A note from the editor...

I am delighted to introduce to you Volume Two of the Queen Mary, Undergraduate History Journal. With yet another increase in the number of essay submissions, it has been a difficult task to choose only seven essays for publication. The committee and editorial team have spent much time reviewing all the essays anonymously, with each being read at least twice to ensure a greater degree of fairness and to reach a consensus about the chosen essays.

The subjects covered in the submitted essays have been from a great variety of modules, reflecting the number of choices available at Queen Mary. The essays aim to demonstrate this diversity, as well as showcase the great talent, originality and individuality among the History students at the university. The quality of the work produced has meant that many fantastic essays have been unsuccessful for this issue, but we hope that students will continue submitting essays for consideration for our future issues.

On the note of future issues, I would like to announce that, as 2014 marks the centenary of World War I, we have decided to work with Dr. Dan Todman on a special issue about WWI, which will be published in that same year. We are therefore urging students to write and submit essays on this subject for this special publication. More details will become available in early 2013.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this issue as much as we have enjoyed both the challenge of reading and selecting the essays for publication. All issues can be accessed at the following link: http://e-clio.history.qmul.ac.uk/historyjournal/.

Katie Choi-Yan Lo
Managing Editor

Queen Mary, University of London Undergraduate History Journal

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An assessment of Blair's use of Cabinet in the run up to the Iraq War of 2003

Mark Currier

The decision to go to war against Iraq remains 'without doubt the most controversial foreign policy act of a British government in decades'.[1] Due to the concerns about legality and the subsequent difficulties faced by British forces, Blair's use of Cabinet – already an issue of scholarly interest – became an issue of public interest. Consequently, many of the documents that would, ordinarily, have been restricted by the thirty year rule, became available following the establishment of several inquiries. Thus a combination of prematurely released documents, Inquiry reports, the copious collection of primary testimony, memoirs, and secondary literature offers a premature 'metaphorical window into the corridors of power'.[2] Indeed there does exist 'an unusual opportunity' to examine a recent historical controversy using 'high quality sources'.[3] Whilst the question under examination is very current, it evokes a very old debate between Cabinet and Prime Minister. In the words of Giles Edwards, Lord Butler's Inquiry has 'enlivened a battle which has been raging for more than a hundred years'.[4]

That debate has been fuelled by the absence of a written constitution and thus constitutional direction as to how a Prime Minister should use Cabinet. Much of what we understand derives from an 'ill-defined royal prerogative' and conventions whose origins are difficult to trace.[5] Its use, therefore, depends on the Prime Minister of the day. Sir Ivor Jennings, in his classic account of Cabinet government, suggests that 'the Cabinet is the directing body of the national policy'.[6] This, however, is not how Tony Blair used the Cabinet in the run up to the Iraq War. There is a general consensus among a wide range of historians, members of the civil service, members of Blair's Cabinet and further endorsed by reports from the Butler Inquiry, to suggest that Blair did not use Cabinet as a decision making body. There was, however, certainly no shortage

of Cabinet discussion about Iraq: as Blair himself pointed out to the House of Commons Liaison Committee on 8 July 2003: 'from September 2002 onwards I think at virtually every Cabinet meeting [Iraq] was debated'.[7] However, as Clare Short has repeatedly stressed, a point endorsed by the Butler Inquiry, there was no 'collective Cabinet strategy for Iraq'.[8] Cabinet was, instead, 'updated each week on the events they are reading about in the Press', as opposed to 'any serious discussion of the risk of the political, diplomatic and military options and the hammering out of an agreed strategy to handle the crisis'.[9] 'No decisions', Short insists: 'were made in Cabinet'.[10] The 'reality', she insists, was that he was 'managing us, reassuring us and keeping us on side whilst he and his entourage decided what to do'.[11] Indeed, as Lord Turnbull told the Iraq Inquiry, Cabinet was not asked for their approval until the eve of the invasion in March 2003.[12] There is further contention as to whether they were even informed with up-to-date information. Lord Turnbull told the Iraq Inquiry that: 'The Prime Minister basically said, "well, they knew the score". That isn't borne out by what actually happened'.[13] 'By the summer of 2002', Turnbull argued, '[Blair] had largely made up his mind at a time when his colleagues were still a long way behind him'.[14]

The consequences of Blair's failure to use Cabinet as a decision making body are widely debated. Much of the criticism is advocated by Lord Wilson and Lord Turnbull. Both represent, according to Jonathan Powell: 'old mandarins' who have propagated a myth of a 'golden age' of collective Cabinet government in the 1970s – indeed a view that doesn't exist 'in reality'.[15] Perhaps the most serious charge is made by Lord Wilson who argues that Blair's style removed the 'check on the exercise of power by too few at the centre'.[16] Collective Cabinet government, Peter Hennessy acknowledges, is the 'only sure sprinkler system we have for hosing down an over-mighty – or potentially over-mighty – Prime Minister'.[17] However, as Hennessy also suggests, 'good government is as much a human matter as it is a technical or machinery of government affair'.[18] John Rentoul, a key defender of Blair, agrees suggesting that in the run up to Iraq, Cabinet government 'was not dead, of course; it was only sleeping'. The check on power is only, of course, one of potential. Regardless of whether Cabinet was a decision-making body or not, the potential to stop the Prime Minister remained.[19] However,

Blair's Cabinet failed to do so: to quote Robin Cook: 'Tony Blair gave Cabinet plenty of time to discuss Iraq. But most in the Cabinet had lost the habit of dissent'.[20] For example, before the meeting of 17 September 2002, during which Attorney-General Peter Goldsmith presented his legal advice to Cabinet, Jack Straw wrote another of his 'personal minutes' to Blair, urging him to think again about going to war.[21] Yet, just a day later, Straw failed to articulate his concerns in Cabinet, instead opting to follow Blair 'with a heavy heart'.[22] Straw's resignation, Andrew Rawnsley insists, 'would almost certainly have stopped British participation in the war' and thus exercised the check on executive power.[23] This was a moment when Cabinet could have wielded their check on prime ministerial power and failed to do so. It was, Hennessy insists, a 'human' as well as 'procedural' failure.[24]

A further charge made by Lord Turnbull and Lord Wilson is that by reducing the decision-making powers of Cabinet, Blair undermined collective responsibility. Lord Wilson, speaking to the Iraq Inquiry, claimed that collective government 'underpins collective responsibility'.[25] Many of Blair's inner circle and close advisers, on the other hand, have defended his use of Cabinet. Jonathan Powell suggests that Cabinet 'is not a policymaking body but the political manifestation of a united and strong government based on collective responsibility'.[26] According to Powell, the Cabinet does not have to be a decision making body to exercise collective responsibility. In reality, he suggests, the Mandarin conceptions of Cabinet government would be 'a singularly bad way of making decisions'.[27] He suggests that a group of 'twenty five people or more', many of them 'uninformed' about the subject simply provides 'at best an unfocused political discussion'.[28] Cabinet is therefore 'not the right place for an informed decision on difficult detailed policy issues'.[29] Peter Mandelson agrees, drawing lessons from John Major's use of Cabinet: 'by behaving as if he is one among equals in his Cabinet, Major shows a lack of authority and drive – a lesson for Tony Blair'.[30] Indeed, Mandelson saw collective Cabinet decision making as inefficient: 'it is impossible to imagine a commercial organisation operating so inefficiently through a large number of executive directors reporting to one Chief Executive'.[31] There is, it is important to note, scholarly endorsement of this view. Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon have argued

that: 'The idea of the modern Cabinet as a seminar of dispassionate and well informed decision-makers is a nonsense [...] most Cabinet ministers are overburdened and barely have time to read their papers'.[32] These arguments are endorsed both by the architects at the heart of Blair's style of governing and by scholars alike. Refutation is confined to those 'retired mandarins', who Jonathan Powell suggests have 'an old fashioned mindset'.[33]

The solution, Jonathan Powell suggests, is Cabinet committees that have: 'the right people present [...] its members are well-briefed; it can take as long as it likes over its discussion on the basis of well prepared papers, and it is independently chaired by a senior minister with no departmental vested interest'.[34] This is where the mandarins and key critics of Blair's style, such as Clare Short, find common ground with those who defend Blair's style. Clare Short highlights the 'prestigious' Cabinet committee called Defence and Overseas Policy (DOP), which is designed to supervise strategy on foreign policy matters and bring together all the relevant expertise across government.[35] In the run up to the Iraq War, however, DOP did not meet. Failure to convene the relevant machinery, designed precisely for a crisis like Iraq, Clare Short argues, amounts to a 'serious erosion of the effectiveness of our government systems'.[36] Indeed, by Powell's own standards, Blair's methods of decision making in the run up to the Iraq war were inadequate.

Blair abandoned Cabinet committees and confided in a 'select group of confidants'.[37] Blair would meet this group and key decisions would be made in bilateral meetings, which Seldon calls 'denocracy'.[38] Peter Stothard, during thirty days of unrivalled access to the Prime Minister, observed: 'A messenger sits guard to ensure that none of the team outside [the Cabinet Room], the people who really run this heart of government, makes too much noise'.[39] This differed from Cabinet committees in significant ways. First, as the Butler Inquiry highlights: 'What happened was you didn't necessarily have an agenda [...] a lot of decisions were taken informally in Number 10 without set meetings for good records being taken'.[40] Indeed, the Butler inquiry, benefiting from the examination of vast documentation and primary testimony, highlights the 'informal nature of much of the Government's decision-making process' and the 'lack of use of established Cabinet committee

machinery'.[41] Blair, Lord Prescott explains, 'used to have these kind of bilateral meetings [...] that's what has become known as the kind of sofa government. That was the nature of Tony'.[42]

Once again, many of Blair's key advisers and 'chums', to quote Lord Prescott, come to his defence.[43] Peter Mandelson's 1996 book, *The Blair Revolution*, is considered by Lord Turnbull to be the 'gospel, the manual' of how government should be run according to New Labour. In it, Mandelson argues that: 'Bilateral ad hoc meetings serviced by Number 10 Staff are a good idea because they are small and manageable and bring together those who are of real interest and weight who can reach decisions more rapidly'.[44] However, as Lord Turnbull suggested to the Iraq inquiry, a vital distinction must be made between an ad hoc (lower case) and an Ad Hoc (upper case) committee. Jonathan Powell, in *The New Machiavelli*, claims that 'I can tell the difference between an ad hoc (lower case) and an Ad Hoc (upper case) committee, and I don't think it matters', he goes on the suggest that those who do believe it matters, such as Lord Turnbull, demonstrate the 'death rattle of the old Mandarin class'.[45] Turnbull 'fundamentally' disagrees, suggesting that there is a 'huge difference'.[46] He explains: 'In an upper case committee you choose people who are the right people and relevant people. There is an ex officio membership of it, whereas if you are ad hoc you choose who you want to be there'.[47] He goes on to explain that the concern is that the Prime Minister, through the use of ad hoc committees (lower case), could 'control the degree of challenge'.[48] In the case of Iraq, 'clearly', Turnbull argues, 'they wanted something where you could choose who you wanted in and who you wanted out, and clearly the Prime Minister didn't want Clare Short and Robin Cook in'.[49] Turnbull reveals that throughout those meetings 'you have not got the Deputy Prime Minister. You haven't got the Treasury represented [...] and you haven't got the Department for International Development': departments that should and would have been represented in a Cabinet committee with a set membership of the relevant departments.[50] Indeed, in a surprising revelation during Alastair Campbell's testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, he revealed that it was because Clare Short was 'difficult'.[51] Indeed, the questioner, Sir Roderic Lyne, concluded that 'because she was difficult, her department couldn't therefore be included fully in the work'.[52] One

of the key 'risks' of this style, according to Lord Wilson is that: 'advice and dissent may either not always be offered or else may not be heard'.[53] Indeed, in the case of Clare Short, her opposing arguments were not heard during the key decision making discussions.

A further consequence of this, according to Clare Short, is 'serious [...] expertise in our system lies in Departments. Those who dictate from the centre do not have full access to that expertise'.[54] It is a conclusion further endorsed by the concluding statements of the Butler Inquiry which expressed concern at the 'informality and circumscribed character of the Government's procedures which we saw in the context of policy-making towards Iraq'.[55] According to Butler, this 'reduced the scope for informed political judgement'.[56] Butler further goes on to suggest that 'one inescapable consequence was to limit wider discussion and consideration by the Cabinet'.[57]

Also encapsulated in Butler's charge of informality was the lack of information provided for Cabinet. Papers on critical issues, Lord Butler highlights, were not given to Cabinet ministers.[58] Lord Turnbull explains: 'they had many discussions but no papers, but more importantly none of those really key papers like the options paper of July, none of those were presented to Cabinet'.[59] The highly significant options paper outlined the military options for 'achieving regime change'.[60] Few of the Cabinet were on the distribution list and thus were, according to Rawnsley: 'excluded from the crucial conclaves about Iraq'.[61] Cabinet were also unaware of the full legal advice from the Attorney-General. Foreign Office legal advisers disagreed about whether the war would be legal without a second UN resolution. The Attorney General gave his full advice in writing on 7 March 2003, however, this advice was not presented to the Cabinet. What they received, rather, was a short final judgement in Cabinet on 17 March that did not include the full considerations that were contentious; they were so contentious in fact that Elizabeth Wilmshurst, the Foreign Office's foremost expert on the legality of military operations, resigned. Lord Prescott indeed expressed 'concern' that 'we were not really getting enough information'.[62] Prescott recalls how he challenged Blair: '"Shouldn't we be given all these papers, etc?" I said [...] I went to see Lord Butler. I said, "didn't you give any advice on how a Cabinet should be run?" He said, "I did, providing all

these kinds of papers and everything". Tony had told him "I am not going to run it that way".[63] However, Prescott goes on to suggest that the fear of leaks was a key reason why the Cabinet were not presented with sufficient information: 'I note that Jack Straw in his evidence did actually say there were times he couldn't give the full information because he thought it would leak. I think that's unfortunate but it is the reality of political life'.[64]

The implications of not seeing the 'crucial documents' is widely disputed.[65] Failure to present the full legal advice to Cabinet, according Sir Gus O' Donnell, was a breach of ministerial code: 'The ministerial code is very clear about the need, when the Attorney General gives written advice, the full text of that advice should be attached [to Cabinet papers]', he told the Iraq Inquiry.[66] Lord Turnbull has argued that as a consequence, he cannot 'accept' Tony Blair's claim that 'they [Cabinet] knew the score'.[67] Indeed, Clare Short has taken this further and suggested that the absence of the full legal advice of the Attorney General demonstrates that Cabinet was 'misled'.[68] This has been strongly refuted by many of the key figures in the Cabinet. Gordon Brown testified that he was satisfied after hearing Lord Goldsmith's advice: 'He had a straightforward question to answer. It wasn't simple but it was straightforward – was it lawful or was it not? [...] and he gave an unequivocal answer'.[69] Lord Prescott agrees, informing the Iraq Inquiry that: 'I didn't desire to see it. I accepted the Attorney General's view, as most people do in the Cabinet'.[70] With specific reference to the options paper, Blair, speaking at the Iraq Inquiry, claimed that regardless of whether the Cabinet saw it: 'you can see all the points were being made, including all the points by the way in these papers [...] there's nothing in those papers, as it were, that wasn't surfaced as part of the discussion'.[71] This practice is influenced by Blair's belief that 'the old infrastructure of policy papers submitted by civil servants to Cabinet who then debate and decide with the Prime Minister as a benevolent chairman, is not suitable in responding to the demands of a fast changing world'.[72] Regardless of whether Blair is right and the defence of Brown and Prescott can be justified, by failing to disclose all the relevant 'crucial documents', Blair's style became open to widespread criticism.[73] The Butler report expressed concern that: 'The absence of Cabinet papers on the agenda so that the Ministers could

obtain briefings in advance from the Cabinet Office, their own departments or from the intelligence agencies plainly reduced their ability to prepare properly for such discussions'.[74] In Paragraph 610, Butler goes further and refutes Blair's claim that these documents were discussed in Cabinet: 'Excellent quality papers were written by officials, but these were not discussed in Cabinet or in Cabinet committees'.[75] Andrew Rawnsley agrees, claiming that there was 'plenty of quantity' about their discussions; the 'real flaw was the lack of quality'.[76] The lack of information available to Cabinet ministers reduced their ability to prepare for discussions.

Some critics have taken this one step further and suggested that it had a bearing on the quality of the decisions taken. Hennessy questions whether the full Cabinet could have tested Lord Goldsmith's opinion, which we now know to be 'more finely balanced' than we thought, based on the short statement presented to the Cabinet on 17 March 2003.[77] Hennessy writes: 'I seriously doubt it'.[78] Thus, the failure to 'scrutinise and question' within the Cabinet Room amounts, Hennessy suggests, to a 'dereliction of Cabinet government comparable only to the autumn of 1956 when Sir Anthony Eden's Cabinet did not press him at the height of the Suez crisis'.[79] Indeed, Lord Quinlan suggests that often, process is 'accordingly a significant component of the outcome itself'.[80] It is collective government and the Cabinet committee system, Lord Wilson argues, that provides the 'best chance of a good decision'.[81] Indeed, Clare Short endorses this theory and applies it to Iraq in unequivocal terms: 'I cannot emphasise strongly enough how Tony Blair's highly personalised system of decision making is a significant part of the explanation of the lack of properly considered policy and thus of the disaster of Iraq'.[82] The Butler Inquiry highlights the significance of this: 'Such risks are particularly significant in a field like the subject of our Review, where hard facts are inherently difficult to come by and the quality of judgement is accordingly all the more important'.[83] Regardless of whether this is the case or not, indeed a charge difficult to prove, it is inescapable that the failure to disclose Cabinet papers to the full Cabinet, left Blair open to such charges.

There is overwhelming evidence that Blair did not use Cabinet as a decision making body. Suggestions that this eliminated a key check

on prime ministerial power, however, are less convincing. The check on prime ministerial power is always potential and rests on personnel as much as machinery. If more key figures in Blair's Cabinet had resigned in opposition to the Iraq War, Blair could not have taken Britain to war. Furthermore, charges that it hindered the decision making process are also unconvincing. Cabinet committees are a suitable alternative with an appropriately representative selection of ministers in attendance to make an informed judgement. Blair, however, did not use Cabinet committees and his alternative to Cabinet decision making was inadequate. It was the 'informality and circumscribed' nature of Blair's decision making that caused concern. Blair used ad hoc committees (lower case) and simply selected those people who shared the same endeavour and thus eliminated any challenge to his policy. The effect was to damage the prospect of informed collective political judgement. Equally inadequate was the absence of key Cabinet papers designed to inform Cabinet discussion. This led to charges that the quality of decision making suffered as a consequence. The accuracy of such a charge is impossible to verify. Nevertheless, with Cabinet committee-like distribution of all Cabinet papers, there would be no doubt and no charge of this nature could have been made. Ultimately, the 'informality and circumscribed' nature of Blair's use of Cabinet in the run up to the Iraq War was simply inappropriate.[84] The use of a formal Cabinet committee, with a set membership, formal minutes and the distribution of Cabinet papers would have sufficed both the leadership's desire for efficient decision making, and simultaneously eliminated the extensive criticism raised, most notably, in the Butler and Iraq Inquiries.

Notes

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4. Hennessy, Peter, 'Informality and Circumscription: The Blair Style of Government in War and Peace', *The Political Quarterly* (2005) p. 3.

5. Foster, Christopher, 'Cabinet Government in the Twentieth Century', *Modern Law Review*, (2004) p.753.

6. Ibid., p. 754.

7. Hennessy, 'Informality and Circumscription', p. 5.

8. Short, Clare, *An Honourable Deception? New Labour, Iraq and the Misuse of Power* (London: Free Press, 2004) p. 150.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 151.

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12. Prince, Rosa, 'Tony Blair went to war without Cabinet consent, senior mandarins say' in *The Telegraph*, 25 January 2011.

13. Ibid.

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15. Powell, Jonathon, *The New Machiavelli* (London: Random House, 2010) p. 59.

16. Lord Wilson testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Tuesday 25 January 2011, p. 8.

17. Hennessy, Peter, 'From Blair to Brown: The Condition of British Government', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (2007) p. 350.

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19. Rentoul, John, *Tony Blair Prime Minister* (London: Time Warner, 2001) p. 530.

20. Hennessy, 'Informality and Circumscription', p. 5.

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22. Ibid.

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24. Hennessy, 'From Blair to Brown', p. 348.

25. Lord Wilson testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Tuesday 25 January 2011.

26. Jonathan Powell, *The New Machiavelli*, p. 58.

27. Ibid., p. 59.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Lord Wilson quoting Lord Mandelson in testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Tuesday 25 January 2011, p. 5.

31. Lord Wilson quoting Lord Mandelson in testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Tuesday 25 January 2011, p. 6
32. Williams, Paul, 'Who's making UK foreign policy?', *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, (2004) p. 918.
33. Powell, *The New Machiavelli*, p. 59
34. Ibid. p. 60.
35. Short, *An Honourable Deception?*, p. 147.
36. Ibid.
37. Williams, 'Who's making UK foreign policy?', p. 917.
38. Seldon, Anthony, *Blair Unbound* (London: Pocket Books, 2008) p.176.
39. Stothard, Peter, *Thirty Days* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003) p. 34.
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41. The Rt. Hon. The Lord Butler of Brockwell, *Review on Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction*, July 14, 2004, paragraph 606.
42. The Rt. Hon. The Lord Prescott testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Friday 30 July, 2010.
43. Ibid.
44. Lord Turnbull's testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Tuesday 25 January 2011, p. 19.
45. Ibid. p. 20.
46. Ibid. p. 21.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Alastair Campbell testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Tuesday 12 January 2010, p. 62.
52. Ibid.
53. Hennessy, 'Informality and Circumscription', p. 7.
54. Short, *An Honourable Deception?*, p. 220.
55. The Rt. Hon. The Lord Butler of Brockwell, *Review on Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction*, paragraph 611.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., paragraph 610.
58. Norton-Taylor, Richard, 'Tony Blair and the case of the disappear-

ing Cabinet', *The Guardian*, 30 May 2007.

59. Lord Turnbull's testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Tuesday 25 January 2011, p. 40.
60. Rawnsley, *The End of the Party*, p. 83.
61. Ibid.
62. The Rt. Hon. The Lord Prescott testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Friday 30 July, 2010, p. 92.
63. Ibid., p. 89.
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65. The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Friday 21 January 2011, p. 12.
66. Norton-Taylor, Richard, 'Cabinet should have been told of attorney general's doubts, Iraq Inquiry hears', *The Guardian*, 28 January 2011.
67. Lord Turnbull's testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Tuesday 25 January 2011.
68. *BBC News*, 'Iraq Inquiry: Short says Cabinet misled on war legality', 2 February 2010.
69. *News Scotsman*, 'Iraq Inquiry: Gordon Brown defends Tony Blair over Cabinet briefings', 5 March 2010.
70. The Rt. Hon. The Lord Prescott testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Friday 30 July, 2010.
71. The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Friday 21 January 2011.
72. Blair, Tony, *A Journey* (London: Hutchinson, 2010) p. 19.
73. The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Friday 21 January 2011 p. 12.
74. Hennessy, 'Informality and Circumscription', p. 6.
75. The Rt. Hon. The Lord Butler of Brockwell, *Review on Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction*, paragraph 610.
76. Rawnsley, *The End of the Party*, p. 118.
77. Hennessy, 'Informality and Circumscription', p. 8.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., p. 7.
81. Lord Wilson testimony to the Iraq Inquiry, Tuesday 25 January

2011, p. 8.
82. Short, *An Honourable Deception?*, p. 147.
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84. The Rt. Hon. The Lord Butler of Brockwell, *Review on Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction*, paragraph 611.

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A comparative study of the successes and failures of modern architecture in interwar private housing and post-war public housing

Clarissa Sutherland

During the inter- and post-war periods, a vast number of new houses were erected throughout Britain due to a growth in population and the destruction of property during the Blitz of 1940-1. The creation of both private and public dwellings occurred in the midst of debates of how best to house people: healthiness, social cohesion and practicality were all deemed important, but there were conflicting ideas on what these notions constituted. The architects of this period generally followed the Modernist Movement, while local authorities and builders designed more conservatively, creating the homes the people wanted more accurately. Each period had its successes and failures, whether within individual structures or the communities they were creating in general.

Between 1919 and 1939, 3,998,000 private houses were built – this made up seventy five per cent of all building of those years.[1] This housing boom meant that new homes could be cheap and were widely available, allowing home-ownership to move further down the social scale, creating a 'property owning democracy'.[2] The ability of members of the working class to purchase property which would have previously been exclusive to the middle classes was a hugely important socio-economic development. The designs for much of this speculative building were drawn up by the builders themselves rather than architects and drew great contempt from the latter. Paul Oliver asks whether these ar-

chitects 'fear[ed] that [...] builders, with grass-roots values, similar origins, modest building skills and little or no architectural expertise had somehow got it right' when they had failed to do so themselves. Part of the reason for this appears to be a lack of understanding by the architects of what people really wanted. Many of these architects subscribed to the Modernist Movement, influenced by Le Corbusier's radical functionalist designs. However, Le Corbusier's definition of the house as 'a machine for living' was not what the public wanted.[3] Burnett explains the British public's rejection of functionalism:

The functionalists' case rested upon the false assumption that people were basically logical about their houses, and on a misreading of social trends which, they believed, were reducing the importance of the home in favour of travel, outdoor recreation and the 'open air life'.

In fact, families were becoming less formal and recreational time was becoming more focused around the children, garden, and home-improvement.[4] Another reason for the lack of adoption of this sort of architecture in homes was that it required vast amounts of space and was deemed impersonal. Furthermore, the designs tended to function better on the continent as glass walls needed expensive heating and ventilation systems to prevent the building being too hot or too cold, and flat roofs meant rainfall was likely to leak through. Another objection to these designs was that they would not fit in well with English rural or suburban landscapes.[5] Due to costs, only the wealthy with an interest in architecture could afford to commission such buildings.

Architects of the modern movement were horrified by the suburbs. The historian and sociologist Lewis Mumford disparagingly described the suburbs as 'a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads'.[6] However, those who lived there viewed the repetition differently: homeowners wished to be perceived as the same kind of person as their neighbours, and a part of their community, without their house setting them apart.[7] These consumers wanted their houses to look like homes, not the factories where they worked. Indeed, the modern church of St. Albans in North Harrow was praised by Nikolaus Pevsner as 'one of the best of its style in England', while local residents still refer to it as factory-like.[8] The suburban semi- was deemed far more practical and homely. *The*

Daily Express described the home equipped with modern amenities as a 'worthwhile possession'.[9] The new houses of the suburbs were designed to accommodate new technologies and ways of living, with larger kitchens where meals could also be eaten, and smaller, cosier reception rooms.

The suburbs were based on Ebenezer Howard's idea of the Garden City: away from the noise and pollution of the city, people could live healthier lives. Although often criticised as a terrible misinterpretation of Howard's vision, the suburbs retained some health benefits.[10] William Robert Davidge, an architect and surveyor, argued that 'cheaper rents and healthier conditions in the suburbs more than outweigh the slight saving of time effected by living in a crowded tenement'.[11] This notion tied in with the 'open air cult' of the 1930s.[12] The expanding rail system made London suburbs ever easier to reach, as did the growth of car ownership. Nonetheless, there were some issues with interwar housing; many criticisms took into account that ex-servicemen occupied much of it. Condemnation focused on 'the absence of a scullery, 'tiring and perilous stairs' [...] electric-light fittings but no power points, and the lack of central heating, dressers and built-in wardrobes'.[13] Despite these criticisms, the majority of homeowners were proud of, and pleased to live in, their dwellings.

Although not as popular or widely built, it is worth briefly looking at the private modernist structures of the period. Berthold Lubetkin's Highpoint I and II are a good example of what was popular among architects, most of whom subscribed to the Modernist Movement. Indeed, Le Corbusier himself praised Highpoint I as one of the first 'vertical garden cities of the future.'[14] The flats were placed in a Lorraine cross, designed to create stunning views and allow for good ventilation. Living areas had great contact with the outside, with large windows and balconies. William J. R. Curtis describes the entire building as 'a masterly exercise in the articulation of movement through a sequence of [...] spaces'.[15] Although those with an interest in architecture praised Highpoint, the style was not popular enough to take off throughout Britain, nor would it have been affordable to do so and thus the most popular house of the interwar period was the suburban semi.

After the Second World War, there was a great shortage of hous-

ing, owing mainly to the Blitz. In the King's 1919 Speech to Representatives of the Local Authorities, he had claimed that 'If a healthy race is to be reared, it can be reared only in healthy homes.'[16] This doctrine still seemed to stand in the 1940s as more and more 'New Towns' were built and suburbs expanded. By 1957, two and a half million new flats and houses had been built, seventy five percent by local authorities.[17] This shows a distinct change from the interwar years, where only twenty five percent of houses were not privately built. Post-war housing tended to be better planned than both public and private housing of the pre-war period as the Ministry of Housing gave out Design Manuals to follow.[18] One of the major successes of these manuals was that each authority interpreted them differently, creating a variety of housing types and densities throughout the country. It was also believed that a major issue of pre-war public housing was the monotony of the buildings and the fact that it was a single class society. Many sociologists believed that this was what created 'suburban neurosis' and that it ought to be part of the architects' briefs to create 'neighbourhood spirit' and 'social integration'.[19] Architects began to see themselves as social engineers, whose duty was to put beauty back into housing estates and unite the social classes.

However, as the 1940s progressed, growing economic pressures began to cull this optimism and the standard of housing slipped back into what it had been. The minimum standard space of 900sq ft was relaxed and former minimum room sizes now became maxima.[20] By the 1960s, high-rise flats accounted for 26% of local authority building yet the next decade showed that they were not the solution. Initially, architects and planners believed that the 'vertical garden city' would take over, inspired by Le Corbusier, and perhaps even the success of Highpoint. Flats were perceived to be more cost-effective as they required less land and industrial building methods would be much cheaper. Furthermore, they seemed far more justifiable ecologically.[21] The final years of the decade revealed that this was not the case: although single people and childless couples liked living in flats, families were very much against it.[22] Moreover, neither the economic or social justifications had proved accurate – it was only affordable to erect them to minimum standards, and William Curtis describes them as embodying 'a particularly modern hygienic alienation'.[23]

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A prevalent example of an idealistic high-rise flat which was later criticised is Denys Lasdun's 'cluster block', Keeling House, in Bethnal Green. The idea was that the four blocks would have a central core, thus promoting community and social cohesion.[24] The central core was to be a communal activity zone, as well as housing the services for the building. However, the experiment was not a success. It was not deemed a suitable place to bring up children due to all the prominence of concrete and lack of grass in the outdoor areas, and the central core simply became a wind tunnel.[25] Lasdun's social experiment of 1957 turned out not to be what the people wanted. Between 1961 and 1975, four thousand housewives in over seventy five estates were interviewed by architects. Those who lived in estates according to the Parker Morris committee's guidelines of the early Sixties were more than satisfied with the interiors of their dwellings, but not so pleased with the exteriors; those living on earlier schemes gave the reverse replies.[26] Which was more important – the exterior appearance or the internal layout and experience? For members of the Modernist Movement, a functionalist interior would have been paramount. The answer to these surveys seemed to be that what people wanted was a return to more traditional housing. The discovery in the 1970s that Victorian and Edwardian town houses could be easily turned into flats and maisonettes appears to have commended these traditional forms of housing to the new generation of architects and planners who were revolting against the Modernist Movement which came before them.[27]

The main success of housing in the twentieth century was that such a vast number of families were housed at all. Although this is obviously one of the most important aspects to consider, a misinterpretation caused much of this housing to be a failure. Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities were turned into the suburb in the 1920s and 30s, which, although not popular among architects, was a success in that it allowed a wider proportion of people to become homeowners. Post-war, however, the continued growth of suburbs and 'New Towns' became a failure as economic shortages caused the housing sizes to be reduced, and local amenities were often not built as quickly, if at all, causing residents to have to travel much further and more frequently than they had expected. Indeed, there seems to have been an attempt to transfer the suc-

cesses of the interwar period, such as the suburbs and Modernist flats, into the post-war public sector, with little success. The clearest reason for this was a combination of fund shortages and a lack of listening to the public. By the time architects started communicating with those for whom they were building, they had already created many unsatisfactory estates and tower blocks. Therefore we see that despite small difficulties, the suburbs of the interwar years were largely a success but the attempt to reutilise private housing ideas in public housing after the war resulted mainly in failure.

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Was 'Outcast London' a product of economics, morality or both?

Alex Hayes

'I myself know family after family where the diminution of distinct responsibility increased drunkenness, and neglect, where steady work is neglected and lost, training for work abandoned, house-duties omitted, all because of our miserable interference with duties we neither can, nor should, perform, and in no way is this evil clearer to me than in the provision of free food for the apparently hungry.'

– Octavia Hill, 1891[1]

I n 1883, Reverend Andrew Mearns published a startling pamphlet entitled *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, which described in shocking detail the abysmal living conditions of London's poor. The abject poverty that Mearns had highlighted was seemingly unique to London; at a time when living conditions of the rest of Britain's working classes appeared to be improving, London, evidently, had been neglected by progress. Two distinct explanations emerged amongst contemporaries as an explanation for this phenomenon: some lay the blame squarely on the shoulders of the impoverished individuals by arguing that their physical conditions were the consequence of their lacking moral integrity; others, however, argued conversely, attributing the collapse in morality to their dire physical environment. This essay will contend the former opinion by locating London's poverty within an economic context. London's working class was not uniquely immoral, but rather London was uniquely uncompetitive, producing an army of low paid and unskilled labourers that swelled the capital's slums.

The notion of 'outcast London' is derived from the capital's evident inability to improve the living conditions amongst its working class, despite progress elsewhere in the country. In 1851, Henry Mayhew published an encyclopaedic analysis of London's lower classes in

his infamous *London Labour and the London Poor*. In Mayhew's London, poverty was clearly evident, indeed it could be found 'abounding in absolute masses round the far-famed port of London'.[2] Yet when Rev. Mearns published *The Bitter Cry* over thirty years later, his revelations proved to be revelatory and highly controversial. Gareth Stedman Jones has attributed this controversy to fact that after two decades of rapid economic growth an evident rise in the working classes' standard of living in many of Britain's towns and cities, 'chronic poverty was no longer thought of as the inevitable lot of the great majority of mankind, but rather as a residual enclave to be eradicated by progress'.[3] London, however, seemed to defy this belief as writers such as Reverend Mearns were keen to point out.

What was particularly shocking for Reverend Mearns was the forcing together of the honest working poor with criminal classes of thieves and prostitutes. The 'pestilential human rookeries,' as Mearns described them, were comparable to the 'middle passage of the slave ship'.[4] In one vivid passage, he describes that

> Walls and ceilings are black with the accretions of filth which have gathered upon them… What goes by the name of a window is half of it stuffed with rags or covered by boards to keep out the rain; the rest is so begrimed and obscured that scarcely can light enter or anything be seen.[5]

Mearns was evidently moved by the intolerable conditions and the human suffering that he witnessed in London's poorest districts. Yet what he found most saddening was 'the inevitable association of honest people with criminals'.[6] The wretched tenements and lodging houses accommodated criminals and decent people alike, with the expected outcome of a general lowering in the morality of these areas. Thus, while the division between rich and poor became increasingly demarcated, particularly between west and east London, the various strata of the lower classes were becoming increasingly mixed.[7]

London's apparent backwardness was both a source of curiosity and great anxiety amongst the Victorian middle and upper classes. As well as reading sensational accounts of London's poverty, many were drawn to the poorest parts of London, particularly the East End, to ex-

perience it first hand as part of a trend that became known as 'slumming'. Reasons for the wealthy to go slumming are mixed, as Seth Koven points out, some 'disguised prurient curiosity in the garb of social altruism,' whilst others did indeed visit on genuine sociological grounds.[8] But the prevalence of a large, impoverished community in London also caused serious consternation in some quarters. In 1871, the Paris Commune had demonstrated to many Britons the instability of cities with large gaps between rich and poor, it was feared that should the squalor go un-checked, London could face an insurrection of its own.[9] As the capital of a vast Empire, London had also begun to draw increasing comparisons with Imperial Rome, but 'just as Rome had been at the mercy of the mob, so too could London be vulnerable to the threat from within'.[10]

By the 1880s, it was clear for many that something had to be done about London's poor, however, the first challenge was to identify the cause of the problem. Poverty in Britain's towns and cities had been a longstanding issue, especially after the gathering of pace of both rural-urban migration and the industrialisation at the beginning of the nine-teenth century. In Victorian responses to urban poverty, it is important to note the influence of the concept of individualism, as propounded by thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham in his philosophy of utilitarianism. Edwin Chadwick, the architect of the new Poor Law, was both a 'friend and disciple' of Jeremy Bentham, and this relationship is evident when Chadwick wrote into the Poor Law amendments of 1834 the concept of 'less eligibility'.[11] This is the idea that poor relief for the able bodied should be less desirable than working itself, so as to deter people from idleness and laziness, an acknowledged cause of much poverty. The premise of this concept is the idea that destitution is within the control of the individual. So long as an able-bodied person was willing to work hard, that person would not only be able to avoid the punishment of the workhouse but to flourish. This pervasive Victorian attitude is perhaps best represented in Samuel Smiles' widely read book *Self-Help* (1855). Although *Self-Help* also drew on Christian values, which were not im-portant in Bentham's philosophy, the emphasis of the individual's ability to master their own fate was strong. Smiles declares that

Poverty itself may be lifted and lighted up by self-respect; and it is

truly a noble sight to see a poor man hold himself upright amidst his temptations, and refuse to demean himself by low actions.[12]

Smiles' dictum was simple, that God helps those who help themselves, and *Self-Help* drew on the success of leading industrial figures of the earlier part of the century, such as Josiah Wedgewood and George Stephenson, as examples of this aphorism.

Towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, this individualism had been merged with concepts of solidarity and cooperation to form the moralist response to 'outcast London'. In the north, the working classes had become increasingly sober, more religious, and thrifty, resulting in an improvement in their general living conditions. Gareth Stedman Jones argues that this was exemplified in the behaviour of the Lancashire labourers during the cotton famine, which resulted from the American Civil War. During the famine, northern industrial towns had demonstrated political maturity by avoiding the temptation of crime and vice and instead joining together through co-operatives and friendly societies, both of which contributed to a general improvement in their standard of living.[13] London's labouring classes on the other hand demonstrated no such behaviour; in contrast, the capital's destitute seemed to be gripped by immorality.

The resultant response from various contemporaries was that London's poor needed to be more like the Lancashire operatives, to exhibit self-discipline and the other virtuous traits. This is exemplified by Octavia Hill's innovative housing scheme. Hill set out to provide adequate housing for London's poor by repairing old dwellings to a reasonable standard, but more importantly, through the reformation of the habits of the occupants.[14] She stated that what was involved was 'not so much a question of dealing with houses alone, as of dealing with houses in connection with their influence on the character and habits of people who inhabit them'.[15] For Hill, it was important that her tenants demonstrated virtuous traits such as sobriety and industriousness, and aimed to foster these values through the provision of adequate housing and the regular visitation of voluntary rent collectors. This regular, face-to-face interaction was also important for Samuel Barnett, founder of Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel in 1884. Toynbee Hall was set up as part of the 'set-

tlement movement'; this was a social reform movement that was similar to the concept of *noblesse oblige*, an inferred responsibility of the wealthier and better educated to bestow moral and cultural leadership upon the lower classes.[16] Toynbee Hall would be a residence for well-educated graduates of Oxford and Cambridge in the East End, where they would be able to 'curb the self-destructive habits of the poor' through direct interaction with them.[17] Barnett and Hill were of the same mind in that the material improvement of the working classes could not be achieved simply by providing handouts through direct charity, but through cultural and intellectual support instead. In essence, they had to be helped to help themselves.

The problem with the moral argument is that it fails to acknowledge the importance of other external factors that contribute to a person's physical and material wellbeing. This was recognised at the time by various intellectuals, including Charles Dickens who was one of the most vehement critics of the individualist stance. This is particularly evident in his satirical novel *Hard Times* (1854). Dickens' character Josiah Bounderby cannot help boasting at every opportunity of his abandonment as a young boy and his subsequent rise to wealth. Yet these boasts turn out to be a sham as in reality he had come from a loving home. In contrast, Stephen Blackpool, an honest, hardworking factory hand, is able to resist moral corruption yet he remains impoverished and victimised throughout the book, ultimately losing his life for a crime he did not commit. For Dickens, it was inadequate to simply equate good moral character with material well-being and this was also the belief of Reverend Mearns, who recognised that honest working men and women were being degraded in London's slums due to their forced cohabitation with thieves and vagabonds in low and despicable conditions. In reference to the London slums, Mearns asks, 'Who can wonder that every evil flourishes in such hotbeds of vice and disease?'[18] A more pertinent question, however, is why exactly were London's slums populated by 'honest people', as Mearns identified?

The answer to this question undoubtedly lies within London's economic structure in the second half of the nineteenth century. The philosopher and economist Karl Marx is perhaps one of the most prominent intellectuals of the period to argue a formative impact of econom

ics on society. Marx was keen to point out the alienating effects of the division of labour, which served to 'mutilate the worker into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy the content of work by his agony, and alienate him from the spiritual potentialities of the labour-process.'[19] Indeed, the increasing sub-division of labour was a prominent facet in London's economy from the 1850s onward. The historian Francis Sheppard has identified that within London's key industries such as clothing, textile and furniture making, trade was based on 'the small master, the wholesale system of distribution and the sub-division of labour'.[20] Sheppard points to the financial outcome in that due to the 'ever increasing sub-division of the processes of production semi-skilled labour was constantly debasing the value of all but the most expert operatives'.[21] Not only was London's labour force being forced to undertake increasingly demeaning tasks within the production process, but this also resulted in the diminution of wages.

Poor pay is a crucial aspect that must be taken into account when examining the phenomenon of 'outcast London', something that was largely overlooked in the analyses of Octavia Hill and Samuel Barnett. However, this was not overlooked in *The Bitter Cry*, as Mearns explains:

> A child seven years old is known easily to make 10s. 6d a week by thieving, but what can he earn by such work as match-box making, for which 2½d a gross is paid […] Before he can make as much as the young thief he must make fifty-six gross of match-boxes a week, or 1,296 a day.

To achieve such a rate of productivity was of course beyond the effort of even the hardest working children. Little wonder then that so many of the slums' younger inhabitants proved vulnerable to criminality.

Yet it was not just London's children that struggled to earn a reasonable income in the late-Victorian capital. The fact that children in London were still to be found working, despite the 1880 Education Act which made school attendance compulsory between the ages of five and ten, is demonstrative of the need for families to maximise their incomes by whatever means. Gareth Stedman Jones centralises the importance of income in his analysis of outcast London. He argues that 'endemic

forms of poverty' were inescapably linked with casual labour, that is, low-skilled and low-paid employment of indefinite periods.[22] Casual labour was particularly prevalent in London due to its relatively unique economic situation in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The rise of industrial towns built around the factory system, particularly in engineering, meant that London faced significant provincial competition.

A number of London's geographical and economic characteristics undermined its ability to compete in a range of industrial sectors. Stedman Jones argues that by 1870 London's traditionally successful industries such as silk production, shipbuilding and engineering had become deficient, so too had production of raw materials and semi-finished goods.[23] To put London's industrial potential into perspective, Isambard Kingdom Brunel's mammoth ship, the *Great Eastern*, was laid down in Millwall docks in May 1854; the fact that such a large engineering project could be undertaken in London demonstrates the engineering capabilities that existed in London prior to its decline. Ironically, the *Great Eastern* was a financial failure and by the time it entered the Merseyside breakers yard in 1888, London's shipbuilding industry had been killed off by 'lower wages and lower prices of raw materials paid by its provincial competitors'.[24] Not only was London further from the all-important coalfields than many of its competitors but ground rent also prohibited London industries from adopting the factory system.[25] The result was the closure or migration of these industries away from the capital, leaving behind a redundant workforce.

Not all of London's industries were driven out altogether; indeed, some sectors were able to prosper. As Asa Briggs points out, the production of commodities such as food, drink, soap and bricks remained strong in the capital due to its proximity to the market.[26] However, the key to manufacturing's survival in the city, particularly for clothing and furniture making, was the significant reduction in overheads. The way that producers achieved this was largely through the process of 'sweating': the employment of workers for excessively long shifts for very little pay. The invention of the bandsaw and the sewing machine between the 1840s and 1860s, combined with the abundance of cheap labour, gave rise to the system of 'sweating'.[27] This was exacerbated by the arrival of Ashkenazi Jews from the 1880s onwards, which further increased the

level of unskilled labour willing to work for low pay.[28]

The consequence of these economic conditions for the casual labour force in London was simply that they could not afford to live in better housing. As good spirited as Octavia Hill's housing scheme was, it was ineffective at providing for London's poorest workers.[29] Indeed, the historian Anthony Wohl argues that up to 16.5 per cent of London's population 'were not reached by any coherent housing effort in the nineteenth century, unless by the dormitory style common lodging houses conceived as temporary shelters'.[30] This problem was further compounded by significant rises in rent after the 1880s, particularly in London's poorest region, the East End, where rents 'increased by an average 25.3 per cent, compared with an average 11.2 per cent in northern, southern and western boroughs'.[31] This trend is largely due to rises in rates being passed on by landlords to their tenants.[32] It is unsurprising then that London's lodging houses were so full.

Misguided attempts to tackle London's slum problem only added to the problem. The Metropolitan Board of Works and its successor the London County Council, attempted a number of slum clearance schemes and house building projects with the intention of providing a better standard of homes for the poor. The problem, however, was that such projects required the large-scale demolition of thousands of existing homes. Jerry White posits that 12,000 people were made homeless by such schemes between 1879 and 1897.[33] Whilst some unskilled labourers were able to move into the new houses that were built, wealthier workers such as clerks and artisans were often the new tenants.34 The resulting effect was usually the relocation of slums into even more overcrowded areas.

In the epigraph of this essay, Octavia Hill makes clear her thoughts on the free provision of food for 'the apparently hungry'. To the modern observer it would likely seem strange that a philanthropist would be preaching to members of the London Charitable Organisation the evils of free handouts. The important contextual detail, of course, is the pervading notion that it was the responsibility of the individual to stand on their own feet; and charity, for Hill and many of her contemporaries, was the teaching of this virtue. The values of hard work, temperance, determination and self-respect as preached by the likes of

Samuel Smiles and the abundance of other Victorian moralists must be admired. However, to cite a lack of these virtues amongst the working class in London is an inadequate explanation as to why the capital continued to be plagued by chronic poverty.

It is clear that a combination of economic factors produced the phenomenon of 'outcast London'. At a macro level London was becoming an increasingly less viable location for a range of industries. This was due to provincial competition and rising overheads, resulting in their decline or migration away from the capital. At a micro level, an abundance of unskilled labour and the development of the sweating system acted to undermine the wages of the lowest earners in London. No matter how honest, sober and hard working some Londoners were, many inevitably found themselves living in the squalid environment of the lodging house. To simply say that these people were a product of impersonal economic forces would be too deterministic and diminishes any sense of moral responsibility. Yet 'outcast London' is a perfect example of the poverty trap: for so many there was no escape because the economic system could not provide them with the basic means to improve their situation, that is, a decent wage. Drink, crime and improvidence was often the only alternative or means of numbing their pathetic existence in the slums, therefore it is the outcome of such conditions, not the cause.

Notes

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To what extent was Europe transformed by encountering the rest of the world?

Lauren Alexandra Hughes

The discovery of new lands had various impacts on the lives of those living in Europe at the time, be it socially, culturally or economically. With the great many products, resources, and cultural practices it brought into European society, it would be difficult to deny its potential as a driving force for development. However, beliefs and influences existing within European societies at the time often prevented these discoveries from having as great an impact on individuals as perhaps we might expect.

Over the centuries, historiography has varied regarding the impact these lands, particularly America, had on Europe. Eighteenth-century historians were more concerned with defending their own beliefs than expanding their knowledge about the contributions of the New World to the Old. Nineteenth-century historiography moved in a different direction, focussing more on the impact of Europe on newly discovered lands. These Eurocentric approaches give us less of an understanding of how Europe itself was transformed, and more so how Europe transformed the rest of the world. Moving into the twentieth century, Europe is viewed in a less positive way. The decline of imperialism and developments in other areas have led to the adoption of a "European guilt" when referring to this subject.[1] Our knowledge about how Europe was transformed is affected by the changing views of historians through the centuries.

The common understanding by Europeans at this time was that they themselves were a superior race, and so it was their duty to civilise other nations around the world. This was largely due to their belief that civilisation had gradually moved westward after beginning in the East, and so they were more civilised than those on the Asian continent.[2] Sto-

ries they had heard created preconceptions of what these native people would be like. These notions were sometimes reinforced, whilst at other times disproved, by the tales told by travellers on their return. Another result of this belief, as Stuart Schwartz states, was that 'Europeans forced themselves and their methods of thought and knowing on the rest of the world during this period'.[3] Furthermore, as Columbus noted in his first voyage while observing Cuban natives, 'They should be good servants [...] and I believe that they would easily be made Christians'. This implied that they were of an inferior race which Europeans had a right to control.[4] Evidence such as this suggests encounters with new societies had no immediate impact on the preconceived ideas of European superiority and their duty to rule and convert others.

The impact of these new discoveries was economically beneficial to some, whilst others were affected negatively by the consequences. Individuals such as merchants and businesspeople experienced an increased standard of living during this period, as their trades were able to adapt to and benefit from this expanding market. In contrast, those on fixed incomes suffered from these changes, as did wage earners and peasants, since their income increased at a rate lower than that of market prices of the time, so they could afford less than they had done previously.[5] It can be seen therefore, in terms of the economic impact on European individuals, some would have welcomed this new transformation, whilst others would have found it damaging to their established way of life.

As with any new market that has been discovered, trade links were almost immediately established. Europeans were able to make money from trade with America, which they could in turn use to finance imports from Asia.[6] As a result, a continuous cycle of trade was established. European towns 'instead of being the manufacturers and carriers for but a very small part of the world [...] have now become the manufacturers [...] for almost all the different nations of Asia, Africa and America'.[7] European manufacturers went from supplying small areas within Europe, to worldwide markets. Therefore, encounters with the rest of the world had clear benefits for European trade and commerce during this period.

A boost in the European economy was greatly needed at this

point in time. As a result of the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth Century, economies were ruined and populations were cut by a third or more, which would have profound effects for years to come.[8] By establishing economic ties with nations around the world, this could help European economies to recover. After over two centuries, this finally began to happen, but it would not have been possible without 'the trading wealth of Asia and mineral riches of the Americas'.[9] Had European encounters with the rest of the world not occurred, their economies may not have had this opportunity to recover, and European nations may not have grown to be the dominating powers they became in the subsequent centuries.

In terms of economy, Europe was affected in other ways too, due to the discovery of new lands . America in particular, can be associated with the rise of European capitalism.[10] With the incorporation of the 'New World' into the world economy, the whole economic system of the 'Old World' began to change. European industries greatly expanded, as they needed to produce manufactured products in order to exchange these with America for silver. This then promoted capitalism further, as large profits were gained by using silver to trade with the East. This also caused inflation within Europe, because wages were significantly lower than prices at this time.[11] Since 'the complexity of […] calculating credit, profit, and rates of interests sounds so familiar to us today', and were concepts that originated from the Renaissance period, it can be said that the discoveries of new lands during this period greatly transformed Europe in terms of its economic systems.[12]

Everyday European life was also affected by these new encounters. New products were constantly being introduced into the European market, and 'as the domestic economy changed with this influx of exotic goods, so did art and culture'.[13] These goods included food, artwork, furnishings and fabrics, demonstrating the cultural impact of these discoveries on European life. A key example of this was Venice. Its established trade relationship with the Ottoman Empire meant that 'Islamic influence thus diffused effortlessly through Venetian culture'.[14] The ease with which Venice and similar societies throughout Europe absorbed aspects of new cultures into their own is a further example of how European societies were shaped by encounters with the rest of the world during

this period.

It was not only physical changes that were brought about by this discovery; the 'New World' also helped to create revolutions of thought. Before this expansion, it was widely believed and accepted that what was written about the world in ancient Roman and Greek literature was correct. These Renaissance discoveries challenged the original ideas, and in many instances proved them wrong.[15] Nevertheless, many individuals found such revolutions of thought difficult to comprehend, and so these new ideas and discoveries were not really incorporated into European thought at the time. Encounters with the rest of the world also brought into question the religious beliefs of individuals. It had readily been accepted that Christianity was the one true religion, so everyone should live their lives by its teachings. However, when explorers came into contact with new civilisations with different religious practices, it made them aware that there may be other religious possibilities too. Nevertheless, many found it difficult to accept that their belief system could be challenged by others. For them Christianity was superior and those of other faiths should be converted. As a result their own beliefs primarily remained unaffected. European encounters with the rest of the world had the potential to dramatically change European thought. However, the prospect of abandoning their traditional beliefs and replacing them with the ideas formed from these new discoveries was often unimaginable for many Europeans, and this, in John Elliott's view, explains 'the apparent slowness of Europe in making the mental adjustments required to incorporate America within its field of vision'.[16] So in this respect, Europe was only marginally transformed by encounters with the rest of the world, since the potential impact of new discoveries was limited by entrenched beliefs and understandings that were difficult to change.

The discoveries made during this period also impacted European language. When explorers reached new lands, they often encountered new creatures and wildlife that had never existed in Europe. Travellers had to find ways of explaining their findings to European society. At first, they were described with reference to similar things that Europeans would already have been familiar with. However, as more discoveries were made, explorers found they needed to give these objects their own names, and so invented new words, many of which are still fun

damental to twenty-first-century scientific practices.[17] In this respect, the fact that we still use the same terminology today suggests European language was transformed as a result of encounters with the rest of the world.

One of the major results of the exploration of new territories was the development of the slave trade. With trade becoming a world-wide phenomenon, cheaper forms of work were constantly sought after. For Europeans who simply wanted to make the most profit from their businesses, slavery was used to meet their labour needs.[18] At the time, it was estimated that around 1,000 slaves were shipped every year just from one region alone, Arguim. They were then sent to Lisbon and sold throughout Europe.[19] As slavery was used by many European powers for centuries to come, the establishment of the slave trade as a result of encounters with new lands clearly transformed both the European use of slave labour and their attitudes towards it during this period.

European encounters with the rest of the world clearly had implications for almost every aspect of European life. Many new discoveries were incorporated into European societies, with some features still remaining today. However, entrenched beliefs and understandings already held by Europeans meant they were not always ready to accept new information which contradicted their own views. So, in this respect, the discovery of new lands had only a relative impact on Europe at this time. Although it largely changed the material and physical life of Europeans, it would be many years before much of what was discovered was readily incorporated into European beliefs and understanding.

Notes

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3. Schwartz, Stuart, 'Encounters of Another Kind', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 28/3 (1998), p. 398.

4. Columbus, Christopher, 'First Voyage (1492-1493)', in *Culture and Belief in Europe 1450-1600*, ed. by Englander, David, et al (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 319.

5. Winks, Robin & Wandel, Lee, *Europe In A Wider World 1350-1650* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 128.

6. Ibid., p. 124.

7. Smith, Adam, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Volume Two* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1950), p. 142.

8. Arnold, David, *The Age of Discovery 1400-1600 2nd Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2002) p.8

9. Ibid., p. 8.

10. Elliott, *The Old World And The New 1492-1650,* p. 55.

11. Ibid., p. 56

12. Brotton, Jerry, *The Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 25.

13. Ibid., p. 23.

14. Howard, Deborah, 'Cultural transfer between Venice and the Ottomans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', in *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe, IV, Forging European Identities, 1400-1700*, ed. Roodenburg, Herman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 169.

15. Winks & Wandel, *Europe In A Wider World 1350-1650*, p. 127.

16. Elliott, *The Old World And The New 1492-1650*, p. 8.

17. Winks & Wandel, *Europe In A Wider World 1350-1650*, p. 127.

18. Arnold, *The Age of Discovery 1400-1600 2nd Edition*, pp. 14-15.

19. Brotton, *The Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 34.

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What roles did mythical and imaginary figures play in the mental framework of medieval society?

Max Bienkowski

Cut down a tree with a herring? It can't be done!
<div align="right">– King Arthur, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*</div>

The mental framework of medieval society was pervaded with figures that would today be considered as 'imaginary' or 'fictitious'. Since the Enlightenment and the subsequent delineation of these figures into the realm of folklore by scholars like Jacob Grimm and Alexander Afanasyev, the figures that were once ubiquitous in the psyche of the medieval population have now been confined to the pages of storybooks and scholarly investigations.

Modern society often presents the belief in these characters as risible evidence for the 'backwards' thinking of pre-modern cultures; one only has to watch *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* to be treated with a slew of characters showing how 'silly' three-headed knights, forest-dwelling warriors with impossible tasks, enchanters and ferocious (if diminutive) animals can be, reassuring the viewer that they are incredibly fortunate to live in an era free of such superstitions. However, nothing could be further from the truth: this essay contends that the mythical and imaginary figures that populated the medieval consciousness were only a reflection of human fears and taboos, and a definition of the 'self' through the construction of the 'other'.

The medieval figures we consider 'mythical' and 'imaginary', therefore, do not play any roles that have not been replaced with other characters of a more modern creation; in dealing with taboos, modern literature and cinema provides a psychological exploration of the same fears that were present in medieval populations: nature, crime, sex, gender and death (and often all five at once) are common subjects. With regards to the 'self' and the 'other', a cursory glance at any tabloid news

paper reveals how cultures construct who they are by alienating what they are not, and thus our monstrous counterparts transformed from wild men, revenants and werewolves into paedophiles, terrorists, and (to use an awful expression) the 'underclass'.[1] This paper intends to show that with regards to the human imagination, the players may change, but the roles remain the same.

Limits of the imagination

Before embarking on the exploration of the medieval imagination, it should be outlined what exactly will be covered by this essay and what will fall outside of a self-imposed purview. Though there is a plethora of figures covered by medieval travel literature (*The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* and the Old English text *Wonders of the East* to name but two), this essay will not cover figures who for all intents and purposes 'dwell' beyond Europe and its immediate periphery. The reasons for this are manifold. Firstly, there is such a wealth of information on these figures that it would not be possible to discuss them in addition to the characters mentioned below in sufficient, satisfactory detail. Secondly, geographically speaking, these characters were far removed from ordinary people, who may have perceived distant races such as the *cyclopes* and *sciopodes* in a much less personal way to figures that they shared their surrounding environment with. Finally, while the distinctions between popular and elite culture are artificial, and that medieval culture in reality existed as a 'complex whole', the figures represented by the travel literature are of a learned tradition passed on from antiquity, and were beyond the physical reach of anyone without the means to embark on journeys to the lands they supposedly inhabit.[2] Subsequently, as far the roles imaginary figures play, these factors make travel literature characters a more 'elite' preoccupation.

In addition, the term 'imaginary' is subjective and fraught with difficulties. Within the medieval mindset, there was not a clear demarcation of where the imaginary ends and the real begins; some figures were perceived as absolutely real, others as the province of oral folklore, but there were many that stood on a hinterland between the two and without any written records elaborating whether or not people actually believed them to exist, the problem of the term 'imaginary' manifests

itself. Similarly, there were many things that existed unquestioned in medieval Europe that today are considered by many to be 'imaginary', in particular the existence of God and Jesus Christ.[3] The problem this is supposed to illustrate is that while it is not appropriate to use a modern concept of 'imaginary' to decide which medieval figures to discuss, it is impossible to apply a medieval definition as none truly exists.

The imaginary 'other'

The creation of the imaginary 'other' in medieval Europe was a clear statement of what it was believed society should be by defining the monstrous antithesis. Subsequently, there are many surviving examples of figures that were perceived to be the opposite of Christian society. One of the most obvious of these is the figure of the wild man. Jacques Le Goff notes that the great contrast of the Middle Ages was between nature and culture, with the wild man representing a regression 'too far' towards the savage natural world.[4] The wild man in Chretien de Troyes' *Yvain ou le chevalier au lion* (written c.1180) is described as 'a hideous base fellow, covered with hair and clad in animal skins', giving him an almost non-human appearance.[5] However, Le Goff notes that though he has a fearful appearance, his control over two wild bulls shows that 'the savage is the master of the forest and not merely a guest because he has tamed the wild beast.'[6] Therefore, the wild man can be interpreted as demonstrating a fear of those who could survive the forest, which was a dangerous and difficult place to live, by portraying its denizens (woodsmen, hunters, hermits and outlaws) as uncivilized because they did not conform to a conventional notion of society. The wild man as an 'other' offers the first idiom of how medieval society viewed itself: *we are civilized.*

Another imaginary figure which came to represent another group of people who transgressed conventional society was that of the werewolf. In the Middle Ages, the figure of the werewolf became explicitly linked with outlawry, mainly as the wolf has long had connotations of thievery and murder in European culture. Aleksander Pluskowski notes that in this case 'the designation is one of depersonalisation, marginalisation and confinement to a defined luminal space: wilderness, shared conceptually and physically with wolves.'[7] Not only did the

werewolves share the 'uncivilized' wilderness connotations of the Wild Man, but they were further stigmatized because of their association with crime. In fact, so deeply engrained was the crimino-lupine association, that in Old English, the word *wearg* was interchangeable for the terms 'wolf' and 'criminal'.[8] The transformation of the outlaw into the werewolf 'other' was medieval society's way of stating: *we are law-abiding.*

Further to these two concepts is the depiction of another race or nationality as an 'other', and how highlighting the differences between the two tells as much (and potentially more, considering the fantastical and probably untrue nature of some of these depictions) about the race or nation who have created the imaginary 'other' race as it does about the subject. A prime example of this is Gerald of Wales' *Topographica Hibernica*, written in the 12th century. Gerald's description of Ireland within this text is 'part history, part marvels, part miracle story and part topography', and contains descriptions of the Irish as an 'adulterous', 'incestuous' race, a 'race outside of the law'.[9] Gerald's Ireland is not only filled with the unorthodox and marginal Irish, but with monstrous humans, including werewolves. Asa Simon Mittram argues that Gerald's intention in portraying the Irish as an 'other', despite being a Christian nation, was to move the British Isles away from the psycho-geographical periphery on which it lay by depicting Ireland 'as a region of even greater marginality and therefore greater monstrosity.'[10] Works such as Gerald's *Topographica Hibernica* created an 'other' through which they further defined themselves: *we are orthodox.*

'Otherising' Nature

The function of imaginary figures in medieval society was not simply to define the 'self' and 'other', these characters were used to reinforce taboos, and they provided a method of exploring and explaining the taboo without transgressing their boundaries. Nature was one such taboo in the Middle Ages; while it has become ostensibly harmless in modern European society (and even benevolent in the eyes of New Age movements), medieval Europeans experienced nature in quite a different way. For them, the world outside of human culture carried dangers, both real and imaginary. Wild animals (wolves in particular) and outlaws posed a potential threat to humans who crossed the boundary into

the natural wilderness, and in this case the boundary provided a genuine protective function against serious injury or death. However, the boundary was further reinforced by the placement of imaginary figures such as wild men, werewolves, faeries, and hags in the forests of medieval Europe. This demonstrates the contemporary fear of the uncivilized woodland boundary; the forests stood on the periphery of cultivated (and thus human-controlled) land, and as a boundary they represented the tangible qualities of the savage, which Le Goff argues was defined not by 'what was out of man's reach, but what was on the fringes of human activity.'[11] As such, the forest was practically imaginary figure in itself, teeming with malevolent energy.

Animals too were the focus of imaginary projections, and their forms are appropriated by a range of imaginary figures, further reinforcing the boundary between human and nature. The appearance of demons as animals attests this, and Joyce E. Sailsbury posits that '[I]t was the perception of perfectly normal-seeming animals being demons in disguise that was the most insidious in people's imaginations.[12] With the imaginary demon inhabiting the very real body of an animal, and its normal behaviour being explained as part of a demonic subterfuge, it became very difficult to separate the two. Subsequently, an animal could inhabit the space of an imaginary figure, made possible by the non-human being the subject of taboo. Similarly, images of animals were appropriated for eschatological imagery. Aleksander Pluskowski notes the use of the wolf and serpent in Northern Europe as key figures in the pagan apocalypse of Ragnarök (in particular the wolf Fenrir and the serpent Miðgarðsormr of Norse mythology), thus using representatives from the natural world as agents in the destruction of humanity.[13] Pluskowski also notes that Fenrir is occasionally presented as being a normal size, and the name 'Fenrir' is also used as a common noun for a wolf, thus presenting a link between the world of the natural and the supernatural.[14] Once again, the boundary between real and imaginary in the medieval psyche is blurred, with the imaginary offering an altogether threatening depiction of nature.

However, during the medieval period, there was the development of an imaginary character that embodied nature and a host of positive virtues. The Green Man was probably pagan in origin, but in

the Middle Ages, a refined and profoundly Christian version appeared. William Anderson notes that '[T]he image was only fully developed in the context of Christian sacred art and that this development is closely linked to the rise, under the influence of Christianity, of the Western attitude to nature, which in turn gave rise to science and its industrial and technological applications.[15] The Green Man reflected a growing belief in intellectual circles that nature was linked to the divine; Hildegard of Bingen made reference to *viriditas*, the green life-force of the universe and St Francis was renowned for his humility towards nature.[16] In this respect then, an imaginary figure was useful for representing and exploring the paradigm shift in the portrayal of nature.

Sex and gender in the imagination

Medieval society had many imaginary characters that demonstrated clearly defined gender roles and sexuality by monstrously inverting cultural norms. The Baba Yaga of Russian folklore is one such example of the inverted gender role, as '[S]he represents a reversal or inversion of the cultural expectations of motherhood when she wants to cook or eat a child, or offers a child food only in order to kidnap him.[17] In addition, she is described as having masculine figures, which Andreas Johns argues made her 'a cautionary figure, a negative example of what a woman should not be (dominant, aggressive, assertive, masculine).'[18] The Baba Yaga therefore fulfilled the role of the imaginary 'other' in the discernment of gender roles; her penalty for transgressing is to be placed in the forest periphery in a liminal world beyond the tangible borders of Russia.[19]

The role of sexual relations within the medieval mindset was also reinforced by imaginary characters. The Cailleach bheara is an Irish hag, a childless former concubine who has lost all her beauty and is riddled with disease. However, in the folktales in which she appears, she is made young and beautiful again through intercourse with the hero of the piece, the most famous version concerning the sons of Eochaid Muigmedon notes that the true heir is he who lies with the Cailleach.[20] Diane Purkiss argues that the sexual union detailed in this story is what makes the male hero fully masculine, and is what restores the once-beautiful Cailleach to her former glory.[21] Subsequently, these imaginary

characters present an account in which the sexual relationship (almost inseparable in this period from the idea of marriage) has a normative effect on the couple, with each falling into the role of masculine king and feminine (and subordinate) queen.

Sexual anxieties were embodied in other imaginary figures; the defence of female virginity against unabashed lust can be seen in the portrayal of wild men as sexual predators. Because of their savage nature, the wild man was often supposed to have an uncontrollable libido, carrying virgins off into the woods to rape them. These stories betray the medieval concerns with female honour, and the imaginary wild men that they warned young women against could easily be replaced with any young man, the tale emphasising caution on the part of women with regards to their sexuality.

Crossing the boundary of death

The anxiety over what happened to people after they died was at peak in the Middle Ages. Church doctrine began to codify the ideas surrounding the afterlife, and concern for the soul after death occupied a place in the psyche of all medieval Christians. This final boundary, with an unknowable other side led to the development of imaginary characters, many of whom had been present in pagan society but were redefined in a Christian context. Ghosts, for example, became a pervasive motif in dealing with taboos over death; the notion of a soul (believed to be a very real and physical part of the human anatomy, the *spiritus*) that could not move on because of the problematic nature of their death, be it unabsolved sin or simply not 'dying well' (the idea of which was set out in the *artes moriendi* literature of the day), became a powerful tool to encourage people to live orthodox, pious lives.[22] Jean-Claude Schmitt suggests that '[T]ales of ghosts favoured the promotion of the liturgy of the dead, the development of piety, the attraction of charitable donation, and finally, a reinforcement of the church's hold over Christian society.'[23] This reflected the nuanced way in which imaginary unorthodoxies were treated in medieval society, with folk traditions entering religious thought and being reappropriated where they served a purpose (much like the Green Man).

Ghosts were not the only creatures in the medieval imagination

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that transgressed the mortal boundary; in this era we see the prolifera-tion of revenants, the unquiet dead of pagan mythology, and their estab-lishment within a Christian framework. William of Newburgh recorded in 1197 that there were several instance of walking corpses in England that year: in Buckinghamshire, a dead man had taken to rising from his grave, entering his wife's bed and harassing his brothers. When the corpse was exhumed, William notes, there was nothing unusual about it, and it was reinterred with an absolution from the Bishop of Lincoln placed on its breast, and it never rose again.[24] The corporeal remains of three other revenants, however, suffered a less happy end. All described as being wicked men in life, three other corpses in England were ex-humed, then dismembered and burnt (or both) to end their post-death perambulation.[25] The medieval ideas surrounding the reason for reven-ancy are similar to the reasons that a soul would remain a ghost; Nancy Caciola argues that '[T]here seem to be two related answers to this ques-tion: the manner of the individual's life and the manner of his or her death.'[26] Once again, the revenant concerns the spiritual inability to pass into the afterlife because of some moral unorthodoxy or unabsolved sin in life. However, in addition to this, the revenant is also *physically* bound to the mortal world, usually because of a 'bad' death, which Caciola de-fines as being 'sudden and violent; those who die badly are torn too soon from this world and are unprepared for the next.'[27] Individuals who have died in this manner are supposed to have a higher propensity for becoming the walking dead, however, the motif of revenancy seems to have a connection mainly with those who had also committed 'physical' sins in life (sex, violence or materialism in the form of usury) and thus their manifestation is bound to have a physical rather than spiritual ap-pearance.[28]

The revenant however, and the reasons for revenancy, had been formed long before the Christian era in Europe. The best surviv-ing corpus of information on these revenants comes from the Icelan-dic tradition, where the *draugr* is a formulaic character in many sagas. These Icelandic revenants appear for two main reasons: they are either 'mound-dwellers or other watchmen, attached to a treasure or their land' and thus unable to leave the temporal world for the spiritual because of their jealous guarding of their physical possessions, or they are 'more

aggressive ghosts, parasitic and preying on humans like incubi or vampires.'[29] Both these forms of revenants appear in the Icelandic *Grettir's Saga*, wherein the hero, Grettir the Strong, first encounters the mound-dweller Kar the Old from whom he steals treasure and then decapitates, and later the monstrous Glam, who himself had been originally killed by a revenant.[30] As such, we are presented with revenants that predate Christian ideas about the walking dead, but occupy the same imaginary space; while there are subtle differences between the European and Icelandic unquiet dead, they both concern the perils of leading an impious life (whether by committing sin or hoarding gold) and the problems caused by the occurrence of a 'bad death'.

Absolving responsibility: the child as an 'other'

One of the great taboos of medieval society, which remains so to this day, is that of infanticide. Yet once again, the medieval imagination is populated with figures that deal with this taboo, and (as will be demonstrated below) even occasionally justify it.

Infanticide then, is the ultimate failing of the woman as mother, the murder of the child a betrayal of her primary biological function. Returning to the Baba Yaga, we can see the otherisation of a woman who represents this maternal inversion. However, in a world where child mortality rates were incredibly high, and caring for a child far more difficult than it is today, infanticide was much less uncommon than might be imagined. Once again, the imaginary was called into service in order to deal with this taboo. The presence of changelings in the medieval imagination, a fairy or faun baby that had been swapped for the mother's actual child, represents the transformation of the potentially difficult infant into an 'other'. Diane Purkiss suggests that the changeling was a way of psychologically justifying maternal hatred of a child (which could occur for any number of relatively 'normal' reasons), and provided an outlet to complain about this imposter baby in comparison to her own, beloved infant.[31] However, otherising the child had psychological consequences, which sometimes led to the transgression of the infanticide taboo.

The rituals designed to rid a mother of the imaginary changeling in this era were highly dangerous to the health of a child, and if a mother

had decided that her child was a changeling, serious injury and even death could befall the child. Cruelty was often used to force the changeling out, and have the fairies return the true child; practices included beating a child black and blue, and then hiding them out of sight for quarter of an hour, and in Ireland, the application of hot iron to the child was advised.[32] However, these rituals, although causing serious physical harm, may often have ended in success, inasmuch as the mother is then psychologically cleansed of the imperfect 'other' child and can resume a normal relationship with the infant. Rituals such as the Guinefort ritual in France, and the Cyriac's Mead ritual in Germany involved the total abandonment of the child in a dangerous place for an extended period of time. The Guinefort ritual, where the mother would place her child by a forest shrine to St. Guinefort, a locally venerated dog-saint, and then turn her back on it until a candle had burned out, by which time either St. Guinefort was supposed to have contacted the fauns and convinced them to return the child or the fauns had recovered their changeling and kept the human baby.[33] In reality, this was highly dangerous for the child; leaving it alone in the woods left it susceptible to the predation of any number of wild animals, or death from exposure. The Cyriac's Mead ritual involved abandoning the supposed changeling by Cyriac's Well for nine days to survive only on the well's water, after which time the fairies were supposed to have returned the human child.[34] Unsurprisingly, this could often end in the death of the child. Similar, less specific rituals occurred across Europe, one of the most common being leaving the child at a crossroads for an extended period of time. Purkiss notes the use of this location because 'to place someone at a crossroads is to divest oneself of them, to declare they have no home among us.'[35] All these rituals had but two possible outcomes, either the child survives and the mother-child relationship undergoes a psychological rebirth, or '[T]he child could be found dead, in which case the mother had rid herself of an impossibly demanding baby, in a manner more-or-less sanctioned by her culture, if not by the Church.'[36] The role that the imagination could potentially play, therefore, had tragically real consequences.

The ambiguous dragon

   One of the most instantly recognisable figures of the medieval

imagination is that of the dragon. They survive in the imagination today, and there are countless examples in modern literature and cinema. However, the role that they played in the medieval imagination is very poorly defined. For a character with such obvious symbolic possibilities, there really is not a common theme that links every appearance of dragons in medieval Europe. The dragon is often used as a metaphor for the devil, although literary examples provide examples of dragons that are paradoxically servants of God.[37] This paints a confusing picture: is the dragon good or evil?

As well as the Christian ambiguity in the role of the dragon, there is the added complication of the dragon serving a purpose to which morality cannot be practically ascribed; that of the dragon as a guardian of treasure. This is a dragon that is familiar to even modern audiences, the dragon typified in their consciousness by Smaug in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Jennifer Westwood and Jacqueline Simpson note that '[T]he association between dragons, burial mounds and buried treasure was very strong in pre-Conquest England.'[38] However, the place of this kind of dragon in the imagination is once again unclear: is it a warning for pagan audiences about transgressing into the realm of the dead? Is it a symbolic motif for later Christian audiences about the Devil dwelling alongside the pagan grave goods? It cannot be discerned one way or the other.

The final ambiguity the dragon presents us with is whether the medieval world considers them to be real or not. There are many accounts of dragons being present in areas, without further embellishment of the story and treating the whole business in a very matter of fact manner; an entry in *Ætherweard's chronicle* for 773 AD notes that 'some monstrous serpents were seen in the county of the Southern Angles, which is called Sussex.'[39] However, Samantha J.E. Riches states that

> There is some evidence that they have been understood to be literal physical animals, with real power to devastate lands and populations, but it is equally evident that they often operated as metaphors of pre-Christian and heterodox beliefs, symbolized lust or other forms of sinfulness, functioned as representatives of generalized evil and also acted as a useful foil to the ideas of human civilization.[40]

Perhaps then, with a creature as fantastical as a dragon, it is better to let even its imaginary nature remain in the realm of the unknown.

He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And when you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss also gazes into you.

— Friederich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

The role of the imaginary figure then, was undoubtedly that of the 'other'. It was the 'other' defining the self, but also the 'other' as a tool for discussing and even transgressing the boundaries of taboo. In a world where the actual exploration of these subjects could involve death and damnation, the imaginary figures discussed above functioned as a safety valve, whereby the 'other' could function as a morality lesson, becoming creatures and committing acts that medieval Europeans dared not dream of becoming and doing. However, the dark recesses of the imagination where these often malevolent creatures flourished sometimes found tragically troubled human counterparts, who used the language and conventions of imaginary characters to justify actions that would have otherwise been condemned as abhorrent. While the creatures of the imagination provided a useful psychological function and even entertainment value, they could also dangerously blur the lines between the real and unreal. Their final ambiguity therefore is this: we would both lament their loss if they disappeared, and feel far safer knowing that they were gone.

Notes

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2. Caciola, Nancy, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture', *Past & Present*, No. 152, pp. 3-45, p. 6.
3. Even within the medieval world, it is arguable that God and Christ are themselves the subject of imaginary projections, see Robert

Mills, 'Jesus as Monster', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, eds. Bildhauer, Bettina and Mills, Robert (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) pp. 28-54.

4. Le Goff, Jacques, *The Medieval Imagination* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1988) p. 58.

5. Ibid, p. 56.

6. Ibid, p. 56.

7. Pluskowski, Aleksander, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006) pp.185-186.

8. Ibid, p. 186.

9. Mittman, Asa Simon, 'The Other Close at Hand: Gerald of Wales and the "Marvels of the West"', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, pp. 97-112.

10. Ibid, p. 106.

11. Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, p. 52, p. 57.

12. Salisbury, Joyce E., *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, 2nd Edition (Abingdon : Routledge, 2011) p. 139.

13. Pluskowski, Aleksander, 'Apocalyptic Monsters: Animal Inspiration for the Iconography of Medieval North European Devourers', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, pp. 155-176.

14. Ibid., pp. 159-160.

15. Anderson, William, *Green Man: The Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth* (Fakenham: Compass Books, 1998) p. 20.

16. Ibid., p. 91.

17. Johns, Andreas, *Baba Yaga: The Ambiguous Mother and Witch of the Russian Folktale* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010) p. 269.

18. Ibid., p. 269.

19. The Baba Yaga is frequently described as being non-Russian or foreign, though it is not suggested what her nationality might be, Ibid., p. 271.

20. Purkiss, Diane, *Troublesome Things: A History of Fairies and Fairy Stories* (London: Penguin, 2000) p. 71.

21. Ibid, pp.70-71.

22. Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants & Ritual in Medieval Culture', p. 8, p. 4.

23. Schmitt, Jean-Claude, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and*

the Dead in Medieval Society, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) pp. 8-9.

24. Westwood, Jennifer & Simpson, Jacqueline, *The Lore of the Land: A Guide to England's Legends, from Spring-Heeled Jack to the Witches of Warboys* (London: Penguin, 2005) p. 836.

25. Ibid., pp. 836-837.

26. Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture', p. 27.

27. Ibid., p. 27.

28. Ibid., p. 28.

29. Jakobsson, Árman, 'Vampires and Watchmen: Categorizing the Medieval Icelandic Undead', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 110/3, pp. 281-300

30. *Grettir's Saga*, trans. Jesse Byock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) pp. 50-53, pp. 91-103.

31. Purkiss, *Troublesome Things*, p. 55.

32. Ibid., p. 57.

33. St. Guinefort himself acts as an imaginary character, Purkiss notes that '[A]s an animal, he can speak to the animal; he is a bridge between the human world and the world to which the babies have been taken.' Ibid., p. 56, p. 55.

34. Ibid., p. 46.

35. Purkiss, *Troublesome Things*, p. 56.

36. Ibid., p. 55.

37. Samantha J.E. Riches notes that a *peist* in a story about the Irish St. Senán had been placed on an island by God to keep it free of human sin in her article 'Encountering the Monstrous: Saints and Dragons in Medieval Thought' in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, pp. 196-218, p. 196.

38. Westwood & Simpson, *The Lore of the Land*, p. 734.

39. *Aethelweard's Chronicle*, in *Old English Chronicles*, ed. J.A. Giles (London: George Bell & Sons, 1906), p. 18.

40. Riches, 'Encountering the Monstrous: Saints and Dragons in Medieval Thought' pp. 197-198.

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Why did Catholicism survive in England after 1558?

William K. A. Cunningham

The question of why Catholicism survived after the Elizabethan Settlement of religion in 1558 is complicated by the use of the term 'survive'. If one takes the word survive to mean the continued existence of a Catholic brand of theology in England, then the issue is in danger of becoming a story of an underground movement surviving waves of persecution; treating English Catholicism in this manner would be an exercise in ignorance of the broader complexities of the situation. That said, discussing the continued operation of Catholic clergy, despite attempts by the state to enforce conformity, can produce results that can be usefully fed into a discussion as to why Catholicism survived as a political force with significant influence. To proceed on the basis that political clout is equal to survival creates a further difficulty, however; English Catholicism by this measurement is only 'alive' during times of turmoil, when the status quo was in danger of changing. This essay therefore will examine a few of the reasons for the continuation of religious practice with a recognisably Catholic flavour, and use these reasons as a foundation for a discussion on the survival of Catholicism as a political force, before coming to the conclusion that Catholicism's political power is derived from both a bleak-looking future for Protestantism and a form of divide-and-rule posture adopted by the state.

The single most salient reason for the continuation of a Catholic religious community would be that the Elizabethan regime does not appear to have actually placed any sort of value onto the eradication of the Catholic faith until events compelled them to. For one thing they only bothered to set up repressive mechanisms in 1582.[1] A gap of twenty-five years between the Elizabethan Settlement and the creation of the means of effectively enforcing it is highly unusual and cannot be simply ignored. The sudden change in policy was probably the result of the martyrdom of Edmund Campion the previous year and the resultant surge

in pro-Catholic sentiment. Campion had been born an English Protestant, but had rejected Anglicanism and gone abroad to join the Jesuits. After around seven years Campion was selected as part of a mission to England, with instructions to avoid becoming involved in politics. Operating as a underground priest for a year, Campion was caught, charged with treason, tortured and then executed. Jesuits like Campion were an unrivalled force in generating Catholic converts.[2] The fact that he was martyred seems to have intensified the problem greatly: executing dissidents provided an opportunity for their glorification on the scaffold.[3] It is worth noting that the new repressive measures compelled Robert Browne, who led a group espousing a congregationalist/Presbyterian style of church governance, to leave England. The introduction of more stringent means of ensuring conformity in 1582 could therefore be also intended to clamp down on puritanism, especially with the events of the Dutch Rebellion and the controversy surrounding Elizabeth's possible marriage to the Duke of Anjou unfolding, both of which created puritan agitation just as potentially troubling to Elizabeth as the Catholic recusants.

It must be remembered that Catholics, especially the clergy, attempted to rule their own fate, rather than bow their heads and succumb. Firstly there was an attempt by Catholics to present themselves as ardently loyalist as possible.[4] For instance they contrasted themselves with Presbyterians and puritans whose leftist ideas could be deemed threatening to the power and freedom of manoeuvre of the monarch (although politically active Catholics also believed that temporal authority should be to some degree subordinate to spiritual authority) whereas episcopate church government, they stated, reinforced monarchical rule.[5] This was a direct counter to the justification the Elizabethan regime used when moving against Catholics, as they were charged with treason, a secular offence, rather than heresy.[6] By attempting to make the issue of their persecution morally murky, a question of conscience rather than a cut-and-dry issue of treason, conservative elements succeeded in shifting the battleground towards a war of symbols, one which they were able to compete on with both the state and puritans.[7]

To return for a moment to Warren's view that 'By the end of Elizabeth's Reign, Catholicism was withering. It was increasingly the

preserve of a minority of gentry' it would seem that while the stated decrease in the numbers of Catholics may be true, a significant minority of gentry still in the conservative camp could actually be taken to indicate healthy Catholic prospects within England.[8] This is primarily because the gentry were highly important in providing resources and political muscle. This would seem on the one hand to confirm Bossy's view that there was a distinction between an upper-class 'modernised Catholicism' and a lower-class 'superstitious' one (although such a description seems to smell slightly whiggish).[9] A loss of lower-class support may have cut the physical mass of Catholics, but it would appear logical to deduce that the infrastructure of patrons and support mechanisms that allowed the continued survival (in all senses) of Catholicism in England, derived from noble support, remained intact. Indeed part of the fear that Catholicism generated amongst Protestants was due to the fact that people of influence followed it, enough to create fears of conspiracy.[10] This would explain why the Catholic laity was encouraged to take an oath that was deemed 'offensive' to Catholic ideology by their clergy, despite the fact that the clergy felt unable to take it themselves, as the penalty for not taking the oath was forfeiture of property.[11] The clergy therefore must have recognised that material and political resources were the key to the continuation of a conservative influence in public life, which implies that they set greater store by this than broader ideological issues, as they were willing for the laity to contravene these in order to secure a political future. This seems to have been the correct course of action, as Catholic worship tended to die out in areas in which there were no local gentry to provide sanctuary for a priest.[12] Furthermore, even Catholicism's opponents, such as Thomas Cartwright, recognised that they too constituted a minority, and that 'there were 'heaps' of people who had cast aside the old religion without discovering the new.'[13] The struggle between the conservatives and their leftist rivals can therefore be viewed as a conflict between minorities; as such a denuded base of Catholic support cannot be taken to show a weakness in conservative attitudes.

The logical next question is why did a significant minority of gentry follow this course if there was only repression in its future? The answer, simply put, is that in almost every period of crisis after 1558 Catholics seemed to be always one step away from at the very least tol

eration, if not dominance. With Elizabeth's failure to produce an heir, the heir presumptive was a Stuart, who Catholics supported because they had supported his mother; it would not have taken a large amount of deduction from contemporaries to come to the conclusion Catholics would be favoured under the new leadership. A similar process plays out again with the proposed 'Spanish Match' in James I's reign, which would have necessitated Catholic toleration in the event of the policy coming to fruition; this sparked an intensified fear of Catholics between 1608 and 1615.[14] Considering the gunpowder plot took place three years before this scare began, this highlights the inherently politically subjective nature of Catholic repression; an attempted regicide and decapitation of the government of the realm is apparently far less serious and worrying than a possible marriage treaty. This also partly explains why Catholic agitation remains relatively submerged and repression lax unless the political landscape looks set to be shaken up, as these symptoms of factional conflict do not arise if there is no issue for the faction's political forces to actually conflict over. Furthermore both Protestants and Catholics were divided internally.[15] Squabbles amongst themselves probably would have kept both of these groups in check unless there was some issue of such importance that an appeal to religion as a unifying force was necessary to pursue a certain objective. On a broader level, Catholicism remained a viable political allegiance as the survival of the Reformation seems to be consistently hanging by a thread. Weighing upon the thoughts of the monarch would have been the need to secure an alliance in order to ensure the security of the realm; potential Protestant allies included a smattering of small states in Germany, the underwhelming power of the Scots, the Dutch, who were waging a war against one of Europe's superpowers, and the Huguenots, sliding inexorably towards extinction. The major powers in Europe on the other hand, were all Catholic. The persistence of a conservative faction therefore seems blatantly obvious.

Catholicism survived in the most basic sense of the word simply because it was impossible to eradicate. The Elizabethan government for instance could root out and destroy any threatening subversive elements, but could not affect the religious views of the apolitical.[16] Even had the capability been there, it was not in either James or Elizabeth's

interest to actually exterminate the Catholic faction as it provided a useful counterbalance to pushy puritan groups. It is telling for instance that James's next speech after the gunpowder plot had been foiled was one more focussed on attacking Puritans than the Catholics who had just attempted to blow him to bits. Survival in a political dimension was also made far more likely because of this royal desire to maintain a political tripod. Furthermore, conservatives succeeded in moving the debate to a far more morally murky arena, one in which they were far better placed to compete by exploiting emotive symbolism. The single most important reason however for the retention of influence by a loose Catholic faction seem to be that Protestantism seems to be constantly at risk and to have no promise for the ambitious; as such Catholicism was a political rather than religious one for these people, a language for political expression as much as the cries against 'Popery and Tyranny' was for those who wanted to shift the balance of constitutional power towards Parliament.[17] A microcosm of most of these issues can be seen in the town of Masham. Most of the anti-Protestant views expressed in the town can be traced back to local issues; Catholic recusancy was a means of communicating an antagonistic attitude towards the local Protestant gentry while risking only mild fines as punishment as opposed to heavier penalties for stating such an attitude outright.[18] Before 1569 the town had a history of being in trouble over the retention of papist icons, and in 1569 itself supported the Earl's rising; when the rising was crushed and conservative allegiance seemed an unsafe bet the town removed fittings from its church which while Catholic in flavour had actually been allowed to remain by inspectors – this however did not last, and various items identified with popery were back in the parish church in 1595, the same year two of England's best naval commanders died and the Spanish burned Penzance.[19] Catholic attitudes were adopted during times of crisis, otherwise conformity was not an especially important issue and only briefly was conformity fully embraced, albeit for what can be guessed to be purely political motives to avoid any reprisals for disloyalty.

Notes

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2. Warren, John, *Elizabeth I: Religion and Foreign Affairs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 2002) p. 73.
3. Lake, Peter and Questier, Michael, 'Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England' in *Past and Present*, no.153 (November 1996) p. 73.
4. Bossy, John, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman &Todd, 1979) p. 37.
5. Lake, Peter and Questier, Michael, 'Puritans, Papists and the "Public Sphere" in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context' in *The Journal of Modern History,* Vol. 72, no.3 (September 2000) p. 606.
6. Ibid., p. 588.
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8. Warren, *Elizabeth I: Religion and Foreign Affairs*, p. 82.
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10. Clifton, Robin, 'Fear of Popery' in *The Origins of the English Civil War*, edited by Conrad Russell (London: Macmillan, 1983) p. 153.
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15. Lake and Questier, 'Puritans, Papists and the "Public Sphere" in Early Modern England', p. 609.
16. Ibid., p. 588.
17. Clifton, 'Fear of Popery', p. 162.
18. Aveling, *Northern Catholics*, p. 23.
19. Ibid., p.22.

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Has the First World War ever been a 'forgotten victory'?

Katie Choi-Yan Lo

Mud, trenches, futility and deaths – it has often been difficult to discuss the First World War without using such terms, with the war being seen as a 'bad war' where there was a shocking number of casualties, incompetent generals, and an overall disaster that led to the outbreak of the Second World War just twenty years later.[1] When considering the Great War, it is rare to think about Britain as being 'victorious', despite being on the winning side in 1918. In popular culture, the war has often been portrayed as catastrophic, where men lost their lives for 'nothing' and families were left without husbands and fathers – this great abundance of literature and negative ideas about the war has led to it being considered a 'forgotten victory'.[2] However, by exploring how the dominant strands in public perceptions of the war have changed since 1918, and considering why the notion of 'victory' has been *ambiguous* for Britons, as well as how such changes and explanations have interacted with historians' views of the war, it becomes evident that it has never been a 'forgotten victory' in its strictest sense. Britons never 'forgot' that the British were on the winning side, but there were times since the end of the war, where the positive aspects of 'victory' were downplayed and overshadowed by the negative aspects of the war. It would be too reductionist to assume that there has only been one view of the War since its end, and by looking at five key periods: 1918-1928, 1929-1939, 1945-50, the 1960s and the 1980s to the present day, it becomes evident that the ideas surrounding a 'forgotten victory' have changed over time.

The immediate post-war period was one of the few decades in which the war was viewed more positively. Victory was still on the minds of the parents of those who served and died, and particularly among those who survived. As Brian Bond has argued, the decade was about the achievements of the men and the country, and if any negativity did exist, it was largely *ambiguity* rather than negativity.[3]

One of the most common associations with war is the great number of deaths, and as these figures were gradually published in the post-war period, the impact of the war became increasingly evident for those at home. Soldiers who died in battle were usually buried near where they fell, often in unmarked graves, and for the bodies which were recovered, 'individual but identical graves' were provided to highlight the 'democratization, individualization, and bureaucratization of death.'[4] There was a sombre atmosphere in Britain, with the 1919 Peace Parade and the burying of the 'Unknown Warrior' in Westminster Abbey in 1920, but there was also a muted celebration of the pride and bravery of those who served their country.[5] The Cenotaph in Whitehall, with the emotive inscription 'The Glorious Dead', and the use of the term 'Warrior' for the unidentified fallen soldier, both demonstrate this quiet celebration of victory, where men fought heroically in a 'just and worthwhile' war, eventually defeating the Germans.[6]

The role played by the bereaved parents also influenced the positive view of the war. This decade was more about mourning than blame or evaluation of the war itself, and as Dan Todman has argued, despite the existence of different ideas about the war, 'it was widely feared that veterans who wished to celebrate survival, camaraderie and victory would upset bereaved families,' as would negative ideas about the war, particularly the belief that it was 'futile'; therefore, such diverging ideas were very much unheard of at the time.[7]

Another indicator that victory was present in the 1920s was with the death of Sir Douglas Haig in 1928. Having commanded the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) through some of the bloodiest battles between 1915 and the end of the war, including the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917, the 1920s saw him being remembered as a hero, who helped to bring the war to an end in 1918.[8]

During and after the war, popular culture was greatly influenced by art and 'war literature'. William Orpen most clearly demonstrated the muted celebration in his 1928 painting *The Unknown British Solider* in France. Initially painted with garlands, cherubs and mourning soldiers surrounding a coffin, the Imperial War Museum had refused such details, and 'what was left was simply a coffin, draped with a flag and surmounted by a soldier's helmet.'[9] The removal of such 'dignitaries' was

controversial, as it appeared to remove the triumphant aspects of vic-tory; however, it was eventually accepted as suitable for the time, when explicit celebrations of victory were deemed inappropriate. The final version still depicts victory, but in a more subtle way.[10]

Despite the quiet positivity, there were certain post-war issues which made the notion of 'victory' ambiguous for Britons and thus, it was downplayed. The demobilised troops were expecting to return to 'homes fit for heroes,' as promised by David Lloyd George in the 1918 'Coupon Election'.[11] However, with only a short-lived economic boom after the war, the veterans experienced a downturn in the 1920s, as high unemployment, growing Trade Union membership, unrests and strikes, and a potential for a civil war in Ireland became increasingly prevalent.[12] Internationally, the Germans were still fighting in the Baltic States, hos-tilities still existed in Russia, and Turkey and Greece were fighting in Ae-gean, almost dragging Britain into another conflict at the Dardanelles.[13] These uncertainties made Britons question the outcome of the war, con-sequently restraining outright celebrations of victory.[14]

The number of men that died, although commemorated for their bravery and patriotism, was still shocking for a country that had not experienced such great losses. Gary Sheffield has argued that 'the enor-mous casualties […] left the people of the British Empire in a profound state of shock that has shaped perceptions of the war ever since.'[15] The parents of the soldiers who died were 'unprepared to be predeceased by their sons,'[16] and this emotional impact has remained 'bitten deep into 'modern memory''.[17] The controversies over how, and *which*, soldiers would be remembered and commemorated also cast a gloomy shadow over the victory of 1918.[18]

The post-war period was filled with vivid memories of the war, but despite the harsh realities faced by the returning soldiers and their families, there was no explicit 'anti-war' stance. There was a general pos-itive perception of the war, many believing it was necessary and worth-while, and that the soldiers had fought courageously to defeat the en-emy. The post-war experience made the notion of 'victory' ambiguous for Britons, but at closer observation, although subtle and beginning to fade towards the end of the 1920s, 'victory' was undoubtedly present.

By 1929, there was a growing negativity about the First World

War, largely influenced by the writings and plays produced at the time, which shaped ideas about the war for the next thirty years. It was such literature that many of the later 'cultural' historians referred to; therefore, the works of this period were vital in formulating ideas about 'victory' over the decades.[19]

Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, published in 1929, 'is the greatest of all the war books.'[20] Although it depicts 'the German soldiers as miserable, downtrodden victims of an unnecessary and meaningless war,' it was still widely successful in Britain, where many readers felt sympathetic and applied such ideas to their own men who had served.[21] Writings such as this started to develop a strong 'anti-war' stance – the sacrifices made in the war did not lead to 'a better world' – beginning the process of overshadowing and further downplaying the notion of 'victory', making it gradually more ambiguous and more negative.[22]

War poetry also shaped popular beliefs. The works of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, which criticised the generals and depicted 'the horrors of the trenches' are most commonly associated with the war, overshadowing the more positive views of the 1920s. However, despite their place in modern memory, it was actually poets such as John Oxenham and Robert Service, who wrote about the conflict as 'the decent and manly thing' that led to 'decency and peace', which were most popular. This suggests that Britons found more comfort in remembering the more positive aspects of the war at this time.[23]

Similarly, R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End*, first shown in 1929 and made into a film in 1930, has become one of the most well-known plays about the First World War. Set in the trenches in St Quentin, the play explores the 'most graphic' experiences of the soldiers just before the German attack on 21 March 1918.[24] The responses were overwhelmingly positive at the time, with newspaper headlines stating that this was 'Trench Life Truly Depicted', and portrayed 'The War as it Was', embedding ideas of 'tragedy' into public memory.[25]

Additionally, there was a boom in the publication of war memoirs, particularly among the generals and politicians. Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George published *The World Crisis* and *War Memoirs*, respectively, both of which criticised the military strategies and the gen

erals, particularly Lloyd George's attack on Haig.[26] These views contributed to the overshadowing of the positive aspects of the war, but the fact that Britain won the war was never ignored.[27] Such ideas were also reinforced by historians at the time, most noticeably by Captain B.H. Liddell Hart, who had fought in the war and later wrote extensively, largely criticising Haig and William Robertson.[28] Robert Graves' *Good-Bye to All That*, published in 1929, also describes his memories of trench warfare and the horrors of battle, injury and near-death experiences, but despite this, which added to the negative ideas of war, it portrayed the war in traditional and positive ways – in terms of courage and victory.[29] This highlights how such writings did overshadow the positive aspects of victory through the 'truths' they 'revealed', but also demonstrate that victory – in that Britain won the war – was not ignored or forgotten.

When considering the period from 1929-1939, it is clear that writings and productions contributed to the growing negativity. Historians had started to evaluate the war more critically and this, along with memoirs which criticised and challenged aspects of popular belief at the time, 'confirmed' the idea that the First World War was a horrendous conflict. When Adolf Hitler became an increasingly threatening figure towards the end of the decade, all the beliefs from the 1920s about the war being worthwhile were shattered, and by the outbreak of the Second World War, the positive aspects of the war were overshadowed by doubt and anger.[30]

1945 marked the end of the Second World War – a war that many did not expect would occur after the Great War was fought 'to end all wars.'[31] The Second World War allowed for the two wars to be compared and it was this comparison that emphasised how 'bad' the First World War was, despite Britain being on the winning side in both wars.

The differing nature of the two wars has greatly impacted the way they have been remembered.[32] Casualties in WWII were comparatively lower than in the Great War, yet Britain still achieved a victory against the Nazis – this made people question the worth of the sacrifices made in the First World War, especially as it failed to prevent the outbreak of another war. The idea of the Great War as being 'futile' became more prominent.[33] Upon their return, the troops of the Second World War did not experience the downturn of the 1920s; there was a post-war

economic boom that lasted into the 1950s and people were generally better-off than before.[34] This again made the First World War appear worse in comparison, further shaping ideas about it being a 'bad war'.

The most important comparison was the moral dimension of the wars. Many Britons had believed that the Great War was fought to defeat an enemy that would lead to a 'better world', but when compared to the Second World War, where the Nazis were 'a clearly evil enemy', and particularly more 'evil' than the Germans in 1914, the idea that the Second World War was 'good war', and the First World War, a 'bad war', became embedded in popular beliefs.[35] When both wars were considered, the Second World War compared more favourably to the Great War, thus overshadowing the positive aspects of the 1918 victory even further.

The 1960s saw the 'resurrecting [of] 'anti-war' beliefs of the 1930s,' as new interest in the Great War appeared both among public interests, as well as among historians, especially of the younger generation.[36] One of the greatest attacks was on the generals of the war, particularly on Haig, whose reputation was already declining since the publication of Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* in the 1930s.[37] A.J.P Taylor's 1963 book *The First World War: An Illustrated History* adopted this negative view, arguing that the generals, and particularly Haig, 'bore the greatest responsibility' for the high number of casualties, particularly at Passchendaele.[38]

The period also saw the emergence of Alan Clark's idea of 'lions led by donkeys' in his 1961 military study *The Donkeys*, which focuses on the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in 1914 and 1915, and criticises the generals for their stupidity and incompetency.[39] Despite this radical and negative view of the war, it actually had the effect of reminding its readers of the bravery and devotion of 'the lions' (soldiers), who managed to secure Britain's victory even though they were supposedly led by 'donkeys' (generals) – this again highlights how 'victory' was not forgotten in the 1960s; it was just downplayed and overshadowed by other aspects of the war.

New productions that used literature, and focused on the tragedies of the war, became increasingly popular, including Joan Littlewood's 'highly entertaining but also deeply moving' musical, *Oh! What*

a Lovely War.[40] First performed in 1963 and made into a film in 1969, it presented the war in a satirical manner from the soldiers' viewpoint, and was largely based on Clark's *The Donkeys*.[41] Similarly, the BBC's 1964 documentary series *The Great War* also portrayed the horrors of the war, particularly focusing on the veterans' experiences.[42] Both of these were popular, yet controversial at the time, and it was the more controversial – and negative – aspects that prevailed and became embedded in popular memory.[43]

For historians, there were still limited sources available to re-examine ideas about the war in the early 1960s, but when the British official archives for the war opened in the second half of the decade, it 'revolutionised academic study of the war,' with historians such as John Terraine and Correlli Barnett beginning to revise the negative perceptions held by the public.[44] In addition, most of the veterans and the beavered parents had died by the 1960s, removing the direct emotional connection with the First World War; this allowed for greater expression about the war, which, up to this point, had been largely avoided.[45] However, at the time, such academic work had little impact in defeating the 'myths', and popular beliefs in the 1960s continued to view the war as 'futile', concealing the positive characteristics of the victory.[46]

By the 1980s, as the distance from 1914 grew, ideas about the war were increasingly developed and passed on through popular culture, and this was how many of the younger generations learnt about the war. Films, plays and particularly 'war literature' were the most common sources for 'understanding' the Great War, and many of the controversies of the 1960s became 'facts' by the 1980s.[47]

The 1980s saw new drama productions about the war, the most famous being the 1989 BBC series, *Blackadder Goes Forth*. It was a comedy that utilised existing beliefs about the war as a disaster to reach a wider audience, which again, reinforced such ideas among the public. However, despite its satirical and comical focus, the final scene, which shows the main characters 'going over the top', has a serious and sombre tone before it switches to a scene of a poppy field. The change in atmosphere at the end demonstrates the seriousness of the war in Britain's history and acts as a reminder of the sacrifices made by the soldiers to secure Britain's victory in 1918.[48]

In terms of scholarly research, there was a much greater focus on different aspects of the war, revealing that past research had greatly reduced the war's complexity. The growth of military historians' interest in the war paved the way for the boom in the 'politico-military' school of thought at the turn of the twenty-first century. By this time, more sources had become available and the academic study of the First World War had begun to revise the negativity. This has since allowed for the idea of a 'forgotten victory' to be used in various ways to explain how Britain's victory has been remembered.[49]

With hindsight, it is possible to view the changing historiography of the war, where two distinct schools of thought exist, termed by Sheffield as the 'cultural' school and the 'politico-military' school. The latter, which focuses on understanding the war to explore how it has been remembered, has come to challenge the 'cultural' school, which views the war as a 'unique cultural event' and is based on literature and opinions about the war.[50] Paul Fussell's 1975 book, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, which is based mainly on 'war literature', is the best example of such a cultural approach; despite its many recognised flaws over the decades, it has become the archetype for the memory of the war.[51] However, recent historians have looked more closely at the war itself in order to understand how and why the war has been remembered in a certain light. These revisionists have examined the war more as 'a history', altering the way aspects of the Great War have been traditionally seen – it is this recent scholarly research which demonstrates that Britain's victory in the First World War has never been 'forgotten'.[52]

It is evident that ideas about the war have changed over time, particularly in popular culture. Victory was on people's minds in the early 1920s, but was often difficult to express due to the circumstances at the time. Over the years, domestic and international problems, as well as the abundance of literature, plays, films and documentaries have overshadowed the positive aspects of the victory, leading to the notion of 'victory' being ambiguous and thus, downplayed. The Second World War provided a comparison which emphasised the view of the Great War as being 'futile' and 'bad'; all of these ideas were exacerbated in the 1960s, and taken as facts in the 1980s.

The opening of the official archives influenced the academic

study of the war, focusing more on the positives and using the idea of a 'forgotten victory' in various ways to explain how memories of the war have changed. However, this research initially had little impact in changing public perceptions about the war, and it was not until the turn of the twenty-first century, with the clear growth of the 'politico-military' school of thought, that historiography has become increasingly important in Britons' understanding of the war. As the centenary of the war approaches, when more documents will be released for historians, new ideas about the Great War may surface, but until then, it is clear that ideas of the war have changed and fluctuated over the decades. The term 'forgotten victory' can only be applied to mean that the positive aspects of the war had been overshadowed and downplayed at different times since 1918. It would be inaccurate to use the term to suggest that the public, and more importantly, historians, have ever 'forgotten' that Britain had won the war in 1918.

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