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How Public History Informs the Present



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Foreword

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Dr Alix Green is a lecturer at the University of Essex in the Department of History. Having completed her BA and MPhil in History at Clare College, Cambridge, she went onto a career in policy and government affairs, and later entered academia. Alix is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society as well as founder of the Institute of Historical Research's Public History Seminar. She has published extensively on history and policy, including her recent book, *History, Policy and Public Purpose: Historians and Historical Thinking in Government* (Palgrave, 2016). Alix's research interests also extend to ideas of citizenship, and the relationship between the public and political, with a focus on modern Britain and Europe. Her current work includes a collaborative project with the John Lewis Partnership Heritage Centre looking at the Partnership's history to inform future business strategies.

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Editorial

Editors: Sarah Marshall, Michael Sewell, Lewis Smith, with assistance from Jessica Fure

This issue of ESTRO, the University of Essex Student Research Online journal, is a special issue, following the successful conference, ‘The Ever Present Past: How Public History Informs the Present’, held by the History Department in October 2017. This is the first time ESTRO and another Department within the University have worked together to produce such an issue. We are delighted that the History Department and the research of PhD students and Early Career Researchers, involved in the conference, can add to the intellectual contributions of ESTRO and the University of Essex. This issue demonstrates the research of those both within the university and those we have worked with from other institutions to create a wider network of researchers.

The aim of the conference was to explore the influence and significance of the past in modern society. This is often evident in the media, anniversaries and commemorations, literature, film and television. Particularly in recent years, there have also been numerous occasions in which the past has been used to promote political agendas and forge identities, such as Donald Trump’s ‘make America Great again’. Within this, the conference also considered the academic’s role in shaping these histories and communicating research to wider audiences. As the organisers of this event, we wanted to extend the reach of the fascinating research presented at the conference which formed the basis of discussions on the day. This issue of ESTRO captures a collection of the papers presented at the conference, and an additional paper from one of our organisers Michael Sewell, with topics ranging from the portrayal of history in film, cultural artefacts, school textbooks, exhibitions and landmarks. The journal issue therefore brings together different approaches to the topic of public history, exploring memory and the influence of the past on the present.

Our issue begins with Steven Bishop's paper which explores the portrayal of the American Civil War in three Hollywood films: *12 Years a Slave*, *Free State of Jones* and *Django Unchained*. Bishop uses these films to explore three vital questions of film as public history: why is it that particular historical events are 'recalled', what aspects of history are forgotten or ignored, and how such histories should actually be remembered. This fascinating article looks at the choices behind the creation of these films, often with directors being drawn to these histories through their relevance to the present, and the challenges of Hollywood in striking the balance between historical authenticity and artistic license.

Following the topic of film, Mona Becker's paper carefully scrutinises the film *Schindler's List* and the German television mini-series, *Generation War*, to evaluate the portrayal of Germans as 'perpetrators, victims and bystanders' of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Becker notes a simplification of narratives with tales of good vs. bad in *Schindler's List*, arguing that the Jewish characters serve primarily to convey the difference between Oscar Schindler and the film's antagonist Amon Göth. The article also notes the claiming of German victimhood, particularly in *Generation War*. Becker carefully links this idea of German victimhood to the recent rise of German right-wing movements and their attitudes to recent issues, such as the refugee crisis.

Katherine Howells' paper continues the theme of cultural artefacts by using a range of Second World War posters to conduct face-to-face and online surveys, as well as interviews, to gauge how these posters trigger and reflect people's memories of the war. Yet, linking in with the conference theme of how public history informs the present, Howells also explores how these artefacts are equally revealing of people's personal and national identity today, reflecting ideas of popular myths such as the 'People's War' and 'Dunkirk and Blitz spirits'. Howells thus convincingly argues the continued significance of the posters to British history and identity, despite the end of the Second World War being over fifty years ago.

Continuing our collection of fascinating papers is the paper of Somak Biswas which examines a different medium of public history, that of textbooks in India. Biswas focuses specifically on the 'NCERT textbook controversy' which broke out in 2012. This intriguing exploration demonstrates the complexity of caste and social class in India, and how histories of the country and identities are portrayed and reflected. Here Biswas conveys the conflicts between the histories produced by the generally 'left/ liberal, secularist and feminist' academic scholarship and the 'Dalit intelligentsia'. Biswas' work therefore carefully highlights various influences on public history, particularly how the influence of those writing historical narratives dictates which histories are written and which are ignored.

Mark Stoddart's paper explores the case of forgotten history via an examination of the largely forgotten 1887 Newcastle Jubilee Exhibition. Stoddart details the origins of the exhibition being organised by the 'North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers', the intention being to promote the area and its key industries. As Stoddart conveys, commerce and entertainment became dominating factors behind the exhibition. Despite limited remaining evidence and archives, Stoddart effectively paints a picture of the aims of the exhibition, the amusements, and visitors, touching here on issues of class. Stoddart ends with an interesting discussion of why the Newcastle Exhibition, unlike others at the time in Glasgow and Manchester, has been largely forgotten.

Our final paper is by one of our organisers Michael Sewell, who explores the memory of the Civil War, focusing on the local history of Colchester and its Civil War landmarks. Sewell assesses not only the surviving memory of these landmarks and the Civil War in Colchester, but also the politicisation of the memory into a narrative of 'good guy' vs. 'bad guy' through the memorialisation of Lucas vs. Fairfax. In addition to this assessment, Sewell highlights the lack of centrality of the memory of the Civil War in Colchester's local history and memory, where instead more popular narratives of the Romans tend to dominate. Consequently, Sewell concludes with a discussion of the usability of Civil War memory in today's world.

We would like to thank everyone who has been involved in ‘The Ever Present Past’ conference and the production of this journal issue. We would particularly like to thank our speakers and authors for sharing their research and allowing for stimulating and thought-provoking discussions and reading. We would also like to thank everyone involved in the peer review process, and Dr Alix Green for providing a foreword to the issue, all of whom have kindly dedicated their time to make this possible. Lastly, none of this would have been achievable without the support and guidance of the ESTRO team, particularly the editors Lin Su and Melissa Shales, and the History Department at the University of Essex. We hope you enjoy reading the journal issue as much as we have enjoyed working on the conference and putting this special issue of ESTRO together.

Foreword

Dr Alix Green, University of Essex

This special collection came out of an excellent conference organised by Sarah Marshall, Michael Sewell, Lewis Smith and Jessica Fure at the University of Essex in October 2017. The articles presented here give us a sense of the temporal, geographical and topical range of public history, a domain of practice that eludes the periodic attempts to define its parameters. The capaciousness and porosity of ‘public history’ is at the same time a source of great intellectual energy and a potential obstacle in the pursuit of attention and esteem within the wider academic discipline. Collections such as this – and particularly those authored and edited by historians early in their careers – play a vital role in shifting the balance towards the former quality. These scholars are often the most active and creative in developing open, boundary-spanning approaches to historical practice, approaches in which engagement and collaboration with publics of various kinds are understood as inherent, rather than subsequent, to research. As these historians progress professionally, the question of whether universities are willing to reflect these disciplinary shifts in their recruitment, probation and promotion arrangements will become pressing, and rightly so.

One important such shift in the discipline is captured in the collection’s title: the ever-present past. Historians have long argued that historical perspective is invaluable for understanding the world of today, often as part of a project to defend the field from charges of irrelevance (the ‘ornamental’ or ‘elective’ humanities having been set up in a fabricated but nonetheless prevalent opposition with the ‘essential’ STEM subjects) (British Academy 2008; Olmos-Peñuela et al. 2015; Szretzer 2001; Tosh 2008). At the same time, we have tended to regard ‘present-centredness’ as a serious scholarly infraction. We have placed ourselves in something of a quandary here; we want to secure our discipline’s societal status while maintaining a judicious distance from any demands society may make of us to put our expertise to work. The characterisation may be too starkly drawn. Nonetheless, it is public history that has provided a space – at the periphery of the academic discipline – in which the presence of the present can be actively and constructively addressed. Public history projects are conceived precisely because a particular past matters now, whether it is marking the anniversary of a local business or the rather more challenging, and potentially dangerous, task of taking history

onto the streets to confront the racism built into the civic environment.¹ The same observation could be made of public history projects pursued in a purely scholarly domain. One important reason, even imperative, for researching confederate monumentation, the public representation of the Third Reich, the politics of school history textbooks or public inquiries into historical injustice is their impact on the present and on people's lived experiences today.

The conference and the papers presented here show the value of historians giving serious attention to the ways in which the past appears to intrude on, make demands of and claim authority over the present. Such contributions draw public history into bigger conversations about the future of the discipline that concern us all – not just those who identify themselves as 'doing' public history. Indeed, professional identity is central to these conversations. We are all products of the choices and chances we have encountered so far. It is hard to anticipate what will fire our intellectual imaginations, or who the people will be who change the way we think in radical ways. We cannot know which opportunities will arise along the way or which routes we expected to follow will prove impassable. These moments can be transformational; they influence not only our historical interests or the subjects we study – so, *what* we do – but also shape our *practices*: *how* we do history, why and for whom. Each of us is a cartographer, drawing our own intellectual map, the contours and features of which we continue to trace throughout our lives as historians. My point here is two-fold. First: once we acknowledge the complex, subjective and contingent influences on *all* scholarship, it is harder to dismiss public history as self-evidently distinct from 'proper' or 'academic' history – at worst, the deintellectualisation and commodification of the past, neatly and appealingly packaged for and presented to mass audiences. Second: the metaphor of the map allows us to view – to *read* and so to recognise – very different terrains of historical practice *as historical practices* without necessarily incorporating them within (or excluding them on principle from) our own cartographies. This acknowledgement is important, because there is more we have in common as historians than divides us. I prefer, therefore, to think of public history not as a field, sub-field or specialism, but as history with 'public purpose': disciplinary-history animated by a commitment to the world and tuned into the needs and questions of the present (Green, 2016).

Practising history in this way is a form of academic citizenship, a duty of service. Offering service does not, however, mean being servile (Mandelbaum, 1991). There is no genuine public purpose in providing ready confirmation of cherished myths or affirmation of

¹ I am referring here, by way of an example of public history at the 'sharp end', to the work of *Historians for a Better Future* and the group's 'Free History Lessons' initiative conducted by Confederate monuments in North Carolina, see: <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/q-sir-would-you-like-a-history-of-this-monument/> [accessed 27/07/2018].

received wisdom. If a more critically-minded, historically-informed society – one highly suspicious of myths and received wisdom – is a ‘good thing’ then one vital task for a history with public purpose is to give people access to the tools by which historical understandings are *made*. We can show them *how* we use our raw materials and on what basis we make our selections and interpretations – whether they are found in a museum exhibition, a documentary, or a book. Indeed, focusing less on the formats in which historical interpretation is presented, a habit that tends to create subdivisions (including academic/public, high culture/mass market) and more on the underlying history-making process should help reinforce a sense of the value and integrity of history. If anything, this kind of historical endeavour asks *more* of us as historians than do conventional modes of production. It is far from a second-class or ‘plan B’ alternative to some academic mainstream. I hope that collections such as this will prompt further, open and inclusive explorations of the forms history with public purpose can take, the questions and problems it can address and the ways in which it can, in turn, shape the future of the discipline itself.

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Remembering the US Civil War and Slavery in 21st Century Hollywood

Steven Bishop, University of Warwick

ABSTRACT

Using contemporary worldwide debates over the removal of statues of historical figures to frame the debate over history, memory and the arts, this article focuses on how Hollywood is currently remembering the US Civil War and slavery. Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave* (2013), Gary Ross' *Free State of Jones* (2016) and Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012) are examined in order to consider three key questions: why are certain histories recalled, which parts of history are *not* being recalled and finally, how should certain histories be remembered? In considering this, this article seeks to highlight how the answers to these questions are complicating Hollywood's fidelity to the historical record, and how in turn public history through cinema is shaping the public's perceptions of this epoch in American history.

On August 11th 2017, the topics of slavery and the US Civil War were brought to global attention once more as protesters and counter-protesters clashed over the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee from Emancipation Park in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Confederate General had also been the namesake of the park until two months prior to his statue's removal, when it was renamed as Emancipation Park, a name which evokes the demise of the institution of slavery in contrast to the man who led the South's fight to keep it. The riots sparked an international debate over how history is remembered by academics, journalists, politicians and the general public. Challenging the ideology behind the statue's removal, namely that it was a symbol of white subjugation of African-Americans, President Donald Trump contended the hypocrisy of not extending this to more universally revered figures in American history:

George Washington was a slave owner. Was George Washington a slave owner? So, will George Washington now lose his status? Are we going to take down statues to George Washington? How about Thomas Jefferson? What do you think of Thomas Jefferson? You like him? OK good. Are we going to take down his statue? Because he was a major slave owner. (Washington Post, 2017)

In his lifetime Thomas Jefferson owned six hundred slaves and possessed 150 at the time of the Declaration of Independence. (L.E. Horton, 2006: p.136) Both Washington and Jefferson were slaveowners yet are revered as Founding Fathers of a nation which declared that all men were equal – as long as they were white. Historian Gary Nash argued that “it would be a misfortune to perpetuate the historical amnesia about the founding fathers and slavery.” (Nash, 2006, p.79) It is not fashionable to agree with comments the current American President makes in this present era, but it seems that historians such as Nash would not be able to find fault with Trump’s comments about Washington and Jefferson.

The memorialisation of contentious historical figures is not a uniquely American phenomenon. Two years previously, both Europe and Africa were engaged in a debate over statues and the history they memorialise. At Oxford University in 2015, Rhodes Scholarship student Ntokozo Qwabe became a prominent figure in “Rhodes Must Fall”, a campaign challenging the memorialisation of British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes. Critics claim that Rhodes advocated white supremacy and was an “architect of apartheid” in his activities in Rhodesia. (Castle, 2016) Whilst the British arm of the movement failed to achieve the removal of the statue of Rhodes from Oriel College at the University of Oxford, the more vociferous wing at the University of Cape Town in South Africa did succeed in the removal of its statue of the colonist in 2015.

In opposition to the removal of the Rhodes statue in Oxford, Chancellor of the University of Oxford and former Governor of Hong Kong Lord Patten warned that: “Education is not indoctrination. Our history is not a blank page on which we can write our own version of what it should have been according to our contemporary views and prejudices.” In defending the necessity of freedom of argument and debate as fundamental to the heart of the concept of a university, Patten argued further that: "Because we value tolerance...we have to listen to those who presume that they can re-write history within the confines of their own notion of what is politically, culturally and morally correct." (Lord Patten, cited in Espinoza, 2016)

Therefore, as historian and columnist David Olusoga comments, it would appear that “statues, along with names of streets, schools and other institutions, have been one of the ways in which certain versions of the past have been given literal solidity...[and] they have become physical targets in a conflict that is otherwise about what is less tangible – ideas and history.” (Olusoga, 2017) If President Trump’s comments are accepted at face value, where do we stop with the re-remembering of history? As Yale Professor David

Blight asks, should institutions such as Yale University, with its former connections with slavery, “frantically delve into every corner of its past looking for complicity with slavery, and then label or relabel buildings, fellowships, the residential colleges themselves? Should it gear the loss of memory in a wave of constant revision of honorific practices, inscriptions, or institutional identities?” (Blight, 2006: p.20)

Perhaps it is at this juncture that it should be noted that these so-called “history wars” are in fact “memory wars” and the debate at hand is how history should be remembered. Historian John Lukacs stated in 1968 that “the remembered past is a much larger category than the recorded past.” David Blight explains that history is revised and interpreted, whilst memory passes down through the generations and manifests itself in monuments, sites, and other works of art, with neuroscientist Daniel Schacter claiming that “artists can best illuminate the impact of memory in our day-to-day lives.” (Schacter and Lukacs, cited in Blight, 2006, pp.21-4)

As the contemporary furore concerning Confederate monuments has shown, the American Civil War and the broader issue of slavery form one of the battlegrounds where the contest of how history is remembered is being fought. This paper will take three films released in the past decade that deal with the issues of the American Civil War and/or slavery in an attempt to shed light into this paper’s three research questions. Firstly, why were certain histories recalled in these films? Secondly, which parts of history are *not* being recalled in these movies? And lastly, how do these films engage with the debate over *how* certain histories should be remembered? The answers to these questions will show the complexities these directors have encountered when handling the historical record, and in turn how this shapes the audience’s perception of the histories these films portray.

Why are certain histories recalled in Hollywood?

Director Steve McQueen’s 2013 award-winning film *12 Years a Slave* (McQueen, 2013) follows the real-life story of free-man Solomon Northup, who is kidnapped from the antebellum North of the United States of America and sold into slavery, eventually ending up in the hands of Edwin Epps, a brutal Louisiana slave-owner. Northup endures severe physical and psychological cruelty from Epps, before he comes into contact with a Canadian plantation-hand who believes Northup’s story and informs the authorities; they in turn eventually rescue Northup and return him to his family in New York. The movie won multiple accolades, including the Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture.

It is hard to critique the historical accuracy of the movie. Steve McQueen's epic is based on Solomon Northup's own narrative of his life.² However, it is interesting to consider *why* Northup's history was recalled to mind in 2012. Steve McQueen answered this question himself in an interview re-published in the journal *Transition*:

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: How did you discover the Solomon Northup story?

Steve McQueen: What happened was that, from the beginning, I wanted to tell a story about slavery. I just felt there was a hole in the canon of cinema. Also, I sometimes feel that slavery has disappeared from the discussion, that it's not looked at in a way that it is deemed important. I wanted to take a look again, and I had an idea of a free man—a free African American who gets kidnapped into slavery, and that's where I got stuck. After that, I met John Ridley and had a conversation with him about this original idea, but things weren't going so well. That's when my wife said to me, "Why don't you look into firsthand accounts of slavery?"...

Gates: So you started with the concept, and there was old Solomon Northup 150 years ago, and he fit the bill?

McQueen: Absolutely (McQueen, cited in Gates Jr., 2014: pp.186-7)

McQueen then goes on to argue that one cannot underestimate the influence that President Barack Obama has had on all these recent films on African American life, claiming that the movie would not have been made if Obama had not helped to create a culture where this type of memory could be recalled on screen. (McQueen, cited in Gates Jr., 2014: pp.186-7) McQueen explains that Northup's last two lines—an apology to his family and a plea for forgiveness—offer a way to confront the legacy of slavery through the movie. When he apologises, he is also asking the US to apologise for slavery and its slave society. "When has a US president ever apologized?" McQueen told Gates "How do we go forward? It's time for the US, it's time for the British, it's time for the Dutch, the French, the Portuguese, et cetera, to apologize. Only then can the legacies of slavery be confronted. With an apology, there can then be forgiveness, and the beginning of healing." (McQueen, cited in Stauffer, 2014: p.323)

Therefore, it could be argued that McQueen started with a particular memory he wished to remember about antebellum American slavery and *then* he searched for the history to fit the bill. For McQueen, the choice to recall Northup's history, and the choice to

² 12 Years a Slave (Northup, 1853)

include fictitious injections to the story,³ ensured that the history fit the bill. This, in Jasmin Nichole Cobb's opinion, reveals that "a feature-film based on historical records can invite much excess...[because] objectivity on the question of blackness cannot guarantee consistent results with regards to slavery". [Nichole Cobb, 2014: p.343] As John Ernest argues, the "power of this film is that it involves so many acts of representation, so many responses to the call for empathy, so many conceptions of accuracy and truth—and in this way, the film gathers together the many histories involved in the history of slavery". [Ernest, 2014: p.372] In short, Northup's narrative could not solely achieve the all-encompassing picture of slavery McQueen sought to produce, echoing Robert Brent Toplin's assertion that "no specific individual's experience perfectly touches all the major historical events an artist wants to depict..." (Toplin, 2002: p.202)

Gary Ross sought similar aims in his remembering of Newton Knight's secessionist movement in *Free State of Jones* (Ross, 2016). The film chronicles the plight of Newton Knight as he becomes disenchanted with the Southern cause and deserts the Confederate army. Hiding out in the swamps, Knight meets a band of runaway slaves and eventually other white deserters. Together they lead skirmishes against the Confederate army and raids on food stores "stolen" from Southern women and their families. Eventually Knight declares his county the "Free State of Jones", seceding from the Confederate States of America. The latter part of the film is dedicated to depicting the successes and ultimate failures of the Reconstruction era. The movie's opening still claims the story to be based on "actual events in Jones County, Mississippi, 1862".

Firstly, it should be noted that director Gary Ross has a rare regard, respect and reverence for historical truth which should be commended. Basing the film on Victoria E. Bynum's *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War*, all the primary and secondary sources Ross discovered during his research were compiled into a website for the public to access.⁴ Arguably Ross' *Free State of Jones* has become the defining history of the rebellion in the public's imagination, with this previously little-known story becoming

³ Northup's masturbation of a fellow female slave in the opening scene of the film is a fictitious event. Patsy's desire for suicide is fictitious (it is rather Mistress Epps who seeks Patsy's death in Northup's narrative.) The murder of a black slave named Robert who intervenes in the rape of a female slave by a white sailor is fictitious. (12 Years as Neo-slave Narrative) Harriet Shaw's eloquent and powerful encouragement to Northup and Patsy that God will have His day of vengeance on the slave-owners is part-fictitious, part-owing to the words not of a slaveholder's black wife but to Bass, the Canadian Carpenter who eventually rescues Northup.

⁴ Ross' website lists 35 different scenes, parts or points of interest in the film, with timestamps. Ross breaks down each of these with justifications for his portrayal. Footnotes can then be explored, listing the primary and secondary sources he used to come to his conclusions. <http://www.freestateofjones.info>

household knowledge. Why was this formerly obscure part of history recalled on screen in 2016? Ross' fictitious characters help explain Ross' broader goals.

The characters of Daniel, Moses and Elias Hood were all creations for the film and were not based on any real-life individuals in any of the actual accounts of Newton Knight. Daniel, whom Ross paints as Knight's teenage nephew, is conscripted into the army and fatally shot in the trenches. In arguably one of the film's most moving and memorable scenes, Newt tries desperately in vain to get his nephew medical attention, before he dies in his arms and Knight carries him all the way on horseback to his mother. Ross explains that Daniel is a "whole-cloth illustration" and a "fictional invention to explore these issues: the outrage of conscription, the class division inherent in it, and the human cost of the war even to boys in their mid-teens". (Ross, 2016) Undoubtedly, plenty of boys Daniel's age would have lost their lives on the front lines for the South. Yet, Daniel is nevertheless an emotionally powerful tool which tugs at the audience to empathise morally with Newt's decision to desert the army, when in fact Victoria Bynum suggests that other factors were far more important for Knight's desertion than conscription.⁵

Moses, the second most important fictionalised character, is a runaway slave, whom Knight meets in the swamps after he deserts the army. Moses exemplifies one of the film's major taglines, "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight" and embodies Newt's resentment of the Twenty Negroes Law.⁶ The audience is drawn particularly to Moses' plight ahead of the other runaway slaves in the swamps due to the spiked collar trapped around his neck – the debilitating punishment resulting from former attempts at escape. As the movie progresses, Newt frees Moses from his collar and the two fight side by side. When the war ends, Moses is eventually reunited with his wife and child who had been sold to a plantation in Texas. Newt then rescues Moses' son from an "apprenticeship", portrayed as a guise for postbellum slavery, before Moses is tragically emasculated and lynched for his Republican activities, serving as a harrowing conclusion to a life destroyed by slavery and white racism.

However, Moses is not part of the real Knight story. He is not even based solely on one individual from the accounts of Knight's life. As Ross explains:

⁵ Bynum explains that the amalgamation of "economic distress, fears of death, and resentment of those who benefitted from exemptions encouraged Newt and other men less ideologically driven...to turn their backs on the army." Bynum also quotes Newton Knight's resentment at the Twenty Negro Law. (Bynum, 2001, pp. 100, 104)

⁶ The Twenty Negro Law was part of the Second Conscription Act passed by the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War in 1862 which exempted from military service one white man for every twenty slaves owned on a Confederate plantation.

The character of Moses is a fictional invention, but one based on research and ample precedent. There are numerous examples of cooperation and alliance between maroons (escaped slaves living autonomously in the wilderness) and white deserters who resisted the Confederacy. (Ross, 2016)

Whilst Moses is by no means ahistorical, historian Margaret Storey casts doubt on the egalitarian relationship portrayed by Ross between Knight and Moses:

I find the notion that some white men might cast themselves as slaves to the Confederacy believable enough, but the idea that they saw themselves as sharing a common, equal-rights-based cause with actual slaves in that effort is more ahistorical. This is not to say that it didn't happen—just that the egalitarian sentiments that undergird this development in the film are harder to substantiate in the historical record. (Storey cited in Keating, 2017: p.407)

Elias Hood, the Confederate general who harasses Knight's band, is actually an embodiment of three real-life men, foremost of whom is Amos Deason, a general whom the real-life Knight assassinates far less righteously in his own home *before* the secessionist band's activities. (Bynum, 2001: p.106) Without the emotionally charged death of Daniel, an embodiment of all the horrors of slavery in Moses and a villain in Hood, Ross' broader aim in using Knight's story to highlight many of the horrors of slavery may be shrouded in far more moral ambiguity.

Lastly, Quentin Tarantino proved even more transparent in his reasoning for *Django Unchained* (Tarantino, 2012) than either Ross or McQueen. For Tarantino, *Django* did not have to be empirically true. Just as the opening title of the recent film *Victoria & Abdul* (Frears, 2017) claims the film is “based on true events...mostly”, *Django's* director openly admitted that his film was “history without the capital H”. (Tarantino, cited in Bonilla, 2013, p.74) Truillot suggests that for Tarantino, it is not about the “faithfulness to the historical record, but about the current moment of historical production and consumption... *Django* speaks to us about the contemporary era of black power—or, more precisely, the era of one exceptional black man in power, and the fear of retribution he inspires”. (Truillot, cited in Bonilla, 2013: p.73) That is not to say that Tarantino does not have one eye on historical fact. He admits that “I'm telling a historical story, and when it comes to nuts and bolts of the slave trade, I had to be real and had to tell it the right way”. (Tarantino, cited in Gates Jr., 2013, p.58) However, telling it the right way means not “just telling about what happened then, but about what is happening now, what that past means today, what relationships it authorizes, what words can and cannot be used to

describe it, what accrued meaning these words carry, and what injuries they perpetuate in the present.” (Bonilla, 2013, p.74) For Tarantino, the chief importance of *Django* was creating a movie that spoke to the present, rather than a film that dotted all the i’s and crossed all the t’s of historical fact.

Which histories are not being remembered?

The second question in seeking to establish the relationship between history and memory is what is *not* remembered when certain histories make it to Hollywood. Running alongside the central narrative of the secession of Jones County from the Confederacy in *Free State of Jones* is Newton Knight’s romantic relationship with a slave named Rachel, who eventually bears his children, despite Newt already being married to his wife Serena. The film periodically flashes forward to the 20th century, where one of Knight’s descendants is in court facing charges of breaking anti-miscegenation laws by marrying a white woman when he is alleged to be one-eighth African-American, with the lawyers debating whether he was one of Newt and Serena’s or Newt and Rachel’s descendants.

The movie first introduces us to Newt’s wife, Serena, as she nurses their sick son. Newt seeks out the help of Rachel who remedies the boy and sees him return to full health. As the film progresses, Newt deserts Serena and his son to defend other families from Confederate raids, and then eventually forms an intimate, consensual bond with Rachel which leads to the birth of a child. When the war ends, the two women, one his long-suffering wife and the other his lover, are depicted as harmoniously living side by side, sharing a laugh or two at the table once they have become familiar with one another. Ross’ intent in his portrayal of the dynamic is unambiguous. He explains:

Newt’s relationship with Rachel has been disparaged by many who have sought to diminish his reputation or the principles that drove him. They try to impute an exploitive motive, implying a Thomas Jefferson/Sally Hemings power dynamic. But nothing supports this. In fact, in a world where Newt was not legally allowed to marry Rachel, he went to the remarkable lengths of deeding her 160 acres of land, making her one of the few African American women to own land in the South. All evidence indicates a respectful, loving relationship that grew over time. (Ross, 2016)

The relationship between Newt and Rachel in the movie is not only completely sympathetic, but a wholesale celebration of a respectful, egalitarian romantic pairing of white and black, in the midst of a white supremacist society. Robert Brent Toplin, in his measured and reasoned assessment of the challenges of the historical movie genre, concedes that “[m]oviemakers often manipulate the historical record to ensure that their

stories will feature a workable romantic interest. Wives and children can stand in the way of such portrayals - or certainly complicate them - so they are often erased from the story.” (Toplin, 2002, p.47) Whilst Ross does not wholly expunge Knight’s wife Serena from the movie, Margaret Storey is one of the few to highlight Ross’ treatment of Newt’s spouse as problematic:

Here I might add that one of the least explored and, to my mind, most problematic, of these alliances is the postwar one between Rachel and Serena Knight, presented as happy cowives contented to jointly take care of their man, or be taken care of by him, while sitting on the porch spinning wool and tending Rachel’s baby. There is so much shorthand and assumption here, rather than historical explication, that it’s hard to know where to start. In the end, there’s little evidence to explain the nature of the women’s relationship, though we know that they, and their children, shared extended households for many years. (Storey, cited in Keating, 2017: p.411)

Ross’ omissions in the Knight family dynamic are striking. Firstly, the film neglects to inform the audience that Rachel had actually been a slave *of* the Knight family, owned by Newt’s grandfather presumably until his death in 1861. Whilst Newton and his father did not own slaves, and thus by the time Knight deserts the army Rachel would presumably have been sold to an unrelated slave-owner who could have been an Eakins-type, would not the sympathies of the audience towards Newt be dimmed if Ross had made it clear that Rachel had been a slave of the family? And if Victoria Bynum’s heavily researched Knight family tree is to be trusted, by the time we are thrown into the war in the film in 1862, the real-life Newton Knight would have been deserting Serena and three of his sons and a new-born daughter by 1864, instead of the one child seen in the movie. Whilst the movie correctly depicts Rachel giving birth to a child, with ambiguity over the parentage, what Ross does not show during the Reconstruction period is the children Newt would bear with *both* women. By 1875, Knight would have fathered a further nine postbellum children, four with Rachel and five with Serena, sometimes fathering a child in the same year to both women. And lastly, and perhaps most alarmingly, Ross’ film falls short of showing Georgeanne, Rachel’s daughter and Newt’s step-daughter, taking her place with Knight many years later, separating him from Serena, and allegedly bearing two children with him in the 1890s. (Bynum, 2001, p.86)

Similarly, the parts of Solomon Northup’s narrative that do not fit comfortably with the story Steve McQueen wishes to portray are ironed out, albeit less consequentially than Knight’s. Whereas Ross overlooks the morally deficient aspects of Knight’s character,

McQueen omits some of the less negative parts of Northup's story. In his final passage of the book, Northup concedes that "If I have failed in anything, it has been in presenting to the reader too prominently the bright side of the picture." McQueen has carefully removed the bright sides, Stanley Fish argues in an op-ed piece for *The New York Times*, and:

gives us no reason to conclude, as Northup does, that there "was much in [Miss Epps's] character to admire." He does not suggest, as Northup does, that "it is not the fault of the slaveholder that he is cruel so much as it is the fault of the system in which he lives." (In the movie they are one and the same.) He omits the lyrical passage in which Northup marvels at the beauty and gentleness of Miss Mary McCoy, an owner of hundreds of slaves who treats them all fairly and is "beloved" by them in return. (This is Northup's "Gone With the Wind" moment.) (Fish, 2013)

Thus, Robert Brent Toplin's claim that Hollywood often "rub[s] out the grays of history, producing portraits in white and black" can be seen in *Free State of Jones* and *12 Years a Slave's* purposeful elision of dimensions of Knight's and Northup's true narratives, complicating their faithfulness to the historical record. (Toplin, 2002: p.27)

How should these histories be remembered?

The final question in assessing the complex relationship between history and how it is remembered in recent US Civil War movies is *how* should these histories be remembered? Must certain historical representations in the arts strike a certain tone? Is a highly stylised film like *Django Unchained*, an appropriate and respectful way to portray such a brutal institution such as slavery? The question is not solely limited to cinema. Disney held plans to open an attraction to portray slavery, including designs for an Underground Railroad to show visitors the plight of runaway slaves. William Styron, a descendant of a family enmeshed in the complexities of slavery, wondered whether the Disney exhibit could represent this complicated tale of how, in his words, the suffering of both masters and slaves were "intimately bound." (Styron, cited in Bonilla, 2013, p.70) In his book *Silencing the Past*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot grapples with this, as Yarimar Bonilla explains:

the problem invoked by Styron was not one of historical accuracy, but of historical authenticity... the Disney park was doomed to fail. For, regardless of how empirically sound its exhibits might be, the idea of gum-chewing tourists lining up

for the Underground Railroad trivializes the history that stretches between that past and this present. It silences the institutionalized racism, structures of inequality, and practices of denigration that bridge the history of slavery to the present day. (Truillot, cited in Bonilla, 2013: p.71)

For Tarantino, the comedy had to be just right in *Django*. He admits that “when it comes to more thematic things and operatic view, I could actually have fun with stylization—because it is taking parts from a spaghetti Western. And I am taking the story of a slave narrative and blowing it up to folkloric proportions and to operatic proportions...” (Tarantino, cited in Gates Jr., 2013, p.58) Does *Django* cross the line of historical authenticity in its depiction of slavery?

The answer to this question can be found in Stanley Fish’s response to McQueen’s *12 Years a Slave*. He writes how it took two viewings of the film for him to discover “the point of the relentless sequence of physical and psychological degradation in “12 Years a Slave” is to withhold from the audience an outlet for either its hope or its sympathy”. (Fish, 2013) Ernest argues that *12 Years a Slave* “is forced to attend to such basic ground, recreating scenes almost unbearable to watch so that audiences might finally confront the realities of their shared past”. (Ernest, 2014, p.369) In one of the movie’s startling and sobering scenes, the camera fixes upon Northup’s half-lifeless, half-struggling body as he hangs from a noose for a duration that runs into hours. McQueen explains that this moment “had to represent all the hundreds of thousands of people who were lynched” in the postbellum era.” (McQueen cited in Gates Jr., pp.191-2) In the same way as *Django*’s horrifically brutal Mandingo fight lingers long in the memory, are such graphic and gratuitous depictions appropriate in such a sensitive film genre as antebellum slavery? Whilst Karen Haltunnen describes this cinematic technique as a pornography of pain (Haltunnen cited in Stauffer, 2014: p.318), John Stauffer argues rather that “they enable viewers to empathize with the plight of slaves, offering access into their emotional and psychological states.” (Stauffer, 2014: p.318) Irrespective of their differences, Haltunnen and Stauffer’s viewpoints prove that *how* historical narratives, and in particular slave narratives, are remembered is almost, if not equally, as important as how faithful they are to the historical record.

Conclusion: Cinema as Public History

James Oliver Horton argues that because people learn history in a variety of non-academic settings, the public historians “in charge of telling the complex and contradictory national history in public spaces, become crucial”. (J.O Horton, 2006, p.36) As the public have been learning history in cinemas for over a century, film directors play

a crucial role as public historians as they choose which histories are remembered and recalled in their cinematic productions. Gary Ross helps elucidate this:

In the modern world, where we get so much of our information from popular culture, the filmmaker is under even more pressure. Today, people read less and watch more, and whether we like it or not, academic history is often overwhelmed by popular history. *Les Mis* actually *becomes* the French Revolution, *Homeland* is somehow the “real” war on terror, and Lincoln is inevitably remembered as he was in *Lincoln*...

Historical films are an odd hybrid. They have constraints of traditional nonfiction writing and the dramatic demands of popular filmmaking. It’s no wonder that they occasionally wind up in the middle of an argument: How much creative license is legitimate? How much responsibility to history does the filmmaker have? (Ross, 2016)

As has been argued in this article, the choices Steve McQueen, Gary Ross and Quentin Tarantino made in deciding what history they remembered, which parts they forgot and how they represented these histories on screen, has impacted their faithfulness to the historical record and this, in turn, affects how the general public remember slavery and the US Civil War. The relationship between history and memory, as Kenneth Moynihan describes, is “an ongoing conversation that yields not final truths but an endless succession of discoveries that change our understanding not only of the past but of ourselves and of the times we live in”. (Moynihan, cited in Nash, 2006, p.101) This reciprocal relationship between the past and the present has caused all three directors to choose their histories based on certain contemporary reflections on history they wished to portray on the screen, namely the confrontation of the present with the legacy of slavery around the time of the sesquicentennial anniversary of the American Civil War.

Toplin proposes that

cinematic history needs to be addressed with a different vision of achievement and failure...[Hollywood] must resort to fictionalization. Historical evidence is too fragmentary to provide a neat, seamless tale for screenwriters to dramatize, and no specific individual’s experience perfectly touches all the major historical events an artist wants to depict. (Toplin, 2002: p.202)

In spite of this, this paper has sought to resonate with Gary Ross’ concession that cinema’s role as public historian carries with it a certain responsibility to the fidelity to the historical record as historical films continue, as Robert Burgoyne claims, to “become part

of the public sphere in ways that only a few artistic artefacts can claim”. (Burgoyne, 2008, p.19)

As *12 Years a Slave*, *Free State of Jones* and to some extent *Django Unchained* have become almost the definitive guides to their histories in the public sphere, has their use of the historical record, with McQueen’s cramming of Northup’s narrative into his preconceived notions for a film about slavery’s legacy, Ross’ forgetting of Knight’s morally problematic personal life and Django’s operatic violence, betrayed the histories they sought to portray? This paper has sought to argue that to varying extents the answer to that question is yes, and that raising awareness of Hollywood’s inevitable difficulties in handling the historical record is therefore crucial for audiences’ ability to grapple with the past through public history.

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The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: The Representation of Good Germans, Bad Germans, and German Victimhood in *Schindler's List* (1993) and *Generation War* (2013).

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the fictionalisation of perpetrators, victims and bystanders in two films about World War II and the persecution and extermination of the European Jews. The first part will focus on the representation of 'good' vs 'bad' Germans, such as the depiction of Oskar Schindler and Amon Göth in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993). The second part will engage with the depiction of 'ordinary' Germans and German 'victimhood' in the more recent German TV production *Generation War* (2013). At the core of both lies a tendency to depoliticise and simplify National Socialist genocides and atrocities. While Spielberg 'hollywoodised' his narrative for *Schindler's List*, a sense of German victimhood similar to that expressed in *Generation War* is now voiced by popular right-wing movements in Germany with regard both to the German engagement with its National Socialist past, as well as to current events like the so-called refugee crisis.

How difficult it must be to find a reasonable attitude is perhaps more clearly expressed by the cliché that the past is still 'unmastered' and in the conviction held particularly by men of good will that the first thing to be done is to set about 'mastering' it. Perhaps that cannot be done with any past, but certainly not with the past of Hitler Germany. The best that can be achieved is to know precisely what it was, and to endure this knowledge, and then to wait and see what comes of knowing and enduring.

Hannah Arendt (1960)

There is a multitude of literature about the representation and remembrance of National Socialist atrocity, and in particular about the persecution and extermination of the European Jews, in literature, film and theatre. Among the pioneers to study the creative 're-imagining' of the extermination of the European Jews, in the field of 'Holocaust

Studies', are Lawrence L. Langer (*The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*, 1975), Alvin H. Rosenfeld (*A Double Dying*, 1980) and James E. Young (*Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, 1988) to name just a few. Following the establishment of the Women's Movement and emergence of Women and Gender Studies in the 1980s and 1990s, the role of gender in 'Holocaust Studies' began to be foregrounded by scholars such as Joan Ringelheim, the director of Oral History at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Myrna Goldenberg, co-editor of *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust* (2003, with Elisabeth Baer). Tim Cole (*Images of the Holocaust*, 1999) and Peter Reichel (*Erfundene Erinnerung*, 2004) trace the interrelation of history and fiction in the form of 'imagined memory' of National Socialist atrocity through theatre, film, and public memory. The ambiguous role of the 'good German' – and in particular his or her representation in post-World War II media – is of interest for many of the scholars already mentioned but has also been the subject of numerous explorations in its own right, for example Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönefeld's essay collection *Representing the "Good German" in Literature and Culture after 1945: Altruism and Moral Ambiguity* (2013).

In this essay, I will explore the representation of Germans in two filmic narratives about World War Two and the extermination of the European Jews. While the (changing) implications of the many representations of National Socialism and its genocides have been scrutinised by a variety of writers and critics, I will focus exclusively on two points concerning the fictionalisation of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders of atrocity that show how these historical narratives can come to express contemporary social and political attitudes. Firstly, I will discuss the representation of 'good' versus 'bad' Germans in the depiction of Oskar Schindler and Amon Göth in Steven Spielberg's 1993 *Schindler's List*. Secondly, I will discuss German 'victimhood' and the concept of the ordinary, moderate German with regard to the German TV production *Generation War* (2013), which constituted a minor media sensation both in Germany as well as abroad: while the miniseries was overall celebrated in Germany, it caused anger and even legal proceedings against the filmmakers in Poland. In both cases, I will also pay specific attention to the way the filmmakers utilise the female body and female sexuality in their narrative-making.

The two films I chose to discuss were produced with twenty years and half a world between them. However, both films are linked in the way in which their depiction of a historic event feeds into dominant cultural discourses, and vice versa; and in their own way, both films were very successful: *Schindler's List* was seen by millions worldwide, while *Generation War* was highly acclaimed in Germany. Both films assume, and were attributed, with a kind of historical authority usually more reserved for documentaries

rather than feature films. While *Schindler's List* focuses on a prominent and extraordinary German, based on a historical figure, who undergoes a moral change to goodness, *Generation War* showcases an ensemble of German protagonists, who, essentially start out as 'good' characters and remain so at their core in spite of participating in the horrors of World War Two.

***Schindler's List* (1993)**

Spielberg's *Schindler's List* is one of, if not the, most influential feature film about the extermination of the European Jews. It had long-lasting effects not only on the fictional representation of concentration camps and atrocity, but also on the way a world-wide public engages with historic sites of atrocity. Annette Insdorf points out that “[w]hile popular movies like *Schindler's List* (...) proved controversial among critics, they played a considerable role in creating awareness of the Holocaust among mainstream film audiences” (Insdorf, 2003, p.248). But the film is also a prime example of what has been termed the ‘hollywoodisation’ or ‘Americanisation of the ‘Holocaust’,⁷ as pointed out by its critics like Alvin H. Rosenfeld, who remarked that:

Spielberg has in effect repositioned the terms of the Holocaust “story” away from those favoured by Hilberg and others – the Holocaust encompassing essentially “perpetrators”, “victims”, and “bystanders” – and has placed the emphasis squarely on “rescuers” and “survivors”. *Schindler's List*, after all, is a Holocaust film that focuses chiefly on the Jews who do not die at the hands of the Nazis but who, on the contrary, are actually saved by a Nazi who undergoes a moral conversion to goodness. (Rosenfeld, 1997, p.139)

The artist Art Spiegelman voiced similar criticism in a discussion in 1994, pointing out that “*Schindler's List* refracts the Holocaust through the central image of a righteous gentile in a world of Jewish bit players and extras. The Jews function as an occasion for Christian redemption” (Spiegelman cited in Hoberman, 1994, pp.26-27). Insdorf also notes, more positively, that Spielberg's focus is indeed not so much on the survivors, but mostly on the rescuer, as an “audience surrogate beyond the oppressed survivor or the criminal – one with whom a viewer would indeed want to identify” (Insdorf, 2003, p.258): the one ‘good’ man Oskar Schindler, and his struggle with his dark double, Amon Göth.

⁷ See also David Bathrick's discussion of the perception of this ‘Americanisation’ – and the differing views on the ‘trivialisation of the Holocaust’ – in Germany and the US with regards to the mini-series *Holocaust* (Bathrick, 2005).

Schindler is introduced as a flawed character – a womaniser, a member of the National Socialist party and a profiteer from war and forced labour, who eventually develops into a ‘good’ capitalist, using his money and influence to save lives. Tim Cole points out how this narrative fits into the contemporary American myth of ‘benign’ capitalism, and draws parallels between Schindler, the successful businessman who uses his fortunes to save Jewish lives, and Spielberg, who uses his fortunes (made from the profits of this film), to save Jewish memory in the form of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (Cole, 1999).

In a way, Schindler is and remains a conformist throughout the film. He does not question or oppose the system in its entirety, but only in its extremity, and continues to work within the system to save ‘his’ Jews, to which he is motivated by a blossoming universal humanism, rather than formulated political opinion. This ‘unpoliticalness’ of the film is further emphasised by its lack of exploration of the political context of World War Two and the persecution of the European Jews, as well as the focus on Schindler’s ‘moral’ flaws – his womanising and cheating on his wife, his excessive drinking and smoking. He overcomes most of these flaws alongside his continual development as a ‘rescuer’, thus grounding this development within a more universal ‘good’ vs ‘evil’ morality tale, rather than a concrete socio-political, historical situation (see also Cole, 1999).

Shohini Chaudhuri points out about *Schindler’s List* that “[i]ts unsubtle, Manichean thinking evades what Arendt called ‘the banality of evil’ (...). It is customary to assume that perverted, sadistic dispositions are what motivated perpetrators of atrocity, setting them apart from ‘us’” (Chaudhuri, 2014, p.54). While the audience is thus invited to identify with the slightly flawed, but essentially ‘good’ Schindler, his opponent Amon Göth is the stereotypical, sadistic, evil Nazi, and in addition, he is also self-pitying, lazy, and vain – easily bribed and easily seduced. In these stark black and white colours, there is little room for a ‘banality of evil’, with which an audience might be able to (uncomfortably) identify. As Alvin H. Rosenfeld observes, “[i]dentification with such a character as Amon Goeth, who is the incarnation of the murderous passions of limitless evil, is out of the question for most filmgoers” (Rosenfeld, 1997, p.142). Due to this focus on the ‘good’ German Schindler and his battle with the ‘bad’ Nazi Göth, even major Jewish characters like Helen Hirsch, forced to serve as Göth’s housemaid, only really matter in their relationship to either of the two Germans. In the duration of the film, both Göth and Schindler are shown frequently ‘womanising’, yet, their relationships with women are very different: Schindler is seen as charming, seducing, and flirting with women (even when he kisses a young woman who clearly resents this), while Göth and

his 'mistress' are depicted as inconsiderate of and emotionally indifferent to each other. Thus, both the protagonist and the antagonist are further characterised through their relationships with women, first and foremost Helen. It is a defining moment when, in the basement of Göth's villa, Schindler tells a fearful Helen that Göth "won't shoot you, because he enjoys you too much". Defining not so much for Helen, who is mostly characterised by her fear of and abuse by Göth, but for Schindler, who, in the same location in which Göth silences, nearly rapes, and brutally beats Helen, consoles her – a further step in his transformation to a 'good' German, and a further differentiation between Göth and Schindler.

The same goes for the depiction of the little girl in a red dress, one of the few occasions of colour in the black-and-white film, during the liquidation of the ghetto, and the later incineration scene, where the girl's dead body resurfaces again. Both scenes are part of Schindler's quest; both are mostly seen through his eyes, the little girl becoming an agent of his transformation. It is Schindler's reaction to the girl's pain that matters, and Schindler's alone. The little girl has no history and no function beyond being Schindler's catalyst. Philip Gourevitch concludes in his review of the film that:

For the most part [the Jews] are viewed either as a silent, cowering mob or as a shrieking, scampering mob. Of course, during the Holocaust Jews were sometimes reduced to such extremes, but hardly all, and never always. (Gourevitch, 1994, p.52)

And this 'silent mob' remains silent even after its 'deliverance'. Towards the end of the film, after the radio announcement of Germany's defeat, Schindler addresses 'his' Jewish workers, stating that "[t]omorrow, you'll begin the process of looking for survivors of your families. In most cases you won't find them. After six long years of murder, victims are being mourned throughout the world". Later, in front of the factory and the assembled survivors, Schindler is given a ring by the grateful Jews, and consequently has a breakdown which constitutes the final act of 'mourning' for the murdered in the film – expressed by the German "member of the Nazi party". Schindler, overcome by grief and guilt, laments his failure to save more, and collapses on the ground, where he is eventually hugged and comforted by some of the Jewish onlookers. It is not their pain with which the historical part of the film concludes, but *Schindler's*, and in the final scene of the film, shot in colour, the surviving *Schindlerjuden* place stones on *Schindler's* grave, where it is he, rather than the victims of genocide, who is, quite literally, "mourned throughout the world".

***Generation War* (2013)**

The German TV miniseries *Generation War*, directed by Philipp Kadelbach and written by Stefan Kolditz, first aired in Germany in March 2013 under the more telling title *Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter* – ‘our mothers, our fathers’. The three-part-series was produced by the teamWorx production company, headed by Nico Hoffmann. Hoffmann and his collaborators are renowned for so-called ‘TV Events’ – feature-length television films with a high production value, usually focusing on ‘dramatic’ moments from German 20th-century history, and often, like in the case of this series, produced for both public and private broadcasters. Screenwriter Stefan Kolditz had already worked with producer Nico Hoffmann on *Dresden* (2006), a TV film in two parts about a German nurse falling in love with an English PoW during the bombing of Dresden. The team of Hoffmann as producer, Kolditz as writer, and Philipp Kadelbach as director, are also responsible for the 2015 remake of the GDR classic *Naked Among Wolves*.

The production team’s strong track record of producing German history for a mass compatible market notwithstanding, *Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter* was announced as a novelty on German screens: finally, a film about World War Two that would show the German side, and depict Germans not as evil sadistic Nazis, but as ‘ordinary’ human beings. This claim is in itself, not entirely true: since the very first German film productions after the end of the war, German suffering and the experience of the ‘ordinary’, dutiful German soldier, as opposed to an Amon-Göth-like fascist psychopath, have been very prominent on German screens. As Peter Reichel points out:

The World War – that was Hitler’s war, more or less forced upon the Germans and the world. The Wehrmacht – that was the brave, long-suffering, industrious, dutiful, decent German soldiers, in a word, the ‘real soldier’ on the one, and the evil Nazi on the other hand. (Reichel, 2004, pp.21-22, my translation)

Generation War’s focus on the un-ideological, ordinary German, and his or her journey through the war events, as well as the interlinking with ‘educational’ projects, not only allowed for the claim of authenticity, but also merged fiction and history. The series was accompanied by TV panels discussing memory culture, and a documentary featuring eye-witnesses whose real-life experiences often mirrored those of the fictional characters. The TV Event’s high production value most certainly paid off for the public broadcaster zdf: the trilogy was seen by approximately 7 million spectators, which, according to the *FAZ* newspaper, constitutes a market share of over 24 percent. Compared to the other prime time programmes, the miniseries proved the most popular among the 17-49-year-old

spectators with 17.5 percent (*FAZ*, 2013) – which is in itself an unusual outcome for a public broadcaster like the zdf, normally more popular with senior citizens, but struggling to attract younger viewers.

Generation War focuses on the lives of five friends and begins with their last meeting in Berlin in 1941 before they all disperse to their various fates. Wilhelm and Friedhelm are off to the Eastern front and Charlotte is to be a volunteer nurse at a field hospital, while the hedonistic Greta and her Jewish boyfriend Viktor initially remain in Berlin. In 1941, two years into the war, and six years after the establishment of the racist Nuremberg laws, Viktor celebrates with the other four as if there was no political divide between them. At no point do any of the characters voice any kind of inner conflict stemming from the fact that they fight in a war, or support a regime, that also persecutes one of their best friends, stripping him first of his civil and eventually all human rights. When the characters express support or enthusiasm for the regime, they do so out of naivety or duty, but never from political conviction. As Ulrich Herbert notes in his review of the film in the *taz* newspaper:

The problem of the film is its perspective, the view on history – the general and the individual. Five young people who look forwards to life – but then war catches up with them and brings out the worst in them. Before, they were more unpolitical, possibly a little patriotic. These five people, the film makes clear, represent our mothers and father, or our grandparents. (...) The Nazis, on the other hand, are the usual character masks. (...) In this film, the Nazis are not our mothers and fathers, but the others. (Herbert, 2013, my translation).

While the loss of the friends' innocence in the war is thoroughly thematised in the duration of the film, any ideological or indeed anti-semitic motivation is thus far from them: Charlotte might betray the identity of a Jewish doctor posing as a gentile nurse in the hospital, Friedhelm and Wilhelm might take part in war crimes, but due to their friendship with Viktor, the audience knows that the protagonists never really act out of political or ideological conviction. This remains the domain of SS officers in the film, who are more or less as one-dimensional as Göth in *Schindler's List* – as a matter of fact, the protagonists all hardly ever act at all. This tendency has also been observed by David Wildermut, who states that Wehrmacht soldiers in *Generation War* are mostly portrayed as "(...) apolitical, (...) but (...) devoted to the timeless military virtues of duty, courage, and self-sacrifice" and connects their 'lack of agency' to long-standing preconceptions about the 'noble' Wehrmacht (Wildermut, 2016, p.67). Those preconceptions were at least nominally ousted in the 1990s by the *Wehrmachtausstellung* which displayed the very active war crimes and involvement in genocidal campaigns of the Wehrmacht

amidst great controversy and public debate. It needs to be noted that *Generation War* does not shy away from showing in graphic detail the increasingly brutal war crimes and atrocities committed by the Wehrmacht soldiers, including the film's protagonists Wilhelm and Friedhelm. Ulrich Herbert rightly points out that there are scenes in the series, for example depicting Wehrmacht soldiers murdering Russian civilians, that have not been shown in a German film in such a way before, and notes that "[o]nly a few years ago, the exhibition 'Verbrechen der Wehrmacht' had first been stormed and then closed because of such pictures" (Herbert, 2013, my translation).

However, the series avoids showing its protagonists as ever actively engaging in the ideology that perpetuates those atrocities. The war happens to these characters, and they are all victims of it, like the bookish Friedhelm, for example, who is mocked by his father for his lack of Prussian, manly qualities, and only joins the Wehrmacht reluctantly and with great humanistic objections. Initially, he suffers from the brutal macho-culture in his unit, is bullied, beaten and ostracised, but in time the brutality he encounters turns him into a ruthless super-soldier, proving his self-fulfilling prophecy that "the war will bring out the worst in us". In Friedhelm's case, the worst is a demoralised, unideological brutality: he kills civilians with his unit as ordered by his superior officer, just as he later shoots the same officer when he threatens to kill Viktor, upon whom they chanced in a Polish forest. Viktor had escaped a transport to a concentration camp and fought with Polish partisans for a while, until they found out he was Jewish. While his friendship with the German protagonists is not impacted by this, the Polish partisans cast him out, resulting in the confrontation with Friedrich and said officer, and expressing the clearest statements of anti-Semitism in the entire film, which caused great controversy about the series in Poland.

Friedhelm's older brother Wilhelm, on the other hand, starts out as the textbook 'dutiful soldier' adhering, less to National Socialist ideology, than to timeless soldierly qualities such as honour and devotion, favoured by their father and unit. Wilhelm's belief in these qualities is put to the test in moments like the one when he is ordered to execute a fellow Soviet officer as a PoW; however, he of course follows these orders, even against his better judgement, due to his sense of duty. After being wounded and traumatised in battle, Wilhelm deserts his unit by 'mistake' and lives in an abandoned hut for a while, before he is found and sent to a punishment company, in which he survives the war ending up on the more or less right side of history, without any active decision-making on his part. Friedhelm, in contrast, dies in the final scenes of the last film: ordered to hold off advancing Red Army soldiers with a few pre-teen Hitler Youth and elderly men, he is taken aback by the boys' blind fanaticism, and sacrifices himself by running into the enemy fire in order to shock the boys into surrendering.

In some way or other, the series seems to suggest they are all victims of the 'system': Wilhelm, whose trauma saves him from having to make decisions compromising his 'duty', and Friedhelm, whose self-sacrifice saves the Hitler Youth's lives, just as much as Viktor, who lost his freedom, his family, and his home to the system for which Wilhelm and Friedhelm fought. As I have already pointed out, German 'victimhood' has played a substantial part in the public – and familial – discourse about National Socialism and the German genocides since 1945, with the possible exception of the 1960s to 1980s, when the events following the Eichmann and Auschwitz trials, as well as the radical student movements, changed the discourse temporarily to focus on the role of German perpetrators and complicity. As Paul Cooke also notes: "As such, might it not be better to view contemporary representations of German victimhood not as breaking previously held taboos, but as simply showing that attitudes have come full circle?" (Cooke, 2006, pp.77-78)

The film's exploration of 'German victimhood' can be most acutely observed with regard to the two female protagonists, Greta and Charlotte. Initially, both collaborate with the National Socialist regime. Charlotte, as I have mentioned earlier, volunteers at a front hospital and betrays a Jewish woman in concealed identity. Her actions are motivated by a naive belief in German duty, while Greta, an aspiring singer and performer, decides to start an affair, both privately and career-wise, with a high-ranking Nazi, out of her own opportunism and desire for fame, as well as in order to procure exit papers for her boyfriend Viktor. In the course of the miniseries, both women drastically change their positions. Greta makes defeatist comments and threatens her Nazi lover with exposing their relationship to his wife, and so, for both reasons, he has her arrested and eventually shot. The possible political dimensions of Greta's actions are therefore downplayed and overshadowed by the private aspect.

Both Greta and Friedhelm, the most conflicted and interesting characters in the film, are killed by its narrative. As the German journalist Wolfgang Michal observes:

The singer, who got too intimate with the Nazis, and the younger brother, who developed from a sensitive outsider to an uninhibited and suicidal front-addict, had to pay with their lives. It is noteworthy that especially those two film-figures have no equivalent eye-witnesses in the accompanying documentary. None of the questioned witnesses speaks about her Nazi-affairs, no witness mentions joyfully committing atrocities. No one would have wanted such parents. Therefore, they did not survive (in the film). (Michal, 2013, my translation)

In their attempt to create a fictionalised national genealogy that enables positive identification with the nation's 'mothers and fathers', who adhere to our own,

contemporary moral code, the filmmakers follow a general trend that has already been observed within a more private and familial context by Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall in the study *Opa war kein Nazi* in 2002. Welzer and his co-authors conducted intergenerational interviews about memory within a family context. The authors note that in those interviews and conversations, 2,535 stories were told and that

[n]ot a few of them change on their way from generation to generation in such a way that anti-Semites become resistance fighters and Gestapo officers the protectors of Jews. There are reports of shootings in the talks, (...) but all this leaves no trace in the individual interviews with the children and grandchildren – it is as if they have not heard these stories at all. However, they use every hint, even the most remote, that their grandparents have done something “good” to invent versions of the past in which they always act as decent, good people. (Welzer et al, 2002, p.11, my translation)

As those children and grandchildren use that “something ‘good’” to exonerate their parents and grandparents of their complicity or actions in the familial context, *Generation War* exonerates most of its protagonists through their friendship with Viktor, while the un-redeemable Greta and Friedhelm die a tragic, yet heroic death.

Welzer and his co-authors also note that, while the generation that had lived through World War Two tend to emphasise their own suffering in the interviews, the generation of their children and grandchildren follow a similar pattern of foregrounding their grandparents’ victimisation. Björn Krondorfer also describes that “one way to forget Jews is to focus on one’s own German suffering (...); in this case, the perception of one’s own alleged victimhood blinds people to the true victims of the Nazi persecutions” (Krondorfer, 2008, pp.220-221). This tendency can be observed in the character of Charlotte, who comes to represent another archetype of German (female) victimhood. In contrast to Greta, Charlotte only ‘betrays’ her tentative, romantic love for Wilhelm after believing him dead, and embarks on her affair with a doctor out of despair and loneliness, not opportunism or lust. She even begins a friendship with the Ukrainian nurse Sonja, which nearly leads to Charlotte’s downfall: When searching for Sonja, she misses the evacuation of the hospital. Both women are captured and nearly raped by Red Army soldiers. Charlotte, however, is saved by a female officer – the same Jewish woman whom she betrayed at the beginning. After her ordeal, she returns to Berlin, where she is reunited with Wilhelm, and Viktor, in the bar where they had celebrated before, and they all toast their dead friends with the same, solemn look on their faces, united by their experience of suffering. Katherine Stone points out, regarding the filmic treatment of Greta and Charlotte, that in many contemporary films about National Socialism female

characters are portrayed as fulfilling a more universal redemptive function, enabled by their experiences of victimhood and aidgiving. Stone concludes that

They make it possible to imagine that the moral ruination of the nation was not total and that moral rehabilitation was therefore possible. (...) The focus on women in recent films about the Nazi past creates a space for remembering the horrors of war without also needing to reflect on the individual's responsibility for the political events that precipitated it. (Stone, 2016, p.459)

At the core of both approaches – Americanisation and German claiming of victimhood – lies a tendency to depoliticise and simplify National Socialist genocides and atrocities, either by turning history into moralistic fairy tales, like *Schindler's List*, or by redeeming the 'ordinary' German as somewhat removed from, and therefore innocent of, the political atrocities of their immediate surroundings.

Spielberg dramatised the triumph of the benign humanist and politically moderate, but essentially liberal, Schindler, over the sadistic and fundamentalist Göth, shortly after the 'triumph' of the USA over the USSR, at a time when the USA were negotiating their new role as uncontested superpower both globally as well as historically. This is not to imply that *Schindler's List* is to be read as a parable on the so-called Cold War, but rather that the film presents its historical topic of the extermination of the European Jews within a cultural bracket adjusted to the sentiments of its time and place of production. Similar to the United States Holocaust Museum, opened in 1993, the film frames the European-Jewish catastrophe within an US-American context. Alvin Rosenfeld notes that visitors to the museum are "fortified against the terrifying pictures they are about to see" by extracts of the Declaration of Independence and George Washington's famous assurance that the US "gives to bigotry no sanction" (Rosenfeld, 2011, p.64). The European catastrophe is thereby transcended with the optimism of a nation that came to consider itself the beacon of the free world and bringer of democracy and liberalism – a narrative that has permeated through American discourse since 1945 and resurfaced strongly, albeit not uncontestedly, after the events of 9/11.

The sense of victimhood in German narratives like *Generation War* is not a new concept as such, although there seems to have been a spate of melodramatic historical narratives in the past two decades, and it has been at the centre of German politics for a while now. A month after the TV premiere of *Generation War*, the right-wing political party AfD, Alternative für Deutschland, was founded. One year later, the racist and islamophobic movement Pegida had its first march in Dresden. Following the AfD's success in the

general election in September 2017 and the decision for a grand coalition, the AfD now serves as opposition leader in the German parliament.

The head of the AfD party in Thuringia, Björn Höcke, spoke to the youth organisation of the party in Dresden in January 2017:

The only intention of the bombing of Dresden and the other German cities was to take our collective identity from us. The intention was to destroy us root and branch, to pull out our roots. And, combined with the systematic re-education started after 1945, this has almost been achieved. (...) Until today our state of mind, our mood, is that of an utterly defeated people. We Germans, and I am not speaking about you patriots, who have assembled here today, we Germans, that is our people, are the only people in the world who planted a memorial of shame in the heart of its capital. (...) We need nothing else but a remembrance policy change of 180 degrees! (Höcke, 2017, my translation)

It is a clearly stated point of the AfD's programme to challenge what it terms the "current constriction of the German memory culture on the time of National Socialism" (AfD, 2016, my translation). Of course, those attacks on 'our memory culture and responsibility' are contested and criticised across party lines, in public discussions and media. However, these attacks, which criticise the current, public mode of remembrance for enforcing a 'master narrative' of shame on Germans today, also resonate strongly with certain notions of German victimhood that are expressed in mainstream cultural products like *Generation War*, which in turn feed into this very 'master narrative'.

The notion of German victimhood, championed by those new popular right-wing movements, often connects the notion of historical victimhood and the current so-called 'refugee crisis', as an unfair attack on the purity and decency of a unified 'German' body with the symbolic use of the female body. During a speech in autumn 2015, the same Björn Höcke claimed that nightmares become true in Germany "in particular for blond women" due to the so-called refugee crisis, while Frauke Petry, of the same party until 2017, compared the sexualised mass attacks on women in Cologne, during the New Year celebrations in 2016, with the mass rape of German women by Red Army soldiers in 1945 (both quoted in Weiland, 2016). The instrumentalisation of the female body thus features not only in mainstream fictional reimaginations of the National Socialist German past – linked with notions of German 'victimhood' and redemption in *Generation War*, and the character building of the German rescuer Schindler in *Schindler's List* – but also in contemporary narratives, intrinsically weaving past discourses and discourses about the past into contemporary political discussions – and vice versa.

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Stoicism, solidarity and cynicism: examining the role of Second World War posters in framing present-day British identity

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ABSTRACT

The events of the Second World War are frequently recalled in modern British cultural discourse. The reuse and repetition of particular historical artefacts can have a powerful influence on the cultural memory and personal and national identities of people in Britain today, people whose experience is far removed from the realities of the wartime period. This paper focuses on one instance of this phenomenon: the appropriation and reuse of home front propaganda posters created by the British Ministry of Information (MoI) during the Second World War. Some of these posters have been republished in a variety of media over the last seventy years and are recognised today by large numbers of British people. This paper seeks to uncover what role the posters have in defining ideas and identities in the present. Drawing on data from a survey and interviews conducted with members of the public in spring and summer 2017, this paper will assess how particular Second World War images are able to influence present-day identities and historical consciousness. This research contributes to our understanding of how historical artefacts can have unintended long-term impacts on national culture, long after their original purpose and context has faded.

Introduction

Cultural artefacts can help to shape the formation of identities. They provoke memories and communicate concepts that relate closely to a person's sense of history and sense of self. The Second World War is considered an influential event for the formation of identities in Britain. Positive mythic interpretations of the experience of the British home front such as 'the people's war', 'the Blitz spirit' and the 'Dunkirk spirit' have often been said to shape British identity in the decades after the war (Calder, 1992; Connelly, 2004; Eley, 2001; Mackay, 2003; McLaine, 1979; Noakes and Pattinson, 2013; Summerfield, 2010). These myths are created through memory of events, but also memory of cultural artefacts created during and after the war, including books, films, television programmes and images. This combination of multiple kinds of memories to produce myth is often explored in definitions of 'cultural memory'.

In their 2014 book, *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson argue that cultural memory is a product of collaboration between different types of memory. Cultural memory of the Second World War ‘includes both personal memories and narratives of war as well as publicly produced war memories’ (Noakes and Pattinson, 2013, p.3). Public memories shape and are shaped by individual memories and this process or ‘cultural circuit’ which produces ‘cultural memory’ (Noakes and Pattinson, 2013, p.5). The relationship between memory, cultural artefacts and identities is reciprocal; neither memory nor identity is static or pre-existing, but each feeds off the other. When a person views and interprets a cultural artefact, this feeds into a cultural circuit whereby their cultural memory can be influenced and their conception of the past and their identities can be impacted. Their interpretation of the artefact can in turn be influenced by their existing conception of the past and identities.

It is crucial to consider in depth what impact individual cultural artefacts have on the formation of myths and the creation of identities. This paper focuses on one specific set of cultural artefacts: propaganda posters created by the Ministry of Information (MoI) in Britain during the Second World War. Using information gathered from surveys and qualitative interviews conducted with volunteers in Britain, I explore how people interpret the propaganda posters today and what influence they have on people’s capacity to shape and communicate their own identity. This research is part of a larger project, the *Publishing and Communications History of the Ministry of Information, 1939-45*, which is being undertaken by the Institute of English Studies in collaboration with the Department of Digital Humanities at King’s College London. It is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The Ministry of Information and its campaigns

The Ministry of Information was established by the British government on 4 September 1939 to manage publicity and censorship at home and abroad. Its objectives were to make British war aims understood by the public, disseminate instructions and improve morale (McLaine, 1979, pp.18–19). The Ministry developed campaigns to achieve specific government objectives using a wide range of media including print, radio, film and exhibitions (Irving, 2016, pp.1–2).

A set of ten posters was selected from those created by the Ministry of Information. Seven were selected because they belong to three famous MoI campaigns: ‘Dig for Victory’, ‘Make Do and Mend’ and ‘Careless Talk Costs Lives’. These campaigns were promoted nationally during the war through a wide range of media. It is difficult to determine the precise level of effectiveness of individual propaganda efforts, particularly for ‘Careless

Talk Costs Lives’ which had fairly intangible objectives, but the ‘Dig for Victory’ and ‘Make Do and Mend’ campaigns were considered effective, based on statistics for domestic food production (Smith, 2013, pp.221–225) and for attendance at Make-do and Mend classes (Simmonds, 1943).

The three campaigns were coherent in the sense that they were promoted using a unifying slogan, compared to other campaigns which employed multiple slogans. They are well-known today, with posters frequently reproduced and slogans referenced in speech and print. The reasoning behind the selection of the seven specific posters from these campaigns and the other three posters will be described later in this paper. Below is a brief outline of the histories of the campaigns and posters. Reproductions of all posters can be found in Appendix 1. Posters from the Imperial War Museum are reproduced under the IWM Non-Commercial Licence.

In 1939, the ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign was initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in order to promote domestic food production in response to Germany’s blockade (Slocombe, 2010, p.35). In 1941, it produced a poster containing a photograph of a boot and spade, which is considered by the Imperial War Museum to be the most famous poster of the war [fig. 1] (Slocombe, 2010, pp.34–5). A campaign with the slogan ‘Make do and Mend’ was initiated on behalf of the Board of Trade in response to the introduction of clothes rationing in Jun 1941 (Slocombe, 2010, p.45). In 1942 a pamphlet cover was designed by artist Donia Nachshen with the slogan ‘Go Through Your Wardrobe’, which shows a woman surrounded by items of clothing [fig. 2] (“Core Record IWMPC - VADS,” 2018). The need for an anti-gossip campaign to defend against espionage was raised by Winston Churchill in 1940 (McLaine, 1979, p.81). A campaign was launched with the slogan ‘Careless Talk Costs Lives’, which appeared on humorous posters designed by well-known Punch cartoonist, Fougasse [fig. 3] (Slocombe, 2010, p.13). These posters are well-remembered particularly by those who experienced the British home front directly. A poster with the slogan ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ was created in 1939 [fig. 4], one of a series of three posters. The other two were issued and received negative feedback from parliament, the press and the public (Irving, 2014; Lewis, 2017; Mass Observation, 1939, pp.52–57; Slocombe, 2010, p.5), so ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ was never officially displayed.

In 1940, a poster was created with a photograph of Winston Churchill superimposed over tanks and planes and the slogan ‘Let Us Go Forward Together’ [fig. 5]. The slogan is a quotation which comes from his speech to the House of Commons on 13 May 1940, days after he became Prime Minister (HC Deb, 13 May 1940; Slocombe, 2010, p.7). Another

poster was designed by in 1941 by Philip Zec, a cartoonist for the *Daily Mirror* (Slocombe, 2010, p.16). It was intended to encourage women to register for factory work, depicting a woman worker standing outside a factory with arms raised triumphantly and planes flying overhead [fig. 6].

During the war, MoI posters were considered ephemeral; they were created to meet a particular need and were not designed to have a long-term impact after the war. However, many have been repurposed in a variety of different media: in books, magazines, on television and also in online contexts (Kirton and Terras, 2013). People in Britain have therefore encountered these images in different kinds of media over the course of their lives. Some of the images are easily remembered and recognised because they have been seen so often. Images are republished to illustrate material about Second World War history, but also to illustrate material relating to current affairs, politics, lifestyle and many other topics. This variety in the uses of the images means that British people may associate with them meanings that are far more diverse than they would be had the images only ever been encountered in the context of the war.

Method

To study the role of the posters on cultural memory and the development of identities, surveys and in-person interviews were selected as appropriate methods. These methods allowed volunteers to be shown the posters and asked questions about their reactions, opinions and feelings. Five posters were selected for inclusion in the survey. The red 'Dig for Victory' poster [fig. 1] is the most famous from that campaign. 'Go Through Your Wardrobe' [fig. 2] is the cover of a pamphlet promoting the 'Make Do and Mend' campaign. 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' [fig. 3] and 'Keep Mum She's Not So Dumb' [fig. 7] were chosen as examples of the 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' campaign. The former was chosen for its famous illustration by Fougasse, the latter for its unusual style of illustration and also for the gender issues that it raises, which could be interesting to explore in relation to identity. The final poster, 'Keep Calm and Carry On' [fig. 4] was selected due to its recent fame in British culture. For each of the images, questions were designed to reveal whether a participant recognised the image, why they thought they remembered it, where and when they thought they had seen it, what thoughts came to mind when they viewed it and whether they thought it might be a memorable image.

Volunteers for the survey were recruited using two methods: face-to-face and online. Information stands were set up in five locations – in Kew, Ealing, Croydon, Nottingham and Leeds – and people were approached from these stands and asked to complete a survey. The images were displayed on the stand itself with the question 'do you recognise

these images?’ in order to prompt interest from members of the public. An online version of the survey was promoted via Twitter and King’s College London publicity emails. The face-to-face method of recruitment, using public information stands, was employed in order to ensure that those recruited for the survey included people who were not internet-users or who were less comfortable using the internet. Relying entirely on online distribution would result in the recruitment solely of active internet users, which would affect results.

Both online and offline methods of recruitment were biased towards those people who had an interest in the Second World War, history or design. Both methods required volunteers actively to approach the stand or click on the link to take part in the survey and this necessitated a certain degree of curiosity and interest. Due to the nature of the survey, which took ten minutes to complete and required concentration and thoughtfulness on the part of the participant, this bias towards interested volunteers was to some extent inevitable. A total of 92 completed surveys were collected from the information stands and 209 were collected online.



Information Stand at Croydon Clocktower, 19 April 2017, © 2017 Katherine Howells

Responses to the survey provided a pool of 252 volunteers who were eligible to be interviewed. Volunteers were selected to ensure that the data covered a broad range of ages and birth locations (see full details of participants in Appendix 2). Sixteen people

were interviewed, with the interviews lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured in design; interviewees were asked about the same topics as in the survey but in more depth. Five new images were added to increase the breadth of the data collected. The new images consisted of an alternative ‘Dig for Victory’ poster [fig. 8], an alternative ‘Make Do and Mend’ poster [fig. 9], an alternative ‘Careless Talk Costs Lives’ poster using the famous slogan ‘Be Like Dad Keep Mum’ [fig. 10], a war work recruitment poster ‘Women of Britain Come into the Factories’ [fig. 6] and a poster depicting Winston Churchill’s face and a quotation from his speech [fig. 5].

The research revealed the range of ways in which the images are interpreted and understood by members of the public and gave some insight into how they can be used by people to help them shape and communicate their own identities. The discussion below focuses on five of the images that demonstrate most clearly the relationship between cultural artefacts and identity formation.

Solidarity and stoicism

When participants viewed the images and responded to them, they often did so by referencing existing national myths of the Second World War. They interpreted the images to represent concepts that are dominant both in these myths and in ideas of British national identity. The two themes that appeared most frequently when participants discussed the images are solidarity and stoicism. These concepts are integral parts of myths of the ‘people’s war’, the ‘Blitz spirit’ and the ‘Dunkirk spirit’.

The ‘people’s war’ is a phrase which conceptualises the Second World War in Britain as a war which involved everybody, including ordinary people on the home front, working together to achieve victory. It encourages an egalitarian view of wartime Britain as an era of camaraderie and solidarity. While the myth of the ‘people’s war’ is often exposed as idealistic, most notably by Angus Calder in his book *The People’s War*, it is still believed and perpetuated today. The phrase itself is commonly used in reference to the role of ordinary people on the British home front (“About The People’s War,” n.d.).

The ‘Dunkirk Spirit’ and the ‘Blitz Spirit’ are phrases which refer to the same mythic narrative about the British character. They both refer to a spirit of high morale, courage and strength despite the suffering and imminent danger of the evacuation of Dunkirk and of aerial bombing. The concept of stoicism is fundamental to these myths. The myths are commonly employed today in speech and by the press to highlight a perceived British character in the face of modern hardships such as terrorist attacks, the recession or even train delays (BBC News 2018; Helm and editor, 2008; Kelsey, 2010).

Stoicism and solidarity are key concepts for these myths and for dominant perceptions of the British national character; however their role in the British character is not new. Mark Connelly suggests that many of the ideas of Britishness associated with the Dunkirk myth, ‘Standing alone, fighting weird, wonderful and incomprehensible foreigners of all sorts against great odds’, were already in existence before the nineteenth century with reference to past military endeavours such as the Spanish Armada and the Napoleonic Wars (Connelly, 2004, pp.56–60).

The ideas of British stoicism and solidarity already existed before the war and were recognised by the Ministry of Information as useful ideas to help raise public morale. MoI propaganda films promoted these perceived positive national characteristics (Aldgate and Richards, 2007, p.316), and printed materials include terms like ‘steady’, ‘together’, ‘courage’ and ‘carry on’ (Lewis, 2017, pp.43-46). While it is difficult to ascertain the effect of these phrases and concepts on the wartime public, there is one example of stoicism and solidarity being used unsuccessfully. In 1939, a poster with the words ‘Your courage, your cheerfulness, your resolution will bring us victory’ was produced to encourage exactly these characteristics (Lewis, 2017, p.54). The poster was unpopular; some people considered it patronising and disliked the abstract term ‘resolution’ (Lewis, 2017, p.55; Mass Observation, 1939; McLaine, 1979, p.31). This example demonstrates the complexity of these concepts in the minds of the British people, even during the war itself.

In many cases, research participants interpreted the images in such a way as to assist them in drawing connections between existing national stories of myths, national identity, and their own personal identity. As well as national identity, the images also enabled some participants to communicate their own generational and gender identity.

Dig for Victory and Make Do and Mend

These two posters demonstrate how historical images help people to define and articulate their own national and generational identity. As participants viewed the images, they interpreted concepts from the objects and words within the image. ‘Dig for Victory’ was overwhelmingly associated with the idea of hard work, and ‘Make Do and Mend’ with rationing and economy. These meanings are fundamental to the existing cultural narrative of the British experience of the Second World War home front.

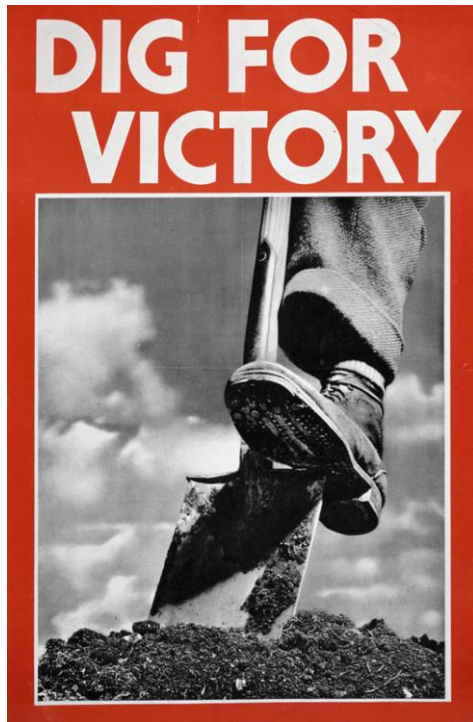


Figure 1 *Dig for Victory*, 1941, © IWM (Art.IWM PST 0059)



Figure 2 *Go Through Your Wardrobe*, 1942, © IWM (Art.IWM PST 4773)

A second layer of meaning was then interpreted by many participants, including the concepts of solidarity and stoicism. In the examples below, respondents explain the content and meaning of the images in reference to people demonstrating solidarity in the face of war by ‘coming together’ and ‘working together’. These ideas feed directly into the dominant national myths of the ‘people’s war’ and the ‘Blitz spirit’.

“Evokes idea of country coming together in a common purpose.”

Male, b.1970, writing about Dig for Victory.

“Like the Dig for Victory poster it represents people doing what they can and working together for the common good.”

Female, b.1965, writing about Make Do and Mend

This demonstrates how these images act as frames for participants to articulate their own understanding of the story of the Second World War, which both feeds, and is fed by, existing dominant national myths. When viewing these images, participants’ minds were drawn from the specific objects contained within the image to larger concepts, beliefs and narratives which they were then able to communicate. While those examples demonstrate the role of the images in reinforcing existing war myths, the examples below demonstrate how this interpretation is extended. Research participants moved beyond

the specific context of the Second World War and applied the associations they had made with British people in general.

“I think it taps into the British feeling of resilience and hard work during tough times.”

Female, b.1989, writing about Dig for Victory.

“It typifies the approach of the British to the war - we were all in it together and everyone had a role to play in the war effort.”

Female, b.1996, writing about Dig for Victory.

“‘Make-do and Mend’ sounds very British it reminds me of ‘keep calm and carry on’ in its abrupt answer to issues from facing hardships in clothing to bombings.”

Female, b.1997, writing about Make Do and Mend.

The posters enabled respondents to articulate their understanding of what it means to be British, and in many cases this understanding included concepts of hard work, solidarity and stoicism. Participants generalised from their interpretation of the image and their understanding of the experience of the Second World War home front to draw conclusions about British national identity. As respondents referred less to the specific Second World War context of the posters, they discussed their relevance to modern life. So, in the examples below, respondents applied the concepts they associated with ‘Make Do and Mend’: of economy, creativity and solidarity to modern causes of vintage fashion, sustainability and charity.

“I think of charity shops and vintage stores, of people in the war repairing clothes in order to save, but also of the comparison with hipster habits now of valuing vintage clothing and living in a more sustainable and ethical way.”

Female, b.1991, writing about Make Do and Mend.

“I like it - it's very contemporary and could/should be taken-up by a charity shop for a modern campaign.”

Male, b.1967, writing about Make Do and Mend.

These two posters also gave respondents the opportunity to frame their own personal identity, particularly in relation to their generation. In the examples below, people identified themselves as members of a certain generational group from their ability to recognise and remember a poster.

“I am sure it is memorable for everyone of my generation as it is immediately recognisable as to what it means.”

Female, b.1946, writing about Dig for Victory.

“I assume (perhaps mistakenly) that I am of the last generation to have heard it spoken as a child.”

Male, b.1959, writing about Dig for Victory.

Respondents also identified themselves as part of a generation in reaction to their perception of the values of other generations.

“I am aware of the slogan 'Make Do and Mend' but wonder how much resonance that has among the younger generations (i.e. younger than me - a post-war baby boomer!)”

Female, b.1956, writing about Make Do and Mend.

By speculating about the knowledge of younger people, this participant positions herself as a member of a ‘post-war baby boomer’ generation for whom the slogan ‘Make Do and Mend’ has meaning. By viewing and responding to the images, participants were able to communicate their own identities through the lens of national myth and through the lens of generational difference.

Keep Calm and Carry On



Figure 4 Keep Calm and Carry On, 1939, public domain (Wikimedia)

Respondents saw ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ as a direct symbol of Britishness in itself. The slogan was frequently interpreted as communicating the concept of stoicism, a key element in the national myth of the ‘Blitz spirit’ and the ‘Dunkirk spirit’. The crown was interpreted as representing monarchy and empire by many respondents, giving a direct link to the British nation. In the examples below, participants communicated their understanding of British national identity through their interpretation of the image. In many cases, they exhibit an emotional response in doing this, defining

themselves as members of the British nation through the use of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’.

“The crown gives authority and reminds all of the empire.”
Male, b.1951, writing about Keep Calm and Carry On.

“It has totally embedded into our collective psyche. I think British people would see this as actually summing up what we think we are good at – facing challenges and being brave when needed.”
Female, b.1954, writing about Keep Calm and Carry On.

“Now it is seen as “Britishness” in a phrase. We are all proud of it and want to say “this is us”.”
Female, b.1953, writing about Keep Calm and Carry On.

“Makes one proud to be British.”
Male, b.1955, writing about Keep Calm and Carry On.

For many respondents, ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ was a symbol of Britain before it was a symbol of the war. This is firstly due to the fact that the poster was never displayed during the war but only in recent years, so memories of it inevitably originate from modern sources. Secondly the poster does not include any features that link it to the 1940s period. This disconnection from the war makes the image a powerful symbol of national identity because it can be easily applied to modern contexts. In the examples below, one participant admitted surprise that the poster was a wartime poster, and another related it to modern-day terrorist attacks.

“I think I was surprised to learn that it came directly from the war.”
Female, b.1965, speaking about Keep Calm and Carry On.

“I think it’s still very relevant today, especially with the numerous terror attacks we suffer.”
Female, b.1989, writing about Keep Calm and Carry On.

Whether or not participants recognised the poster’s link to the war, they still interpreted it as communicating the concept of stoicism as a typically British characteristic. By viewing and responding to the image, participants were able to associate themselves with this characteristic and define their own national identity.

Women of Britain Come into the Factories and Let Us Go Forward Together

The two posters ‘Women of Britain Come into the Factories’ and ‘Let Us Go Forward Together’ were only included in the interview process and not the survey. For many interviewees, Winston Churchill’s face was a symbol of the Second World War and of British national identity. In the example below, one interviewee expressed emotion when talking about Churchill.

“For those of us who had imbibed memories and for whom it is as if we’d lived through the war, because it is like that for me, I mean Churchill saved us – and one feels very emotional.”

Male, b.1943, speaking about Let Us Go Forward Together.

Looking at the photograph of his face triggered memories for this person which in turn caused strong feelings of pride and gratitude. The interviewee also responded to the poster in a way that reinforces the existing national story of the Second World War as Churchill’s War, where Churchill was the sole hero of the Britain’s victory.

The ‘Women of Britain’ poster is often interpreted as a symbol of women’s liberation. The



Figure 5 *Let Us Go Forward Together*, 1940, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Figure 6 *Women of Britain Come into the Factories*, 1941, © IWM (Art.IWM PST 3645)

objects in the poster triggered memories of interviewees and encouraged them to reflect on their existing understanding of the story of the Second World War, that it was a time

of increased independence for women. In the example below, one interviewee interpreted empowerment and used the word ‘us’ to demonstrate her own identification with this meaning.

“Women—sort of like empowerment and a sense of their liberation and I know that’s not what that is meant to symbolise, I know she’s looking more towards the men who are going to war, but that kind of image, it kind of signifies like a sort of sense of us finally, as women, moving forward a bit, breaking the traditional roles and breaking some boundaries.”

Female, b.1992, speaking about Women of Britain.

Cynicism

While respondents recognised the symbolic meanings within the posters and the existence of the national myths, they did not always agree with these interpretations. There was a distinct element of cynicism running through the survey and interview responses, as people communicated their interpretations of the images and their personal identities *in reaction* to what they perceive to be the dominant narrative. In the example below, one interviewee explained their interpretation of the poster ‘Let Us Go Forward Together’.

“For me, Churchill, now there’s a lot of baggage there, in some ways I feel proud about the fact that we fought the second world war and we won and I feel like it was a noble cause, but – I feel like he’s kind of elevated to a status which is perhaps problematic and probably would have been problematic even for him, because obviously it wasn’t just one man who won the war, so I’d say it sort of creates mixed feelings in a way – some sort of doubts.”

Female, b.1987, speaking about Let Us Go Forward Together.

This participant recognised the power of the national myth of Churchill’s war, but expressed their discomfort with this myth and explained a more nuanced interpretation of Churchill.

Similarly, ‘Dig for Victory’ made one respondent feel uncomfortable with the patriotism that they felt when viewing it. They recognised that the poster successfully triggered thoughts, memories and emotions that encourage feelings of patriotism, but they made clear that rationally they did not find this interpretation of the image comfortable.

“It makes me feel like, yeah, yeah, yeah, pull together – and that’s slightly uncomfortable, in the sense of – in terms of nationalism, yeah, yeah, pull together, we will defeat enemies – that is slightly uncomfortable, now– it makes me feel like patriotic and that has a double edged sword, now, that’s a very, that’s an

uncomfortable thing I think currently and I wouldn't have felt that years ago– but at the same time it's like this is part of my history, I'm English, I'm British, English, and this is part of my heritage.”

Female, b.1969, speaking about Dig for Victory

'Keep Calm and Carry On' encouraged the most cynicism from respondents. While most recognised the poster's power as a symbol of a dominant national identity, some positioned their own identity against this. In the examples below, the participants associated this conception of national identity with modern events such as Brexit and identified themselves as against this.

“Irritation, boredom, a sense of frustration that we sentimentalise some kind of Dunkirk spirit at a time when we are experiencing a real international crisis around refugees and Brexit and so much more.”

Female, b.1971, writing about Keep Calm and Carry On

“I suppose it represents Britishness to me, and the British attitude of carrying on regardless. It reminds me of during the recent Westminster terrorist attack, when I think people did some mock-ups of it, or that was the tone of a lot of the images shared on social media. I think its "Britishness" annoys me a bit, because I hate all that nostalgia for the Empire, Rule Britannia stuff that I think has really become prominent recently, especially in the run-up to Brexit.”

Female, b.1992, writing about Keep Calm and Carry On

These examples demonstrate the subtle responses people have to historical images, which require in-depth interviewing to be fully revealed. People interpret historical images in light of contemporary concerns, their own personal beliefs and memories and historical knowledge. The images help people to make sense of these different influences and frame and communicate their own identities.

Conclusion

The posters examined in this study are artefacts from a very specific cultural context which are associated by members of the public with concepts relating to the Second World War. However, the survey and interview data collected through this research has revealed that the posters have a far more expansive role in influencing how people define and communicate their understanding of the past, their nation and their identity.

When the research participants viewed the images, they often interpreted concepts fundamental to dominant myths of the British war experience. The concepts that were most frequently referred to are solidarity and stoicism: necessary elements of the 'People's War' and the 'Dunkirk Spirit' and 'Blitz Spirit' myths. In many cases, participants

responses were both informed by and reinforce these myths. In the process of interpreting and responding, participants clarified their own personal identities. These identities can relate to the British nation and ideas of Britishness, but also to generation and to gender. It seems that viewing and considering an image can help a person to distil their memory, knowledge and beliefs and frame and communicate their identity in response to it.

Identities can be framed and communicated not only in accord with associated concepts and myths, but also in reaction to them. The research demonstrates that a person may interpret the same dominant concepts from an image and recognise the existence of the national myths associated with it, but at the same time may define their own identity against this orthodoxy, clarifying it with far more nuance than is usually revealed by survey-based research. This underlines the need for in-depth interviewing when attempting to explore the relationship between cultural artefacts and identity.

This study reveals long-term and complex impacts that historical and cultural artefacts can have on the way people think about the past and their own identities. An artefact such as a propaganda poster acts as one of many different influences on the mind of a person when they consider their own sense of nation, history and self. As a person encounters and attempts to make sense of an artefact, they also are able to make sense of their own thoughts and identities through the cultural frame of that artefact.

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Appendix 1: Images

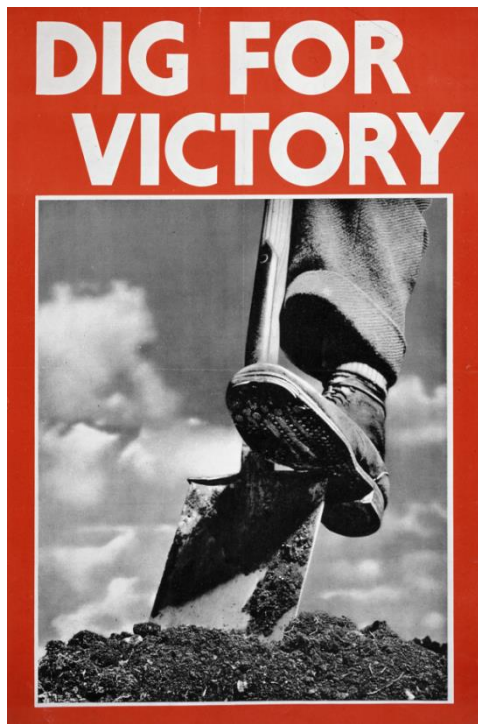


Figure 1 Dig for Victory, 1941, © IWM (Art.IWM PST 0059)



Figure 2 Go Through Your Wardrobe, 1942, © IWM (Art.IWM PST 4773)



Figure 3 Careless Talk Cost Lives, 1940, © National Army Museum, London



Figure 4 Keep Calm and Carry On, 1939, public domain (Wikimedia)



Figure 5 Let Us Go Forward Together, 1940, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Figure 6 Women of Britain Come into the Factories, 1941, © IWM (Art.IWM PST 3645)



Figure 7 Keep Mum She's Not So Dumb, 1941, © IWM (Art.IWM PST 4095)

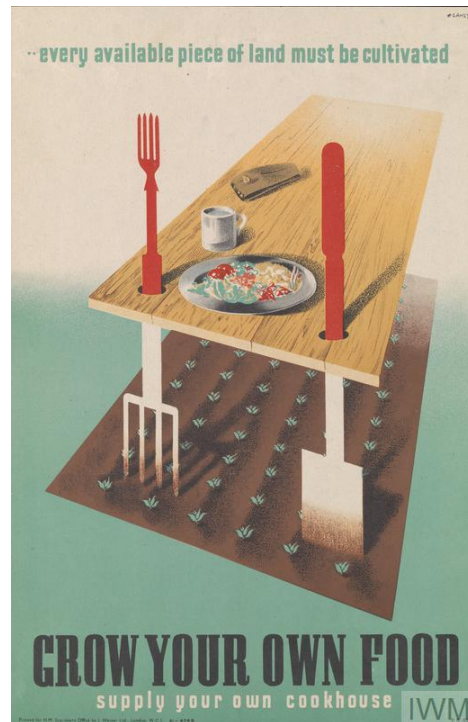


Figure 8 Grow Your Own Food, 1942, © IWM (Art.IWM PST 2893)



Figure 9 Make Do and Mend, 1943, © IWM

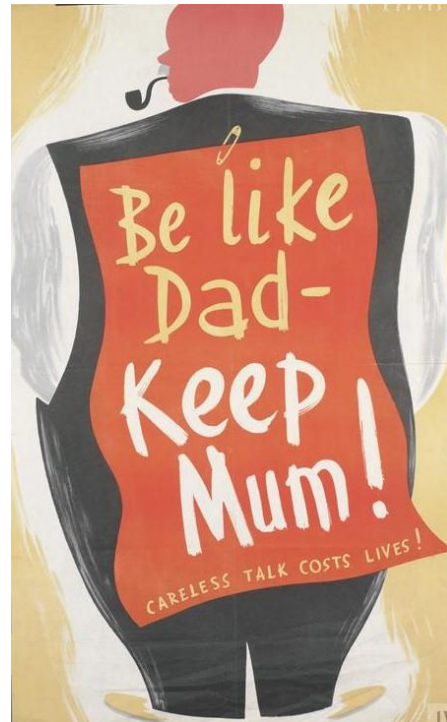


Figure 10 Be Like Dad – Keep Mum!, 1940, © IWM (Art.IWM PST 13946)

Appendix 2: Survey and interview participants

Table 1 Birth years of participants

Birth year	Number of survey respondents	Number of interviewees
1925-1930	4	2
1931-1939	11	1
1940-1945	10	3
1946-1955	47	2
1956-1965	40	1
1966-1975	38	2
1976-1985	31	1
1986-1995	55	2
1996-2001	16	2
TOTAL	252	16

Table 2 Birth regions of participants

Birth region	Number of survey respondents	Number of interviewees
East Midlands	11	1
East of England	9	2
International	36	2
London	73	2
North East	9	2
North West	19	1
Scotland	7	1
South East	31	1
South West	12	1
Wales	9	1
West Midlands	16	1
Yorkshire and the Humber	15	1
Unknown	5	0
TOTAL	252	16

Table 3 Gender of participants

Gender	Number of survey respondents	Number of interviewees
Female	129	9
Male	120	7
Genderqueer	1	0
Prefer not to say	2	0
TOTAL	252	16

Table 4 Highest level of education of participants

Highest level of education	Number of survey respondents	Number of interviewees
Secondary School	16	2
Some College or Further Education	56	4
Bachelor's Degree	61	5
Master's Degree	66	3
Advanced Graduate work or PhD	46	2
Prefer not to say	7	0
TOTAL	252	16

Claiming a History: The 2012 Cartoon Controversy and Public History debates in Contemporary India

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the widening split between academic and public histories and their role in shaping contemporary Indian politics. This paper illustrates the axes of this divide through the NCERT textbook controversy (2012) that saw numerous petitions and lawsuits filed against reputed academic historians in India for their ‘unflattering’ portrayal of certain marginalised castes (Dalits), communities and organisations in school history textbooks. This paper discusses the politics of their production and takes into account the claims and contestations that surround them. It goes on to argue why the pedagogies that inform secular history writing in India have fallen short in their understanding of popular historical narratives produced by Dalit communities and how they speak to larger narratives of caste, class and capital.

Deconstructing a cartoon

In 2005, after the secular nationalist Congress party came to power in India in 2004, the National Council of Education and Research Training (NCERT), the national body that is tasked with framing school curriculum and producing textbooks, instituted the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). The NCF was a massive bibliographic enterprise that marked several important departures from earlier postcolonial exercises in writing textbooks for Indian schoolchildren. It attempted to undo the distortions and rewritings of the immediately preceding government in power, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), ideologically affiliated to the Hindu Right. It also focused on fostering “critical pedagogies” of teaching rather than foisting cultural and political ideologies on schoolchildren. Knowledge, the NCF emphasised, was to be conceived not as “finished products” to be transferred to schoolchildren but built upon the experiences of the teacher and the taught (National Curriculum Framework 2005, p 25). The new social science textbooks posed history, along with other disciplines such as political science and sociology, as open-ended projects, emphasising a plurality of narratives that sharply interrogated presumptions of homogeneity. Professionally established academics were engaged as authors, discussants and vetters of these paradigm-shifting textbooks. Cartoons were introduced as a central pedagogic tool in many of the social science textbooks. The

new centrally-produced textbooks and these methods of production became a new grand standard for state-level educational boards to aspire to and emulate (*Aarti Dhar*, 20 May 2012).



Figure 1: *Constitution*. Cartoonist K. Shankar Pillai drew this illustration in 1949, when B.R. Ambedkar was the Law Minister and Chairman of the Constituent Assembly.

It was not until 2012 that a furore erupted on a national scale. At the heart of the debate was a cartoon that portrayed B.R. Ambedkar, the iconic leader of the Dalit (ex-Untouchable castes) movement and Chairman of the Constituent Assembly in independent India, being whipped by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, for the slow progress in drafting the new Constitution. The cartoon itself was published in 1949 and had raised no outcry then, with both individuals still alive. Its inclusion in the new textbooks in a chapter on the making of the Indian Constitution and the subsequent outrage by members of Dalit communities, almost after 70 years of the cartoon's publication, seemed ironic and unreal to most in the academic public sphere. The controversy exposed the massive divide between the Dalit intelligentsia who wanted the cartoon to be removed from the textbook and the left/liberal, secularist and feminist scholarship that rallied behind the authors, not only in India but also Indian scholars located in elite western universities. I understand the serious critical sleight performed in

clumping distinct, if not disparate categories such as left, liberal, secularist and feminist together but the cartoon controversy saw precisely a convergence of sorts between these groups. The point is not to collapse these categories of scholarship nor its scholars as a monolithic unit but rather to show how the cartoon controversy throws light on the pedagogical hierarchies created, informed and sustained by such a nexus. Scholars from the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, whose faculty was heavily involved in the writing of these new textbooks, readily came to defend these cartoons along with their supporters. An early statement, somewhat grandly titled “In Defence of Critical Pedagogy”, was issued by prominent JNU historians Neeladri Bhattacharya (also the Chief Advisor for the NCERT History textbooks), Janaki Nair, and Kumkum Roy (both pioneering feminist historians), among others. Defending the cartoons in question, the authors argued:

India has a long creative tradition of satire and irony. The productive power of laughter has been used not only in movements for social justice, but in children’s literature as well. If we celebrate this tradition, we celebrate democracy. Only in non-democratic countries is there a fear of cartoons (“In Defence of Critical Pedagogy”, 2011).

The statement exemplifies this kind of convergences – critical pedagogues, feminists, leftists, secularists who came together in defence of the cartoon’s use in textbooks and happened to be, incidentally, mainly savarna or upper caste. Nivedita Menon, another celebrated and radical feminist voice, noted with unhappy concern that Dalit intellectuals had unwittingly played into the “political strategy of stifling democratic critique of the political classes” (Ajay Skaria, “Violence and laughter: The Ambedkar cartoon controversy”, 30 May, 2012). K Satyanarayana, a Dalit scholar and academic based in Hyderabad, comments on this extraordinary coming together of the left-liberal academic community:

In fact after Mandal⁸, I think this is the first time that left-liberals and Gandhians and Marxists to other ML [Marxist-Leninist] groups came together unanimously in response to dalit protests to say that these textbooks are good and revolutionary and there is nothing wrong in them (Satyanarayana, “Ambedkar Cartoon, Dalit Objections and Indian Left Liberals – I”, 03 June 2012).

Within a week, it received more than a thousand signatures and major statements of support from scholarly communities mobilised not only from elite academic institutions

⁸ The Mandal Commission was set up in 1979, chaired by B.P. Mandal, to identify backward communities. Its recommendations to create a 27% quota for a new category of ‘Other Backward Classes’ created a massive outrage among ‘general category’ students who were not part of the affirmative action instituted under this provision.

in India but also abroad. The easy equation of celebrating satirical humour as celebrating democracy romanticises the cartoon as a critical tool, as if it is a text which exists beyond the social structures and asymmetries that produce it. That any kind of laughter could also be structured innately by the caste hierarchies that create objects and subjects of laughter is completely missed in the whole statement, and Dalit insensitivity is implicitly posited as a sign of immaturity of its politics.

The cartoon controversy also opened a barrage of complaints, mostly from ex-marginalised communities who considered portrayals of their victimisation as an emasculating exercise that went counter to their own attempts at upward mobility. Janaki Nair, historian and an author of the NCERT Textbook Committee, argued that the ability of historians to claim any kind of academic authority seemed seriously tested:

Recent protests against the protocols of academic history have shown only the most cavalier respect for such claims to authority. In fact, 'unreason' could become the starting point for a new kind of historical claim, especially among peoples such as Dalits (the name taken by people from hitherto 'untouchable' castes) who are increasingly making a claim to their histories based on oral and performative traditions, rather than searching for non-existent archival sources. (Nair, 01 October 2016)

Community assertions such as this went directly against the enlightenment assumptions of history as a discipline: of scripting a story of rationality, progress and the spread of secular, liberal knowledge in homogenous empty time.

In sharp contrast to the non-identitarian secular-speak of India's elite public sphere, Dalit discourses explicitly invoked identity politics to mobilise their claims and enter history by rewriting existing narratives. How did Dalit discourses reach such an impasse in postcolonial practices of secular history writing? From its anti-colonial context where Indian nationalism was shaped, forged and pitted against the British empire, articulations of narrow community interest were generally perceived as playing into strategies of imperial consolidation by the largely liberal nationalist vanguard. Community interests were actively tamed and disciplined, even subverted by the rhetoric of a greater nation that was always more than the sum of its parts. This anti-colonial nationalism, particularly of the kind espoused by the Indian National Congress, whose leaders generally came from an upper caste/class social background, defined and dominated the trajectories of nationalist discourse. Ambedkar was the first nationally acclaimed leader to come from outside this rank and file of majoritarian Congress nationalism.

The emphasis on an essential unity of the subcontinent fermenting through ages and centuries was a powerful nationalist invocation deployed recurrently in anticolonial politics. All struggles, movements and conflicts that involved tribes, castes, women, labour or religions and other community interests were subsumed within an ever-expansive

nationalist movement. The autonomy of these struggles, the nationalist movement and its leaders repeatedly insisted, could be deferred to a future postcolonial moment; its time to be assertive was not now. In 1947, the creation of an Islamic state of Pakistan, the murder of Gandhi by a Hindu activist and the bloody legacy of partition proved repeatedly that nationalist myths of unity are often fallacies and fantasies. Yet, for the Congress leadership, now headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, these events were proof of the horrors that identity movements perpetuated, rather than major blowbacks to majoritarian politics. The immediate postcolonial decades of 1950s and 60s saw the creation of the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) that reflected the postcolonial state's agenda of national integration and secularism (Nair, 2016, p.4). The first history textbooks were written by nationalist historians who sought to write decisive and coherent histories for the nation, celebrating an ethic of 'unity in diversity'. In so doing, they managed to repudiate liberal/imperial notions of colonial history, but also borrowed extensively from an earlier generation of colonial Orientalist scholarship often invested in disciplining forms of power-knowledge, transforming them into received wisdom in the process (Bhattacharya, 2003). This also led to an almost complete cultural hegemony of the liberal/left intelligentsia over state research bodies. Nehru's death saw the dissipation of the Nehruvian consensus on nationalism in the 1970s. The former approach to history as a public good informed by humanist and liberal values and a welfare state also waned (Chakrabarty, 2008, pp. 6-7). If the 1950s and 1960s were a period of enchantment with nationalism and modernity, the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s saw the dissolution of that enchantment with secular socialist nationalism and the emergence of more cultural nationalist forms that did not hesitate to be exclusivist (Bhattacharya, 2003, pp.5-7). The Cold War and its aftermath had produced a disenchantment with socialist utopias and India was all geared up to embrace the neoliberal world ushered in the 1990s with the New Economic Policy.

Dalit interventions

Thanks to decades of positive discrimination programmes, the emergence of a relatively well- to-do Dalit middle class politically, socially and academically from the 1990s onwards saw a major transformation in the nature of their struggle. From near illiteracy and marginalisation that involved struggles for livelihood and everyday experiences of caste humiliation, it took a distinctive mainstream turn. The rise of a middle-class Dalit-Bahujan discourse saw a massive production of low-caste histories and narratives often at sharp variance with academic historical scholarship.⁹ They proliferate and flourish in the vernacular, with little or no engagement with the existing body of academic historians lodged in influential academic institutions in India and abroad. The claim to victimhood and emasculation is powerful and any attempt at interrogating it could cause sustained public outrage. Dalit senses of pastness, as the cultural anthropologist Badri Narayan

⁹ Bahujan refers to Other Backward Classes, a term used by the Government of India to refer to socially disadvantaged groups other than ex-untouchable castes.

explicates, are deployed through oral retellings of popular legends and mythologies to invoke guilt in upper caste audiences (Narayan, 2009, pp. 2-3). Orality converts narratives of suffering into thresholds of empowerment. This has led to significant debates in the Indian academia on the primacy of experience over theory when it comes to claiming authorship on matters relating to caste.¹⁰

There is a certain lived experientiality to caste that defies any attempt at describing or defining. There is little written record of the histories of Dalit, tribal and other marginalised communities, whereas upper castes and classes, with their cultural and literary entitlements, provide easy access for historians to study them. These entitlements enable the reproduction of upper caste/class narratives far more readily than their less available and less visible lower caste counterparts. Histories of marginalised communities, however, thrive richly in oral, performative or musical traditions. Given the academic historian's preference for the written archive over other forms, these communities have generally suffered historical absence and inattention. The social locations of academic historians mattered precisely because any upper caste renditions of lower caste histories are seen as de-legitimising and devaluing lived experience. While upper-caste intellectuals have confidently laid claim to a universal language of humanism through specific ideologies, lower-caste intellectuals have generally regarded with suspicion such meta ideologies and universalist politics as new guises for old hegemonies.

To return to the cartoon. When furore broke, almost the whole of the left-liberal academic history establishment rallied behind the authors of these textbooks, citing threat to the much (ab)used but universal rhetoric of our times: the need to protect our "freedom of expression". The protests were, these scholars argued variously in sophisticated universalist languages: un-reasonable, irrational, unsecular and undemocratic forces to critical pedagogies of learning. There was a 'global' outpouring of support for the authors of the textbooks, and Dalit responses were termed variously fanatic, frenzied, and most importantly, identitarian. Responses to the cartoon controversy saw Dalit responses being cast as regressive and against 'freedom of expression', rallied around by largely upper-caste/class intellectuals and their followers all over the country and abroad. They protested and condemned the cartoon and its Dalit interpretation as a symbol of derision. Yet, the government had to give in to the Dalit protests and constituted a commission to review the offending cartoon as well as the others.

¹⁰ See Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai, *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*, Delhi, 2012.

Languages of universalism can couch exclusion in extremely insidious ways.¹¹ It masquerades as social location, issues of access, audience and privilege in rather benign ways. The ability to speak the 'universal' is often itself an entitlement. They constantly need to be qualified by asking who and what they are for. Given that there are so few Dalits in national iconography, the way Ambedkar is portrayed becomes hugely representative. Texts change meaning over time, and to a newly empowered community of marginalised groups, this representation holds substantive political significance. Ambedkar has been a ubiquitous symbol of Untouchable pride, so much so that he is memorialised in Dalit marriage invitation cards, homes and public installations and this portrayal seemed insensitive to that legacy. The imagery of the whip was seen as a violent disciplining act to those who have a history of being on its receiving end. Dalit intellectuals invoked instances of colonial slavery and their own untouchable pasts to instantiate how cultural memories of their violent and exclusive pasts very instinctively shaped their responses to the cartoon. The cartoon for these groups, manifested a perverse and punitive symbolism, re-enacted by an upper-caste Brahmin man on the giving end and an ex-Untouchable leader on the receiving (Savari, "Whipping up 'critical pedagogy': Uncritical defence of NCERT's violence", 21 May 2012). Support in defence of the cartoon seemed to be an apt reminder of that assertion, this time by a modern, educated and 'critically aware' class of subjects. Before rolling ourselves into the sort of postcolonial debate on whether symbolic violence is real or not, we need to remember that the issue is not merely punitive symbolism but also memories and invocations of physical violence intrinsically attached to it. This violence is not only external but also experienced, as Gopal Guru and Ajay Skaria have aptly observed, in the form of humiliation that cannot be measured but festers as a wound (Skaria, 2012). As Skaria explains, Dalit experience of humiliation is difficult to render or rationalise into the political discourse of oppression and slips through the categories of public reason (Skaria, 2012). It is precisely this pre-political aspect that seems to make Dalit outrage seemingly unreasonable and simplistic.

Cartoons, like any other social text, could equally be implicated in the disciplining forms of power-knowledge and hence not necessarily innocent and intelligent expressions of freethought and satire as are often believed. If critical pedagogy be upheld, cartoons, like any other text, need to be deconstructed. The cartoonist Shankar was an upper-caste person – perhaps the punitive symbolism of Nehru whipping Ambedkar escaped him (Skaria, 2012). It's not critical pedagogy that is a problem per se, it is the way it is deployed to resist self-reflexivity when it comes to considering questions of location,

¹¹ Etienne Balibar discusses this in his debate with Alan Badiou, "On Universalism: In Debate With Alain Badiou", <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0607/balibar/en>.

access and audience. Critical pedagogy collapses into another false universal, which claims to speak for everybody and therefore, nobody.

If the language of popular Dalit protest remains so insistently 'identitarian', it raises more questions on the trajectory of progressive politics in postcolonial India and the nature of its exclusions. The inability of marginalised communities either to access, use or transcend the specificities of their identities and contexts reflects that they barely have the language or the resources to do so. The globalising tropes of human rights or class struggle have largely been unable to permeate the everyday spaces inhabited by Dalits, in the absence of which identitarian discourses have remained such a popular, even if fraught, mode.¹²

Postscript

As an academic historian, the ethical dilemmas of indulging identity claims while writing histories is understandable. But invisibilising identities, for academic historians not just in India but almost everywhere, is instrumental in producing what Dilip Menon has termed, the 'blindness of insight' (Menon, 2006). Endogamous socialising in academia, has for long produced, and continues to produce among the finest Indian historians, a belief and conviction of the utter casteless-ness of high academia, with its pretensions to merit and English language fluency. The Dalit student, upon being admitted to these elite, generally metropolitan institutional spaces that historians inhabit, is forever looking up to an aspirational universe dominated by upper-caste/class students and faculty, their social values normalised as normative academic behaviour. The challenge remains for the high academic historian, largely Left/Liberal, among other things, to be engaged sensitively to the cultural worlds inhabited by such students, so that classrooms and seminars could forge new and inclusive ways of intellection.¹³

Given that the Dalit middle class, thanks to decades of positive discrimination, is only now beginning to enjoy the benefits of capital, the Left critique of neoliberalism takes away the very real benefits to which these communities only recently got access. Straddling and struggling with so many subjectivities simultaneously, the enchantments of neoliberalism impart meaning to their desires, demands and anxieties, without taking away their need for a past. The Hindu Right offers these communities an easy path of

¹² This is not to say that Dalit intellectuals have not studied or remained disengaged with movements such as Black Panthers or the anti-Apartheid movement, among others but rather to state the very upper caste/class dominance in forging a global language of oppression.

¹³ Take for instance the recent deaths of Dalit students Mutthukrishnan (2017) and Rohith Vemula (2016), on elite but no less alienating campuses of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi and the University of Hyderabad respectively. See for instance "A violence no autopsy can reveal!: the deadly cost of India's campus prejudice", <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/jul/02/a-violence-no-autopsy-can-reveal-the-deadly-cost-of-indias-campus-prejudice>, for an understanding of how university and higher education spaces could be places of caste-based ridicule and abuse.

cultural appropriation to be part of a majoritarian dialectic that could offer social respectability, while also assuring guilt-free access to the enchantments of a neoliberal world. Negotiating a separate Dalit identity has been difficult, convoluted and elusive, and the Left, with its entrenched coterie of class privileged intellectuals, has often underplayed caste struggles in its preference for class. Dalits now seek an active rehabilitation of their pasts and politics in mainstream nationalist narratives, a project which the Hindu Right has been happy to accommodate in exchange for their loyalties to Hindutva. Very systematically, as North Indian electoral politics has witnessed, Dalit-Bahujan and tribal heroes and legends have been co-opted and recast to fit a unified Hindu narrative. Individual caste myths and legends are used to reinforce the contributions of specific Dalit castes while also transcending that specificity to be part of a wider Hindu nation and narration, converting them into potentially valuable foot-soldiers for Hindutva (Narayan, 2009, p.11). Yet, this is not without its difficulties. The diversity and difference of Dalit practices are too inconvenient to be mainstreamed into unifying narratives without practising serious epistemic violence.

The looking-away from academic approval for these Dalit groups marks a disenchantment with academic history writing, while simultaneously bringing these groups closer to a neoliberal embrace than ever before. In other words, caste or community frameworks are being ruptured in contemporary India, but are also reinvented in different forms. As Dalits are becoming aware of their political significance as marginalised groups, attempts to placate and preserve their identity claims have gone hand-in-hand with their tethering for Hindu Right mobilisations. With the Hindu Right gradually emerging to become a true Right-wing force in South Asia, embracing the logic of capital while also being Hindu, the inclusion of Dalit communities in its fold aids a successful enactment of this move. Dalit insistences on holding on to identitarian narratives suggests how they disrupt homogenising impulses of neoliberal capital through a culturalist idiom, while also contributing to it.

The only way for academic historians to be relevant to the challenges of such popular histories is to reflect and rethink their own locations, positions and the ethical implications of their historical productions. As Partha Chatterjee has so thoughtfully commented, given that popular histories are generally articulated in vernacular mediums, it is time that English- educated bilingual historians in metropolitan universities begin to engage with such narratives in their vernaculars (Chatterjee, 2003). Only with emphases on discontinuities, breaks and ruptures that characterise historical narratives across space and time can academic historians perhaps finally begin to grapple with the writing of public histories. And always in the plural.

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Whatever happened to the 1887 Exhibition? “Tomorrow’s almost over, today went by so fast It’s the only thing to look forward to – the past” (Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?)

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ABSTRACT

In 2018 Newcastle/Gateshead held The Great Exhibition of the North. The stated ambition was that it “... will showcase world-class art, culture, design and innovation from the North.” Their website stated: “It will reveal ... how the North of England’s great art and culture, design and innovation has shaped all our lives and is building the economy of tomorrow. The dramatic story of the North, ... will instil local pride and inspire people to pursue exciting lives and careers in the North. By attracting visitors from near and far, it will transform global perceptions of Northern England...” In 1887 Newcastle held an exhibition with remarkably similar aims. Yet this event is almost forgotten – information boards at the location have only two references to it and the main local museum has only a couple of items on display. Yet it attracted over 2 million visitors and made a financial surplus of over £4,000. By comparison the Millennium Dome attracted around 6.5 million visitors, cost £789 million and made a notional surplus of £25 million.¹⁴ Visitors came on excursion trains from around the UK, and a party of 207 Danish artisans, paid for by their Government, made the trip across the North Sea. The event was put together quickly and it displayed a full range of North-Eastern industry, from a 100-ton gun to a woollen needlework picture of Moses. It was fully lit by electricity, had an extensive art gallery and a theatre. Archival material is almost non-existent (compare the 1887 Manchester Exhibition) and there is only one article in a local history publication. The paper will discuss how the exhibition came about and the role of business and workers, as well as contemporary reactions. It will question how far the past should inform the present, and will finish with provisional thoughts as to why the event has been largely forgotten.

¹⁴ According to the UK National Audit Office, the total cost of The Dome at the liquidation of the New Millennium Experience Company in 2002 was £789 million, of which £628 million was covered by National Lottery grants and £189 million through sales of tickets etc. A surplus of £25 million over costs meant that the full lottery grant was not required. However, the £603 million of lottery money was still £204 million in excess of the original estimate of £399 million required, due to the shortfall in visitor numbers. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennium_Dome

Introduction

The tallest tower in the Armstrong Building of Newcastle University sits above an arched entrance inscribed “Royal Jubilee 1887 Exhibition Tower”. At the time of writing this article, seven out of ten Google searches for this phrase refer to the 1887 Royal Jubilee Exhibition in Manchester. Of the three that refer to the Newcastle tower, two link to single images of it. The tower was built for the College of Physical Science with the foundation stone laid by Sir William Armstrong in June 1887, whilst the north-east wing opened in 1888. The building was officially opened by King Edward VII in 1906. The 1887 Jubilee Exhibition was by far the biggest public event in Newcastle in the latter part of the nineteenth century and one of a series of similar events across the North of England and Scotland. Yet the Newcastle Exhibition is the least recorded and known, even by those who work in the tower.

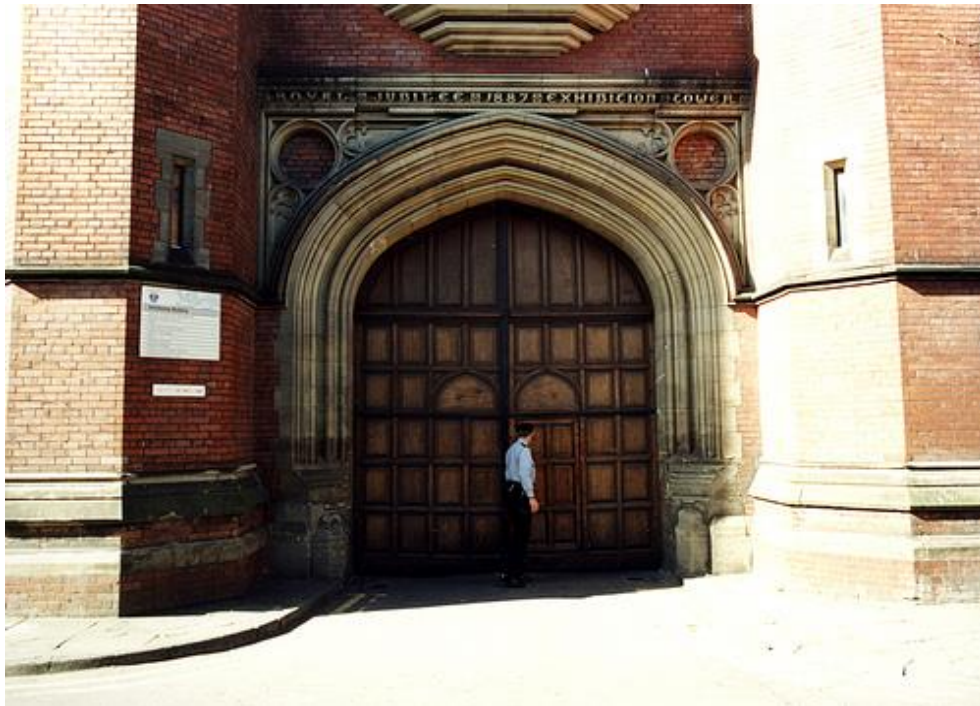


Fig.1: Newcastle City Library Photo Collection 1

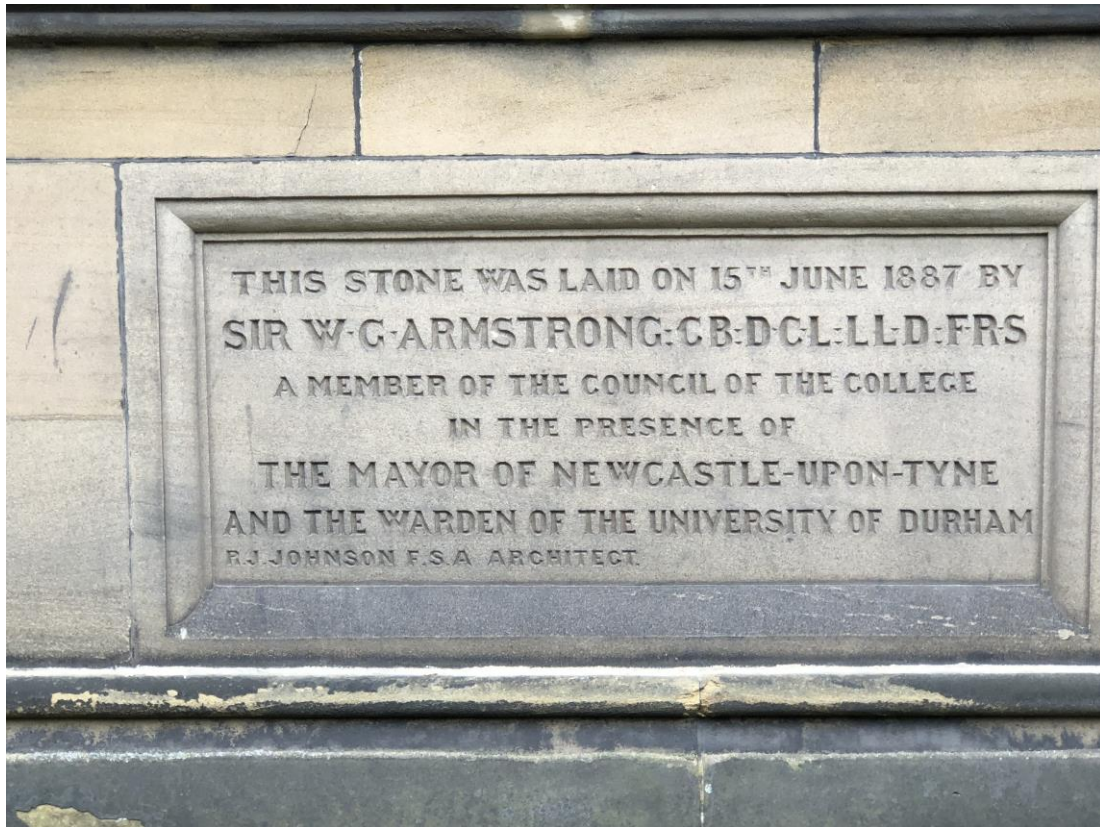


Fig. 2: Author's Collection 1

Liverpool (twice), Edinburgh, Manchester and Saltaire all held Jubilee Exhibitions between 1885 and 1887. Books have been written on the Liverpool and Manchester events, and Trafford Council maintains an extensive archive of material, including many photographs of the Manchester event (Murray Steele, *Liverpool on Display* (2012); *A Good Day Out – English Exhibitions in the Golden Jubilee Era* (2015)). Wikipedia entries exist for Manchester, Glasgow and Liverpool, and there are relics of the Edinburgh and Saltaire events in situ. The park where the Newcastle event was held is called 'Exhibition Park', still with the bandstand, originally a centrepiece of the Inner Court. Even here, there are only limited references to 1887 on the information boards.



Fig. 3: Author's Collection 2

Two million people visited the showgrounds between May and October 1887, many arriving on the six hundred or so excursion trains run from as far afield as Peterborough and London. This was a big event, but it has been almost entirely forgotten. At a time when cost constraints restrict access to local archives yet £20m is being spent on ‘The Great Exhibition of the North’ in an attempt to redefine Newcastle to locals and visitors, we need to ask if a good balance has been struck.

The Context for the 1887 Exhibition

The winter of 1885/6 was one of the coldest in thirty years, with a severe economic slowdown across the country. Government inaction through 1886 and 1887 contributed to an environment of social discontent that saw riots in London and demonstrations and marches across the country, stoking middle-class fears of violence as the ‘residuum’ had become a visible entity rather than a hidden social problem. The North-East suffered as much as anywhere. The dramatic decline in the tonnage of shipping output from Palmer’s Jarrow shipyards from 1884 onwards shows the scale of downturn (*Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 10th May 1887).

Palmer's Shipyards Tonnage

Year	Tonnage	% Change
1876	8635	
1877	16235	88.0%
1878	23470	44.6%
1879	36080	53.7%
1880	38117	5.6%
1881	50192	31.7%
1882	60379	20.3%
1883	61113	1.2%
1884	28911	-52.7%
1885	25057	-13.3%
1886	20725	-17.3%

Fig. 4: Newcastle Daily Chronicle, May 10th 1887

In industrial sectors prominent in the North-East unemployment was significant during the 1880s, reflecting the cyclical nature of the UK economy as can be seen in the graph below.

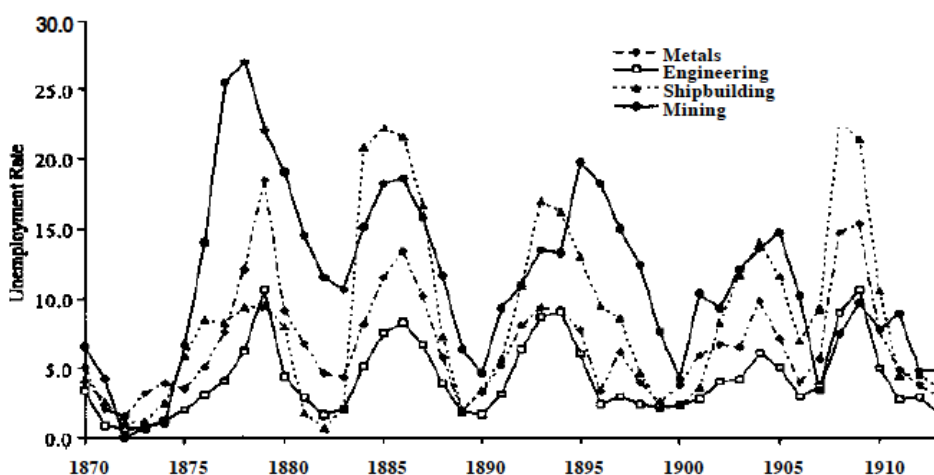


Fig. 5: Boyer and Hatton, 2002, p.658.

Despite the economic situation, Irish Home Rule dominated Westminster politics. The Liberal Unionists split from the government, and after a defeat in the Commons on the Home Rule bill in June 1886, Parliament dissolved. In the July election Salisbury returned to power supported by the Liberal Unionists. The winter of 1886/7 saw more intense cold weather, with further negative impacts on the economy. An obstructionist approach meant that the Government was tied down by the opposition and was not able to bring forward any legislation other than the Budget, so actions to address the economic downturn were seriously constrained.



Fig. 6: Newcastle City Library Photo Collection 2

Whilst these issues consumed political energy, Queen Victoria was approaching her Golden Jubilee. The government was reluctant to get too involved, waiting for some external pull for celebration rather than pushing it themselves (Kuhn, 1987, pp.107-114). This potential for pull was small; the monarch's popularity low, the Queen rarely seen in public. In 1886/7, political and economic circumstances were challenging so exhibitions were seen by big cities as opportunities to stimulate economic activity, promote local businesses, and reinforce local pride.

Scholarship to date

At the time of writing, there are no peer-reviewed academic articles about the Newcastle Exhibition. There is an article published in *Tyne and Tweed* (a local history publication) by Stafford Linsley (1991/2), and two self-published books by Murray Steele (2012; 2015) contain sections on the exhibition. Both authors make extensive use of the limited archival material available, consisting in the main of Newcastle Council Minutes, the Prospectus and the Catalogue for the exhibition, an event and local guide book, published by Andrew Reid in 1887, and contemporary newspaper reports, especially a four page 'special' printed by the *Newcastle Weekly Courant* on Friday, 13th May 1887. Steele also uses extracts from the unpublished diaries of 23 year-old William Dunn, a shipping clerk and season ticket holder. What material there is can be found in the Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle University Library's Special Collection and the City Central Library. Finding the material is difficult as there is nothing catalogued under obvious search terms such as 1887 Jubilee or 1887 Exhibition. There are few, if any, artefacts or ephemera remaining – these events produced commemorative plates, cups, handkerchiefs and the like, but the author has found none despite much searching.

Stafford Linsley's (1991/2) article in *Tyne and Tweed* is based around contemporary reports. Murray Steele's books (the first focusses on Liverpool, the second on Liverpool, Manchester, Saltaire and Newcastle) use a more extensive set of sources, but the section of the Newcastle event uses the same core as Linsley. There is little 'new' source material, although I have referenced another diary, that of Richard Lowry, together with some content in the 1887 edition of *Bulmer's History and Directory of Newcastle upon Tyne*.

Steele (2015, p.4) argues that, apart from the second Liverpool exhibition, where they seem to have been irritated into action by the success of their Mancunian rival's event, each of the Exhibitions was locally driven, planned and executed with little reference to the other events. The Newcastle evidence supports this; the Council Minutes only contain one reference to another exhibition, when, as recorded in the Corporation Minutes of Wednesday 24th November 1886 Councillor Youll said that the finances of the event needed to be properly managed "as they appear not to have been at Liverpool" to ensure a success for Newcastle. Steele (2015, p.4) noted that Manchester's extensive archive of photographs and other material related to the event was preserved at the request of the City Corporation. Liverpool lost a lot of civic material during the blitz, their archive catalogue listing twenty-one items relating to their exhibition, two of which are Murray Steele's books, and seven are newspaper articles.

The Age of Exhibitions

The concept came to Great Britain with the 1851 Great Exhibition bringing elements of the commercial, the competitive, national and regional pride and, in their patrons' minds at least, arbitration of taste. (Briggs, 1988, pp.95-6). The Great Exhibition's main aim was for Britain to show the world its role as an industrial leader. Whilst exhibits from around the world were encouraged, it was expected that these would underline Britain's superiority. The commercial was inherent in the design of the event – through attracting as many visitors as possible from both home and abroad, it would act as a shop window for the Exhibitors and reach customers in a more effective way than the newly emerging advertising industry could, as well as encouraging local pride and, in the light of the widening franchise, provide an inclusive environment which would draw all social classes into a shared experience.

The 1886 Exhibitions

In the midst of a volatile political environment there were events taking place across the country that encouraged the thought that Exhibitions were the fashion of the hour. Opening in May 1886, the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in South Kensington drew

more than 5 million visitors over 164 days. As Briefel records (Briefel, n.d., p.1) the *Saturday Review* considered that “... if any man can look at this and not come away with a new and a lively sense of the greatness of the country he belongs to, he must be a fellow of a very dull imagination and a very stupid temperament”. It focused on exhibits from around the Empire, including 34 ‘artisans’ from India (reputedly brought from Agra jail). (Briefel, n.d., p.3).

At the same time another Exhibition was opening in Edinburgh. Running from the 6th May to 30th October 1886, it was opened by Prince Albert Victor, Victoria’s grandson, and took place in a purpose-built pavilion on the city’s Meadows parkland. In keeping with other events, over 20,000 exhibits from around the world, including examples of mining, pottery, sugar-refining, paper-making, printing and railways were arranged within a large pavilion. Additionally, there was a large-scale reconstruction of a 17th-century Edinburgh street including the old gateway into the city, the Netherbow Port and the Black Turnpike (*The Scotsman*, 2013).

These events combined a formal industrial/commercial element with a less formal amusement section. They can be seen as fusion events, mixing high and low culture; elitism and popularity, aligning with expectations of rational recreation (Hoffenberg, 2001, p. xviii). This mixture was on the one hand contentious, but on the other intensely practical. The machines, products and tools were displayed almost as abstract examples of work, with little or no reference to the working lives of those who made or operated them (Hoffenberg, 2001, pp.184-185). These sections provided the competitive and commercial elements but they alone would not attract sufficient visitors. The key was to make the public not just visitors but participants hence the addition of amusement – Grace Darling’s Coble, the recreation of ‘Old Edinburgh’. It also reflected the change in thinking about the nature of popular entertainment and its role; rather than fearing ‘the mob’ it was becoming accepted thinking that exhibitions, fairs and the like were vehicles for creating a greater integration between classes – they were a potential source of order, not disorder. These two events attracted 7.7 million visitors (London 5 million, Edinburgh 2.7 million) (Steele, 2012, p.112). Both made a profit and the press and critics judged them as successful. Around the same time leading figures in Newcastle and Manchester were considering running similar events, and the news from Edinburgh and London must have been well received.

Origination

The Newcastle event originated with the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers. Meeting in late 1885, the Institute decided to hold an exhibition of

mining appliances in Newcastle and to invite mining and mechanical engineers from the UK and abroad. Members of the Institute started to discuss the proposal with the Corporation of Newcastle in January 1886. The Mayor, Benjamin C Browne,¹⁵ and the Council saw an opportunity, and the scope was extended to cover all mining, engineering and industrial appliances, with the date being moved to 1887 recognising that the Edinburgh and Liverpool events were planned for 1886, and, “to mark in the annals of Newcastle-upon-Tyne the Jubilee year of the reign of her Gracious Majesty.” (Newcastle Corporation Minutes, 11th May 1887).

A public prospectus was created and a panoply of the great and good of North Eastern society formed an organising committee. The Duke of Northumberland became Patron, the Earl of Ravensworth President; thirteen Earls, four Bishops, twenty-eight MPs, and twelve Mayors joined Sir William Armstrong, the Mayor and Sheriff of Newcastle, amongst the Vice Presidents.¹⁶ The first meeting, held on 15th April 1886 at the Literary and Philosophical Society, was described as one of the ‘most representative and influential meetings ever held in Newcastle’ (Newcastle Corporation Minutes, 11th May 1887). The Mayor argued that what a shop window is to a shopkeeper, an exhibition is to a manufacturer. He said they were also a way of finding out how others did things, including those abroad.¹⁷ An exhibition ‘would put Newcastle in a better position than it had ever occupied before, which is saying a great deal’ (*Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 13th May 1887). This was the aim of the event – to promote the town and its industries to as many people as possible.

The Official Prospectus does not mention the intended audience, but we can deduce some ideas from the proposed pricing structure. The initial entrance fee structure was straightforward – 2/6d on Wednesdays, and 1/- on other days. The higher price on Wednesday (common practice at other exhibitions) was designed to encourage attendance by people of quality. A Season Ticket could be purchased for a Guinea with a Workmen’s Ticket at half a Guinea available to men and women who worked with their hands for wages, and to clerks, shopkeepers or foremen who earned less than £2 per week. This was soon extended to include seamstresses, shop girls, female factory workers and domestic servants, but these tickets could not be used on Wednesdays. With a typical

¹⁵ Browne was a mechanical engineer who had trained at the Elswick works. He had been a senior partner and had been involved in the takeover of R&W Hawthorn in 1870. He eventually became Chairman of Hawthorn Leslie & Co in 1886.

¹⁶ This construct was the same for the Manchester Exhibition – The Earl of Sefton was President, and the Vice Presidents included 2 Dukes, 6 Earls, 28 MPs and 22 Mayors.

¹⁷ The *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (n.d.) records a visit by 207 Danes, chiefly artisans, who were sent across to visit the exhibition on 21st July. The Mayor addressed them at the Exhibition site. The following day they inspected several engineering and manufacturing establishments on the Tyne, including the Elswick works.

agricultural wage in the North East around 13/4d and artisan wages perhaps between 30/- and 38/- a week a family visit would have been expensive.

The Exhibition Executive Council agreed that the scope should be expanded to showcase electric lighting and the systems needed to produce it.¹⁸ By the end of April 1886, the Executive Council had secured agreement to hold the exhibition on Bull Park, adjacent to the Great North Road and on the south-eastern corner of the Town Moor. Conveniently it was decided to hold the Royal Agricultural Society's Annual Show to coincide with the proposed exhibition, and by co-locating the two events, a total of 31.5 acres were available (*Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 13th May 1887). The Town Moor was (and still is) owned by the Freemen of the City, so the land was only lent, with the proviso that it had to be returned to its previous state. After some modifications, the plans were accepted by the Executive Council on 2nd September 1886 (*Newcastle Corporation Minutes*, 2nd September 1886). They provided an area of 270,000 square feet under cover in the main Exhibition Halls, and with additional buildings in the gardens, the total under cover was 430,000 square feet.

As with other events, a Guarantee Fund was set up – the Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers committed £1,000, Newcastle Corporation committed £5,000.¹⁹ The Tyne Improvement Commissioners then agreed to provide £2,000, and soon the fund stood at £34,552.10s. The Fund underpinned the Exhibition finances, to be called on only if entrance fees from visitors and rental from stallholders did not cover the costs. In the event, some £27,000 was realised from charges made to exhibitors for space, catering, printing and other contracts, thus covering the building costs so the Exhibition was effectively cost neutral before it opened. The Directors of the North Eastern Railway were persuaded to offer excursions to the event. Usefully, the Chairman of the Railway, John Dent, was an Exhibition Vice President, and Sir Lothian Bell, member of the Exhibition Executive Council was also a Board Member. They offered tickets at reduced rates with excursions running from as far afield as London and Peterborough, and by the close over 600 excursion trains had been run by the NER, a mutually beneficial collaboration.²⁰

¹⁸ Joseph Swan developed the first practical lamp and led the way in early electrical lighting. Swan supplied arc lamps to light the Picture Gallery at Cragside (Sir W.G. Armstrong's house) in Northumberland in 1878, and for Mosley Street in Newcastle, the first electrically lit street in 1879.

¹⁹ One vocal opponent of the Corporation committing such a large amount was Alderman Barkas. Interestingly he is mentioned in the official record of the event as attracting one of biggest crowds to a lecture at the event – on 'Animals that lived in Northumberland during the Coal Period'.

²⁰ The Liverpool event saw a similar close collaboration – this time between the Tramways and the event. The Chairman of the Tram Company was the Mayor of Liverpool who presided over the Exhibition as well.

By the end of January 1887, it was confirmed that The Duke of Cambridge ²¹ would open the event on behalf of Queen Victoria. The Exhibition buildings were handed over at the end of February 1887, the first exhibits arriving at the end of March. Newspaper reports indicate that large crowds outside the grounds watched developments, and seats on top of tramcars going up North Road to Gosforth were a popular means of evaluating progress (*Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 8th April 1887). The larger exhibits required considerable effort, including a 44-ton Robert Stephenson & Co locomotive. Other exhibits, including a 6ft glass replica of Scott’s Monument suffered some damage in transit, but by April everything was in place (Linsley, 1991/2, p.49).

The ‘Attractions’

Attractions were not a new idea – there were as many sideshows as stalls at the Great Exhibition (Briggs, 1988, p.91). Fairs and exhibitions alike had always had something of a dual role – the Hiring Fairs, common across much of rural England until the outbreak of the First World War were as much about enjoyment as they were about securing another annual contract (Caunce, 2017, p.111-126). Added to this was the commercial benefit– the larger the paying audience the bigger the revenue, and the bigger the audience the larger the fees to be charged to the amusement providers.

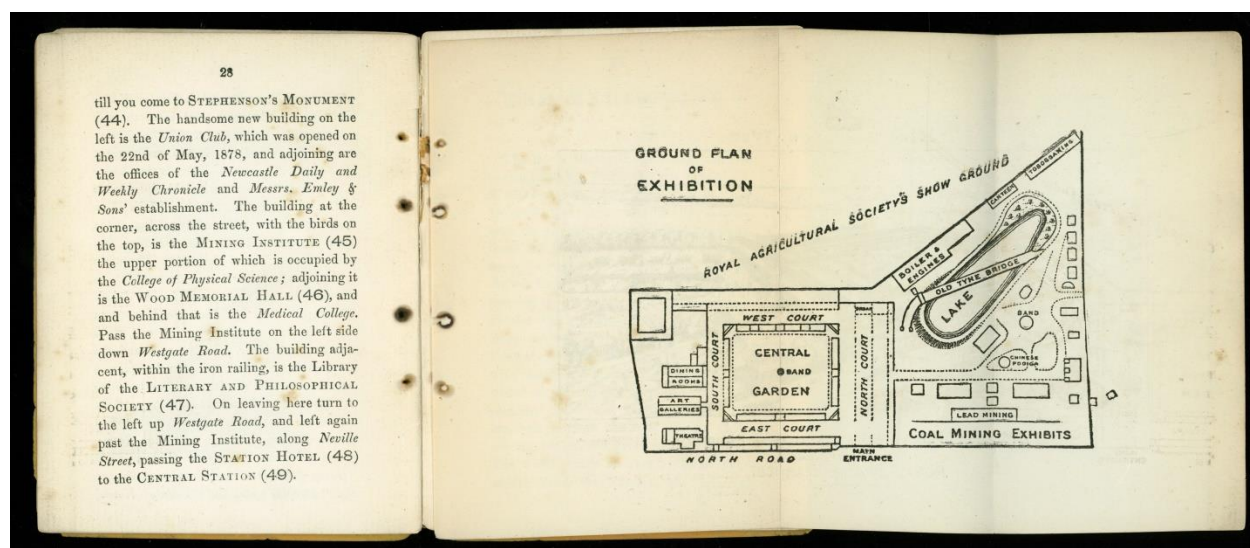


Fig. 7: Newcastle University Special Collection 1: Exhibition Plan from “A Day in Newcastle and its Jubilee Exhibition” published by A Reid.

²¹ Prince George, 2nd Duke of Cambridge (George William Frederick Charles; 26 March 1819 – 17 March 1904) was a cousin of Queen Victoria. The Duke was an army officer by profession and served as Commander-in-Chief of the Army from 1856 to 1895. He became Duke of Cambridge in 1850.

The Exhibition was based around four ‘Courts’ with a central garden and bandstand. The North Gardens contained many of the ‘attractions’ including full-size replicas of a lead and a coal mine together with working examples of the haulage systems used in them. The coal mine had a replica of a coal seam where different methods of mining were demonstrated.²² Both the mines (and other parts of the Exhibition) were lit by electric light, provided by a generator housed in the Gardens (using fourteen 14 steam powered turbo-generators built by local firm Clarke, Chapman, Parsons and Co.) (Linsley, 1991/2, p.56). In a bold example of the competitive spirit of the Exhibition, the Executive Council chose multiple different generating systems. As the first city in the world to have a street fully lit by incandescent light bulbs, when the lights of Mosley Street were switched on on 3rd February 1879, Newcastle was a leader in this area so it made sense to promote this technology.

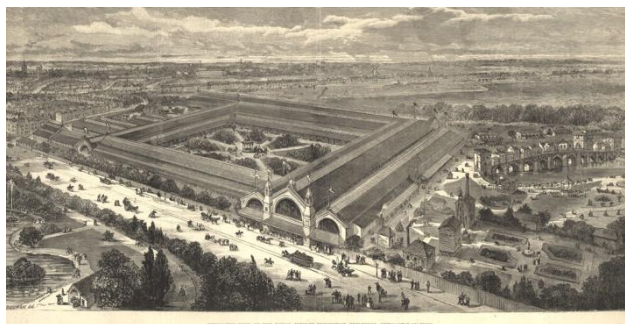


Fig. 8: Newcastle City Library Photo Collection 3

The Newcastle amusements included a shooting and archery range resembling Alnwick Castle, a cigarette and cigar emporium, and a model dockyard selling mechanical toys. In addition, a toboggan run and a gravitational railway were at the northern tip of the gardens, both provided and run by Messrs Brown and Backhouse.²³ Refreshments were available from a variety of stalls, and for those requiring cheaper fare, there was a canteen selling cold luncheons and beer at what were described as public house prices. There was also Mr Barker’s Cyclorama of Paris, a panorama depicting various incidents of the 1871 Franco-Prussian war. Finally, there was a model of the old Tyne Bridge as it would have

²² Methods demonstrated included stope mining, longwall, and pillar and stall. Stope mining is the process of extracting the coal leaving behind an open space known as a stope. Stopping is used when the rock is sufficiently strong not to collapse, although in most cases artificial support is also provided. Longwall mining is where a long wall of coal is mined in a single slice; pillar and stall mining is where the coal is extracted across a horizontal plane, creating horizontal arrays of rooms and pillars. This technique is usually used for relatively flat-lying deposits, such as those that follow a particular stratum.

²³ Brown and Backhouse were also involved in the construction of 1886 Liverpool Exhibition. http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/1886_Liverpool_International_Exhibition

looked in the late Middle Ages. Built at a scale of two-thirds for its length and height, but with its width at full scale it sat across a lake constructed from two pre-existing reservoirs.



Fig. 9: Newcastle City Library Photo Collection 4



Fig. 10: Newcastle City Library Photo Collection 5 Photograph of the old Tyne Bridge alongside the High Level Bridge. Date unknown.

The building of a replica of a well-known local site was common at these Exhibitions. The most complete example was in the 1887 Manchester Exhibition – a recreation of a number of streets representing ‘Old Manchester and Salford’ (see Fig. 11). The Exhibition catalogue pointed out that this was not just a physical manifestation of the past; it was a living entity, the buildings being occupied by people replicating old crafts and dressed in costumes peculiar to the time.



Fig. 11: Trafford Council Archives 1

Visitors

Visitors could purchase an Official Catalogue for 1/-, printed in Newcastle by R Robinson and Co, who paid a considerable amount for the privilege of being Official Printers to the Exhibition (*Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 4th March 1887). The highest weekly attendance (117,720) (Newcastle Corporation Minutes, 1887 Record, page lviii) during the first half of the Exhibition came during the week ending 16th July, the same week as the Royal Agricultural Show was held in the fields adjacent and the Prince of Wales visited both. On Thursday 14th July 38,139 people attended, the fourth highest daily total for the whole period. By the time the Exhibition closed on Saturday 29th October, 2,092,273 visitors had come through the gates (Newcastle Corporation Minutes, 1887 Record, page lviii). The single most popular day was the closing day, when 54,716 people visited, some 10,000 more than the previous high on Saturday 1st September. Overall, the Exhibition was reported to have made a surplus of £4,388, which was donated to the College of Physical Science (*Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, 21st October 1889).²⁴

This was not achieved easily however. By the end of the sixth week of the Exhibition some half a million people had come through the turnstiles, but the Exhibitors were not happy, feeling that numbers had been insufficient (*Newcastle Courant*, 1st July 1887). They had formed an 'Exhibitors' Association' and set up an 'Indignation Meeting' with the Executive Council to share their concerns. It was alleged that there were more posters in Newcastle advertising the Jubilee Exhibition in Liverpool than the local event, and that

²⁴ This figure differs from that quoted by Steele (see Table 1).

unless more ‘popular’ events such as sport and band competitions were held the numbers would stay low.²⁵ Better publicity was demanded, more railway excursions, better attractions and more music.²⁶ However, it was not just due to failures by the Committee that takings were not as hoped; there were newspaper reports of aggressive touting for business on the Old Tyne Bridge that caused visitors to avoid the attraction (*Newcastle Weekly Courant*, 1st July 1887). The Executive Council responded quickly, placing posters at 100 additional railway stations; advertisements in 10 London newspapers with flyers made available at Newcastle Central Station for new arrivals. The Council also agreed to organise more ‘popular’ events such as sports, choral and brass band contests, and balloon ascents.²⁷ They also abolished the 2/6d Wednesday tickets, pushing the Exhibition into becoming more like a festival than was ever envisaged in 1885. Performing elephants, variety shows and juvenile bicyclists were not part of the original intention to showcase Newcastle as a centre for engineering, but without these attractions it seems unlikely that over 2 million visitors would have come. And if they came for the elephants and also learned how a mine works, what did that matter? In the end pragmatism and commerce won – the need to get the visitors through the gates overcame any concerns. After the close of the Exhibition, there was debate as to whether the buildings and attractions should be kept as a permanent feature of the Town Moor. The Earl of Ravensworth wrote formally to the Corporation offering them the option. In the end a resolution was passed stating the Council, ‘most respectfully’ declined the offer.

One aspect not covered by either Steele or Stafford is the use of the exhibition as a vehicle for the ‘doing of good works’. An example is a report in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* on Tuesday 20th September 1887 of a visit by the Byker Mother’s Meeting. Byker, to the east of the City, had been hit hard during the economic downturn of the previous three years and Mrs Peacock and Mrs Pease (of Pendower Hall – a large hilltop mansion north of Armstrong’s factories) had helped to feed eighty to ninety mothers on a weekly basis during the depression, and had arranged for them to obtain paid sewing work at two pence an hour. *The Chronicle* reported that the party of over forty “neatly attired and

²⁵ The 1886 Liverpool event had much the same situation – by the end of the first month only 314,000 had come, and exhibitors complained about lack of publicity. The response included a 40ft placard placed in The Strand in London, and a touring display around Lancashire towns. See Steele p.29.

²⁶ The Executive Committee was discussing railway excursions as early as March 1887. In a report in the *Newcastle Courant* on 18th March 1887, the Committee is reported as noting the desirability ‘that the whole of Midland towns should be tapped by the North Eastern Railway Company in conjunction with the Midland Railways.’

²⁷ It should be noted that the 1886 Prospectus does contain a section on a Balloon Sub-Committee sitting under the Entertainments Committee. Chaired by Mr T Gray it had 8 members, so the balloon ascents may well have been planned long before the ‘Indignation Meeting’. North Country Lore and Legend of September 1887 records balloon ascents on 3rd and the 15th August by a Captain Dale.

happy looking mothers... [who] could scarcely be distinguished from other dames” saw the sites of the Exhibition and had a “capital tea at Lockhart’s”.

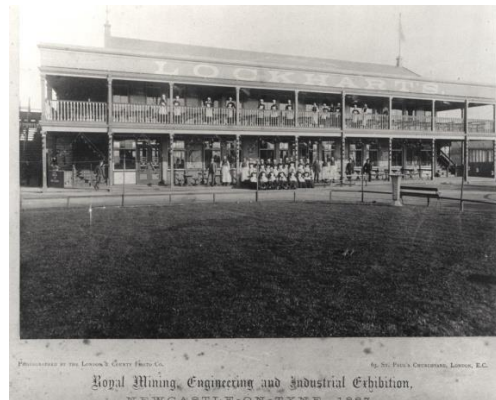


Fig. 12: Newcastle City Library Photo Collection 6

The costs of the excursion were covered by money subscribed for the purpose, and the article finished with the comment that “...Now that the opportunity has come, self-help has come with it.” Samuel Smiles would have approved.

Why is 1887 rarely remembered?

The 1929 Newcastle Exhibition, held on the same site, fulfilled a similar purpose – exhibiting regional products and providing an event to boost the confidence of the producers, workers and consumers. Attracting around 4 million visitors, some contemporary goods descend directly from the event – Newcastle Exhibition Ale was launched there and is still on sale. There is more memorabilia in circulation, and the Newcastle Discovery Museum (2018) has a dedicated section. The 1887 Exhibition has no archive, unlike Manchester and Glasgow which have extensive online archives. So far, all that has been found are three copies of the Newcastle catalogue, and the few photographs that remain are scattered across several sites.

There are some other, more cultural possibilities. The region sees itself (and perhaps the rest of country sees the region) as about coal, ships and engines, and especially the decline and disappearance of those industries.²⁸ How these were promoted, marketed and sold is not part of that definition, as the focus is on an almost romanticised past, so an Exhibition falls outside that narrative. As the ‘Mining, Manufacturing and Engineering’ Exhibition

²⁸ See for example <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/may/10/north-east-avoid-becoming-britains-detroit>, Beckett, Andy (2014), *The north-east of England: Britain's Detroit?*, The Guardian, May 10th

the contemporary focus in newspapers was on these elements not the amusements, so ‘stories’ and ‘anecdotes’ are missing. There are two diarists who wrote about the event but they remain unpublished. Although 1887 was organised and managed without representatives of the groups whose work was being exhibited and promoted it was a genuine attempt to provide a boost for business as well as a popular attraction and this may not fit comfortably into the conventional ‘them and us’ narrative of hard-headed uncaring elites and noble workers. Steele’s conclusion that these events should be seen as primarily business ventures (Steele, 2015, p.149) is really only half the story. The exhibition was much more than that – the balance struck between education, elucidation and entertainment tells us much about the priorities of the elites putting the event together, and it tells us much about the priorities of those who attended. Work may have been at the core of the event’s intent, but it was not at the core of the ‘day trip to the Ex’.

A Good Day Out

Murray Steele’s book on the 1887 Jubilee Exhibitions is called *A Good Day Out* (Steele, 2015) and for the Exhibition Organisers this would be just what they wanted to hear. This phrase encapsulates the reasons why the events should be remembered but also why they may have been forgotten. The intention of the Newcastle Organising Committee was to promote the city and its products in the expectation of increasing business. They wanted at least to break even, and the firms who paid to occupy the stalls and shops, run the catering, and provide the attractions were there to make a profit. On one level the event was a business enterprise, and as worthy of attention as the development of department stores, music hall or sport as examples of rational recreation in increasingly consumerist society, where ‘A Good Day Out’ would be a mark of success.

Yet that would ignore the political and social construction of the event and the bringing together of work, networks, politics, society, art and economics under one ‘roof’. Even more significantly, the event was conceived, built, run and dismantled during a period of political uncertainty, and severe economic downturn, by people with no previous experience of doing so. That visitors were able to say it was ‘A Good Day Out’ under these circumstances makes it worthy of study. That being the case, why has the Newcastle event been largely forgotten? Again, we can find a clue in the ‘Good Day Out’ – other than the surplus the exhibition generated there is no extant evidence of it as a business success. The grounds were returned to their previous state within a few weeks of the close, and there no records remaining of products exhibited at the event generating new sales (that is not to say it did not happen, just to say that cause and effect cannot easily be established). So, in that sense, ‘A Good Day Out’ is all it was – whether you were one of Danish apprentices who came to the event; a mine owner looking at new mining

equipment, or a clerk riding the toboggan and drinking at Lockhart’s, perhaps it was a day out, and no more than that. With few extant contemporary accounts, the Exhibition just came and went, and without drive from the City Council to create an archive (pace Manchester Corporation) it was quickly forgotten.

Table 1 - Major UK Exhibitions 1851-1890 (Steele 2012, p.112).

Year	Location	Attendance	Profit / Loss
1851	London	6,039,145	£186,000
1857	Manchester	1,336,715	£304
1885	London	3,750,000	(£5437)
1886	Liverpool	2,676,515	(£19,135)
1887	Manchester	4,765,137	£46,977
1887	Newcastle	2,002,273	£3762
1887	Saltaire	823,133	£4000
1888	Glasgow	5,748,379	£43,000
1890	Edinburgh	2,414,129	(£43,961)

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Remembering the Siege: Civil War Memory in Colchester

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ABSTRACT

Although the British Civil Wars saw the destruction of many landmarks, Colchester has many that have survived. This has allowed a memory to survive. This paper focuses on this memory and the modern-day representation of the Civil War within the local landmarks of Colchester. From a monument to the Royalist martyrs Sir Lucas and Sir Lisle, to the damaged churches, the siege of Colchester has lasted in local memory. This memory nonetheless has been contentious; Lucas, Lisle and Fairfax were to become images of the wider national debate between Charles and Cromwell in the nineteenth and twentieth century. This debate resembled a hero and villain mentality, with each figure, Lucas or Fairfax, Cromwell or Charles, being seen as either the 'good guy' or the 'bad guy'. However, in Colchester, like national history, the focus of memory in recent years is not on the Civil War, but on more popular histories; The Colchester tourism board prefer to focus on the town's Roman and Norman heritage, rather than the siege of Colchester in 1648. This microhistory of Colchester provides important insights into the wider national memory and portrayal of the Civil War.

The town of Colchester suffered terribly during a catastrophic siege that occurred in 1648 towards the end of the British Civil Wars, characterised by a level of brutality and destruction unparalleled in any previous war in England. This article draws on Andy Wood's description of the productive, eclectic 'mess' that is memory studies (Wood, 2013, p.23), and examines the changing memory in Colchester, noting how and why historical memory of the siege is problematic for the town, connecting with the more specific, emerging scholarship on memory and the Civil War in England.

The Siege of Colchester in 1648 was one of the most prolonged and brutal episodes of the war, affecting both soldier and civilian. Royalist risings in Kent and Essex culminated in the seizure of the Essex town on behalf of King Charles I. Colchester was besieged by the small but well-trained New Model Army under its commander Sir Thomas Fairfax, with the prolonged siege leading to the civilian population being forced to eat horses, dogs, cats and even rats. Starved out, the garrison surrendered and the two royalist commanders, Sir

Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, were shot on Fairfax's Council of War orders for their breach of parole. The town was then fined, with a large proportion of the fine falling upon the Dutch residents in Colchester. A contemporary account records that a 'parliamentarian who rode into Colchester after its surrender found it "a very strange place": it was "a sad spectacle to see many fair houses burnt to ashes & so many inhabitants made feeble and weak with living upon horseflesh & dogs, many glad to eat the very draught & graines for preservation of life" (Donagan 2004, p.314). Several contemporary accounts recorded what happened during the siege but one, written by an unknown parliamentarian and follower of Fairfax is remarkable because it is not simply a record of events. It is also a document of place; the diary included a map (*The Siege of Colchester by the Lord Fairfax*, British Library) a detailed account of fortifications and of military skirmishes during the siege. Indeed the diary has been used to help with archaeological excavations (*Map of Siege of Colchester*, 1648, 2018) and to understand the siege works around the Colchester in recent times.

We know that the landscape continued to preserve the memory of the siege well into the eighteenth century because of topographical descriptions recorded by travel writers such as Daniel Defoe and Cecilia Fiennes. In 1727 Daniel Defoe wrote that Colchester, "still mourns, in the ruins of a civil war" (Defoe, "Letter 1, Part 1: Through Essex to Colchester", *Vision of Britain*, 2017). For him, the scars from the siege were still very much evident, even when he was writing, eighty years after the siege. But because in so many ways the issues that divided people during the war continued to be played out in the politics of the eighteenth century and then re-formed into party political fights between Whigs and Tories in the nineteenth - these political divisions shaped how history was written and memory preserved.

The memory of the war was preserved into the eighteenth century largely in books although it is clear that the landscape still bore the marks of conflict and so presumably served as a constant reminder of the suffering and destruction inflicted on the town during the siege. Yet it is also clear that the political traditions and divisions that had grown up in the conflict continued to endure well into the eighteenth century. The Royalist party became the Tory party of the 1700s and the Parliamentary Party evolved into the Whigs. These divisions shaped the ways in which the siege was remembered in books. The eighteenth century marked the highpoint of the publication of urban histories as shown by scholars such as Rosemary Sweet, who has shown that town histories in this period served a variety of purposes whether to promote the town in a period of decline, or to highlight a key issue in their contemporary world that could be related back to the past (Sweet, 1997, p.3). Several authors wrote histories of Colchester in the eighteenth century and interestingly the siege is only mentioned quite briefly in most of these works. Perhaps, as Rosemary Sweet argues, the authors were conscious of the need to heal division and keen to brush over the enmities of the relatively recent past (Sweet, 1997, p.232). Furthermore, it is also tied to the fact that most of the eighteenth-century

histories of Colchester were written by Tories. Philip Morant was the most famous of these scholars. When he wrote his history in 1748, he was also rector of St Mary at the Wall, a building badly damaged in the siege (*St Mary at the Walls*, 2018). Morant included details of damage, for example, he notes the amount of houses destroyed by the siege, “In St Mary’s at the walls, 5 burnt and ruined. In H. trinity, 32 burnt and destroy’d. In St Martin’s 5 pulled down. In St James’s 28 burnt. In St Botolph’s 53 burnt and ruined. In St Giles’s 17 burnt” (Morant, 1748, p.68). He and other writers of Colchester’s history in this period, such as the antiquarian Tory Charles Grey focused mainly on the leaders of the Royalist forces Lucas and Lisle and their suffering at the hands of the Parliamentary leader General Fairfax.

John Aikin, another Tory chronicler called Lucas and Lisle “gallant leaders” (Aikin, 1788, p.235). The Tory writer David Lloyd noted that when the Royalists surrendered, “Never did Roman with great courage, nor Christian with firmer confidence court grim death than did this matchless pair of heroes” (Lloyd, 1766, p.424). Arnaud M. Berquin (1788) was a Frenchman, writing in the midst of turbulent times in his own country and was known to write to target children and families. It shows how far reaching the execution of Lucas and Lisle went, if indeed it was a subject of discussion by French writers. When he wrote of the death of Lucas and Lisle, he used the word “murder”; Berquin wanted the viewer to note that the deaths were unjust. He laid the blame on one individual, Ireton, who was heavily involved in Fairfax’s Council of War, moving the focus away from Fairfax, writing that, “Lord Capel, who looked upon Ireton as the sole instigator of this barbarity” (Berquin, p.104). The history he presented focused on the lives of individuals as he used the past to show important character traits. Building on the image developed during the Restoration of Charles I as martyr king, Lucas and Lisle were represented as martyrs to the tyranny of Fairfax and the Parliamentarians. In the dominant strand of eighteenth-century memory, Parliamentarians appeared as the villains.

Sites such as St. Botolph’s Church and St. John’s Abbey represent important ways in which memory of the siege survived. Although it is possible to see a fragmentation of memory in either site, such as St. Botolph’s being a ruin as well as a burial ground, the Overseer’s accounts from 1757 indicate that the churchyard was under the authority of the local parish, and that they took responsibility for its maintenance. The gate was repaired in 1757 and the yard cleared in 1765 (Churchwardens Accounts from 1753-82, Essex Record Office). Therefore, in the eighteenth century, the site was still being used; this continued use suggests that the site of St. Botolph’s was still an important part of the local community. The fact that the churchyard is only mentioned suggested that there was a separation of memory and use. St. John’s Abbey had been divided into the Abbey, Gatehouse and Green. Their survival, in name and, in part, presence highlights the importance they had in local memory. The fragmentation of memory also meant that the sites saw communal use and ensured their importance in the local sphere.

These landmarks became sites of romanticism. In the late eighteenth century, a variety of different drawings showed the priory of St. Botolph, which was heavily damaged during the siege of Colchester, and whilst the reformation removed many of the priory's buildings, the church remained and still functioned for the community. These tend to show people visiting the site which suggests that it was a popular place to visit. In each of these drawings the artists portray them in a picturesque scene, giving a sense of mystery to the site (1791 drawing of St. Botolph, Essex Record Office). These drawings show that the Civil Wars would have a huge impact in how landmarks were seen throughout the following century. Although the drawings do not indicate that it was the lure of the Civil War that would draw people to them, the fact that they were in ruin added a sense of mystery to them.

The nineteenth century was a time in which political identity was extremely important. The Tory John Horace Round, a local historian in Colchester, was a key figure in the preservation of the history of Colchester and wrote a number of books on the Siege of Colchester, including one specifically focused on the trial of Lucas and Lisle (Round, 1894). Round organised and commissioned a monument to Lucas and Lisle, supposedly built on the spot on which they were executed. Round wrote at a time of growing support for the Whigs/Liberals however and noted “there has been revived in various ways, within the last few years, an old subject of controversy, namely, the execution of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, in cold blood, on the surrender of Colchester to Fairfax in 1648” (Round, p.157). Unsurprisingly, efforts started to be made in print to clear Fairfax's name by supporters of the Whigs (who evolved into the Liberal party). Newspaper articles focused on the “indefensible conduct of the military defenders” (The Royal Archaeological Institute, *Morning Post*, 1876). Memory started to be contested during this time; Lucas and Lisle were no longer protected, and Fairfax became a more respectable figure in Colchester. Nonetheless, the strong Tory party in Colchester eventually cemented the memory of Lucas and Lisle with the building of the monument to them on the alleged site of their execution in 1892. The fact that the monument does not outright accuse Fairfax of anything does suggest that Round and Henry Laver (a local archaeologist and guide) felt that they could not get away with it. However, the monument suggests that they did indeed feel the memory was threatened, and their attempt helped solidify the memory of the martyrs in Colchester. Other landmarks were still there to provide markers of memory. For example, George Buckler, a local architect, took great pride in the fact that the castle survived the siege, proudly writing that “Its massive walls withstood all the storms of war and the fierce Siege of 1648. Most of the Castle Keeps were battered down by Cromwell's armies, but this Castle survived” (Buckler, 1876-82, p. 5). Rev. E. L. Cutts, one of the founders of the local Archaeological Society, discussed the damage done to the town stating that “the street outside East Gate had been reduced to ruins; the churches of the town had suffered greatly; the fine Norman minister of St. Botolph had been reduced to the ruinous condition in which it

still remains...St Mary's had been so shattered that it had to be rebuilt" (Cutts, 1888, p.201). We can see that the Civil Wars impacted other histories and memories; Cutts made a specific mention of the "Norman minister", lamenting the destruction caused, whilst Buckler rejoiced that the Norman castle survived the siege. The Civil Wars were written about in terms of how it affected previous memories and landmarks. This is important for historians as we try to see how memory of the conflict changed and developed over the centuries, and how these memories layered on each other.

Landmarks in the nineteenth century played an important role in the political life of the town. Visiting parties would often go and visit the sites of St. Botolph's and St. John's but also the tomb of Lucas and Lisle, as the *Essex Herald* showed in 1866, "they visited the ruins of St. Botolph's Priory and St. John's Abbey gate, passing St. Giles church, where lie buried the remains of the two knights, Lucas and Lisle" ("Printers' Holiday Excursion to Colchester", *Essex Herald*, Tuesday, 3rd July 1866). As already mentioned, the figures of Lucas and Lisle became a political statement in the nineteenth century, and thus tours that visited this site highlight its political importance. It was not just the Abbey and Priory which showed this, the Castle was reported as "ruined in the civil wars of the Commonwealth" (*St. James Gazette*, 1882). The political expressions would also appear by the tour guides themselves expressing their opinions, as can be found in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* (1894). Landmarks therefore became an important tool in keeping Civil War memory alive; it allowed people to engage with the topic and gave Colchester a very strong political identity.

Broadly speaking, by the twentieth century local and civic interest in remembering the siege seems to have declined. Most local history books focused more attention on the Roman and medieval aspects of Colchester (Denney, 2006; Jarvis, 1971; Jarvis, 1984; Jarvis, 1991). However, Phil Jones has published a popular history of the siege, which discussed the destruction in the landscape as well as the lives of individuals (Jones, 2003). There was also a play written by Roger Howard, which focused on the lives of individuals during the siege (Roger Howard, 1981). Andrew Phillips noted that the "siege and its aftermath left deep damage on the psyche of the town, ever visible in its ruined churches" (Phillips, 2004, p.61). Landmarks still hold a memory in modern Colchester and these shall be analysed to see how memory has been maintained in the present day.

The Castle had played a role in the Siege of Colchester, mainly as a prison for Lucas and Lisle, just before their execution. It became a museum in the middle of the nineteenth century, and came into public ownership at the beginning of the twentieth century with most of its exhibits focused on the Roman and Norman period and only a couple of glass cases filled with artefacts from the siege (Personal Observation, 2018). What should be noted is that the siege is the last exhibit before the shop, suggesting that history ended with the siege. At the castle we can see that the siege, although not prominent, is still a



Figure 1: Colchester Castle (Picture: author's own).

key part of Colchester's history. Interestingly, the Civil War display focuses on the landmarks around and on the execution of Lucas and Lisle. The damaged landmarks hold the memory of the siege, and show the victimisation of the town, as they are referenced in terms of suffering and damage caused by the cannons. There is also the focus on Lucas and Lisle, which shows the remembrance of Heroes and Villains. However, when using Lucas and Lisle they are often referred to when talking about the town's suffering, with the lives of Lucas and Lisle coming to represent the town, rather than the old political identities that they represented in the nineteenth century. What can be noted from the exhibition is that these two memories do not look at the wider context of the Civil War or even conflict in general in regards to Colchester, concentrating only on the suffering of the people of the town in 1648.



Figure 2: Monument to Lucas and Lisle outside the Castle (Picture: author's own).

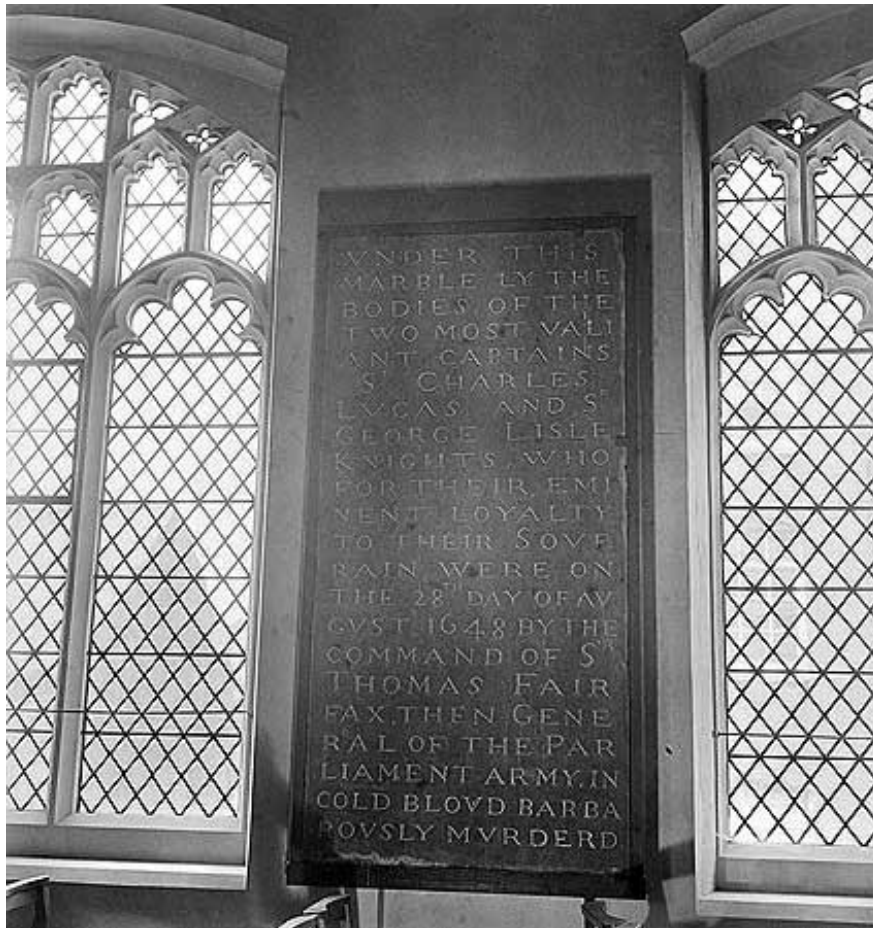


Figure 3: Inscription from Lucas and Lisle's tomb at St. Giles church (Historic England, AA43/03523, 1943).

The Monument to Lucas and Lisle was built in 1892 by Henry Laver. Today, it still stands outside the castle, along with an information board stating the fact that two men were executed at the location. However, there is little context given to the event and there is little mention of the importance of the execution. Other man-made memorials, such as the tombs of Lucas and Lisle (1661) survive alongside a memorial to Sir William Campion (unknown date), a commander of the Royalist forces at the siege. These monuments continue the idea of a memory constructed around martyrs and villains. This Tory interpretation of the war, in terms of royalist martyrdom, has not been challenged or modified and was only strengthened in the nineteenth century (Memorials Part III, 2018). These monuments are the only sort of man-made commemoration of the siege. The text on the tomb of Lucas and Lisle for example describes their death as an injustice, for example declaring, “IN COLD BLOOD BARBAROUSLY MURDERED” (Round, 1984, p.174). The language offers an insight into the Restoration memory promoted by the state, showing heroes and villains. What is important to note is that there is no monument to commemorate the besieged or any of those who suffered during and after the conflict. The town has tried to alter the memory of Lucas and Lisle by making them symbols of the town's suffering, as can be seen in the castle exhibitions, altering the memory people engage with at the monument. Interestingly, there is no monument or note of the royalist rank and file who were taken prisoner at Colchester. The focus of

memory on the figures of Lucas and Lisle highlight the importance of heroes and villains in royalist remembrance of the Civil War.



Figure 4: St Botolph's Priory now owned by English Heritage (Picture: author's own).

Physical evidence of the siege survives but is only partially preserved. The medieval priory of St Botolph's was practically destroyed during the siege and never rebuilt. It is now owned by English Heritage which has ensured the ruin's preservation. The site is hard to find; it is not actively advertised or signposted. It is now enclosed and enveloped by the rest of the town, which has erected up a plaque, with the help of English Heritage including brief information explaining the damage inflicted by cannon fire in 1648. No context is given (Colchester, St. Botolph's Priory, 2017). What is noticeable is that the siege is only briefly discussed, whilst the wider Civil War is forgotten in local memory. The siege is only talked about when considering the damage the town received and the suffering it received because of the events of 1648. The priory shows us a clear example of how the Civil War impacted landmarks and memory around us, and how, even in the present, memory of the Civil War is not prevalent and promoted in society.



Figure 5: St Botolph's Priory now owned by English Heritage (Picture: author's own).

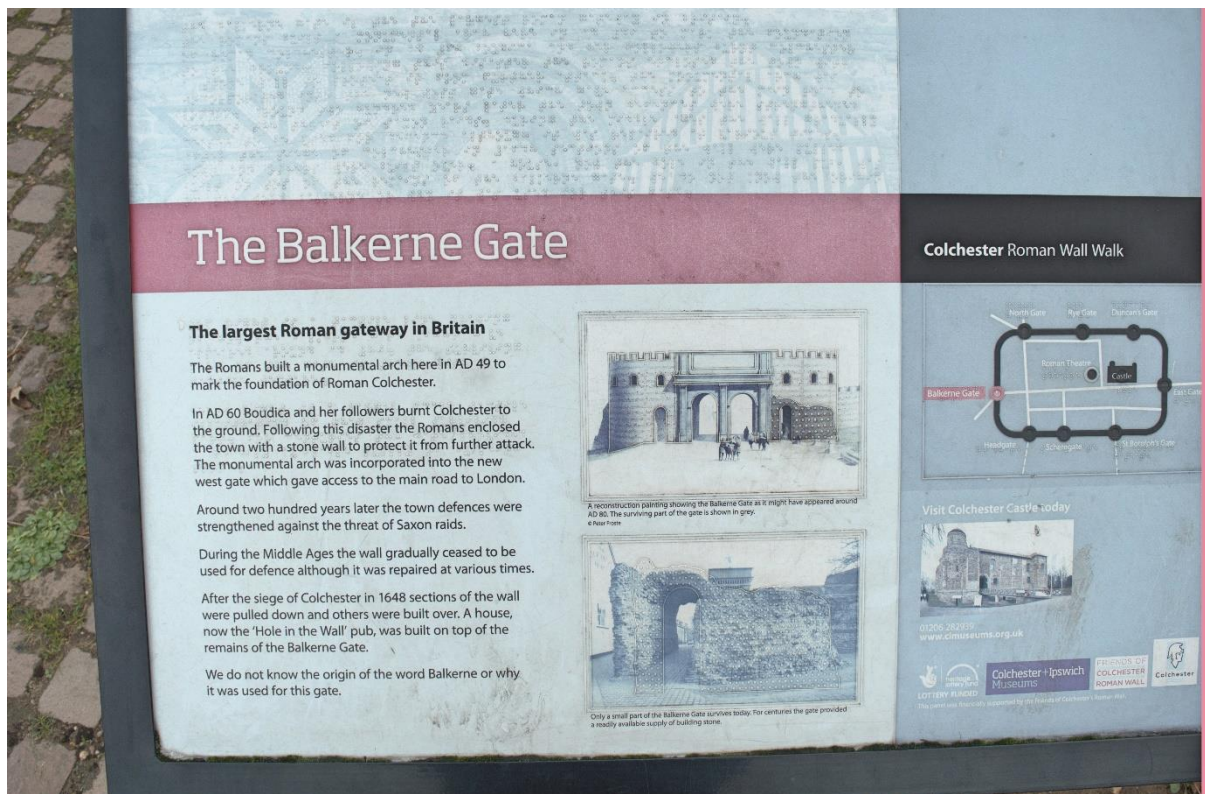


Figure 6: Information board at the Balkerne Gate (Picture: author's own).

The Roman Wall is another landmark which bears the damage from cannon fire from the siege (Roman Wall, 2018; Visit Colchester, 2018). There are plenty of plaques around the wall which tell the reader about the wall and its history from Roman times, but information about the damage inflicted upon it during the siege only appeared in 2015 (Roman Wall, 2015). This is one of the largest engagements with the Civil War which suggests that siege memory attached itself to other landmarks, which allows it to survive to the present. The wall also shows us, that whether welcomed or not, the siege survives in local memory, even if not actively promoted, because it impacted other memories.



Figure 7: St Mary at the Wall. Note the different brick at the top which shows the eighteenth-century repairs (Picture: author's own).

The memory of the damage inflicted on St Mary at the Wall Church has been better preserved. The church suffered during the conflict but was repaired in the eighteenth century (St Mary at the Wall, 2018). This might also be because the story of its damage was also preserved in popular memory, as Benham wrote in his nineteenth-century town history that the church lost its tower because of a man called Thompson, who only had one eye. From the tower he fired cannon shot at the Parliamentary forces and was later targeted and killed (Benham, 1897, p.18). From Benham's story we can not only see how popular memory survived well into the nineteenth century, but we can also see how stories attach themselves to specific landmarks, such as why the tower was destroyed. In the twentieth century, people have claimed that the church was the origin of the nursery

rhyme ‘Humpty Dumpty’ (Colchester, St Mary at the Walls, 2018). There is no evidence that this is the case, yet this memory survives into the present day and this memory of Humpty Dumpty has prevailed (Colchester: Can Humpty Dumpty have a great find, 2018). It also suggests that memory and stories adapt and change over time. The eighteenth century tower is very distinct from the rest of the church and plays are held here about the siege, making it a rare site of preservation of popular memory. What is interesting to note is that the medieval memory of the church has been overwritten by the siege.



Figure 8: Siege House with the musket shot being highlighted (Picture: author's own).

There is also the building and restaurant now called the ‘Siege House’. This name obviously keeps the siege alive in some capacity. It proudly shows us the musket damage sustained in the attack, one in which George Lisle was injured, captured, and then re-captured by the Royalists (The Old Siege House Bar and Brasserie, 2018). At the Siege House, Civil War memory is marketed with the red circles on the outside which represent musket damage actively playing on the memory that Colchester was severely damaged during the siege; the Civil Wars can be marketable in the present era. It must be noted that Siege House is a unique case, nowhere else in Colchester is the siege

marketed as such, but it does provide an example of how the Civil Wars can be used and marketed to a wide local and national audience.

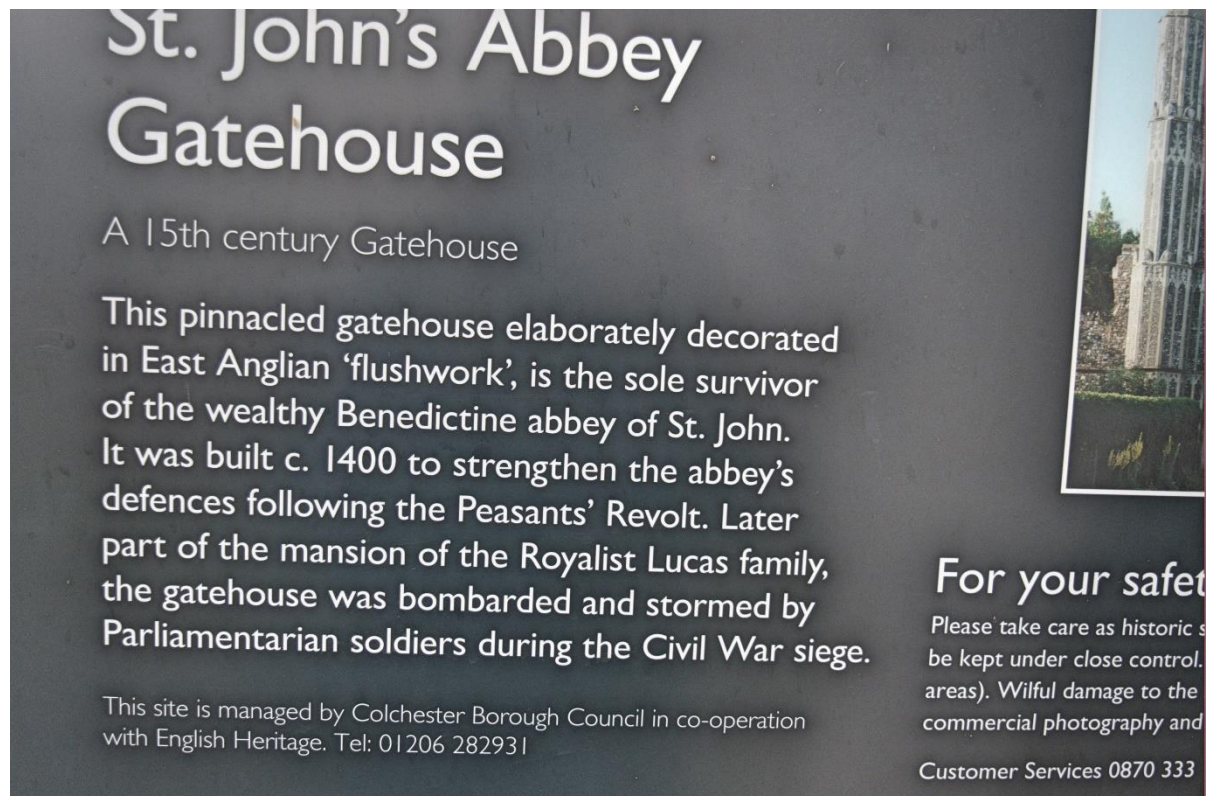


Figure 9: Information board at St. John's Abbey Gate (Picture: author's own).

Other sites also house Civil War memory, such as the 'Hole in the Wall' pub and remnants of Lucas's Abbey and the old East Gate. All these sites, although not profound in their representation of the siege, still linger and promote a memory that is not necessarily advertised. The abbey for example, has just one building remaining, which is called the gate house. This has a small information plaque; its survival again does sustain a memory, but it is not advertised and stands there alone. The land on which the abbey stood has now been used for housing, with the road names reflecting a strong Roman perception such as Londinium Road (Personal Observation, 2017). The abbey is also separated from the main part of the town by the main road that goes around the centre of town. This separation has made accessibility even harder than before. This raises a question of modern town planning and its impact on sites of memory such as the old abbey.

But many landmarks have disappeared since the siege of 1648, mainly the old forts which Fairfax built to surround the town. These forts are mentioned by Defoe and so presumably were still visible in the eighteenth century, but fell into ruin and eventually disappeared under housing estates or main roads. These changes suggest that Colchester did not want to remember the siege, and let these landmarks corrode, leaving only what was necessary, such as the churches and buildings in the town which had a purpose.

The English Civil War was a catastrophe for the people of England and the siege was a tragedy for the town. Locally and nationally, political enmities that developed during the war continued to shape politics well into the nineteenth century and in turn the way the war was remembered by individuals and communities. Indeed we might argue that the struggle continues between authority and liberty in our own binary politics of the twenty-first century. According to Tristram Hunt (2002, xii), Colchester typifies a national trend. He has pointed out that there is a decreasing historical memory of the English Civil War in British culture more generally and argues that it is vitally important to remember the conflict since questions that were asked then regarding republicanism, capitalism, democracy and devolved powers are still relevant today.

The history of the siege is very well recorded in print and memory of the terrible events is still visible in the physical fabric of the town, but broadly speaking Colchester seems largely indifferent to this period of its history. Perhaps the town has preferred to brush over the enmities of the past and avoid too much discussion of division in public. Hunt points out that the civil wars fought by the Americans and French have a much more prominent place in their respective historical memory and collective political culture and identity (Hunt, 2002). In other words they have managed to construct a 'usable past' (Richard Cosgrove, 2008). The modern idea of a usable past reflects a desire to make sense of national experiences in ways that unify rather than separate us. The search for a usable past aims at creating a better world by incorporating achievements as well as regrets, pride as well as disappointment, into our historical accounts. This article has shown that currently the Civil Wars are not seen as 'usable'. Yet, as Hunt argued, the conflict can be used to help answer questions in the present. In the right hands the usable past can be an expression of communal aspiration. It is hoped that this article has indicated a few of the routes by which research on the Civil War along these lines can and should proceed.

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