GROUNDINGS
Volume 8, April 2015
www.gla.ac.uk/groundings

FRONT COVER
Zoe Grams
Peter Stewart

WITH FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM
University of Glasgow Chancellor's Fund
Glasgow University Students' Representative Council

PRINTED BY
J. Thomson Colour Printers, Glasgow

PUBLISHED BY
Glasgow University Dialectic Society
Glasgow University Union, 32 University Avenue, Glasgow, G12 8LX

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Following the Scottish Independence Referendum, *Groundings* volume eight moves beyond the journal's accustomed politically motivated demeanour in order to pursue the ideal of intellectual enlightenment. This year's volume has been defined by political fatigue resulting in very few proposed themes and submitted articles motivated by Glasgow University students' interests in politically motivated issues. Instead, volume eight thrives on the hunger and passion of our students for knowledge, culminating in a novel theme and a diverse selection of articles.

'Constructs, Myths and the Ideal' is an innovative theme breaking the traditions of *Groundings'* previous themes, which have historically consisted of two concepts or two concepts and a relational connective. This novelty arises from the use of three distinct concepts, with no explicit incorporated relational guidance. This resulted in a record number of submissions for a third year in a row, with the quality of the articles improving even further. Giving authors the ability to develop three concepts has also led to the diversification of research methods, combining articles utilising archaeological field work, qualitative and quantitative analysis, as well as meta-analytical studies in the same volume for the first time. Despite the change of motivation and novelty of the theme, volume eight simultaneously delivers the *Groundings'* promise for quality and continues to grow the journal's relevance.

While theme novelty has been directly influenced by the changes at Glasgow University, other necessary innovations have stemmed from unfortunate circumstances. G*roundings* volume eight experienced funding difficulties. This led to the journal's first ever Editorial Board fundraiser cake sale with the cooperation of the Glasgow University Dialectic Society and the society's ravenous members. This, in addition with the last of the Chancellor's Fund resources and a grant generously provided by the Glasgow University Students' Representative Council, has funded volume eight and laid the financial foundation for next year's journal.

All of the above would be impossible without the vigorous and creative work of all involved students (both authors and editors), as well as the wisdom and guidance provided by our Academic Advisory Board. Their collaborative work in troubled times is an inspiration and an exemplar of the University of Glasgow relentless spirit.

GROUNDINGS ANCIENTS EDITORIAL BOARD

Columba at Keil Point: Uncovering the Myth

Alex Alexander and Allan Stroud

Until recently, it has been taken on faith that Columba, the sixth-century Irish monk, landed at Keil Point, Kintyre, in Argyll in 563AD on his way to Iona. Truth or otherwise, historians have perpetuated this myth, which was later championed by the tourism industry. This article will investigate the archaeological remains at Keil Point that have been used to support the claim that Columba was once there, and attempt to uncover the truth behind this claim. It will be argued that there is no archaeological evidence or written historical record in support of the myth. It will also be argued that the domination of the Columba myth is effectively suppressing other aspects of Scottish history. This investigation demonstrates how accepted history can be challenged by archaeological evidence.

Myths, say anthropologists, are folktales believed to be true and regarded as sacred.[1] Further, Allen and Montell posit that 'what people believe happened is often as important as what actually happened'.[2] This could be said to be true of Columba, the sixth-century Irish monk regarded today as one of the leading saints in Scottish history.[3] Many tales about his life have been woven into Scottish history, leading us to ask how many of these tales are real. However, myths are more than simple untruths: they convey something of the beliefs and priorities of those who tell them.[4] Myths can also be an expression of cultural identity,[5] and are frequently used to justify political

ALEX ALEXANDER is a third year student of Archaeology at the University of Glasgow. Her interests include the prehistoric and Early Christian periods, as well as landscape archaeology. She intends to continue her studies at postgraduate level.

ALLAN STROUD is also a third year student studying Archaeology at the University of Glasgow. His areas of interest include early Middle Age Argyll and the archaeology of religion. He hopes to continue studying at postgraduate level and to become employed.

[1] K. Flannery & J. Marcus, *The Creation of Inequality: How Our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery and Empire* (Cambridge, 2012), 56.

[2] B. Allen & L. Montell, *From Memory to History: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research* (Nashville, 1981), 89.

[3] T. O. Clancy, 'Scottish saints and national identities in the early middle ages' in A. Thacker & R. Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), 397.

[4] A. Gazin-Schwartz & C. J. Holtorf, *Archaeology and Folklore* (London, 1999), 11.

[5] R. Bultman, 'New Testament mythology' in H. W. Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth* translated by R. H. Fuller (New York, 1972), 46.

systems.[6] Therefore, it is not enough to say that a certain story from the past is a myth: it is also necessary to say why that myth was created and what its creation reveals about the culture of the time.

Figure 1. Map showing location of area of study (in red) © Digimap 2015.

This article will attempt to deconstruct one particular myth about Columba's life and the processes behind its creation. Teasing out truths from historical documents, particularly hagiographic material, can be very difficult, and so other methods must also be applied. In this case, an archaeological study of the evidence at a Columban site, Keil Point in the Kintyre Peninsula (Figure 1), will be used to challenge the myth that this was where Columba first landed in Scotland in 563AD. This will demonstrate how archaeology can be used as a tool to test aspects of Scottish history. While there is no documentary or archaeological evidence to contest the claim that Columba first landed at Keil in 563AD, it can be demonstrated that the local community has used certain artefacts at Keil to perpetuate a myth about Columba. The use of archaeology,

[6] R. Graves, 'Introduction' in F. Guirand (ed.), *New Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology*, new Edition (London, 1989), v.

along with historical sources, will demonstrate how this myth was created and why this was part of a wider trend of myth-making in Victorian Scotland.

COLUM OF THE CHURCH

Columba was born in present-day Donegal, although the year of his birth is not known for certain. The *Annals of Ulster* record that Colum Cille was born in 518,[7] but later states that he sailed to Iona in 563 at the age of 42,[8] which would put the year of his birth as 521. Other sources suggest he was born sometime between 520 and 523.[9] He is named in the *Annals of Ulster* as Colum but referred to in other texts as Crimthann, and it is not known for certain which name he used throughout his life. The name Columba, Latin for 'dove', was not used until after his death. As a descendant of Conall — the founder of the powerful Cenél Conaill dynasty — Columba had politically powerful kin in the Uí Néill, a group of families that held power in the northern half of Ireland.[10] After completing his ecclesiastical training, Columba allegedly played a role in the events that led to the Battle of Cul Dreimhne in 560, where the northern Uí Néill defeated the Irish high king. Although some of the stories surrounding Columba's role in the build-up to the conflict are now regarded as fictitious,[11] it was recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* that the battle was won, thanks in part to the prayers of Colum Cille.[12] Therefore Columba is involved in events at some level, although his full role is still under debate.

In 563, Columba and twelve companions left Ireland for Britain. The reason for the voyage is thought to be either voluntary pilgrimage or forced exile.[13] Columba established his seat on the Hebridean island of Iona, where he also founded his church.[14] The facts of Columba's life thereafter become contentious and much of what

[7] W. M. Hennessy, *The Annals of Ulster: a Chronicle of Irish Affairs from A.D. 451 to A.D. 1540* (Dublin, 1871), 41.

[8] Ibid., 61.

[9] B. Lacey, *Colum Cille and the Columban Tradition* (Dublin, 1997), 12; R. Sharpe, 'Introduction' in Adomnan, *Life of St Columba* (London, 1995), 9.

[10] J. E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh, 2012), 95.

[11] Lacey, *Colum Cille*, 13.

[12] Hennessy, *The Annals of Ulster*, 57.

[13] Lacey, *Colum Cille*, 21 and Sharpe, 'Introduction', 13.

[14] Hennessy, *The Annals of Ulster*, 61; I. Fisher, 'The early Christian period' in D. Omand (ed.), *The Argyll Book* (Edinburgh, 2004), 72-4.

we assume about his life is based on texts written a century after his death. Folktales about Columba, including his ability to perform miracles, began to circulate around Scotland. [15] This reached all aspects of society, for even King Oswald of Northumberland, in 633, claimed he saw an apparition of St Columba, 'radiant in angelic form, whose lofty height seemed with its head to touch the clouds'.[16] But perhaps the biggest myth about Columba in Scotland was his involvement in converting the Picts to Christianity. In many sources, this has become historical fact: Columba journeyed to the land of the Picts, taking with him the new religion.[17] Adomnan's *Life* recounts the journeys of Columba to Pictland and the miracles he performed in front of the heathen Pictish king.[18] Bede records a similar account in his work *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (731), even naming the Pictish king he converted as Bridius.[19] But is this true? Recent research has suggested it is not. Fraser claims that Columba only visited a subsidiary Pictish kingdom in Atholl,[20] and as attested to by Bede, these southern Picts were already practising the Christian faith in Columba's time.[21]

Written historical evidence alone cannot provide an accurate picture of Columba's life, so additional approaches must be explored. Archaeological evidence is an ideal means of testing the validity of historical evidence. To test and explore every myth about Columba's life would fill volumes of books, so one particular myth has been chosen for presentation as a case study.

KEIL: THE AREA AND THE MYTH

The focus of enquiry is the stretch of coastline between Keil Point and Dunaverty on the southern tip of the Kintyre Peninsula in Argyll and Bute. The hills extend to the shoreline, along which are several caves. A ruined church set within a modern cemetery sits at the headland, adjacent to a holy well; both are heavily overgrown (Figure 2). Columba is said to have landed here when he left Ireland in 563. Only

[15] A. P. Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD 80 – 1000* (Edinburgh, 1984), 85.
[16] Ibid., 84.
[17] C. MacDonald, *The History of Argyll* (Glasgow, 1950), 27; and G. A. F. Knight, *Archaeological Light on the Early Christianizing of Scotland* (London, 1933), 7.
[18] Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 96.
[19] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* translated by L. Sherley-Price (London, 1990), 100.
[20] Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 105.
[21] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 99.

twelve miles separate the two pieces of land, and Argyll has a long history of interconnections with Ireland. It may seem logical, therefore, for Keil to be Columba's first stop on Scottish shores, but Adomnan's *Life* makes it clear that fourteen days at sea was not unusual at this time.[22] If Iona were Columba's final destination, then there would have been no need for him to stop first at Keil, although this remains a possibility.

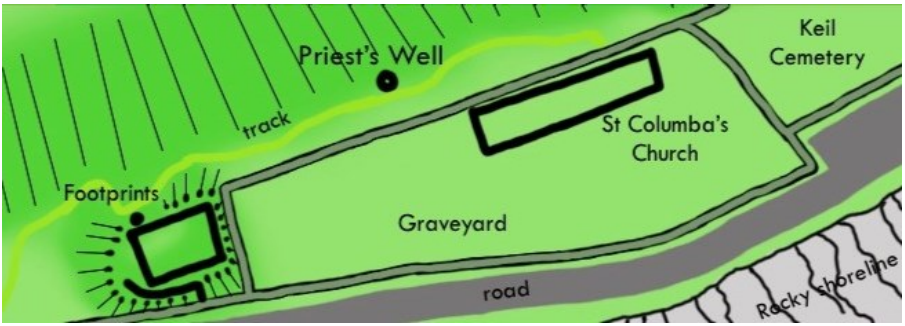


Figure 2. Image of the archaeology at Keil Point, showing the remains of the church and the location of the well and the carved footprints. Authors' own.

This myth is supported by various physical artefacts: two carved stone footprints are said to represent the exact spot he first touched Scottish soil. He and his companions are then said to have sought shelter in Keil Caves and blessed a local well before moving on to Iona.[23] This story has been taken at face value, to the extent that some tour operators include Keil Point as part of Columban pilgrimage routes.[24] The archaeological remains of the area are included in this story, with some of the remains integral to it.

[22] Sharpe, 'Introduction', 197.

[23] Capt. T. P. White, 'The ecclesiastical antiquities of the district of Kintyre in Argyllshire' (1871) 9 *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 227-8.

[24] See for example: 'Campbeltown To Tarbert, Loch Fyne: St Columba Journey' in *Scotlandspilgrimjourneys*. Available: <http://www.scotlandspilgrimjourneys.com/pilgrim-journeys/5/st-columba-journey/?stageid=6> [Accessed: 10.02.15]; and 'Keil Caves, St Columba's Steps and Dunaverty' in *Walkhighlands*. Available: <http://www.scotlandspilgrimjourneys.com/pilgrim-journeys/5/st-columba-journey/?stageid=6> [Accessed: 10.02.15].

ANALYSING THE ARCHAEOLOGY

Using data from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), sixteen archaeological sites were identified between Dunaverty Bay and Keil Point. Four of these are associated with the Columba myth: St Columba's Footprints (two carved footprints set into a stone at the entrance to a ruined building), Keil Caves (a number of caves where Columba and his companions are said to have stayed after landing at Keil),[25] St Columba's Church (the ruin of a chapel named after the saint), and St Columba's Well (a natural spring said to have been blessed by Columba).[26]

Figure 3: St Columba's Footprints. Authors' own.

SITE 1: ST COLUMBA'S FOOTPRINTS

Two carved footprints are named locally as St Columba's Footprints and are advertised as such (Figure 3). Of the two footprints, one is a genuine historical monument, while the second is a much more recent addition. The lower, southernmost of the two footprints (on the right of the photograph) has been identified as a Dark Age inauguration stone, linked to Dunaverty, a nearby fort.[27] This ceremonial artefact was used in the ritual inauguration of a local chief or royal leader who would place his foot

[25] Capt. T. P. White, 'Ecclesiastical antiquities', 228.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 156.

in the carved footprint, symbolically linking him with the land.[28] This was a common ritual practice in Ireland and Gaelic Scotland.[29] A more famous example of an inauguration stone can be found at Dunadd Hillfort near Kilmartin in Argyll. There, a foot has been carved into the rock at the summit of the fort.[30] This footprint was used to inaugurate the kings of the early Scottish Kingdom of Dalriada,[31] and employs the same symbolism as the stone footprint at Keil.

However, when drawing parallels between Keil and Dunadd, what immediately becomes apparent is that at Keil there is no royal centre and no great hill fort. This is where the archaeologist's insistence upon looking at sites within the wider landscape is informative. Far east from Keil, across Dunaverty Bay, is an impressive headland: once the location of an early medieval fortress tentatively identified as Aberte. This was the power-base of the powerful *Cenel nGabrain* kingroup.[32] If Dunaverty was an important power-base, then the footprint carved into the rock at Keil would likely have been the location for the ceremonial inauguration of *Cenel nGabrain* leaders. The footprint is directly facing the spot where the fortress would have been, enabling the new leader to view his kingdom as he was being inaugurated.

The second footprint, on the other hand, enjoys no such provenance. It was carved by a local stonemason in 1856,[33] according to a later visitor to the area who heard the story from the perpetrator's grandson.[34] The number 564 that has been carved into the stone beside the footprints was likely carved at the same time. Therefore, neither footprint is associated with Columba and, as such, cannot be used to indicate Columba's presence at Keil.

---

[28] M. R. Nieke & H. B. Duncan, 'Dalriada: the establishment and maintenance of an early historic kingdom in northern Britain' in S. Driscoll & M. R. Nieke (eds.), *Power and Politics in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1988), 16.

[29] E. Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration of Gaelic Ireland 1100-1600: a Cultural Landscape Study* (Woodbridge, 2004), 125.

[30] Knight, *Archaeological Light*, 259.

[31] Nieke & Duncan, 'Dalriada', 15-16.

[32] Ibid., 11-16.

[33] Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration*, 119.

[34] A. MacVicar, 'Irish Heritage' (1987) 21 *The Kintyre Antiquarian and Natural History Society Magazine online*. Available: <http://www.ralstongenealogy.com/number21kintmag.htm> [Accessed 04.02.2015].

SITE 2: KEIL CAVES

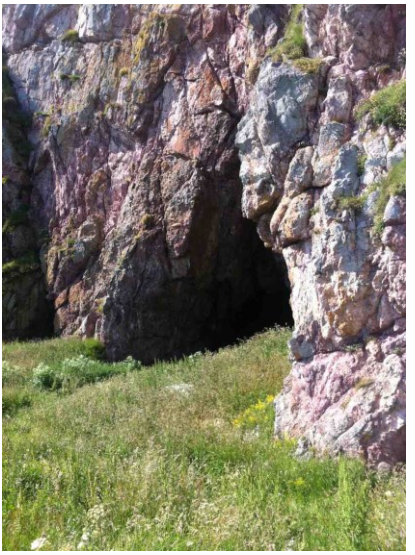


Figure 4. Largest of the caves at Keil Point. Authors' own.

The largest of the nine caves was excavated between 1933 and 1935 (Figure 4), uncovering artefacts dating from as early as the third-century AD, when the cave is thought to have first been occupied. Its last occupation was recorded in the 1881 Census, when the cave was home to a tinsmith, his wife, and child, as well as his cousin, a basket-maker, and his wife.[35] Another cave is thought to have contained a Druid's altar stone with cup marks, and was also believed to have been occupied from the third-century.[36] The evidence from the excavations gives no indication of any link with Columba or any other Christian figure. However, another legend attached to the site is that St Kiaran of Clonmacnois, a contemporary of Columba who came to Kintyre from Ireland, was thought to have lived in the area as a hermit.[37] It is possible that St Kiaran became associated with Columba and began to embellish the story of the latter's arrival in 563.

[35] C. Tolan-Smith, *The Caves of Mid Argyll: An Archaeology of Human Use* (Edinburgh, 2001), 5.
[36] Ruth Morris & Frank Morris, *Scottish Healing Wells: Healing, Holy, Wishing and Fairy Wells of the Mainland of Scotland* (Sandy, 1982), 34.
[37] Capt. T. P. White, *Archaeological Sketches in Scotland: District of Kintyre* (Edinburgh, 1873), 40.

SITE 3: ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH

The ruinous and roofless remains of the former parish church measure 22 metres long by 5.6-5.8 metres wide (Figure 4). The dedication of the building to St Columba would seem to provide an obvious link to the monk's presence at Keil. Indeed, the dedication of a site to a particular person was once seen as evidence that that person had been there.[38] However, there is no evidence to support this theory and no records to show how the church received its dedication, which is a common problem in Argyll for sites named after saints.[39]

Figure 5. St Columba's Church (covered in ivy top left) and graveyard. Authors' own.

The eastern portion of the building is the oldest and dates roughly to the thirteenth-century. The western portion of the building was probably added in the late medieval period. Moreover, the church first appears in written records only in the early 1300s, when it was granted to the priory of Whithorn and remained in use until the late 1600s. [40] The church was therefore established far too late to have had any contemporary association with Columba, so the fact that the church bears the name of

[38] R. Butter, *Cill-names and Saints in Argyll: a Way Towards Understanding the Early Church in Dal Riata?* (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2007), 13.

[39] A. MacDonald, 'Gaelic *Cill* (*Kil(l)-*) in Scottish place names' (1979) 2 *Bulletin of the Ulster Place Name Society* 15.

[40] RCAHMS, *Argyll: An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments*, Vol.1 (Edinburgh, 1971), 147-51.

Columba cannot be taken as evidence that Columba was at Keil.

SITE 4: ST COLUMBA'S WELL

Just north of the ruined church is St Columba's Well. This is a natural spring which bubbles from the rocky hillside, with the water collecting in a stone-lined pool (Figure 6). On the rock face that overhangs the well is an incised Latin cross measuring 20 centimetres by 15 centimetres. This is by far the most ambiguous of the sites, as there is no written history and there are no features that can be accurately dated. The cross could have been carved at any time; there is simply no way of knowing. Old maps of the area do not associate Columba's name with the well. The earliest Ordnance Survey map to include Keil, published in 1866, records it as 'Priest's Well,' whilst in later maps the well is marked simply as 'Well.' Yet again, there is no archaeological evidence, except its recent renaming, to link this feature with Columba.

Figure 6. St Columba's Well. Authors' own.

In summary, these four sites are neither connected nor contemporary with one another. Detailed analysis of the archaeology provides no evidence to support the claim that Columba was ever at Keil, although there is evidence that people attempted to associate Columba with the area, through the naming of the Church and the later carving of the second footprint. The evidence, therefore, points away from Columba's historical presence and in favour of deliberate myth-making.

CONSTRUCTING A MYTH

A close examination of the archaeological evidence, allied with existing documentary evidence, demonstrates that there is nothing to suggest Columba was ever at Keil. The evidence does not absolutely exclude this possibility but strongly suggests that Columba's landing at Keil in 563 is a locally constructed myth. The parties and reasons behind this myth then become interesting in their own right.

One possible explanation is that the area around Keil became involved in the politicisation of Columba long after his death. The cult of St Columba was well established by the time Adomnán wrote on Columba's life in the 680s,[41] and Keil likely became associated with Columba due to the strength of the cult in the local area in the later medieval period. The strength of the cult can partly be ascribed to the deliberate promotion and exaggeration of the life and deeds of Columba by the Scottish kingdom, in what amounted to an early form of state propaganda.[42] In the medieval period, numerous histories were endorsed in order to provide Scotland with a form of provenance, so as to assert it as a modern, centralised, and independent kingdom.[43] Part of this effort involved the promotion of specific saints to establish the uniqueness of Scotland's Christian identity and past, particularly as being independent from England.[44] Columba was one of the saints chosen, and he was subsequently featured prominently in one of the first official histories of Scotland, the *Chronica Gentus Scotorum*, compiled in the late thirteenth-century.[45]

Columba was therefore politically endorsed on a national level. Yet this was also likely to have had local impact, particularly amongst followers of the cult of Columba. The lack of historical evidence for the myth could imply that it survived as an oral folktale

[41] Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men*, 85.

[42] A. Lane, 'Citadel of the first Scots' (2001) 62 *British Archaeology*. Available: <http://www.archaeology.uk.org/ba/ba62/feat1.shtml> [Accessed 05.02.2015].

[43] A. Grant, 'The Middle Ages: the defence of independence' in R. Mitchison (ed.), *Why Scottish History Matters* (Edinburgh, 1991), 29.

[44] T. Turpie, *Scottish Saints, Cults and Pilgrimage from the Black Death to the Reformation, c.1349-1560* (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2011), 26.

[45] D. Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh, 2007), 261-2.

and, like many written accounts, could have its own political agenda.[46] While it was once thought that place-names showed where a saint had physically been, it was subsequently believed that an area with many sites named after a particular saint actually reflected the strength of that saint's cult in later times.[47] If this is indeed the case, then the popularity of Columba in Kintyre in the later medieval period may explain why the church at Keil was named after him. Even so, this does not explain why the archaeology of the area was deliberately manipulated to imply a connection with Columba. This was a separate development unrelated to medieval politics and occurred much later, during the Victorian era.

As previously mentioned, the northern footprint was carved by a local stonemason in 1856. One implication is that this enterprising local was making alterations to the archaeology at Keil, in order to link it with the Columba myth. At the time, the site would not have been known as an inauguration site for early kings. It would have made sense to repackage the site as a whole, representing just one narrative, including the footprints alongside the caves and the church. The inclusion of the well, renamed as 'St Columba's Well' in the nineteenth-century, would have further strengthened the myth and completed Keil Point's rebranding. The cross may have been added to the well at the same time as it was renamed but, as there is no evidence as to its dating, the provenance of the cross remains a mystery. Therefore, there is a strong argument that at some point during the nineteenth-century, the loose assemblage of archaeological sites at Keil Point were brought together under a single 'Columban' umbrella, with alterations made to some of the archaeology to better place the site within the Columba myth. It is likely that someone in the local community was attempting to create a tourist attraction to market to the Victorian public. This practice was not uncommon: the development of railways and the MacBrayne steamship company opened up Scotland's rural communities to urban-dwelling Victorians,[48] providing many remote rural communities with lucrative new opportunities. The archaeological record contains other instances of locals selling a myth to tourists in the Victorian era, such as Hebridean 'Barvas Ware'.

---

[46] R. Layton, 'Folklore and world view' in A. Gazin-Schwartz & C. J. Holtorf (eds.), *Archaeology and Folklore* (London, 1999), 28.

[47] Butter, *Cill-names and Saints*, 13.

[48] H. Cheape, 'Food and liquid containers in the Hebrides: a window on the Iron Age' in A. Fenton (ed.), *Food and Drink and Travelling Accessories: Essays in Honour of Gösta Berg* (Edinburgh, 1988), 7-10.

Like Keil Point, the Hebridean Islands became more accessible after 1851, facilitating the development of tourism in the area. The Victorian middle-class tourists viewed the Hebridean people as primitive, speaking a different language (Gaelic) and living a life far removed from their own. Folklore and anthropology were emerging disciplines at the time and, alongside archaeologists, scholars were attracted to the islands. 'Crogan Ware,' a low-fired and hand-thrown pottery, was of particular interest to archaeologists, as this prehistoric-type ceramic was still being made and used even although potter's wheels were common. [49] Tourism inspired new commodities, including ceramics and glassware, and new shops were opened to sell imported goods. Seeing an opportunity to make money, an enterprising, 'backward' group of locals from Barvas on the Isle of Lewis decided to make and sell ceramics that imitated the modern nineteenth-century style to tourists. These ceramics, known as 'Barvas Ware' (Figure 7), were in the shape of contemporary tea sets and included teapots, cups, and saucers. 'Barvas Ware' was never used by the locals, who favoured modern pottery and their own 'Crogan Ware' vessels, but was of interest to tourists and collectors. These handmade clay teapots were created entirely to perpetuate the myth of the Barvas' 'primitive' lifestyle; they were never designed to be functional.[50] They did not reflect the reality of how people lived on the islands but represented what visitors wanted to see. Visitors were attracted to the myth of people still living in the past, with their quaint customs and artefacts.

Figure 7. Example of Barvas Ware. Courtesy of the Hunterian Museum.

[49] Ibid., 7-12.
[50] Ibid., 14.

To draw a parallel between Hebridean 'Barvas Ware' and the Columban site at Keil, in both instances, locals constructed a myth about the local area in order to increase its appeal to tourists. Victorians liked quaint and romanticised portrayals of the past, and these myths were tailored to suit that market. One distinction is that in Barvas, locals made use of material culture, as opposed to the physical sites used at Keil. Additionally, 'Barvas Ware' is a deliberately constructed myth that fed Victorian fantasy, while the artefacts at Keil are far more subtle. This subtlety, combined with a well-known historical figure, made the myth of Columba at Keil believable. It gave a new and powerful meaning to the archaeology of the site, and it is this meaning, rather than historical accuracy, that grabs the imagination and perpetuates a story.[51]

CONCLUSIONS

Whatever his true achievements were in life, Columba became a political and cultural construct after his death, with many people seeking to benefit from his posthumously enhanced reputation. This was partly political, as a more mythical Columba was useful to the leaders of medieval Scotland. The effect at a local level was that it empowered the cult of Columba in some rural areas. This power was reflected in names and dedications, such as the church at Keil. Columba later became something of a cultural construct, both in how his life was presented by locals and accepted by outsiders. This is evident in the legend of Columba's landing at Keil, which was deliberately exaggerated by locals with unsubstantiated (and partially fabricated) evidence, but nevertheless eagerly consumed by the Victorian tourists who visited the site. Their shared belief in this story created a myth that may not reflect the truth about Columba's life.

This investigation has in part been very illuminating of the politics of medieval Scotland, the aspects of the lives of ordinary people at Keil at various points in time, and the entrepreneurial spirit of the Victorian era. But the Columba myth at Keil is also greatly damaging. This area is home to an important and historic royal site where local chiefs were inaugurated into power, but the dominance of the Columba myth is arguably overshadowing other histories which deserve to be known. This is illustrated perfectly by the two footprints that are still called 'Columba's Footprints'. Furthermore, this case study also demonstrates the key role that archaeology plays in questioning any accepted history, whether at Keil or elsewhere. It is important that

[51] P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2nd Edition (Oxford, 1988), 113.

questions are asked and histories challenged, as this enables a more critical engagement of Columba's life and the stories that surround him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

B. Allen & L. Montell, *From Memory to History: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research* (Nashville, 1981).

Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* translated by L. Sherley-Price (London, 1990). Originally published in 731.

D. Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh, 2007).

R. Bultman, 'New Testament mythology' in H. W. Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth* translated by R. H. Fuller (New York, 1972), 1-44. Originally published in 1961.

R. Butter, *Cill-names and Saints in Argyll: a Way Towards Understanding the Early Church in Dal Riata?* (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2007).

H. Cheape, 'Food and liquid containers in the Hebrides: a window on the Iron Age' in A. Fenton (ed.), *Food and Drink and Travelling Accessories: Essays in Honour of Gösta Berg* (Edinburgh, 1988), 111-121.

T. O. Clancy, 'Scottish saints and national identities in the early middle ages' in A. Thacker & R. Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), 397-420.

E. Deutsch, 'Truth and mythology' in S. Biderman & B-A. Scharfstein (eds.), *Myths and Fictions* (Leiden, 1993), 41-50.

I. Fisher, 'The early Christian period' in D. Omand (ed.), *The Argyll Book* (Edinburgh, 2004), 71-84.

E. Fitzpatrick, *Royal Inauguration of Gaelic Ireland 1100-1600: a Cultural Landscape Study* (Woodbridge, 2004).

K. Flannery & J. Marcus, *The Creation of Inequality: How Our Prehistoric Ancestors Set the Stage for Monarchy, Slavery and Empire* (Cambridge, 2012).

J. E. Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* (Edinburgh, 2012).

A. Gazin-Schwartz & C. J. Holtorf, *Archaeology and Folklore* (London, 1999).

A. Grant, 'The Middle Ages: the defence of independence' in R. Mitchison (ed.), *Why Scottish History Matters* (Edinburgh, 1991), 29-39.

R. Graves, 'Introduction' in F. Guirand (ed.), *New Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology*, new Edition (London, 1989), v-xiii.

W. M. Hennessy, *The Annals of Ulster: a Chronicle of Irish Affairs from A.D. 451 to A.D. 1540* (Dublin, 1871).

G. A. F. Knight, *Archaeological Light on the Early Christianizing of Scotland* (London, 1933).

B. Lacey, *Colum Cille and the Columban Tradition* (Dublin, 1997).

A. Lane, 'Citadel of the first Scots' (2001) 62 *British Archaeology*. Available: <http://www.archaeology.uk.org/ba/ba62/feat1.shtml> [Accessed 05.02.2015].

R. Layton, 'Folklore and world view' in A. Gazin-Schwartz & C. J. Holtorf (eds.), *Archaeology and Folklore* (London, 1999), 26-34.

A. MacDonald, 'Gaelic *Cill* (*Kil(l)-*) in Scottish Place Names' (1979) 2 *Bulletin of the Ulster Place Name Society*, 9-19.

C. MacDonald, *The History of Argyll* (Glasgow, 1950).

A. MacVicar, 'Irish Heritage' (1987) 21 *The Kintyre Antiquarian and Natural History Society Magazine* online. Available: <http://www.ralstongenealogy.com/number21kintmag.htm> [Accessed 04.02.2015].

R. Morris & F. Morris, *Scottish Healing Wells: Healing, Holy, Wishing and Fairy Wells of the Mainland of Scotland* (Sandy, 1982).

M. R. Nieke & H. B. Duncan, 'Dalriada: the establishment and maintenance of an early historic kingdom in northern Britain' in S. Driscoll & M. R. Nieke (eds.), *Power and Politics in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1988), 6-21.

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), *Argyll: An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments*, Vol.1 (Edinburgh, 1971).

'Campbeltown To Tarbert, Loch Fyne: St Columba Journey' in *Scotlandspilgrimjourneys*. Available: <http://www.scotlandspilgrimjourneys.com/pilgrim-journeys/5/st-columba-journey/?stageid=6> [Accessed: 10.02.15].

R. Sharpe, 'Introduction' in Adomnan, *Life of St Columba* (London, 1995), 1-99.

A. P. Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD 80 – 1000* (Edinburgh, 1984).

P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2nd Edition (Oxford, 1988).

C. Tolan-Smith, *The Caves of Mid Argyll: An Archaeology of Human Use* (Edinburgh, 2001).

T. Turpie, *Scottish Saints, Cults and Pilgrimage from the Black Death to the Reformation, c.1349-1560* (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2011).

'Keil Caves, St Columba's Steps and Dunaverty' in *Walkhighlands*. Available: <http://www.scotlandspilgrimjourneys.com/pilgrim-journeys/5/st-columba-journey/?stageid=6> [Accessed: 10.02.15].

Capt. T. P. White, 'The ecclesiastical antiquities of the district of Kintyre in Argyllshire' (1871) 9 *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland,* 227-30.

Capt. T. P. White, *Archaeological Sketches in Scotland: District of Kintyre* (Edinburgh, 1873).

The Construction of the (Convincing) Child Subject in Victorian Literature

Katie Arthur

Drawing on genre theory and especially Shklovsky's definition of ostranenie, or defamiliarisation, this article investigates the evolution of the construction and understanding of the child subject in Victorian literature. Engaging not only with the role of literature in shaping representations of the child, but also how the child's knowledge is furthered or tested through the genre of 'children's literature', this article offers close readings of several key novels. From the 'plastic children' of Dickens to Carroll's empowered Alice, this article fuses a discussion of the technique of defamiliarisation in creating a convincing child voice with an emphasis on the implications of doing so. Moreover, it traces the roots of the contemporary child's agency as well as the linguistic formulations of childhood, language, and civil society. In weighing the distinctions between nineteenth-century realism and non-sense, this article ultimately proposes that the ostranenie synonymous with the technique of the child's standpoint evokes a coded social commentary, shifting the child from an affective to a political narrative device.

> To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood;
> … this is the character and privilege of genius[1]

There seems a transcendental connection between the thrill of novel experience to the child and that of aesthetic ecstasy to the beholder of art. To encounter something for the first time inspires in the human condition a different understanding, beyond the tedium of the everyday signified. To recover this childlike fascination is art's aim, the aesthete's opiate, the character of genius. Marking Shklovsky's understanding of this phenomenon of defamiliarisation, this article hopes to illuminate the success and effect to which it is used in evolving Victorian literary constructs of the child.

KATIE ARTHUR is a fourth year undergraduate student studying English Literature and Politics at the University of Glasgow. This article was written as part of her 'Victorian Literature' module, and marked the beginning of her pursuit of critical theory throughout her academic studies. She has engaged with a broad range of topics whilst at university, from Shakespeare to conflict resolution, and has received recognition in the form of two 'Highly Commended' certificates for essays submitted to the 2014 Undergraduate Awards.

[1] S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* in J. Shawcross (ed.) (London, 1939), Vi, 59.

Ostranenie, or defamiliarisation, is the literary device employed to portray the ordinary and the known with fresh eyes, free of the associations bound within our socialisation that alters our understanding. In his essay *Art as Technique*, Shklovsky outlines perception as an 'aesthetic end' in and of its own, declaring:

> The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception…[2]

In Shklovsky's view, the aim of art is to defamiliarise the reader, its beauty arising from making the known unknown, by asking us to look again and see differently. He differentiates between the 'known' and the 'perceived': the known as laden with the normative inflections of tacit social discourse, and the perceived as the defamiliarised object free of normative connotations. He describes the 'attenuated' and 'tortuous' form of poetic speech as the mode best to achieve perception. Wonderful and strange, almost 'foreign' in its reduction to evocation and musicality, Shklovsky understands its qualities as most adequate to simultaneously distance the reader from the 'known'. Antithetic to poetic speech is prose, which Shklovsky argues is automatising and habitualising, rendering its object as known by tacit social discourse. Shklovsky offers as an example the '"direct" expression of the child'[3], whose portrayal is plain and reductive. Yet, Shklovsky overlooks how the child's abruptness offers perception and not knowledge, with their expression of thought still deeply embedded in an attempt to grasp what is new to them and not overloaded in socialised codes of language.

Jakobson's work highlights this ostranenie within the child's perception and elocution. He analyses how the development of semantic understanding and linguistic conventions often leads to curious, substitutive misuses in children's vocabulary.[4] Indeed, the confusion and displacement of words and meaning, based on the individual's own cognitive understanding, are deemed a necessary phase in children's linguistic development before they conform to conventional understandings and usages that shape their perception of the world. This discrepancy in perception,

---

[2] V. Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' in J. Rivkin & M. Ryan (eds.), *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd Edition (Oxford, 2004), 16.

[3] Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique', 20.

[4] R. Jakobson, *Studies on Child Language and Aphasia* (Paris, 1971).

language use, and meaning provides defamiliarisation through the child's perspective. The combination of Shklovsky and Jakobson thus provides an analytical framework to measure the success of creating convincing literary constructs of the child, and the effects to which defamiliarisation is utilised by the authors. Interestingly, Jakobson divides aphasic disturbances into two broad categories: metonyms regarding contiguity, and metaphors in relation to substitution. He argues that the '"realistic" trend' is underpinned and even pre-determined by metonymy[5], an idea that will ground the later part of this essay as it attempts to expose and distinguish between the political and semantic implications of the child in realism and literary non-sense.

The child received unprecedented attention during the Victorian era. Although the cult of the innocent child prevailed in the days of the Romantics, their poetic fascination further transpired into anthropological and psychiatric study. Amidst the days of empire and codes of civilised conduct, the figure of the child was constructed alongside Darwinian anxieties and concerns of sexual transgression. [6] As the cornerstone of British civility and social order amidst the fears and tensions of an expanding world, the discursive figure of the child became 'the site for the exploration of the self, the measure of morality, and human perfection and the standard for the evaluation of Victorian society.'[7] The adult fascination with innocence wrote of the child with idealised sentimentality, whilst the cultural dictums rendered it the signifier of primitivism and hegemonic masculine paranoia on the warm hearths of genteel English homes. As the Victorians struggled in their brave new world to reconsolidate the bourgeois order, the child became a focal lens through which the future of society was seen and contested.

As such, the literary and scientific space of the child in the Victorian era expanded to play out the tensions of an increasingly fragmented society in its newly designated role as the 'father of man' as bequeathed by the Romantic vision[8]. Shuttleworth argues the newfound social space brought the child a 'complex subjectivity'[9], with novels by

[5] R. Jakobson, 'Two Aspects of Language' in J. Rivkin & M. Ryan (eds.), *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd Edition (Oxford, 2004), 77.

[6] S. Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science and Medicine, 1840-1900* (New York, 2010), 4.

[7] L. C. Roberts, 'Children's Fiction', in P. Brantlinger & W. B. Thesling (eds.), *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Oxford, 2002), 355.

[8] Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child,* 3.

[9] Ibid., 359.

Dickens, Eliot, and the Brontës locating the child's interiority within a growing paradigm of psychoanalytical understanding. Beginning with Dickens, this article will examine the evolution of the construction and understanding of literary representations of the child. By contrasting Pip in *Great Expectations* with the 'plastic'[10] Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, this article will argue that ostranenie creates a convincing child voice. Proceeding down the rabbit hole into Carroll's *Alice* narratives, this article will assert that a defamiliarised perspective overturns naturalised ideological apparatus through a fierce and uncivilised sense of injustice. The child subject thus becomes the site of transgressive potential to unpick the very bourgeois moral ideals it had come to represent. Tracing the child to the end of the century, we mark the progression in the epistemological understanding of the child, and the literary representations which founded the basis of the contemporary child.

Critics often cite Dickens as one of the central propagators of the myth of childhood and one of the worst offenders for wielding the sentimentalised child as a rhetorical mechanism[11]. His 1841 novel *The Old Curiosity Shop* serves as a useful starting point of enquiry into contemporary considerations of the literary innocent as a fictitious construction drawn from the need to gratify adult ideals. Little Nell certainly cannot withstand accusations of conforming to Carey's notion of Dickens' 'manufactured children'[12], with Oscar Wilde infamously purporting that '[o]ne must have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without dissolving into tears… of laughter.'[13] Pattinson evokes that her innocence is 'somehow fatal'[14], and her obliging and pliable character bend her to inevitable annihilation as she is finally symbolised as the adult potential for redemption, bowing to the adult necessity to write children in gratification of their own pursuits. The opening chapter sees Nell first addressed as 'my child' [15], the possessive pronoun oddly indicative of Nell's one-dimensional malleability. Described as earnest, helpful, and infallibly angelic, Nell — although exceedingly competent — is restricted as an emotive device.

---

[10] J. Carey, *The Violent Effigy: A Study of the Dickens' Imagination* (London, 1973), 136.

[11] L. Langbauer, 'Ethics and Theory: Suffering Children in Dickens, Dostoyevsky and Le Quin' (2008) 75:1 *English Literary History* 104; R. Pattinson, *The Child Figure in English Literature* (Georgia, University of Georgia Press: 2008), 78; J. Kincaid, 'Dickens and the Construction of the Child' in W. Jacobson (ed.), *Dickens and the Children of Empire* (Hampshire, 2000), 37.

[12] Carey, *The Violent Effigy,* 131.

[13] R. Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London, 1987), 441.

[14] Pattinson, *The Child Figure,* 80.

[15] C. Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (London, 1985), 44.

It is ironic then, when the first-person narrator speaks of his shame in considering taking advantage of the child 'for the purpose of gratifying my curiosity'[16] when the reader is not encouraged to reflexively appreciate a shame in their exploitation of Nell's sentimentalised construction. As her death is revealed at the end of the narrative, Dickens' narrator explains '[s]he was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell, was dead.'[17] This roll of adjectives, in addition to the comparison of her to her tiny bird, renders Nell preposterous — a shell of an imagined idealised child, the adult-reader's child, Dickens' glib means to ensure sympathy. It can thus be deduced that the adult author's rendition of the child often inscribes the fictitious qualities of the innocent, decimating child agency and imposing conventions of emotive conditioning in relation to the reader's conception of the child.

But it would be brash to assume that Dickens offers no recompense for Nell, and it is indeed found in the intuitive voice of Pip, published twenty years later. Here Dickens employs the technique of ostranenie to create a convincing child subject. Defamiliarisation is inherent within the narrative tone of child Pip in the 'first stage', where Dickens constructs a fine balance between self-vindication and retrospective rebuttal. The device of a first-person retrospective narrator at the end of his Bildungsroman journey, and thus moral teleology, allows for careful comic consideration of Pip's childish thoughts. The disparity between child and adult understanding, and the gentle reproving tone with which Dickens has Pip comment on his former self creates a convincing child and moreover, a convincing character. The first page of *Great Expectations* entertains the 'childish conclusion' Pip 'unreasonably derived' regarding the gravestones of his family, creating a vibrant conception of the child's perspective, or as Pip notes, his 'vivid and broad impression of the identity of things.'[18] It is important here to note that adult Pip recognises that his acquisition of knowledge at that stage was merely an 'impression', as opposed to a grasping of substantive reality.

The child's voice is marked by a dislocation from understanding and an imperative curiosity filled with internally constituted comprehensions. Tied into the trajectory of the coming-of-age narrative, the reader is initially presented with a child inept in

[16] Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop,* 46.
[17] Ibid., 654
[18] C. Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London, 2003), 3.

conditioned ideas: Pip recollects his light-hearted childish fantasies regarding his family's gravestones, as opposed to a deep mourning that would characterise the sentimentalised child. These discrepancies often allow descriptions of sympathetic circumstances that avoid self-pitying. For example, young Pip fathoms a parallel meaning to the notion of his being raised 'by hand', 'having at that time to find out for myself what the expression meant', [19] and notes Pumblechook at ease whilst smothering Pip with sums.[20] While the first example uses comic ostranenie to code a sympathetic characterisation without deploring for pity, the latter sees Pip appropriate his adult register to describe and undermine the 'gorging and gormandising' [21] Pumblechook. This balance between redeemed retrospective narrator and unjustly treated child creates an incongruity of meaning that not only allows comic lightness, but also encodes Dickens' realist moral intent.

Thus, the biggest tragedy to child Pip is his premature enlightenment. The twisted revelation of his being 'ignorant and backward'[22] after meeting Miss Havisham and Estella thrusts him unkindly out of ignorance. The irony of course, which the narration instils, is that his newfound knowledge only serves to breed his ignorance. The sense of being coarse and common haunts young Pip, but leads his retrospective narration to admit that it 'is a most miserable thing to feel ashamed of home.'[23] The reader is then led not to agree with Pip's 'black ingratitude' but the contrived adult world that brings this perception to him. Furthermore, the reader is pushed to acknowledge the keener insight of the child Pip, who is not engulfed by morally senseless adult convictions. His observation that moving from kitchen to parlour for Christmas dinner 'was a change very like Joe's change from his working clothes to his Sunday dress'[24] (from 'well-knit characteristic-looking blacksmith' to a 'scarecrow in good circumstances' [25]) highlights the keen perceptiveness of Pip outside the acculturation of conduct. Not taken in by adult habitualisation, the ostranenie allows Dickens to have him to comment most freely and accurately in his position of the other.

---

[19] Dickens, *Great Expectations,* 7-8.
[20] Ibid., 54.
[21] Ibid., 55
[22] Ibid., 71.
[23] Ibid., 106.
[24] Ibid., 25.
[25] Ibid., 23.

It is precisely this misapprehension of adult codes through the defamiliarisation of the child's perspective that successfully translates into a social commentary with an acute sense of (in)justice. As G. K. Chesterton commented, '[b]y [Dickens'] solemnity he commands us to love our neighbours. By his caricature he makes us love them.'[26] *Great Expectations* then confronts the didactic realist use of the child as emotive device. The narration gently nods towards the keener insight of child Pip, his defamiliarised perspective proving more rational than the erratic adult moral codes that eventually corrupt it. Unlike Nell, who is so good that there is nothing more to her, Pip has agency, and a specific child's agency. This agency prevents Pip from becoming the symbol of childhood which gratifies the adult reader. Dickens avoids the pitfall of characterising him as innocent; rather, the child is seen as the vehicle for denaturalising ideological apparatuses against the autonomy of adult codes.

This brings us neatly to Alice, whom Carroll too, imbues with a specific child agency. Alice's adventures are marked by her attempts to fix meaning or understand the conventions presented to her. Her futile attempts to discern rationality within her nonsensical settings are combined with the child's prerogative of fearless curiosity: the story begins with Alice carelessly chasing the rabbit down the hole, 'never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.'[27] Unlike Pip, Alice has a two-track defamiliarisation of perspective, that of the child and that of non-sense. Lerer propounds that literary non-sense derives its foundations from the nineteenth-century novel, as each explores 'the limits of social expectation through linguistic experiment.'[28] He notes the fairy-tale quality to Dickensian names and caricature as well as the estrangement evoked by his use of dialect, going so far as to argue that the key proponent in such defamiliarisation is to see the world through the child's eyes. The child as the 'other', outside automatism adds colour to the author's lines, allowing gothic melodrama and wild chremamorphisms, with Pip describing characters through object-like attributes. Whereas in realism, the ostranenie of the convincing child affords satire, in non-sense the meanings are a lot more obscure. So though both Pip and Alice are staples of the transformative energies[29] of the child subject who do not

[26] G. K. Chesterton, *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens* (London, 1911), 59.
[27] L. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (London, 2012), 6.
[28] S. Lerer, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago, 2008), 191.
[29] K. Reynolds, *Radical Children's Literature: Future Visions and Aesthetic Transformations in Juvenile Fiction* (Hampshire, 2007), 1.

conform to the gratification of the adult reader, Alice's endeavours into the symbolic allow Carroll to exercise ostranenie on a further level.

Wonderland and the world of the *Looking Glass* do not only satirise adult codes, but also the linguistic and semantic conventions that they arise from. If *Great Expectations* illuminates the child's rejection of adult rationality, the *Alice* narratives call forth a dissection of the child's linguistic development and acculturation. Returning to Jakobson's emphasis that realism relies on metonymy, we can see non-sense disrupting this contiguity and thus providing no hierarchy of discourse; no final signified. The poetic use of metaphor is also unsettled by Alice's constant displacement, uneasiness, and inability to construe meaning, resulting in an absence of entrenched semantic proposals from the text. In this sense the genre resonates with the power of language by torturing the reader's need to find coherent meaning. Lecercle advocates an inherent tension within non-sense, as it 'both supports the myth of an informative and communicative language and deeply subverts it'[30]. To achieve its purpose, non-sense strictly adheres to certain rules, like syntax, yet it is from this that the reader recognises the signs as empty[31], conforming to Shklovsky's notion of poetic speech – wondrous, strange, and foreign.

Carroll's 'Jabberwocky'[32] poem is the quintessential example of this: seemingly meaningless yet actually imitating the rules of the English language. Thus, when Humpty Dumpty begins to interpret the poem to Alice, she is able to understand which words are verbs from their syntax as she asks 'And what's to "*gyre*" and to "*gimble*"?'[33] The importance here is that Alice can deduce enough to ask 'what's to', implying her understanding of the word as a verb that conveys an action. Humpty Dumpty also defines "outgrabe" to Alice using its present tense "outgribing", tracing the word's morphological markers in accordance with the logic of English conventions. The signifier then has no fixed meaning — it merely derives it from the signifying rules which it follows.

---

[30] J-j Lecercle, *The Philosophy of Nonsense: The Intuitions of Victorian Nonsense Literature* (New York, 2002), 3.

[31] M. Yaguello, *Language Through the Looking Glass: Exploring Language and Linguistics* (Oxford, 1998), 95.

[32] Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass,* 131.

[33] Ibid.*,* 191.

Yet, Carroll has Alice constantly meet characters who do attempt to deliver meaning. From Humpty's reading of 'Jabberwocky' to the pun-based explanations of the Gryphon and Mock Turtle, the creatures of the dream-world present themselves as custodians of knowledge, a knowledge Alice must adapt to and make sense of. The corruptions of etymology and semantics used by the monsters can be seen as undermining adult didacticism; as Silverstone notes, although 'the tone of these utterances is frequently pedagogic and belittling, the content is ridiculous.'[34] The arbitrary morals of the Duchess represent the futility in trying to wrestle meaning from meaninglessness — 'everything's got a moral, if only you can find it.'[35] The vulgar repetition, 'And the moral of that is…', only serves to render them more nonsensical and so reflect the absurdity of the adult code to the child. Where before the child subject was posited as the passive receptacle and unwitting upholder of bourgeois values, Carroll uses Alice's innocence to afford her the ability to reject and transgress social codes and cultural dictums.

Rather than being bowled over by the preposterousness she is greeted by throughout her journey, Carroll writes of Alice as engaging with and rebelling against the codes and conventions presented to her. This agency is vital in preventing Alice from becoming a submissive, sentimentalised subject, and instead ensures that she is inquisitive, active, and consequently subversive of the Victorian construction of the child as a projection of the ideals and anxieties of the adult world. And so the twofold employment of ostranenie, both within the child's perspective and the genre of non-sense, propels Carroll's *Alice* narratives to a new capacity to deconstruct and denaturalise ideological apparatuses, from adult codes to the structure of language.

Both Carroll's Alice and Dickens' Pip are child subjects written convincingly and with vigour through the author's use of defamiliarisation, which in turn allows them to denaturalise and reflect upon the constructs the character is restrained by: from class to language to adult conventions. It is Dickens' device of a first-person retrospective narrator, and Carroll's careful use of an unobtrusive third-person narrator, which allows their child subjects to be children. Indeed, Carroll, whose narrator offers no enlightened vision through carefully measured interjections such as 'I hope you

[34] B. Silverstone, 'Children, Monsters and Words in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass' (2001) 30:4 *Cambridge Quarterly* 325.
[35] Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 77.

understand what *thinking in chorus means* — for I must confess that *I* don't'[36], places meaning with the reader in a profoundly distinctive way for his time. He thus empowers his child reader alongside his child subject, the transition of meaning from author to reader since becoming 'a central tenet of modern critical theory.'[37]

This epistemological shift in the understanding of the child and its literary representations paved the way for modern child subject. The end of the century was marked by works like Morrison's *A Child of the Jago*, turning to the child subject but embracing a new subjectivity. Away from the sentimentalised innocent of the Romantics, Morrison portrays the protagonist Dicky Perrott as fierce and resourceful, ambiguously sympathetic and doomed to corruption. His two-year-old sister's death is met by his mother's 'listless relief'[38] — a far cry from the tears shed for Little Nell. Sparing neither the adult-readers' need for idealised innocence nor the characters that litter his plot, Morrison's tragic naturalist trajectory offers no recompense of meaning. Dicky still misunderstands the adult world, with his redemptive gift to the Ropers being perceived as 'spite'[39] and his first encounter with Weech leaving him feeling 'guilty without in the least understanding the offence'[40]. However, he also 'clicks', fights, and lies. Morrison states he killed Dicky because he could not escape, and 'would have become perforce, as bad as his surroundings',[41] reinforcing the idea of moving away from the conventional affective use of the child as an emotive rhetoric device.

The child subject and its literary representations are still subject to contemporary debate, yet we can conclude that it was through the Victorian era that the child found its agency and its subversive voice. From the constraints of the plastic child as an emotive device, to the empowered modern child subject and reader, we have seen how Dickens and Carroll rewrote the epistemological category of childhood as well as our understandings of it. Shklovsky's definition of ostranenie and Jakobson's appreciation

---

[36] Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass,* 146.

[37] J. Dunisbere, *Alice to the Lighthouse: Children's Book and Radical Experiments in Art* (Hampshire, 1987), 42.

[38] A. Morrison, *A Child of the Jago* (1896; London, 1969), 102.

[39] Ibid., 89.

[40] Ibid., 70.

[41] A. Hunter, 'Arthur Morrison and the Tyranny of Sentimental Charity' (2013) 56:3 *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 293. Citing: A. Morrison, 'The Children of the Jago: Slum-life at Close Quarters: A Talk with Mr Arthur Morrison', *Daily News,* 12th December 1896, 6.

of it within the child's linguistic development pave the way for an analysis of how it has subsequently been employed by authors to create a convincing child subject. The defamiliarisation of children's eyes also allows them to see what the habitualised adult's cannot, and thus is a technique used by authors to evoke social commentary, whether coding realist concerns of justice or the satire of language in non-sense. The child shifted from an affective to a political narrative device, empowered by a consideration of his or her keen perceptiveness. In her adventures, Alice is constantly pestered to 'say what [she] mean[s]'[42], but in truth the child does so — and usually captures meaning better than the most eloquent logophile, as the stories do not fail to remind us.

[42] Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland,* 59.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

J. Carey, *The Violent Effigy: A Study of the Dickens' Imagination* (London, 1973).

L. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (London, 2012).

G. K. Chesterton, *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens* (London, 1911).

S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* in J. Shawcross (ed.) (London, 1939), Vi.

C. Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860-1; London, 2003).

C. Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841; London, 1985).

J. Dunisbere, *Alice to the Lighthouse: Children's Book and Radical Experiments in Art* (Hampshire, 1987).

R. Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London, 1987).

A. Hunter, 'Arthur Morrison and the Tyranny of Sentimental Charity' (2013) 56:3 *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 292-312.

R. Jakobson, 'Two Aspects of Language' in J. Rivkin & M. Ryan (eds.), *Literary Theory: An Anthology* 2nd Edition (Oxford, 2004), 76-80.

R. Jakobson, *Studies on Child Language and Aphasia* (Paris, 1971).

J. Kincaid, 'Dickens and the Construction of the Child' in W. Jacobson (ed.), *Dickens and the Children of Empire* (Hampshire, 2000), 29-42.

L. Langbauer, 'Ethics and Theory: Suffering Children in Dickens, Dostoyevsky and Le Quin' (2008) 75:1 *English Literary History* 89-108.

J-J. Lecercle, *The Philosophy of Nonsense: The Intuitions of Victorian Nonsense Literature* (New York, 2002).

S. Lerer, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago, 2008).

A. Morrison, *A Child of the Jago* (1896; London, 1969).

R. Pattinson, *The Child Figure in English Literature* (Georgia, 2008).

K. Reynolds, *Radical Children's Literature: Future Visions and Aesthetic Transformations in Juvenile Fiction* (Hampshire, 2007).

V. Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' in J. Rivkin & M. Ryan (eds.), *Literary Theory: An Anthology,* 2nd Edition (Oxford, 2004), 15-21.

L. C. Roberts, 'Children's Fiction', in P. Brantlinger & W. B. Thesling (eds.), *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Oxford, 2002), 353-369.

S. Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science and Medicine, 1840-1900* (New York, 2010).

B. Silverstone, 'Children, Monsters and Words in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass' (2001) 30:4 *Cambridge Quarterly* 319-336.

M. Yaguello, *Language Through the Looking Glass: Exploring Language and Linguistics* (Oxford, 1998).

The Cultural Status of Art Forgeries

Vedika Khandelwal

This article explores the cultural status and significance of forgeries in the world of art, as well as tracing an evolution of the changes in their perception. Forgeries are generally thought to be culturally perverse, falsifying our experience and understanding of art. However, this very devaluation of forgeries presupposes notions of authenticity and originality which, upon examination, turn out to be arbitrary or inconsistent. Thus, the value of forgeries is twofold: firstly, they highlight and help criticise the presuppositions behind our cultural and aesthetic practices and attitudes; and secondly, they can also be valuable as works in their own right. Forgeries cannot be left out from the study of art history, as they have contributed in the shaping of art historical study as it is today.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS ART FORGERY?

A forgery can be defined as an intentional action with the intent to deceive. It imitates the appearance of an artwork with a different origin and intends to steal its identity, place, and status.[1] A successful forgery relies on appearing to be authentic and thus displays characteristics that are in common with the original it emulates.[2] Moreover, the forger intends to remain anonymous in his quest to deceive the Art World. Consequently, the unknown forgery enjoys the cultural status reserved for the object or artist it simulates, and is deemed successful. However, on its detection, the perception of forged art changes and the status of the work is altered in in terms of its intrinsic value. The newly discovered forgery is deemed un-artistic and authorless — marking it as culturally perverse and thus creating a 'black-hole' in the art historical paradigm.[3] This essay highlights the evolution of attitudes towards forgery, whilst elaborating on their significance, based on instances from the journey of modern

VEDIKA KHANDELWAL is a final year History of Art student, and previously read Art History and Art-World Practice at Christie's Education, London. She is interested in South Asian art and the influence of international politics on postmodern art. This article emerged from her 'Art Forgeries, Misattributions and the Art Market' Senior Honours course. The guidance offered by Dr Christa Roodt was instrumental in researching the topic.

[1] T. Lenain, *Art Forgery: The History of a Modern Obsession* (London, 2011), 30.

[2] M.C. Beardsley, 'Notes on Forgery' in D. Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art* (Berkeley, 1983), 225.

[3] Lenain, *Art Forgery*, 20.

forgers including Han Van Meegeren and Tom Keating.

EVOLUTION OF FORGERIES: FROM GENIUS TO FRAUD

The first notion of forgeries as they are perceived today appeared in Vasari's account on Michelangelo. During the Renaissance, the act of successful deception was hailed as artistic genius — Michelangelo even began his career as a forger.[4] Vasari also recalls that the young artist was able to pass off his version of the classic age statue of *Sleeping Cupid* (among others) as ancient artefacts.[5] Moreover, he could replicate antique drawings and then give them an authentic appearance by smoking and staining them.[6] Michelangelo's infamous deception and success as a forger was imperative towards the establishing of his reputation as a 'great' and 'original' artist.[7] However, with the evolution of culture there was a change in the basis of artistic interpretation and a consequent shift in the perception of forgeries. The view that is nowadays standard in the art world regarding forgeries has best been summarized by Lenain:

> from the status of dazzling mimetic prowess, forgery has moved downwards in the culture of art, and then to its darkest margin, to become the weird epitome of the unartistic...once celebrated by the best-established observers of art.[8]

A reason for this change in perception of forgeries is the modern art world's obsession with the idea of 'originality,' which has now become an integral characteristic of 'great art.' This idea of the 'aura' dominates artistic understanding and original art is considered to be aesthetically valuable and exciting because it facilitates a 'feeling of intimate contact with the magical power of the creative artist; it heightens awareness, sensitivity and deposition to response: when a work is a known fake, the magic is gone.'[9] In order to succeed, Western artists do not merely seek to produce works of

[4] Ibid., 13.
[5] Ibid., 13.
[6] P.F. Norton, 'The Lost Sleeping Cupid of Michelangelo' (1957) 39 *The Art Bulletin* 251.
[7] A. Briefel 'Sacred Objects/Illusionary Idols: The Fake in Freud's 'The Moses of Michelangelo"' in P. Knight & J Long (eds.), *Fakes and Forgeries* (Newcastle upon Thames, 2005), 29.
[8] A. Briefel, 'Sacred Objects', 30.
[9] Lenain, *Art Forgery*, 311.

beauty, but original works of beauty.[10]

It is on these grounds that, for instance, Vermeer, the infamous Dutch Golden Age Painter, is considered to be an Old Master. He is viewed not only as a painter of beautiful pictures, but also as someone who achieved the ideal of original creation through his art. This reiterates the modern idea of viewing the artist as a creative genius.[11] It is the forger's lack of this very imaginative novelty and spontaneity in their art that has prompted the view that forgeries should occupy an inferior position in the cultural hierarchy and be distinguished from works of 'great' art.[12] For instance, the forgers of inauthentic Vermeer paintings faked not his technique, but rather his originality, by imitating his unique usage of light and shade, to his intricate compositions and the innovative use of the rich blue colour characteristic to his work.[13]

This interpretation of modern forgery, as seen in the works of forgers such as Van Meegeren and Elmyr de Hory, is what distinguishes them from the of the earliest known Renaissance examples — modern forgers tend to rely on their ability to mimic styles and creativity rather than technical skills. For instance, even though the forgeries by Van Meegeren were widely accepted as works of the Dutch master Vermeer, they were technically inept. In this case, Meegeren was able to exploit a gap in the rediscovered Dutch master's oeuvre. Since Vermeer only had a small body of known paintings, Meegeren was able to create 'early religious period' paintings in the 'style' of Vermeer. His interpretation of Vermeer's Caravaggio phase led to the creation of *Supper at Emmaus.* His forgery was celebrated as a newly discovered Vermeer masterpiece and deceived everyone including the seventeenth-century Dutch art expert, Abraham Bredius.[14] After his initial success, Meegeren continued to inject Vermeer forgeries into the Art World. On the detection of this deceit, Meegeren exposed the vulnerability of the highest art authorities. Prior to their detection, the acceptance of these forgeries into the canon of Vermeer's oeuvre influenced all subsequent judgments of related works, both originals as well as unknown forgeries.

[10] L.B. Meyer, 'Forgery and the Anthropology of Art' in D. Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art* (Berkeley, London, 1983), 85.

[11] A. Lessing, 'What is Wrong with a Forgery?' in D. Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art* (Los Angeles, 1885), 70.

[12]Lessing, 'What is Wrong with a Forgery?', 67.

[13]Ibid., 70.

[14]Ibid., 74.

Perceptions were built around the forged works and Meegeren in a way that loosened the hold on reality and managed to deform and falsify the understanding of Vermeer's art.[15] Moreover, as seen in this case, Meegeren's deception also led to misinterpretation of Vermeer's artistic achievements.

DOES TRUE ORIGINALITY REALLY EXIST?

Western society today places cultural value on what is 'original.' Originality in art is expected to lead to the revelation of new and valued information 'about the world, revealing new forms of beauty', which 'explores the emotions, nature of social relationships and what it is to be human, explores what is new in the world and how the world might best be represented and so on.'[16] Even though forgeries have, as discussed above, led to certain revelations — including the vulnerability of the art authorities, and gaps in art historical knowledge — they are considered to lack artistic integrity because they involve deception. Moreover, it is believed that they do not contribute towards the discovery of *new* ideas.[17] This lack of creativity leads to a devaluation of their cultural status.[18]

Despite this devaluation, placing forgeries within an art historical study also reveals that the very notion of forgery is a concept that is made meaningful only when referenced with regard to the modern concept of originality and authenticity.[19] This can reveal to us, and help criticize, the various presuppositions upon which the notion of aesthetic value depends, as it perceived today. The significance placed on the artistic genius and the superiority of the 'authentic' marks the primary basis of the cultural distinction between the original and the forged. The pleasure derived from a work of art often depends on its perception as a scarce, authentic, and therefore collectible object. Moreover, the very evolution of the perception of art forgeries is intertwined with the changing perception of 'authentic' art: both reflect the same societal interests, and every forger pays attention to the trends behind 'original' art, and the psychology

---

[15] E. Dolnick, *The Forger's Spell: a True Story of Vermeer, Nazis, and the Greatest Art Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (New York; London, 2008).

[16] M. Jones, 'Why Fakes?' in M. Jones (ed.), *Fakes: The Art of Deception* (London, 1990), 13.

[17] R. Bowden, 'What Is Wrong with an Art Forgery?: An Anthropological Perspective' (1999) 57 *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 336.

[18] Ibid., 337.

[19] Ibid., 334.

of their appreciation.[20]

Today's art world 'demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake.'[21] This cult of authenticity pervades modern life and the essence of authenticity takes priority over authenticity itself. For instance, a majority of the Renaissance forgeries that stemmed from the demand for relics were successfully deceptive despite reflecting contemporary characteristics: they were more reflective of the contemporary vision of the past than authentic antiquities.[22] Also, the discussion of this cult of authenticity is incomplete without the mention of the modern idea of restoration: a process that often misinterprets the original artistic intention, yet is culturally acceptable and deemed authentic. Tom Keating's painting in the style of Goya was a protest against the museum restorers who, according to him, destroyed this old Master's work with their over restoration. To Keating, his painting was a replacement that the museums were not fit to own.[23] He considered his own forgery, in a way, more true to original that the actual authentic piece. This highlights another important issue: that even though the contrast between originality and artistic genius, on the one hand, and everything that falls short of this ideal, on the other hand, is one of the central tenets that influence artistic perception and value judgments, this very distinction is rather arbitrary. Restoration can do as much violence to the ideal and the cult of originality as forgeries, and yet the former is acceptable, while the latter is not.

It can be argued that the art world places significance on authenticity and originality in order to strengthen the alienation of the public from it. Art connoisseurship has traditionally been elitist, and this issue of authenticity further empowers 'experts'.[24] This culture of looking at art 'experts' as the final authority and judge of authenticity and 'great' art often encourages forgery: forgers like Tom Keating, and Van Meegeren among others faked artworks to demonstrate the crass incompetence of the so called 'experts'.[25] Keating resorted to art forgery as a means of avenging those artists who had deserved respect from the art establishment, which had left them impoverished during their lifetime and continued to exploits their work even after their death:

---

[20] Lessing, 'What is Wrong with a Forgery?', 68.

[21] J. Keats, *Forged: Why Fakes are the Great Art of Our Age* (New York, 2013.), 4.

[22] D. Lowenthal, 'Forging the Past' in M. Jones (ed.), *Fakes: The Art of Deception* (London, 1990), 22.

[23] D. Lowenthal, 'Authenticity? The Dogma of Self Destruction' in M. Jones (ed.), *Why Fakes Matter: Essays on Problems of Authenticity* (London, 1992), 189.

[24] Keats, *Forged*, 144.

[25] Lenain, *Art Forgery*, 25.

> ...the time had come for the commercial art establishment to learn a lesson — I was determined to do what I could to avenge my brothers and it was to do this that I decided to turn my hand to Sexton Blaking. Money was not the motive and a vast majority of fakes were just given away – including the sketches imitating the style of Rembrandt, watercolours in the hand of J.M.W. Turner and Thomas Girtin.[26]

Fakery, according to him, was regarded as a means of helping people in need and simultaneously creating chaos in the art market. Van Meegeren, too, started his career as a forger in an attempt to prove his merit after being rejected by the connoisseurs.

FORGERIES AS SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

These forgers have in their own ways succeeded in revealing the weaknesses of the art paradigm. As highlighted earlier, the knowledge that a work is a forgery alters its cultural value for experts and connoisseurs and reveals a form of cultural anarchism on an ethical and political level.[27] However, whether or not the knowledge of a forgery affects the general aesthetic perception, state or cultural value of an artwork depends almost wholly upon the aesthetic theory we bring into inquiry.[28] From a purist perspective, this kind of knowledge does not cloud the aesthetic judgement, and theoretically the discovery of a forgery should not influence the visual experience of a work of art.[29] To a man who has never heard of either Vermeer or van Meegeren and who stands in front of *The Disciples at Emmaus* it should make no difference whether he is told that is a seventeenth-century Vermeer or a twentieth-century Meegeren in the style of Vermeer[30]. The fact that it is a forgery would be, for this viewer, merely a piece of knowledge that stands independent from the work as an object of aesthetic value.

However, in reality, the very distinction between the 'original' and 'forged' art

---

[26] Ibid., 33.

[27] Keats, *Forged*, 149.

[28] Lenain, *Art Forgery*, 25.

[29] L. B. Cebik, 'On the Suspicion of an Art Forgery' (1989) 47 *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 148.

[30] Lessing, What is Wrong with a Forgery?, 63.

highlights that the criteria of judgment of art are not intrinsic or purely visual.[31] The perception of a work of art, including that of forgeries, is inherently relative: cultural beliefs influence the way in which we perceive, think, act, and also condition and modify our physiological responses.[32] The same cultural beliefs are revealed on the detection of a forgery – despite remaining visually unaltered, the cultural and market value of a forged work changes in accordance to its attribution, thus proving that perception of art does not rely merely on the visual. Lessing writes in his essay that it is

> indeed serious or regrettable that the realm of art should be so infested with non-aesthetic standards of judgement that it is often impossible to distinguish artistic from economic value, taste or fashion from true artistic excellence, and good artists from clever businessmen.[33]

Lenain also brings to light that the very concept of originality itself is arbitrary and ill-defined: all artists borrow, copy, simulate and plagiarize to some extent the styles and inventions of others, if not their own and 'originality' always derives from the more or less dissimulation of simulation.[34] We may value originality, but true originality, if it exists at all, is rare.[35]

On the other hand, the very nature of art ensures that the production of a perfect fake is nearly impossible: every forger inevitably leaves traces of his own style, even when imitating (as closely as possible) the style of others.[36] Therefore, forgeries arguably possess, in their own way, characteristics similar to original art as they have their own 'aura.' The moment the forger becomes an author, the fake ceases to be a fake. That is, to define a work as a forgery is to only make a point regarding authorship misattribution; it should not entail that we ought not to treat it as an individual work in its own right, applying to it the same standards we would apply when dealing with a non-forgery. In this context, there would be no distinction between the 'original' and 'forged' art, as forgeries would be treated as authentic works of a certain kind and

[31] Nelson Goodman, 'Art and Authenticity,' in Denis Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art* (Berkeley, 1983), 82.
[32] Meyer, Forgery and the Anthropology of Art, 82 .
[33] Lessing, 'What is Wrong with a Forgery?', 63.
[34] Lenain, *Art Forgery*, 26.
[35] Meyer, 'Forgery and the Anthropology of Art', 86.
[36] Keats, *Forged*, 15.

therefore, should belong within the same authorial structure reserved for what is perceived as 'original.'

CONCLUSION

On the basis of this historiographical study, it can be argued that forgeries occupy a changeable artistic and cultural status. Placing them within the realm of art historical study requires the questioning of critical theory, and puts the nature of art in jeopardy. However, even though forgeries may be deemed culturally perverse, they are a part of the modern history of art and their significance cannot be ignored. The development of a critical tradition is connected with the exposure and even production of fakes: works of art cannot exist in isolated splendour and are always a part of a cultural and artistic history.[37] Forgeries form a valuable source of historical evidence, and are therefore worthy of preserving and studying. Not only do they provide a unique perspective on how the past was perceived by the past but are also integral to the understanding of artistic creativity. Detection of forgeries highlight the components of modern artistic experience: there is an intertwining of aesthetic and symbolic value, and art is judged not purely based on the external but also internal factors such as authenticity and attribution which drive perception. They reveal that the attitude towards works of art is also sentimental: what we know literally changes our responses to a work of art.[38] Thus, once we know that a work is a forgery our whole set of attitudes and resulting responses is profoundly altered.[39] Forgeries question non-aesthetic standards of judgement, and bring to light the elitist nature of the art world. They also formulate an integral aspect of modern artistic culture, and are thus imperative to the understanding of the history of art.[40] The late modern forger is a part and parcel of the cultural fabric of our world and the epitome of the new artistic culture based on the application of this artistic paradigm.[41]

Forgers like Van Meegeren cannot be left out from the study of art history as they have contributed in the shaping of art historical study as it is today. Moreover, their

---

[37] Meyer, 'Forgery and the Anthropology of Art', 89.

[38] D. Lowenthal, 'Authenticity? The Dogma of Self Destruction' in M. Jones (ed.), *Why Fakes Matter: Essays on Problems of Authenticity* (London, 1992), 189; A. Koestler, 'The Anatomy of Snobbery,' in *The Trail of the Dinosaur and other Essays* (New York, 1995), 73.

[39] Meyer, 'Forgery and the Anthropology of Art', 81.

[40] Lenain, *Art Forgery*, 324.

[41] Lenain, *Art Forgery*, 234; 324.

journey is often romanticized and often draws more public attention than most 'original' artworks. Therefore, it can be said in conclusion that today's culture places forgers as foremost artists of our age. There are but few authentic modern masterpieces as provocative as a great forgery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

M. C. Beardsley, 'Notes on Forgery' in D. Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art (*Berkeley, 1983), 225-231.

R. Bowden, 'What Is Wrong with an Art Forgery?: An Anthropological Perspective' (1999) 57:3 *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 333-343.

A. Briefel, 'Sacred Objects/Illusionary Idols: The Fake in Freud's "The Moses of Michelangelo"' in P. Knight & J. Long (eds.), *Fakes and Forgeries* (Newcastle upon Thames, 2005), 29-40.

L. B. Cebik, 'On the Suspicion of an Art Forgery' (1989) 47:2 *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 147-156.

E. Dolnick, *The Forger's Spell: a True Story of Vermeer, Nazis, and the Greatest Art Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (New York; London, 2008).

N. Goodman, 'Art and Authenticity' in D. Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art* (Berkeley, 1983), 78-93.

M. Jones, 'Why Fakes?' in M. Jones (ed.), *Fakes: The Art of Deception* (London, 1990), 11- 16.

J. Keats, *Forged: Why Fakes are the Great Art of Our Age* (New York, 2013).

A. Koestler, 'The Anatomy of Snobbery' in *The Trail of the Dinosaur and other Essays*, (New York, 1995), 69-94.

T. Lenain, *Art Forgery*: *The History of a Modern Obsession* (London, 2011).

A. Lessing, 'What is Wrong with a Forgery?' in in D. Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art* (Berkeley, 1983), 58-76.

D. Lowenthal, 'Forging the Past' in M. Jones (ed.), *Fakes: The Art of Deception* (London, 1990), 16-22.

D. Lowenthal, 'Authenticity? The Dogma of Self Destruction' in M. Jones (ed.), *Why Fakes Matter: Essays on Problems of Authenticity* (London, 1992), 184-192.

D. Lowenthal, 'Counterfeit Art: Authentic Fakes?' (1992) 1:1 *International Journal of Cultural Property* 79-104.

L. B. Meyer, 'Forgery and the Anthropology of Art' in D. Dutton (ed.), *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art* (Berkeley, 1983), 77-93.

P.F. Norton, 'The Lost *Sleeping Cupid* of Michelangelo' (1957) 39:4 *The Art Bulletin* 251-257.

Censoring Perversion: J.G.Ballard's *Crash*, the Novel and the Film

Klara Kofen

This article considers JG Ballard's seminal novella *Crash* and its film adaptation by David Cronenberg within the tradition of lascivious, subversive literary utopias. It examines how *Crash*, as both a caustic critique of consumerist culture and a work of futurist pornography, sought to uncover the psychopathologies of sexual and political transgression simmering beneath the concrete surface of suburban ennui. The controversy ignited by Cronenberg's film amongst critics and audiences alike brought contemporaneous social morality into sharp relief with the black mirror Ballard held up to society, two decades earlier.

> Pornography is the most political form of fiction, dealing with how we use and exploit each other.[1]

Utopias are, per definition, 'no places', they describe scenarios and places which do not exist. Ever since their inception in the sixteenth-century, writers started using these exotic and undiscovered places to illustrate the mores of their society.[2] Wagar notes how out of this tradition two more or less distinct kinds of utopian writings emerged: [3] those that use imaginary places as ideals to strive for, and a 'counter-culture', in which the social or political power relations of their time are perpetuated ad absurdum; 'in which utopia is not a bustling city registering worldly progress but a community of spirits earning grace'.[4] It is this latter category to which notorious writers such as the Marquis de Sade, Aldous Huxley, Nietzsche and J.G. Ballard belong, writers who theorised desire in all its forms, and it is this latter category which has consistently been attacked by censors and moralists from the entire political spectrum, precisely

KLARA KOFEN is a final year History student at the University of Glasgow. Her main academic interests lie in eighteenth-century European history, the Enlightenment in France and Germany, and debates on censorship. The idea for this piece originated in a series of reading group meetings on the theme 'Utopias' which she organised over the course of her final year. She hopes to continue into Postgraduate study to further pursue her studies of the European Enlightenment.

[1] J.G Ballard, *Crash* (London, 2008).
[2] D. E. Rose, *The Ethics and Politics of Pornography* (Basingstoke, 2013), 81.
[3] W. W. Wagar, 'J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia' (1991) 18:1 *Science Fiction Studies* 61.
[4] Ibid.

because the 'perversities' described by these writers are 'too close to home'. In that, they can be considered as valuable pieces of social criticism, while the controversies they generate shed a light into the dark edges of dominant ideology. Although censorship in the twentieth-century was not, primarily, a business of the state anymore, its workings can still be used as a starting point for analysis of these controversies, and the way in which 'texts' become politicised through public debate.

If measured by the debate and moral hysteria they generated, J.G. Ballard's cybersexual novel *Crash* from 1973, and David Cronenberg's adaption for the screen from 1996, can be considered the very peak of this subversive potential in the literature of the twentieth-century. And if all sexually explicit material has been political since its inception, then censoring pornography is always, and has always been primarily, a political act.

The novel is essentially and primarily a story about sex and car crashes, including all the deadening narrative traits of pornography: 'flatness, repetition, circularity'.[5] Yet the cruel banality of the world through which James, the protagonist, is wandering — and which Ballard describes with the cold detachment of a 'scientist, dissecting a cadaver'[6] — is essentially a dark mirror of twentieth-century western consumer society and its psychopathologies, in which technology has moved into the most intimate realm of human relations. Thus, Ballard's social criticism, while it might not provide a 'healthy', constructive alternative of how to restore morality to the present state of affairs, serves to lure his readers out of their complacency.

Richard Porton characterises Cronenberg's films as 'viscerally aggressive' pieces of cinema, which 'examine irrationality and often stomach — churning violence with calm, rational detachment '.[7] In the greater context of Cronenberg's work, Crash is not thematically unique: Within the 'body horror' genre, the destruction of the human body as the last stable referent of identity has also been treated in his *The Fly* and *Naked Lunch*, while the power of the media was the central theme of his *Videodrome*.

[5] Z. Smith, 'Sex and Wheels: Zadie Smith on JG Ballard's Crash' in *The Guardian* (04.07.2014).
[6] Ballard, *Crash,* 3.
[7] R. Porton, 'The Film Director as Philosopher: An Interview with David Cronenberg' (1999) 24:4 *Cinéaste* 4.

In this article, it will be shown how Ballard's *Crash* can be placed into the tradition of lascivious, subversive utopias, how Cronenberg's 1996 adaption translated its literary precepts into film, and how both the book and the film reached a level of notoriety among critics, audiences and censors. Ballard states that 'Crash (...) is not concerned with imaginary disaster, however imminent, but with a pandemic cataclysm that kills hundreds of thousands of people each year and injures millions'. As we shall see, advocates of censorship during the *Crash* controversy in 1996 were overly aware of this, but did not believe in the positive potential for change in this 'cautionary tale', this 'warning against that brutal, erotic and overlit realm'.[8]

During the 1960s when Ballard was writing *The Drowned World*, there was a paradigm shift among the avant-garde which turned 'no places' into 'not yet' places. Out of this, a range of Promethean writings emerged which strove for 'a liberation of indeterminate energy'.[9] While *The Drowned World* might not show 'any obvious ways forward for the human race'[10] in the manner of Fromm or Marcuse, Ballard's writings are far from pessimistic: Ballard has been described as 'a seeker of transcendence ',[11] and, with regards to *Crash*, that his heroes are 'driven by a dream of a perfectible world, a better world'.[12] At the same time, Ballard's utopias have always been is a lot more cautious and self-aware than that of many of his contemporaries.[13]

Vaughan, with whose death the tale starts and finishes, is the seductive,[14] omnisexual Prometheus of a new race, created by a 'new sexuality born from a perverse technology'.[15] His voice echoes the dark energy of Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto*, celebrating the new 'beauty of speed' of the 'racing automobile with its bonnet

[8] Ballard, *Crash*, Introduction.

[9] J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations - XIII. Simulacra and Science Fiction* translated by S. F. Glaser. Available: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-baudrillard/articles/simulacra-and-simulations-xiii-simulacra-and-science-fiction/> [Accessed 16.07.14].

[10] Ballard qtd in Wagar, *J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia*, 55.

[11] Manuel, Frank E. *et al.*, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1979), 6.

[12] Ballard quoted in Wagar, *J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia*, 55.

[13] Ibid, 56.

[14] Like a kind of cyber-sexual Zeus, Vaughan sleeps with nearly every character in the novel or it is implied that he already has. During the car-crash show, James has 'the sense that Vaughan was controlling us all, giving each of us what we most wanted and most feared', Ballard, *Crash*, 76.

[15] Ibid, 6.

adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath ... a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire'.[16] Through Vaughan's obsession with Elizabeth Taylor, photos of bodies mutilated by car crashes, 'the mysterious eroticism of wounds; the perverse logic of blood-soaked instrument panels, seat-belts smeared with excrement, sun visors lined with brain tissue',[17] a perverse sinister world unfolds in front of the reader's imagination.

Manuel, in his writings on utopian thought states that:

> When a social order is dissolving, some of its members will strip the body before it is cold. They perform autopsies on the carcass while it still has a breath of life in it.[18]

Ballard undertakes such an autopsy, and describes with the necessary critical and emotional distance of a physician the symptoms of time and society which sets the background for *Crash*.[19] He describes the twentieth-century as dominated by 'the marriage of reason and nightmare', 'sinister technologies and the dreams that money can buy', in which sex and paranoia reign supremely over people's lives. Past and future have ceased to exist, and people live in an infantilised world 'where any demand, any possibility, whether for life-styles, travel, sexual roles and identities, can be satisfied instantly'. We live in an ever more ambiguous world, which makes everyone complicit in the celebration of ultimate consumerism. With the situation being as such, *Crash* acts as 'an extreme metaphor for an extreme situation, a kit of desperate measures only for use in an extreme crisis'. *Crash* was first published as a short story in Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition*, which, to some extent, is an even

[16] 'We declare that the splendour of the world has been enriched by a new beauty. We will sing of (...) the nocturnal vibration of the arsenals and the workshops beneath their violent electric moons: the gluttonous railway stations devouring smoking serpents; (...) great-breasted locomotives, puffing on the rails like enormous steel horses with long tubes for bridle.' F. T. Marinetti, 'Futurist Manifesto' in U. Apollonio (ed.), *Documents of 20th Century Art: Futurist Manifestos* (New York, 1973).

[17] Ballard, *Crash*, 6.

[18] Wagar, *J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia*, 54.

[19] 1983, Ballard, interview with Graeme Revell: 'In a sense, I'm assembling the materials of an autopsy, and I'm treating reality- the reality we inhabit-as if it were a cadaver, or, let's say, the contents of a special kind of forensic inquisition' quoted in Ibid.,64.

more extreme version of this particular kind of utopian criticism of the flaws in the 'late capitalist machine'. [20]

Anti-pornography feminists have almost unanimously criticised porn on the basis that it leads to an objectification of women.[21] Furthermore, as Zadie Smith writes, the book's 'phallocentric' obsession with cars, as well as descriptions of 'penises entering the leg wounds of disabled lady drivers' will undoubtedly strike an inflammatory chord amongst those concerned with the patriarchal suppression of women.[22]

Yet Ballard deliberately objectifies every single one of his characters, turning them into mere objects of consumption. But the driving force behind this objectification is not the patriarchy, but society as a whole, and everyone, from the fascinated but passive onlookers of car crash sites to the characters themselves, is complicit in this objectification, as the following passages illustrates:

> A considerable number of children were present, many lifted on their parent's shoulders to give them a better view. (...) None of the spectators showed any signs of alarm. They looked down at the scene with the calm and studied interest of intelligent buyers at a leading bloodstock sale. Their relaxed postures implied a shared understanding of the most subtle points, as if they all realised the full significance of the displacement of the limousine's radiator grille, the distortion of the taxi's body frame, the patterns of frosting on its shattered windshield.[23]

Greenland, as well as Delville[24] has described the characters in a Ballard story as 'subordinated to their values as roles or signs'.[25] As such, they are devoid of any psychological traits that would explain their actions, 'human beings from whom all

---

[20] D. A. Foster, 'J. G. Ballard's Empire of the Senses: Perversion and the Failure of Authority' (1993) 108:3 *PMLA* 519.

[21] C. A. MacKinnon, 'Francis Biddle's sister: pornography, civil rights, and speech' in *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Harvard, 1987), 176.

[22] Z. Smith, *Sex and Wheels.*

[23] Ballard, *Crash*, 127.

[24] M. Delville, *J.G. Ballard*, (Plymouth, 1998), 4.

[25] C. Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction* (London, 1983), 99.

time has been eroded, and reduced to the essence of their own geometries'.[26] Working high-profile jobs, beautiful, self-assure, his characters are utterly perfect: Catherine Ballard (an independent woman by all accounts),[27] Dr Helen Remington, and James, are all as clean and perfect as the objects they consume: despite their individual sexual depravities. Yet this post-emotional, hyper-sexual world in which 'human beings emerge as strangely distanced and detached observers' [28] does not allow for the expression of real eroticism and desire.[29]

It is only with the destruction of the body that they awaken into a new realm of sensuality and indeed reality. In a much quoted passage, James notes 'after the commonplaces of everyday life, with their muffled dramas, all my organic expertise for dealing with physical injury had long been blunted or forgotten. The crash was the only real experience I had been through for years'. [30] Dr Helen Remington, her sexuality previously 'untouched ', is 'reborn' into a new realm of liberated sexuality after her car crash.[31] Before she gets crippled in a car-crash, Gabrielle is described as 'a conventional young woman whose symmetrical face and unstretched skin spelled out the whole economy of a cozy and passive life, of minor flirtations in the backs of cheap cars enjoyed without any sense of the real possibilities of her body'.[32] They all discover true reality in the sublime world of 'benevolent technologies', [33] beyond the all conventional notions of good and evil.[34]

In Lacan's and Bataille's terms, the only real possibility to experience pleasure is through pain.[35] In the union between the organic and the technological, Ballard's characters experience what Bataille would call true eroticism: 'true' because it takes

---

[26] Ballard, *A Users Guide to the Millenium* (London, 1996), 86.

[27] 'Catherine was now taking flying lessons, and with one of her boyfriends had started a small air-tourist charter firm. All these activities she pursued with a single mind, deliberately marking out her independence and self-reliance as if staking her claim to a terrain that would later soar in value' Ballard, *Crash*, 20.

[28] Delville, *J.G. Ballard*, 5.

[29] J. Baudrillard, 'Ballard's *Crash*' translated by A. B. Evan, (1991) 18:3 *Science Fiction Studies* 317.

[30] Ballard, *Crash*, 28.

[31] Ibid., 16f.

[32] Ibid., 78.

[33] Ibid., 62.

[34] Wagar, *J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia*, 54.

[35] E. Dylan, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London, 2002), 93.

the individual to 'farthest bounds of possibility' which is only in death.[36] It is the ultimate mystical negation of logical positivism, of any conventional understanding of pleasure. In his Accursed Share, Bataille writes:

> But how can we solve the enigma, how can we measure up to the universe if we content ourselves with the slumber of conventional knowledge? If one has the patience, and the courage, to read my book, one will see that it contains studies conducted according to the rules of a reason that does not relent, and solutions to political problems deriving from a traditional wisdom, but one will also find in it this affirmation: that the sexual is in time, when the tiger is in space. The comparison follows from considerations of energy economy that leave no room for poetic fantasy, but it requires thinking on a level with a play of forces that runs counter to ordinary calculations.[37]

In an interview with Graeme Revell, Ballard said his purpose is 'to break the conventional enamel that encases everything', to transcend the world by engaging it directly and without fear. Deviant and perverse ideas may have more power to lead us to 'some sort of moral truth' than ideas borrowed from 'conventional morality'.[38] There is a strong potential for subversion in this lethal mystical utopia, this 'thirst for spiritual renewal' through destruction of the self: like the Futurists, Vaughan rehearses and plans his own death.[39] The new world can only arise if one is willing to sacrifice oneself. In this idea, the same logic reigns that pervades the writings of de Sade: 'Nothing would be reborn, nothing would be regenerated without destructions. Destruction, hence, like creation, is one of Nature's mandates '.[40]

---

[36] G. Bataille, *Eroticism* translated by M. Dalwood (London, 1987), 24.

[37] G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share* translated by R. Hurley (Brooklyn, 2013), 11f.

[38] Ballard quoted Wagar, *J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia*, 61.

[39] Delville, *J.G. Ballard*, 39.

[40] D. A. F. De Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* translated by R. Seaver & A. Wainhouse (2002), digitised by Supervert 32C Inc, 73. Available:
<https://itp.nyu.edu/classes/germline-spring2013/files/2013/01/philosophy_in_the_bedroom.pdf> [Accessed 15.07.14].

As Baudrillard has argued, the aspect of photography and cinema is inseparable from the fusion of the technical and the sexual.[41] In the world of *Crash*, the oversaturation with images of violence has led to a certain lethargy, boredom and passiveness among their audience. Due to this, empathy and care has become mere 'pantomimes', 'gestures' and 'moral gymnastics'.[42]

> In her sophisticated eyes, I was already becoming a kind of emotional cassette, taking my place with all those scenes of pain and violence that illuminated the margins of our lives-television newsreels of wars and student riots, natural disasters and police brutality which we vaguely watched on the colour TV set in our bedroom as we masturbated each other.

It is unsurprising that it was adapted for the screen. The film's notorious opening sequence consists of three sexual acts set in a plane garage, a storage room full of cameras and on a balcony overlooking a seemingly infinite net of motorways. In these few minutes encapsulate what James in the novel describes as:

> a glimpse of an unmoving world, of the thousands of drivers sitting passively in their cars on the motorway embankments along the horizon, seemed to be a unique vision of this machine landscape, an invitation to explore the viaducts of our minds.[43]

The classical structure of mainstream films can be characterised by 'continuum of cause and effect' and hence, an overall linear narrative that lives off the 'desires' driving individual characters and actions, and creating chains of cause and effect.[44] The visual and musical aesthetic steers its audience's emotions, allowing them to come to conclusions as to the films moral content. Cronenberg's Crash does have all of these features, yet they are stripped of any kind of comfort that traditional storytelling might have provided. In fact, Cronenberg's American agent suggested the insertion of a

[41] Baudrillard, *Ballard's Crash*, 317.
[42] Ballard, *Crash*, 24.
[43] Ibid., 40.
[44] D. Bordwell & K. Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition (New York, 1990), 70.

voice-over commentator 'a voice of comfort and to explain the film to everybody'.[45] Yet critical self-scrutiny and uncertainty was precisely what Cronenberg wanted.

His characters desire sexual satisfaction, and this is the only thing they are moved by, which is contrasted by a cinematic aesthetic that renders their sexual depravities almost disconcertingly un-erotic. The repetitive nature of the opening sequence and the inability to discern any kind of motivation in the minds of these serenely beautiful libertines make it nearly impossible to discern some kind of moral message from the film. In this, it is a perfect translation of the literary autopsy Ballard conducts in his novel. The film, however adds another layer: Howard Shore's score, in bringing together electric and classical instruments, absorbs the viewer into a claustrophobic and yet romantic world. The juxtaposition of these images, which might easily be construed as crude and pornographic, and of the lyrical soundtrack create a sense of unease.

The story is framed by the sentence 'Maybe next time', referring to this one, unattainable orgasm that keeps both Catherine and James moving from one sexual encounter to the next. The very last picture shows them lying side by side in the grass next to the wreck of Catherine's car. 'Are you hurt?' asks James, but she is not. 'Maybe next time' he says, by now entirely caught in Vaughan's universe in which the only way pleasure can be experienced is through a car crash. This drives the obscene logic of consumer culture to its uttermost extremes.

And it undoubtedly hit a nerve, not only in the UK but also in the US and France.[46] When the film was released, Alexander Walker, an outspoken critic of censorship and longstanding defender of *A Clockwork Orange*, issued a report from Cannes that condemned *Crash*. The report was then published in the *London Evening Standard* under the headline 'A movie beyond the bounds of depravity'.[47] It was under this headline that veritable storm was released: About 400 reports, articles and statements of politicians appeared on the radio, television, and in the newspapers. The writers of *The Crash Controversy* state that it was the very vagueness of Walker's original article which turned *Crash* into a projection surface for all kinds of cultural and moral

[45] M. Barker, J. Arthurs & R. Harindranath, *The Crash Controversy – Censoring Campaigns and Film Reception* (London, 2001), 5.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 1f.

anxieties, often expressed by people who had not even seen the film. *The Daily Mail* was leading the campaign against the film, turning into a matter of 'national significance'.[48] What is interesting is that many of the film's most outspoken critics were aware of the fact that this was not about 'imaginary disasters', but a 'symptom of a universal moral decline'.[49] Bell Mooney from *The Daily Mail* wrote that:

> The limits of the freedom of expression [is] one of the most vital issues we have to confront today. About whether we shall allow our society to be corrupted by a handful of people who believe that there are no boundaries to what the screen should show or the writer describe. (...) I have argued that unless people like myself take a stand against the seemingly endless downward spiral of sex and violence in books, film and on television, the world that I was born into will disappear forever, and we shall allow our children to inherit a moral vacuum, not a civilised community.[50]

John Bell from the Westminster City Council justified the ban in the cinemas in West London, where it remains banned until today,[51] by stating that he cannot accept a film as this 'So much of this kind of violence is going on and we have had enough of it. Let us stop it'.[52] What the critics feared was copycat behaviour,[53] in an audience that was defined as putatively vulnerable, corrupt or depraved: 'weak egos', 'incomplete' in their moral conditioning.[54]

---

[48] Ibid. 1f /11 ff.

[49] Ibid., 14.

[50] Ibid., 16.

[51] 'Squeezed into Somebody else's Mould' in Ballard, *Crash*, 20 (Appendix).

[52] Barker et al, *The Crash Controversy,* 3.

[53] M. Fisher (Labour shadow arts spokesman) criticised the Royal Automobile Club for allowing that Crash might have some 'educational' benefit saying that 'It is distasteful that the RAC is supporting the film. If there is one area of copycat behaviour, it will be car crashes' Ibid., 4.

[54] A Western Daily Press Editorial described the films audience in the following words 'Ram-raiding and reckless driving by youngsters for the fun of it are already endemic throughout the country, with a particular West Country favourite being a game of chicken in which the drivers of stolen cars signal they are going in one direction before going in the other. When it is a fact that scenes of violence or depravity from other films have produced real-life copycats, it is not being sensational to suggest this one's lethally reckless driving for sexual thrills, fetishism, voyeurism and sadomasochism could prove the latest game for some lunatic West thrill-seekers.' Ibid., 7.

The BBFC was at the heart of this controversy. Eventually, the board based its decision to give the film an 18 rating, uncut, on the report by psychologist Dr Paul Britton who stated that there was no known fetishism to which the film might appeal.[55] He later revoked this statement and claimed that:

> Young people, and those whose moral and philosophical systems have not yet matured, or who are particularly impressionable, are much more likely to be influenced by the moral vacuum associated with the sexuality shown by the main characters. This is significant because sexually inexperienced people may look to the main characters as models.[56]

It is maybe not unsurprising that the controversy was going on in the year before the general election, in which the *Mail* was aligned with Tony Blair,[57] and stood up against 'liberalism', the 'anything goes' society, and the 'intellectual establishment'.[58]

When the book was published in 1973, the reviewer for the *New York Times* called it 'the most repulsive book [he had] ever read', 'freakish', while *The Times* stated that 'the novel's obsession with sado-masochism via car-crashing is repellent' and Martin Adams from *The Observer* called it nothing but 'an exercise in vicious whimsy'.[59] While all three acknowledged that it was well written, they almost unanimously advised their audience not to read it. Another commentator even went as far as saying that Ballard is 'beyond psychiatric help. Do Not Publish!'.[60]

With state censorship being officially abolished, critics of the book could rely on nothing but public opinion, and hope that only a small number of people would chose to read it. In 1996, when the film came out, the danger was much higher as the cinema is a far more popular and sociable medium for the formation opinions and attitudes.[61]

---

[55] Ibid., 3.
[56] Ibid., 8.
[57] Ibid., 142 ff.
[58] Ibid., 16.
[59] 'What the Papers said in 1973' in Ballard, *Crash*, 12f (Appendix).
[60] T. Goldstein, 'J.G.Ballard: Visionary of the Apocalypse' (1982) April *Heavy Metal* 38-40. Available: <http://jgballard.ca/media/1982_april_heavy_metal_magazine.html> [Accessed 15.07.14].
[61] Barker et al, *The Crash Controversy,* 34 f.

It has been shown how the politics of transgression in *Crash* inhabit a morally ambiguous and subversive literary and cinematic territory, in which pornography, technology and mystical utopian thought merge and become a black mirror of society. In 1982, David Pringle, a frequent Ballard critic stated that 'For the last thirty years we have been living in J. G. Ballard's world'.[62] The moral panic the book and the film produced, and the debate they generated certainly suggests that Ballard's particular form of social criticism struck a chord with the public.

[62] Goldstein, *J.G.Ballard*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

J. G. Ballard, *Crash* (London, 2008).

J.G. Ballard, *A Users Guide to the Millenium* (London, 1996).

G. Bataille, *Eroticism* translated by M. Dalwood (London, 1987).

G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share* translated by R. Hurley (Brooklyn, 2013)

Cronenberg dir., *Crash*, UCA, (2007) Film.

D. A. F. De Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom* translated by R. Seaver & A. Wainhouse (2002), digitised by Supervert 32C Inc. Available: <https://itp.nyu.edu/classes/germline-spring2013/files/2013/01/philosophy_in_the_bedroom.pdf> [Accessed 15.07.14].

F. T. Marinetti, 'Futurist Manifesto' in U. Apollonio (ed.), *Documents of 20th Century Art: Futurist Manifestos* (New York, 1973).

Z. Smith, 'Sex and Wheels: Zadie Smith on JG Ballard's Crash' in *The Guardian*, (04.07.2014).

SECONDARY SOURCES

M. Barker, J. Arthurs & R. Harindranath, *The Crash Controversy – Censoring Campaigns and Film Reception* (London, 2001).

J. Baudrillard, 'Ballard's *Crash*' translated by A. B. Evan (1991) 18:3 *Science Fiction Studies* 313-320.

J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations - XIII. Simulacra and Science Fiction* translated by S. F. Glaser. Available: <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-baudrillard/articles/simulacra-and-simulations-xiii-simulacra-and-science-fiction/> [Accessed 16.07.14].

D. Bordwell & K. Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition (New York, 1990).

M. Delville, *J.G. Ballard* (Plymouth, 1998).

D. Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London, 2002).

D. A. Foster, 'J. G. Ballard's Empire of the Senses: Perversion and the Failure of Authority' (1993) 108:3 *PMLA* 519-532.

T. Goldstein, 'J.G.Ballard: Visionary of the Apocalypse' (1982) April *Heavy Metal* 38-40. Available: <http://jgballard.ca/media/1982_april_heavy_metal_magazine.html> [Accessed 15.07.14].

C. Greenland, *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction* (London, 1983).

C. A. MacKinnon, 'Francis Biddle's sister: pornography, civil rights, and speech' in *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Harvard, 1987).

F. E Manuel & F. P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Massachusetts, 1979).

R. Porton, 'The Film Director as Philosopher: An Interview with David Cronenberg' (1999) 24:4 *Cinéaste* 4.

D. E. Rose, *The Ethics and Politics of Pornography* (Basingstoke, 2013).

W. W. Wagar, 'J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia' (1991) 18:1 *Science Fiction Studies* 53-70.

Constructing the Ideal Interpretation: The Significance of King Saul's Mood in 1 Samuel

Fiona Macdonald

The First Book of Samuel traces the rise and fall of King Saul. His troubled kingship has been interpreted in numerous ways over the centuries by biblical scholars, literary critics, medical professionals and people of faith. The search for an explanation of King Saul's 'madness' that the text has been handled in several different ways, ultimately leading to the construction of various perceptions of the biblical narrative, of King Saul's character and of the biblical representation of mental health.

Saul's reign as the first king of Israel is fraught with challenges. He is a reluctant leader who regularly struggles with the various and sometimes conflicting demands placed upon him. Additionally, he suffers from repeated episodes of 'dark' moods: sadness, anger, jealousy and paranoia being some of the emotions he displays. These changes in Saul's mood have elicited much debate and discussion in recent decades, with many health professionals as well as biblical scholars trying to assign a medical diagnosis to the behaviour he displays. Various hypotheses have been proffered, some more convincing than others, yet the ethics of such diagnoses are questionable. Perhaps this desire to medicalise Saul's 'dark moods' grows out of an increasing awareness of biological rather than divine causes of illness. Perhaps it is complicated by the multi-faceted compilation of the Books of Samuel. Perhaps it is reflective of a wider desire to 'naturalise' problematic biblical narratives. Whatever the reason, the way Saul's mental state is constructed and interpreted has consequences, which differ depending on whether the book is read as history, literature or scripture. Ultimately, however, this text is most commonly and powerfully read as scripture and so any interpretation of Saul's moods could have a profound impact on the way people understand God and their own lives, particularly if they are living with a mental health diagnosis.

FIONA MACDONALD is an Honours student working towards a Bachelor of Divinity. This is her second undergraduate degree at the University of Glasgow and part of her training as a Candidate for Ministry with the Church of Scotland. She is interested in all aspects of Christian theology and biblical studies but is particularly concerned with how theory impacts on the Church's work with the most vulnerable in society.

From their arrival in the Promised Land just after the death of Moses, the Israelites remained within their tribes and were ruled by God through earthly mediators: the judges. [1] Early in 1 Samuel the Israelites grow increasingly worried about their aggressive neighbours, particularly the Philistines. They desire strong military leadership and petition for a king. God is unimpressed by this request but reluctantly agrees and instructs the final judge (Samuel) to anoint young Saul as Israel's king. Initially, Saul does well and wins various battles; however, he twice disobeys God's commands. As a result, God regrets making him king and Samuel anoints David as Israel's new king. From that moment onward, God is with David and Saul faces the decline of his kingship whilst David rises in power. It is Saul's moods and behaviour within this narrative that continue to intrigue readers. Those who seek to analyse his mental state tend to categorise key moments as indicative of either an elevated/'high' mood or a depressed/'low' mood. How these events are categorised, either as 'highs' or 'lows', leads commentators to label Saul with a particular condition. There is, however, a great deal of information about Saul's general character and personality that tends to be ignored or minimalized. This may be classed as 'background information' but could be significantly instructive when engaging with Saul's story as a whole.

Saul's highs are rare. Only one is unanimously labelled as such and that is the 'prophetic frenzy' Saul falls into when 'the spirit of God possessed him' not long after he is anointed (10:10). Two other events could be classed as 'highs' because of similarities with this episode. The first comes when Saul hears about the Ammonite siege of Jabesh-gilead: 'And the spirit of God came upon Saul in power…and his anger was greatly kindled' (11:6). The anger Saul feels could be interpreted as a 'low' but the fact that 'the spirit of God came upon [him] in power' suggests that this was a positive response to a bad situation, rather than uncontrollable rage. This is supported by the subsequent narrative in which Saul defeats and drives out the Ammonites (11:11). The second potential 'high' comes later in the story when Saul is hunting down David and Samuel: 'the spirit of God came upon him…he fell into a prophetic frenzy…stripped off his clothes…[and] lay naked all that day and all that night' (19:23-24). Again, the attribution of the event to 'the spirit of God' and the act of prophesying mark this episode as a 'high', even if it is not interpreted positively.

The lows are more frequent and begin immediately after David is anointed, which results in 'the spirit of the LORD depart[ing] from Saul, and an evil spirit from the

[1] R. Coggins, *Introducing the Old Testament,* 2nd Edition (Oxford, 2001), 23.

LORD torment[ing] him' (16:14). We are not told the nature of this torment but it was sufficiently visible for Saul's servants to notice and suggest music therapy. David's lyre-playing is helpful but it is apparent that the 'evil spirit from God came upon Saul' on a recurrent basis,[2] departing only when David played (16:23). Additionally, Saul flies into rages against David and his son Jonathan, seemingly either without justification or growing out of jealousy (18:8-11, 19:9 and 20:30-34). He throws spears at them in attempts to kill them and searches for them when they take flight. The end of Saul's life is similarly 'low'. Before his final battle against the Philistines, Saul is 'afraid, and his heart trembled greatly' (28:5). He seeks guidance from God but 'the LORD did not answer him' (28:6). In desperation, he consults a medium — a profession he had recently outlawed — to communicate with Samuel's spirit (28:8, 11). Unfortunately for Saul, Samuel predicts defeat for Israel and death for Saul and his sons (28:19). With this dire warning ringing in his ears, Saul goes into battle, where he is 'badly wounded' by enemy archers (31:3). Saul asks his armour-bearer to kill him 'so that these uncircumcised may not come and thrust [him] through, and make sport of [him]' (31:4). The armour-bearer refused the request 'so Saul took his own sword and fell upon it' (31:4). This final act by Saul has been interpreted by many as Saul heroically taking back control of his life.[3] Whatever deeper meaning the reader may attach to this action — positive or otherwise — the taking of one's own life demonstrates a significant alteration of mind-set whereby the instinct to live is overwhelmed by a desire to die. Therefore, regardless of the wider meaning attributed to Saul's suicide, it should be interpreted as a 'low'.

Throughout 1 Samuel there are small hints that Saul might be prone to dealing negatively with challenging circumstances. An early example would be his worrying about his father whilst he is out looking for donkeys.[4] It is the boy with Saul who reassures him and offers a practical solution to Saul's concerns (9:5-8). Later on, after he is anointed, Saul seems reluctant to step forward as Israel's king, deciding to hide 'himself among the baggage' (10:22). This may be symbolic of Saul's general reluctance

[2] P. F. Esler, 'The madness of Saul: a cultural reading of 1 Samuel 8-31' in J. C. Exum & S. D. Moore (eds.), *Biblical Studies/Cultural Studies: The Third Sheffield Colloquium* (Sheffield, 1998), 237.

[3] For example: W. L. Humphreys, 'The rise and fall of King Saul: a study of an ancient narrative stratum in 1 Samuel' (1980) 18 *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 76-77; J. C. Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative: Arrows of the Almighty* (Cambridge, 1992), 25; E. Nissan & A. O. Shemesh, 'King Saul's "evil spirit" (ruach ra'ah): between psychology, medicine and culture' (2010) 62 *La Ricerca Folklorica* 152.

[4] For an alternative explanation see Esler, 'The madness of Saul', 227.

or shyness or may be the actions of an anxious man. Saul also reacts badly whenever guilt, wrong-doing or a poor decision is pointed out to him; for example, when David decides not to kill Saul, 'Saul lifted up his voice and wept' (24:16). Such a public outpouring of guilt and emotion is unusual in someone of such stature,[5] and may indicate Saul's more vulnerable emotional state.

This brief overview of Saul's mental state demonstrates the complexity of his character. This may be explained by the way the books of Samuel were written and edited. Many scholars have argued that there are multiple sources for these texts which were later synthesised into one narrative plot. These different sources will have competing aims, e.g. anti-monarchy versus pro-monarchy sources,[6] and pro-Davidic southern versus anti-Davidic northern sources.[7] Each source seeks to achieve its own identity-forming and theological aim by framing and interpreting events in specific ways. If Saul is a pawn in a writer's political or theological argument then he must be constructed accordingly. This may explain why Saul is portrayed in a positive light at some points in the text and as a weak, ineffectual leader at others.[8] However, whilst this explanation might satisfy a historian seeking to discover the 'real' Saul depicted in 1 Samuel it is highly problematic: not least because there is no agreement amongst scholars about what the various source-texts are and when they were compiled. Moreover, such dissection does violence to a text that has been read as a 'whole' for centuries. When assessing the significance of Saul's moods it is, therefore, more pertinent to work with the final text as it stands and leave textual debates for another day.

Taking 1 Samuel as it has been received by current readership, then, there are a growing number of theories as to why Saul acts and reacts as he does. The Bible is quite clear: God is immediately responsible. For when the spirit of God is with Saul he performs well and experiences moments of elevated mood. But when this spirit leaves him to be replaced by an evil spirit from God, Saul spirals downwards. God's spirit is what drives Saul either for good or bad.[9] Yet there could be more than one link in the

[5] Nissan and Shemesh, 'King Saul's "evil spirit"', 151.

[6] G. P. Williams & M. Le Roux, 'King Saul's mysterious malady' (2012) 68 *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 1.

[7] Humphreys, 'Rise and fall', 75.

[8] Ibid., 76.

[9] S. Nicholson, *Three Faces of Saul: An Intertextual Approach to Biblical Tragedy* (London, 2002), 91 and 108.

biblically-explained chain of causation. Saul is only anointed king because the Israelites demand one, which displeases God (8:4-9, 19-22). It might be interpreted, therefore, that God is seeking to punish Israel as a whole via Saul for their rejection of God. Or God might be reacting to Saul's disobedience to God's orders regarding a burnt-offering at Gilgal (13:8-15) and the destruction of Amalek (15:1-33).[10] Either way, the text shows that God is not acting arbitrarily but in response to events and decisions by other people. In other words, the blame does not necessarily lie just with God: it would appear that Saul and the Israelites should also bear some responsibility for their actions.[11]

If the biblical reason for Saul's mood changes is relatively straight-forward, the recent medical explanations are anything but. Biblical scholars and medical practitioners alike have mined the text for signs and symptoms that could pin-point the 'real' reason Saul acts as he does. Their conclusions can be loosely grouped into two sections: physiological and psychological. Interestingly it is only biblical scholars who propose diagnoses under the former category, with Robert Gordon giving the most detailed, and complicated, exposition, discussing the various ways in which the term *barsan* can be interpreted.[12] He links it with the Arabic word *birsam* which 'denotes a disease often associated with delirium'[13] and goes on to state that 'the nearest term in current medical terminology would be meningitis'.[14] Although this article is etymologically intriguing it is of very limited use when considering Saul's malady. It is focused very narrowly on just one episode in Saul's troubled life (19:18-24), and whilst delirium might be a helpful term to describe some of Saul's other signs and symptoms it sheds no further light on the cause. To suggest that Saul was ultimately suffering from meningitis makes little sense. He may have had some sort of brain inflammation during the particular episode Gordon is discussing but such diseases are usually fatal, even with twenty-first century medical technology. Even so, if Saul did survive one bout of meningitis it is still unclear what was happening throughout the rest of his reign. Another suggested diagnosis that limits itself to Saul's prophesying episodes is epilepsy.[15] This is more convincing than Gordon's suggestion due to its chronic,

[10] Esler, 'The madness of Saul', 236.
[11] Nicholson, *Three Faces*, 79 and 101.
[12] R. P. Gordon, 'Saul's meningitis according to Targum 1 Samuel XIX 24' (1987) 37 *Vetus Testamentum* 39-49.
[13] Ibid., 41.
[14] Ibid., 42.
[15] Williams and Le Roux, 'Mysterious malady', 2.

recurrent nature but also does little to explain Saul's wider condition. Of course, it is entirely possible that Saul was suffering from more than one illness and that epilepsy was but one of his conditions.

The vast majority of the literature, and all of the medical literature, focuses on psychological diagnoses. Three aspects of Saul's story make a psychological diagnosis more convincing. The first is that they encompass all the manifestations of Saul's malady in the text, not just specific examples. The second is that acute episodes tend to follow an external or environmental stimulus, such as the women's song after the slaying of Goliath (18:6-11) or the advancing Philistine army coupled with a silent God (28:3-23). The third is similar in that David's lyre playing has a positive effect on Saul (16:23). Whilst it is not impossible for external factors to have an impact on a purely physiological illness, they are more important in psychological ones. The specific diagnosis, however, is subject to more debate. The various options proffered are: general anxiety disorder (GAD), depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As only one manic or 'high' episode is required to shift a diagnosis of depression to one of bipolar disorder,[16] the narrative tends to reject depression as the sole disease affecting Saul. Subsequently, the recurrent episodes of paranoia and delusions leading to violent attacks potentially shifts the diagnosis towards schizophrenia.[17] GAD[18] and PTSD[19] have wide-ranging behavioural signs which could encompass most of what we are told about Saul, but the lack of evidence about his thought-processes make these difficult to pin-point with any accuracy. Given Saul's warrior status, the argument for PTSD is convincing, particularly as Saul does not appear to go into battle from the coming of God's evil spirit (16:14) until his final campaign against the Philistines, when 'he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly' (28:5).

Any medical diagnosis of Saul's behaviour is highly problematic, however, and perhaps even unethical.[20] As Esler highlights, there are 'difficulties inherent in an attempt to apply etic [contemporary Western] psychiatric perspectives to a narrative text from

[16] L. Ben-Noun, 'What was the mental disease that afflicted King Saul?' (2003) 2 *Clinical Case Studies* 276.

[17] Esler, 'The madness of Saul', 276-77.

[18] Ibid., 249-52.

[19] Williams and Le Roux, 'Mysterious malady', 2-3.

[20] C. C. H. Cook, 'Psychiatry in scripture: sacred texts and psychopathology' (2012) 36 *The Psychiatrist Online* 225-26.

another historical epoch'.[21] There is little explicit evidence of Saul's continuing signs and symptoms, particularly once the narrative shifts from Saul's initially successful reign to his cat-and-mouse pursuit of David. For example, whilst PTSD seems a compelling option because the narrative contains no indication of Saul repeating his earlier battle victories, this may be due to a change in the narrator's focus rather than Saul's morbidity. Moreover, an unsophisticated reading of only one English translation of the text could remove some of the nuance needed to make an accurate diagnosis. Esler, for example, asserts that Saul's episodes of 'prophesying' would be better translated as 'fell into a possession trance', which has implications for any putative diagnosis.[22] Moreover, no self-respecting doctor today would seek to diagnose someone on such scant information, particularly not with a psychological condition, which requires hours of exploration and testing. It may be that Saul was 'simply overwrought and terribly stressed', struggling with the pressures of being king;[23] after all, David's subsequent reign is not without tension and poor decisions. Any suggested diagnosis, therefore, can only be tentative at best for there is much potential for harm if labels are attached too readily to Saul.

Yet many people remain keen to diagnose Saul. For some this will come from a natural curiosity and a need to fill textual gaps: J. Cheryl Exum has termed this process 'naturalization'.[24] Whenever people read any text they inevitably imagine the story in a particular way and this visualisation, like film-making, requires assumptions to be made. Such assumptions can be unconscious and reflect the reader's socio-politico-cultural context and their pre-conceived understandings of the Bible.[25] For people who have suffered from, or know people who have suffered from, signs and symptoms similar to Saul's there will be a strong urge to identify with him.[26] Readers naturally want to connect with characters and every reading of a biblical story involves a process

[21] Esler, 'The madness of Saul', 243.

[22] Ibid., 229 and 249.

[23] Williams and Le Roux, 'Mysterious malady', 6.

[24] J. C. Exum, 'Michal at the movies' in M. D. Carroll R., D. J. A. Clines & P. R. Davies (eds.), *The Bible and Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson* (Sheffield, 1995), 273.

[25] B. Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen? A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel* (London, 2003), 466.

[26] This was certainly my experience: I initially diagnosed Saul with severe clinical depression because that was my diagnosis and I could see similarities in our respective conditions.

of re-writing and re-constructing the text.[27] Saul and his struggles, in particular his 'illness', provide some specific and emotive points of correlation to draw-in the reader, thereby enabling them to re-imagine, re-construct and re-tell the story in their own way.

Whichever way people diagnose or identify with Saul, there are consequences for the reading of this text. These will differ depending on whether someone reads 1 Samuel as a historical text, a piece of literature or as a sacred text. For centuries the Bible was read as it is presented: a history of the Hebrew people. This is particularly true of the historical narrative of the Hebrew Bible[28] of which 1 Samuel is a part. More recently, however, the historicity of the even the monarchy narratives has been questioned so that it is no longer possible to say with certainty that Saul is a 'real' historical figure who lead the Israelites as their first king.[29] Indeed, it may be that readers can learn more about the time the texts were written — along with the traditions that shaped the source community —rather than the period about which they were written. Ultimately, however, the Bible is 'a body of literature'[30] and so increasingly readers have applied all forms of literary criticism to it as a way of engaging anew with these ancient texts. Yet throughout its history, the Bible has been read first by Jews then Christians as a sacred text: as a means of God-inspired revelation about God and God's relationship with humankind. Some insist on a literal interpretation of the text, often in reaction to historical, literary or even scientific criticism. Many people of faith, however, engage to some degree with such criticism in a constructive manner to inform their own reading and understanding of often complicated, contradictory and challenging material.

Considering 1 Samuel as history first of all, the story of Saul illuminates the community's attitude and approach to changes in people's behaviour during that period, whichever period is assigned to the text. That it was Saul's servants who diagnosed him rather than his family is historically and culturally interesting, as is the proposed remedy of 'music therapy' (16:14-15): his 'symptoms…are noted and socially

[27] S. Tongue, *Between Biblical Criticism and Poetic Rewriting: Interpretative Struggles over Genesis 32:33-32* (Leiden, 2014), 159-65.
[28] This is known in the Christian tradition as the Old Testament.
[29] Coggins, *Old Testament*, 30-32.
[30] Ibid., 113.

interpreted' but he is otherwise allowed to 'continue as king'.[31] This also says something about the growing understanding of the king's role and people's attitudes towards Saul himself. That his servants were willing to help and support him, rather than depose him in favour of another, 'stronger' man, is important, particularly during this period of transition to kingship. The text also provides insight into how people perceived and understood God's role in the world. For example, there is no suggestion of dualism in this text: bad things come from God rather than a satanic figure.[32] God also appears to be mutable: God gives in to Israelite demands for a king (8:22) and regrets anointing Saul (15:10-11). Additionally there was a belief 'that all goods…exist only in finite quantities', hence God's positive spirit could not be with both Saul and David at the same time.[33] Such cultural beliefs could impact on how people worshipped and interacted with God, which not only enables a richer understanding of religious practice in that period but also helps date the text.

If 1 Samuel is read as a piece of literature, the previous discussions around historical information help establish the setting for the work but Saul's characterisation adds further areas for debate. 'The rise and fall of King Saul' is considered to be 'the clearest example of biblical tragedy'.[34] Such an allocation of genre then leads to a discussion about the role of Saul's character flaws versus God's role as the harbinger of fate.[35] This very much positions Saul in relation to the other characters and probes his role in this particular narrative. He could be the man who transitions Israel from judge-rule to kingship, a scapegoat for God's anger at being rejected, or a comparison to promote David as *the* king for Israel.[36] Exum suggests that shifting the narrative focus from Saul's downfall to 'David's rise to power' gives an 'alternative to the tragic perspective'.[37] However, it is more likely that David's role in Saul's malady only adds to the tragedy, for it is deeply ironic that the only person who can improve Saul's health is the very person who causes him most angst. It may also be the case that Saul's personal 'failure' fits into the wider early narrative of the Hebrew Bible. Particularly in Genesis, the preference for the second-born is clear: e.g. Abel over Cain (Gen 4:1-5),

[31] Esler, 'The madness of Saul', 246.
[32] Nicholson, *Three Faces*, 108-9.
[33] Esler, 'The madness of Saul', 222 and 237.
[34] Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative*, 16.
[35] D. M. Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story* (Sheffield, 1980), chapter one and Nicholson, *Three Faces*, chapter two.
[36] Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative*, 35.
[37] Ibid., 20.

Isaac over Ishmael (Gen 21:8-14) and Jacob over Esau (Gen 27). Even David is the youngest of his brothers (16:11-13). It may be, therefore, that the preference for the underdog in the Hebraic narrative meant that Saul could never be allowed to prosper as king—that had to be left for his successor.

Saul's changing moods and behaviour provide interesting points of departure for academic debate but are unlikely to have a dramatic impact on the way historians, literary critics or doctors live their lives. This is less true of those who read 1 Samuel as sacred. For people of faith, how they construct and interpret any given text could have a profound impact on their lives, and 1 Samuel raises some serious questions. It probes theological doctrine generally: is God a changeable deity prone to petty jealousy and vengeful behaviour?[38] Answers to such questions may determine how and why people pray or how they expect God to respond to their decisions and actions. Moreover, the debate around the source of evil and suffering in the world concerns not just people of faith but also those considering whether to join or leave a particular religious organisation.[39] Is it possible to worship a God who sends an evil spirit to torment the very person God chose to be king or who ignores someone's desperate pleas for help (e.g. 14:37 and 28:6)? For many people the answer is 'no' and this has implications for how they choose to interact (or not) with God/religious groups.[40]

More specifically, however, Saul's experiences in 1 Samuel speak directly to those who are facing hardship of some kind, particularly those living with a mental health diagnosis. Such engagement is only given further credence by the growing body of medical literature that seeks to 'diagnose' Saul. There is a very real danger that medical diagnoses become popularly linked with the biblical explanation of Saul's mood-changes: suffering is caused by God's rejection which, in turn, is a result of human sin. This is highly problematic as conflating mental illness with punishment from God indiscriminately labels those who already face substantial public prejudice. Instead of becoming a source of help and support, the synagogue and church risk being places of ostracisation, ridicule and fear. This may 'discourage people who might benefit from

[38] Nicholson, *Three Faces*, 106-7.

[39] Ibid., 107-10.

[40] A recent interview with Stephen Fry is a powerful case in point: 'Stephen Fry on God' in The Meaning of Life with Gay Byrne, *RTÉ Commercial Enterprises Limited*, broadcast in the Republic of Ireland on Sunday 1 February 2015 at 22:30. Available: <http://www.you tube.com/watch?v=-suvkwNYSQo>.

psychiatric help from seeking it' as they encouraged by others to work out how they could have incurred God's displeasure.[41] The remedy becomes repentance and prayer rather than medication and psychological treatment. This is not to suggest that prayer is not a powerful tool for many, rather that such advice from the faithful does not follow a diagnosis of cancer quite as frequently as it does a diagnosis of mental illness. Then, when prayer does not seem to work, individuals can start questioning themselves, questioning their faith and questioning God. As such, searching for the 'right' or 'ideal' interpretation of Saul's life is more than just an interesting academic endeavour: it can be life-changing.

Saul is a pivotal character in the biblical narrative. As the first king of Israel he represents the transition between heavenly and earthly kingship. His tragic characterisation sets the scene for the Davidic dynasty from which the Messiah will come and the portrayal of Saul's mood is instrumental in this. The significance of the changes in his mood varies depending on how the Bible is read. Whilst it is academically interesting to note how Saul's behaviour is construed by others or drives the plot, such implications will have little impact on the life of the reader. The same may be true of those who read it as scripture. But for people of Jewish or Christian faith who are facing hardship, illness or a mental health diagnosis the significance could be profound. It will speak to the heart of their experiences, their understanding of God, the relationship between God and suffering, and their own culpability in suffering. Such an outcome requires everyone engaged in biblical interpretation to read responsibly and critically engage with the implications of their respective readings. A wider recognition that there is not, and cannot be, one correct or 'ideal' construction of the Bible will enable healthier religious practice, more fruitful interfaith dialogue and a safe space for people of faith to explore their own relationship with God within a tradition that respects particularity.

[41] Cook, 'Psychiatry in scripture', 228.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

L. Ben-Noun, 'What was the mental disease that afflicted King Saul?' (2003) 2 *Clinical Case Studies* 270-282.

S. Bhayro, 'The madness of King Saul' (2003/04) 50 *Archiv für Orientforschung* 285-292.

L. Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York, 1984).

W. Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, 2003).

R. Coggins, *Introducing the Old Testament*, 2nd Edition (Oxford, 2001).

C. C. H. Cook, 'Psychiatry in scripture: sacred texts and psychopathology' (2012) 36 *The Psychiatrist Online* 225-229.

S. Dragga, 'In the shadow of the Judges: the failure of Saul' (1987) 30 *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 39-46.

P. F. Esler, 'The madness of Saul: a cultural reading of 1 Samuel 8-31' in J. C. Exum & S. D. Moore (eds.), *Biblical Studies/Cultural Studies: The Third Sheffield Colloquium*, JSOTSup 266 (Sheffield, 1998), 220-262.

L. Eslinger, '"A change of heart": 1 Samuel 16' in L. Eslinger & G. Taylor (eds.), *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, JSOTSup 67 (Sheffield, 1988), 341-361.

J. C. Exum, 'Michal at the movies' in M. D. Carroll R., D. J. A. Clines & P. R. Davies (eds.), *The Bible and Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson*, JSOTSup 200 (Sheffield, 1995), 273-292.

J. C. Exum, *Tragedy and Biblical Narrative: Arrows of the Almighty* (Cambridge, 1992).

E. S. Fiorenza, 'The ethics of biblical interpretation: decentering biblical scholarship' (1988) 107 *Journal of Biblical Literature* 3-17.

E. Forman, '"Pour être donc humain j'éprouve sa colère!": Saul, King of Israel, as tragic hero in French drama' (2013) 108 *The Modern Language Review* 438-458.

C. Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen? A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel*, JSOTSup 365 (London, 2003).

R. P. Gordon, 'Saul's meningitis according to Targum 1 Samuel XIX 24' (1987) 37 *Vetus Testamentum* 39-49.

D. M. Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story*, JSOTSup 14 (Sheffield, 1980).

M. Huisman, 'King Saul: work-related stress and depression' (2007) 61 *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 890.

W. L. Humphreys, 'The tragedy of King Saul: a study of the structure of 1 Samuel 9-31' (1978) 6 *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 18-27.

W. L. Humphreys, 'The rise and fall of King Saul: a study of an ancient narrative stratum in 1 Samuel' (1980) 18 *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 74-90.

S. D. Moore & Y. Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* (Minneapolis, 2011).

S. Nicholson, *Three Faces of Saul: An Intertextual Approach to Biblical Tragedy*, JSOTSup 339 (London, 2002).

E. Nissan & A. O. Shemesh, 'King Saul's "evil spirit" (ruach ra'ah): between psychology, medicine and culture' (2010) 62 *La Ricerca Folklorica* 149-156.

H. M. van Praag, 'The downfall of King Saul: the neurobiological consequences of losing hope' (1986) 35 *Judaism* 414-428.

'Stephen Fry on God' in *The Meaning of Life with Gay Byrne*, *RTÉ Commercial Enterprises Limited*, broadcast in the Republic of Ireland on Sunday 1 February 2015 at 22:30. Available: <http://www.you tube.com/watch?v=-suvkwNYSQo>.

G. Stein, 'The case of King Saul: did he have recurrent unipolar depression or bipolar affective disorder?' (2011) 198 *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 212.

The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version, Anglicized Edition (Oxford, 1989).

S. Tongue, *Between Biblical Criticism and Poetic Rewriting: Interpretative Struggles over Genesis 32:22-32*, Biblical Interpretation Series vol.129 (Leiden, 2014).

G. P. Williams & M. Le Roux, 'King Saul's mysterious malady' (2012) 68 *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 6 pages. Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.906>.

Fixing For a Fight: Can Interstate Rivalry Ever be Positive for the State's Populace?

Ilian Mitev

This article aims to challenge the myth that interstate rivalry and conflict can only have negative effects for state populace. It observes that interstate rivalry can have positive effects on poverty reduction in developing states. It begins by explaining Tilly's bellicose model of war and state-building, and investigates how it can be adapted to non-OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) states, engaging with current literature in the process. Then it considers some objections to the application of the model to non-OECD states, concluding the literature review by explaining the causal mechanism expected to result in poverty reduction. The article then runs a number of comparative statistical regressions on a pooled cross-sectional time-series dataset, measuring poverty, rivalry and control variables tri-annually from 103 non-OECD states between 1981 and 1999. The results of these tests support the general hypothesis that interstate rivalry reduces poverty. The article then concludes by discussing moral considerations, policy advice and future research directions.

Interstate rivalry is a protracted extreme hostile relationship, involving competition between two or more states over a temporally evolving set of issues. States in such relationships exhibit irrational addictive behaviour towards the use of hostility and military threats against each other.[1] The two widely used measurements of rivalry are strategic and enduring rivalry. The former is measured qualitatively in terms of threat perception and foreign policy response. The latter is measured quantitatively in terms of military interstate conflict over a prolonged time period.[2] 75% of all strategic interstate rivals engage in war[3] and the majority of international military conflicts

ILIAN MITEV is a Senior Honours Philosophy and Politics student and is the *Groundings* Editor-in-Chief. This article extracts the statistical analysis from his undergraduate thesis on interstate rivalry, state-building and poverty reduction. He is currently applying for further studies, with the goal of expanding his domain of expertise and experience.

[1] B. Valeriano, *Becoming Rivals: The Process of Interstate Rivalry Development* (New York, 2013), 13-14.

[2] W. R. Thompson, 'Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics' (2001) 45:4 *International Studies Quarterly* 557-586; J. Klein, G. Goertz & J. Diehl, 'The New Rivalry Dataset: Procedures and Patterns' (2006) 43:4 *Journal of Peace Research* 331-348.

[3] Thompson, Identifying Rivals, 557-586.

occur between enduring rivals.[4] Although somewhat positive for the state, there is little evidence to suggest rivalry translates into a positive effect for its population. This article will examine the potential benefits for the populace of rival states. Ultimately, it challenges the notion interstate rivalry can only be studied for the advancement of the state and rivalries can never be beneficial to the populace.

This article focuses on the impact of external rivalry on intrastate poverty reduction. It studies absolute poverty, as defined by personal income of under $1.25 per day. This should not be mistaken for relative poverty, which is measured in comparison to the mean personal income of a state. Developing states in an interstate rivalry reduce poverty indirectly and directly. Indirectly, rivalry produces economic growth through infrastructural expansion, providing more low-skilled job opportunities. It also reduces poverty directly by changing the class power structures of people in poverty through elevating their collective bargaining. This article argues ruling elites are more likely to make concessions to their populace under the threat of external rivals due to their need to sustain stability and economy growth.

UNDERSTANDING TILLY'S MODEL

Because of the depth and strength of the theory, this article focuses on Tilly's predatory state-building model.[5] As such, it is the most relevant and debated theory of predatory state-building.[6]

Tilly sees state-building as a result of interstate war, intrastate war, protection and extraction of resources, where protection refers to neutralising the rivals of ones clients/power base.[7] He concludes that ruling elites in Europe engaged in interstate and

[4] F. Diehl & G. Goetz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (Ann Arbor, 2000).

[5] Ibid.; T. Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (USA, 1997), 14-15; K. Rasler & W. R. Thompson, 'War Making and State Making: How and Where Does it Fit into a Bigger Picture?' in J. Vasquez (ed.), *What do we Know About War?*, 2nd Edition (USA, 2012), 237-239.

[6] Rasler & Thompson, War Making and State Making, 241-242.

[7] C. Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.' in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer & T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back in* (Cambridge, 1985), 182; Thies, A Study of Post-Colonial Developing Country Extractive Efforts, 54.

intrastate war in order to eliminate any claims to the state's monopoly of violence, legitimacy or control over its territory.[8]

Wars need resources, which is why the state extracts taxes, but these extraction needs constantly rise.[9] To continue extracting at a higher rate than their enemies, states engage in controlling and maximising the means of production. As production needs rose, non-ruling social classes were placed in a position where they could bargain for adjudication. This is because production, and therefore extraction, is dependent on the citizens' cooperation and economic output.

Armies require supplies, so a need for controlling the distribution of goods rose in order to assure the smooth military conduct.[10] Subsequently, empowered citizens can demand existing structures are also used to redistributing goods to address inequalities.[11] As Figure 1 shows, Tilly's model concludes that all state action eventually leads to distribution.[12]

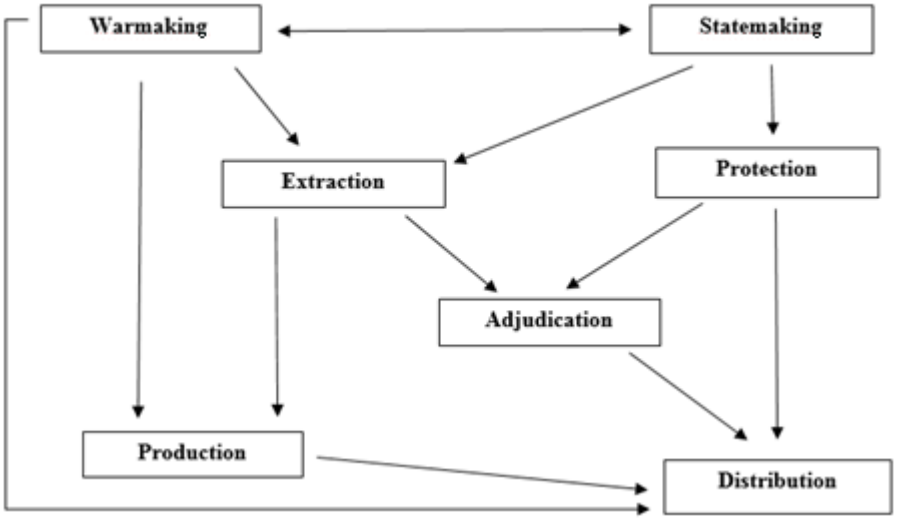
ADEQUACY OF THE MODEL

Other theorists have recently expanded on Tilly's model and the idea that war is a catalyst for state-building. Stubbs argues war and the threat of war act as catalysts for political, economic and social development of states in Southeast Asia.[13] However, he points out war's effects are not always beneficial. For example, a war fought in a state's territory has destructive ramifications, resulting in non-uniform outcomes for war-induced state-building.[14] Conversely, Stubbs concludes the threat of war consistently has constructive results.[15]

[8] Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 96-99.
[9] Ibid., 103-107.
[10] Ibid., 96-99/117-120.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 97.
[13] R. Stubbs, *Rethinking Asia's Economic Miracle: The Political Economy of War, Prosperity and Crisis* (China, 2005), 18-20.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

Centeno broadly replicates these findings for Latin America in arguing war that has not acted as a catalyst for economic and political progress.[16] He argues the intensity of war and the duration of war is more important than the presence of war itself, concluding that limited wars create limited states. Additionally, Centeno argues that preparation for war has a positive effect on society.[17]

Figure 1. Relationship among major activities of states



Using these observations, Thies operationally defines the threat of war in terms of interstate rivalry.[18] Due to the longevity of enduring rivalries and the response to threat perception in strategic rivalries, he argues they are of the right intensity and duration to produce the best results.[19] His quantitative analysis concludes rivalry has a positive effect on extractive capability, and by extension state-building, in the post-colonial developing world.[20] Consistent with Centeno and Stubbs, Thies concludes war

[16] M. A. Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (USA, 2002), 266-269.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Thies, A Study of Post-Colonial Developing Country Extractive Efforts, 57-65.
[19] Ibid., 62-63.
[20] C. Thies, 'State Building, Interstate and Intrastate Rivalry: A Study of Post-Colonial Developing Country Extractive Efforts, 1975-2000' (2004) 48:1 *International Studies Quarterly* 53-72; C. Thies,

itself generally has a negative effect on political development and extraction.[21] Considering the above, this article uses interstate rivalry as the independent variable for testing its hypothesis.

Whilst substituting war with rivalry has become an established method of testing Tilly's model, there are still a number of state-building activities from this model that have not been tested. A new wave of studies has expanded the academic engagement with Tilly's model by examining the effects of interstate rivalry on economic growth, as well as the effects of war on economic growth and extraction.[22]

Here, the presence of interstate rivalry is expected to result in the redistribution of goods, with the goal of tackling inequality. There seems to be no direct way of measuring the redistribution process itself, but there is a direct measurement of inequality, through the widely used Gini index.[23] However, as explained later, there was a lack of data concerning this index. Alternatively, Besley and Burgess found poverty falls by 67% when there is a reduction of one standard deviation in inequality. This is why this article utilises absolute poverty (henceforth poverty) measures as a proxy for inequality.[24] Although far from ideal, poverty can provide an insight into the behaviour of inequality reduction. As poverty has mostly been eradicated in high income Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, this study observes only non-OECD states. As most non-OECD states are outside Europe, the adequacy of globally adapting Tilly's model is discussed in the next subsection.

'War, Rivalry, and State Building in Latin America' (2005) 49:3 *American Journal of Political Science* 451-465; C. Thies, 'Political Violence and State Building in Central America' (2006) 39:10 *Comparative Political Studies* 1263-1282; C. Thies, 'The Political Economy of State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa' (2007) 69:3 *The Journal of Politics* 716-731; L. Lu & C. Thies, 'War, Rivalry, and State Building in the Middle East' (2013) 66:2 *Political Research Quarterly* 239-253..

[21] Thies, War, Rivalry, and State Building in Latin America; Thies, Political Violence and State Building in Central America; D. Sobek & C. Thies. 'War, Economic Development, and Political Development in the Contemporary International System' (2010) 54:1 *International Studies Quarterly* 267-287; Lu & Thies, War, Rivalry, and State Building in the Middle East;

[22] C-N. Kang & B. Valeriano, 'Can an Interstate Rivalry Be Positive' *International Studies Association Annual Meeting*; Sobek & Thies. War, Economic Development, and Political Development, 270.

[23] T. Besley & R. Burgess 'Halving global poverty' (2003) 17:3 *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 10-12.

[24] Ibid.

CAN TILLY BE APPLIED TO THE DEVELOPING WORLD?

Tilly's model is widely accepted, but there are a number of objections to applying the model outside of Europe.[25] As noted, this study has already solved one problem concerning the intensity of war by focusing on the threat of war instead of war itself. However, there are two additional objections to applying Tilly's model to the developing world.

Firstly, it has been argued territorial conquest has ceased to be an institution in world politics.[26] Herbst notes that since decolonisation and the imposition of the state system in Africa, borders have rarely been challenged.[27] He argues African leaders will react differently than expected by Tilly, due to a lack of threat of losing their state. Ayoob disagrees international norms are this deterministic, arguing conquest has not been abolished.[28] He offers the breakdown of the USSR and Yugoslavia as evidence. Additionally, Stubbs theorises external conflict can lead to the breakdown of economic and social life, resulting in internal unrest and *coup d'état*.[29] Therefore, even if there is no conquest, it is unlikely ruling elites lack the stimulus to engage in traditional state-building as a response to external threats.

Secondly, Herbst also posits internal strife is more relevant than external rivalries in the decision making process because of the lack of conquest.[30] As noted, external rivals can lead to civil wars or worse. Additionally, Ayoob observes the majority of external rivals start rivalries to exasperate internal tensions by encouraging secessionism.[31] To prevent secessionism, he concludes that states need to ensure they are stronger than their competing neighbours. This further suggests external rivals pose the same threat to third world countries as they did to European states, even if conquest is absent. Therefore, this article proceeds on the basis there is not sufficient evidence to suggest developing countries experience a different processes from their European peers.

---

[25] Rasler & Thompson, War Making and State Making 244-246.

[26] Ibid.

[27] J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (USA, 2000), 21-28/221-226.

[28] M. Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System* (Colorado, 1995), 173-177.

[29] Ibid., 18-20.

[30] Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, 21-28/221-226.

[31] Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament,* 23-28/47-51/53/55-56.

APPLYING THE THEORY AND DEFINING THE CAUSAL MECHANISMS

The adequacy of the model now established, this article proposes that two causal mechanisms affect poverty reduction in non-OECD states. Figure 1 showed the two ways that the threat of war can act as a catalyst for the redistribution of wealth. The first mechanism is indirectly reducing poverty through economic and infrastructural growth. The second is directly reducing poverty, by elevating the population's bargaining position to redistribution of wealth.

Regarding the first mechanism: the threat of war acts as a catalyst for political, economic, and social development of the state.[32] Once in a rivalry, each side enters 'an extreme competition with each other'.[33] This involves doing everything possible to be relatively ahead of the rival.[34] When engaged in rivalry, states tend to find ways to enhance their power through any means possible. They do this usually through military proliferation and alliance seeking.[35] Further, Stubbs also suggests finding patrons that supply aid might accelerate economic and military growth.[36] Rudolff, Scott, and Blew support this and note the USA allocates larger amounts of aid to the neighbours and rivals of their own rivals.[37]

While military spending seems to have an adverse effect on economic income,[38] Kang and Valeriano argue rivalry has a net positive effect on economic growth in developing countries and the international system as a whole.[39] These findings loosely coincide with Stubbs' observation that the Vietnam War had a positive effect on the East Asian states by providing them with an opportunity to develop economies supplying the war effort.[40]

---

[32] Stubbs, *Rethinking Asia's Economic Miracle,* 18-19.

[33] J. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge, 1993), 75-76.

[34] Valeriano, *Becoming Rivals,* 13-14.

[35] Kang & Valeriano, Can an Interstate Rivalry Be Positive; Valeriano, *Becoming Rivals,* 72-90; S. Sample, B. Valeriano & C-N. Kang, 'The Societal Determinants and Impact of Military Spending Patterns' (2013) 43 *Political and Military Sociology – Annual Review* 117-119.

[36] Stubbs, *Rethinking Asia's Economic Miracle,* 148-152.

[37] P. Rudloff, J. M. Scott, & T. Blew, 'Countering adversaries and cultivating friends: Indirect rivalry factors and the allocation of US foreign aid' (2013) 48:3 *Cooperation and Conflict* 417-418.

[38] Sample et al., The Societal Determinants, 131-133.

[39] Kang & Valeriano, Can an Interstate Rivalry Be Positive.

[40] Stubbs, *Rethinking Asia's Economic Miracle,* 125-152.

According to Stubbs, the presence of the Vietnam War resulted in a number of favourable factors for economic growth.[41] For example, it helped Thailand build an army and brought the American Army into the region. The armies themselves needed provisions, thus providing a good environment for the aligned states to encourage industries that would supply the armies with what it needed. Specifically, this included infrastructural expansion in order to increase army mobility. The labour market quickly absorbed all possible labour and all states in the region boasted full employment, resulting in a reduction in poverty and a gradual redistribution of wealth in society.[42] These observations are consistent with Goudie and Ladd's as well as Besley and Burgess' findings that economic growth largely reduces poverty.[43]

Obviously, states need money to invest, which is usually provided by taxation of society. As noted, Thies and Lu have found extraction capability increases during a rivalry.[44] As rivalry is a competition, one expects rivalling states would compete in extraction of resources in order to fund larger and more effective armies. This means that they would also have to increase their production means, as observed by Kang and Valeriano.

Goudie and Ladd posit states with high inequality rates are likely to perform poorer than more equal states in terms of economic growth.[45] States should therefore be willing to concede to population demands for wealth distribution if that causes better economic growth and secures improved extraction cooperation. Simultaneously, elites can be expected to avoid internal unrest, which would essentially result in direct poverty reduction.

---

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 148-150.

[43] A. Goudie & P. Ladd, 'Economic growth, poverty and inequality' (1999) 11:2 *Journal of International Development* 192-193; Besley and Burgess, Halving global poverty, 7-9.

[44] Thies, A Study of Post-Colonial Developing Country Extractive Efforts; Thies, War, Rivalry, and State Building in Latin America; Thies, Political Violence and State Building in Central America; Thies, The Political Economy of State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa; Lu & Thies, War, Rivalry, and State Building in the Middle East.

[45] Godie & Ladd, Economic growth, poverty and inequality, 192-193.

Ultimately, since interstate rivalries generate economic growth and willingness for the ruling class to concede to redistribution demands, both being related to poverty reduction, this article hypothesises that:

> *Hypothesis 1: Due to the fierce competition between rivals, involvement in interstate rivalries will have a positive effect on absolute poverty reduction through economic growth and wealth redistribution.*

METHODOLOGY

DESIGN

The study conducted a comparative statistical analysis with a cross-sectional time-series design. The sample group tested included all non-OECD countries available in the World Bank PovCal dataset. The following variables and datasets were used.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES: MEASUREMENTS OF POVERTY

Poverty was operationalised by three different variables — *poverty headcount index, poverty gap index* and *squared poverty gap index* — taken from the PovCal Dataset. The *poverty headcount index* represents the proportion of people living in a household with income per person under the poverty line.[46] The *poverty gap index* measures the mean income of all people living under the poverty line. It represents the average income needed to bring a person out of poverty.[47] Lastly, the *squared poverty gap index* measurement gives more weight to the people farthest away from the poverty line, ultimately being more sensitive to changes in the livelihood of the poorest section of the people living under the poverty line.[48] All of the above variables measure absolute poverty. The poverty line for this research was set at $1.25 per day, per purchasing power of the 2005 US dollar.

[46] E. Alvi & A. Senbeta, 'Does Foreign Aid Reduce Poverty?' (2012) 24:8 *Journal of International Development* 960.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

Whilst these are the best measurements for poverty, Alvi and Senbeta observe that each variable experiences specific contextual limitations in measuring poverty.[49] By using all three measurements, this article mimics their approach observing all possible forms of poverty levels variation.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES: MEASUREMENTS OF RIVALRY

Following the established tradition, two measurements of rivalry were tested.[50] The measurements were enduring rivalry and strategic rivalry. The first measurement was proposed by Diehl and Goertz and updated by Klein, Goertz and Diehl.[51] According to Diehl and Goertz, enduring rivalry is 'a relationship between two states in which both use, with some regularity, military threats and force as well as one in which both sides formulate foreign policy in military terms'.[52] Klein, Goertz and Diehl operationalise two types of rivalries — enduring and proto — both measured in terms of Military Interstate Disputes (MIDs).[53] Enduring rivalry between a dyad is operationalised when the dyad have experienced six or more MIDs within twenty years.[54]

Proto rivalries are operationalised only after four MIDs or if their disputes do not last twenty years.[55] Consequently, Thies concludes that proto rivalries 'fail to approach the severity or duration of an enduring rivalry'.[56] Further, he concludes they will not have a strong or significant effect on the state's extractive capacity. This article expects proto rivalries will lack the intensity to meaningfully reduce poverty.

The second measurement of rivalry was Thompson's strategic rivalry measurement.[57] According to his conceptualisation, strategic rivals need to see each other 'as (a) competitors, (b) the source of actual or latent threats that pose some possibility of

[49] Ibid., 960-961.
[50] Kang & Valeriano, Can an Interstate Rivalry Be Positive; Lu & Thies, War, Rivalry, and State Building in the Middle East, 244-245; Valeriano, *Becoming Rivals*, 93.
[51] Diehl & Goetz, *War and Peace*; J. Klein, G. Goertz & J. Diehl, The New Rivalry Dataset, 331-348.
[52] Diehl & Goetz, *War and Peace*, 4.
[53] Klein, Goertz & Diehl, The New Rivalry Dataset.
[54] Ibid., 335-340; Diehl & Goertz, *War and Peace,* 44-45.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Thies, The Political Economy of State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa, 723.
[57] Thompson, Identifying Rivals.

becoming militarised, and (c) enemies'.[58] Thompson examines the foreign policy histories of states, using the decisions and activities taken by the states to determine the decision makers' perceptions of threat and thus define rivalries.[59] Echoing Thies, this article sees the perception of threat to be enough to stimulate poverty reduction within the state.[60]

Lu and Thies argue the two operational definitions use sufficiently different methodologies for measuring external rivalries.[61] This is observable through the spatial and temporal disparities in their measurements of rival dyads.[62] By testing both, this study aims to confirm the robustness of its results.[63]

Lastly, since the dependent variables are reported tri-annually, this study codes the presence of an enduring, proto, and strategic rivalry as 1 for a given state year: if there was one or more enduring, proto, or strategic rivalries for the majority of the three years prior to and including the measured year. Otherwise, the state year is coded as 0.

CONTROL VARIABLES: AID, FINANCE, GDP, AGE DEPENDENCY RATION AND TRADE OPENNESS

Control variables are the standard ones used for testing poverty.[64] Gini measures are excluded from the model, due to lack of data. The Gini index had a non-null value in only 78 out of 660 (11.82%) state years reported by PovCal. The control variables were taken from the World Bank World Development Indicators (WDI) Dataset and included Aid, Finance, GDP, Age Dependent Ratio, Imports and Exports.[65]

A new variable named Trade openness was calculated using the Exports and Imports variables provided by the WDI dataset. Trade openness for a given state year equals

[58] Ibid., 560.
[59] Ibid., 567.
[60] Thies, A Study of Post-Colonial Developing Country Extractive Efforts, 63.
[61] Lu & Thies, War, Rivalry, and State Building in the Middle East, 244.
[62] Thompson, Identifying Rivals, 570-573; Thies, The Political Economy of State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa, 722.
[63] Valeriano, *Becoming Rivals*, 93;
[64] Alvi & Senbeta, Does Foreign Aid Reduce Poverty, 962.
[65] Appendix A.

the sum of imports and exports of the country for that year. All control variables, including trade openness, are reported as averages of the tri-annual period.

DATA AND SAMPLE GROUP

The sample data was an unbalanced cross sectional time-series dataset, compiled from the WDI, PovCal, and the two rivalry datasets. The state-year data was defined by the availability of information in PovCal. The dataset had 132 states observed between 1981 and 1999, of which, 30 were removed. Seven were excluded due to being OECD.[66] The West Bank and Gaza and Montenegro were excluded due lack of state system membership in the Klein and colleagues database.[67] Another 10 were omitted due to lack of information on the dependent variables. The resulting dataset included 102 non-OECD state panels. Each state was observed tri-annually, resulting in a maximum of 7 observations per panel. Due to lack of state-system membership throughout the whole duration of the period, some states had fewer observations per panel. The dataset included 660 state-year entries, of which only 525 were tested due to missing values.

OECD states were excluded in order to avoid developed high income states from the sample group. The income group of the rest of the states was calculated according to the World Bank income group classification.[68] As shown in Table 1, 51.52% of the sample group state-years fall within the low income group, 34.70% fall within the lower-middle income group and only 5.45% fall within the upper-middle income group. As expected, there were no high income state years tested.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

As recommended by Beck & Katz, a Prais-Winsten Regression with Panel-Corrected Standardised Errors (PCSE) and AR(1)-type autcorrelation test with a common

[66] 'High-income OECD', *World Bank*. Available: <http://data.worldbank.org/income-level/OECD> [Accessed 20.01.2015].

[67] Klein, Goertz & Diehl, The New Rivalry Dataset.

[68] 'Country and Lending Groups', *World Bank*. Available: <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups> [Accessed 16.01.2015].

correlation coefficient across all panels was conducted.[69] This approach avoids autocorrelation and heteroscedastic errors when testing time-series panel data. The test was run using the panelAR version 0.1 package in R, version x64 3.1.1.[70] Below is the model ran in testing the hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: log(Poverty) ~ Rivalry + Foreign Aid + log(GDP Average) + Finance + Age Dependency + Trade Openness

The model was run six times in order to calculate all possible unique combinations between the two sets of independent variables (represented as Rivalry) and the three dependent variables (represented as Poverty).

Table 1: Distribution of sample states between income groups.

Income Group:	**Count (% of Total):**
Low income	340 (51.52%)
Lower-middle income	228 (34.70%)
Upper-middle income	36 (5.45%)
Higher income	0 (0.00%)
Not available	55 (8.33%)
Total	**660 (100%)**

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

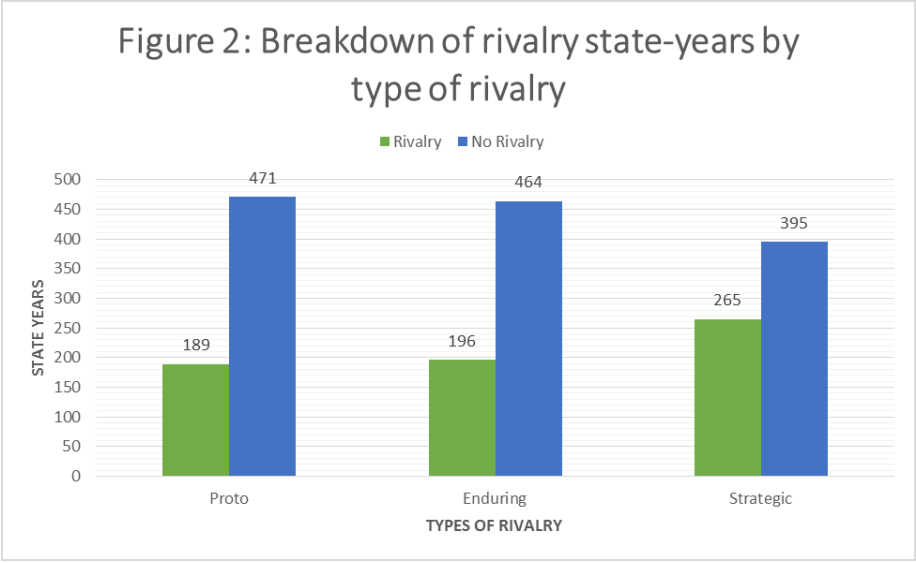
This research aims to investigate whether there is a positive relationship between interstate rivalry and poverty reduction. In Table 2 and Figure 2 the distribution of rivalry and non-rivalry state years in the sample group by type of rivalry is observable.

[69] N. Beck and J. N. Katz, 'What to Do (And Not to Do) With Time-Series Cross-Section Data' (1995) 89:3 *American Political Science Review* 644-645; Kang & Valeriano, Can an Interstate Rivalry Be Positive.

[70] 'panelAR: Estimation of Linear AR(1) Panel Data Models with Cross-Sectional Heteroskedasticity and/or Correlation', K. Kashin. Available: <http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/panelAR/index.html> [Accessed 12.01.2015].

Table 2: Breakdown of rivalry and non-rivalry state years by type of rivalry

State years		Types of Rivalry		
		Proto	Enduring	Strategic
Rivalry	Count:	189	196	265
	% of Total:	28.64%	29.70%	40.15%
No Rivalry	Count:	471	464	395
	% of Total:	71.36%	70.30%	59.85%
Total	Count:	660	660	660
	% of Total:	100%	100%	100%



THE RIVALRY-POVERTY MODEL

Table 3 presents the results for the model testing the relationships between rivalry and poverty. The relationships were tested by running a Prais-Winsten Regression with Panel-Corrected Standard Errors and an AR(1) autocorrelation with a common correlation coefficient across all panels. Columns (1), (3) and (5) report the results of testing proto and enduring rivalries against the three dependent variables – *poverty headcount index*, *poverty gap index* and the *squared poverty gap index* respectively. Columns (2), (4) and (6) report the results of testing strategic rivalries against the dependent variables in the same order as (1), (3) and (5) (Table 3).

Table 3: Effects of Rivalry on Poverty 1981-1999
Prais-Winsten Regression with AR(1) Correction and Panel-Corrected Standard Errors

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Dep. Variables	**Poverty headcount**		**Poverty Gap**		**Squared Poverty Gap**	
Proto rivalry	-0.1144		-0.1103		-0.1002	
	(0.0803)		(0.0915)		(0.1025)	
Enduring rivalry	-0.0457***		-0.1585**		-0.2841*	
	(0.0093)		(0.0607)		(0.1161)	
Strategic rivalry		-0.1769.		-0.2066.		-0.2583.
		(0.0923)		(0.1107)		(0.1385)
Aid	-0.0042	-0.0045	-0.0024	-0.0027	-0.0006	-0.0013
	(0.0041)	(0.0041)	(0.0043)	(0.0040)	(0.0036)	(0.0042)
Log GDP per capita	-0.8192***	-0.8203***	-0.9055***	-0.9102***	-0.9796***	-0.9363***
	(0.0041)	(0.0961)	(0.1069)	(0.1121)	(0.1091)	(0.1230)
Finance	0.0698*	0.0862.	0.0609	0.0793	0.0170	0.0510
	(0.0041)	(0. 0442)	(0.0520)	(0.0618)	(0.0839)	(0.0794)
Age dependency ratio	0.0220**	0.0221**	0.0251**	0.0248**	0.0272**	0.0265**
	(0.0041)	(0.0071)	(0.0078)	(0.0078)	(0.0084)	(0.0088)
Trade openness	0.0005	0.0004	0.0004	0.0003	0.0003	0.0002
	(0.0005)	(0.0004)	(0.0005)	(0.0004)	(0.0006)	(0.0005)
Constant	6.6280***	6.6441***	5.9530***	5.9924***	5.5714***	5.3707***
	(0.4722)	(0.5175)	(0.6533)	(0.7411)	(0.8428)	(0.9421)
N of observations	525	525	525	525	525	525
N of panels	91	91	91	91	91	91
R-Squared	0.6849	0.6999	0.4809	0.4795	0.3535	0.3265
Wald X^2 (d.f.)	259.0509 (7)	143.373 (6)	206.2395 (7)	717.8889 (6)	139.8357 (7)	135.2609 (6)
Prob > X^2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Standard errors in parentheses.
Significance codes: '***'p<0.001 ; '**'p<0.01 '*'p<0.05 ; '.'p<0.1

As expected, enduring rivalry has a negative statistically significant effect on all three dependent variables, indicating that it reduces poverty. Column (1) shows enduring rivalries have the weakest negative correlation with *poverty headcount index* (-0.0457) and column (5) that the strongest negative relationship is between enduring rivalries and the *squared poverty gap index* (-0.2841). This suggests enduring rivalries are more effective at reducing poverty for the people living under the most severe poverty circumstances and are less effective at reducing poverty for the people living closer to the poverty line.

Additionally, proto rivalries have negative but non-significant effect on all three dependent variables. Since no significant relationship was found, Thies' argument — that proto rivalries lack the severity and duration of threat needed to elicit the same type of state-building response as enduring rivalries — is supported[71].

Unlike Alvi and Senbeta's findings, the negative effect of aid on poverty in Table 3 is not significant. Furthermore, Finance has a significant effect only in (1), when controlling for the effects of proto and enduring rivalry on the *poverty headcount index*, as opposed to having a significant effect on all three dependent variables. They observe no significant effect of Age dependency ratio in their study, but this article deviates by observing a significant positive effect of the variable on poverty in all six tests[72].

Lastly, GDP per capita has a negative significant effect regardless of independent variable. This strongly supports the author's causal mechanism that rivalry indirectly reduces poverty through eliciting economic growth. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with the wider literature both on poverty and state-building.[73]

In conclusion, apart from Finance and Aid, most factors acted as expected. Enduring rivalries and GDP per capita have a negative significant effect on poverty. Strategic rivalries also have a negative relationship, but are not significant in the conventional sense. These results are not sufficient to falsify Hypothesis 1. Therefore, the author has confidence that interstate military rivalry helps with the reduction of poverty in non-OECD states by promoting economic growth.

CONCLUSION

Enduring interstate rivals have been shown to directly and indirectly reduce both the depth and breadth of poverty in non-OECD states. However, strategic rivalries fall short of having a significant positive effect on poverty reduction. One reason could be that strategic rivalries are not measured in military terms. Due to the lack of military engagement, states might not expand their infrastructure to support military mobility,

[71] Thies, Post-Colonial Developing Country Extractive Efforts, 63.
[72] Alvi & Senbeta, Does Foreign Aid Reduce Poverty, 965.
[73] Ibid., 965-969; Kang & Valeriano, Can an Interstate Rivalry Be Positive; Sobek & Thies, War, Economic Development, and Political Development, 280-285.

thus reducing the positive effect on people in poverty. Further research is needed to support this claim. Regardless of these divergent results between the independent variables, the results are decisive and fail to falsify the hypothesis.

While the conclusion of this article does challenge the myth that interstate rivalry is never beneficial for a state's populace, more research is needed before interstate rivalry can be shown as positive for the state's populace. Nonetheless, this article opens new pathways in researching this by conducting an original test exploring a previously unexplored relationship. There are two ways in which the academic society can build upon this work. Firstly, further definition and case studies, expanding the model to its logical extreme can be tested, thus further supporting or falsifying the results of this article. Secondly, by challenging the paradigm, this article allows for follow-up studies examining the role of interstate rivalry on democratisation and other benefits, which can challenge the myth in different ways.[74]

Lastly, although this article finds a positive relationship between rivalry and poverty reduction, ethical considerations must be made before advising policy. Rivalry is a dangerous process, which results in state failure and death.[75] This should never be forgotten and these risks should always be taken into consideration before informing policy. The author would like to conclude by advising against starting rivalries for poverty reduction purposes in developing states. While the information of such beneficial results can be helpful in motivating aid flows, there are other methods of reducing poverty suggested by Alvi and Senbeta, Besley and Burgess, and Goudie and Ladd, which have less salient risks to human security and therefore should always be considered first.

[74] Rasler & Thompson, War Making and State Making, 248-254.

[75] Thies, Post-Colonial Developing Country Extractive Efforts, 68-69; Kang & Valeriano, Can an Interstate Rivalry Be Positive; Thompson, Identifying Rivals; Diehl & Goertz, *War and Peace*;

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS AND CHAPTERS OF BOOKS

M. Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System* (Colorado, 1995).

M. A. Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (USA, 2002).

T. Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (USA, 1997).

J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (USA, 2000).

K. Rasler & W. R. Thompson, 'War Making and State Making: How and Where Does it Fit into a Bigger Picture?' in J. Vasquez (ed.), *What do we Know About War?,* 2nd Edition (USA, 2012), 237-255.

C. Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.' in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer & T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back in* (Cambridge, 1985).

C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992* (USA, 1992).

B. Valeriano, *Becoming Rivals: The Process of Interstate Rivalry Development* (New York, 2013),

J. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle* (Cambridge, 1993).

CONFERENCE PAPERS & JOURNALS

E. Alvi & A. Senbeta, 'Does Foreign Aid Reduce Poverty?' (2012) 24:8 *Journal of International Development* 955-976.

N. Beck & J. N. Katz, 'What to Do (And Not to Do) With Time-Series Cross-Section Data' (1995) 89:3 *American Political Science Review* 634–647.

T. Besley & R. Burgess, 'Halving global poverty' (2003) 17:3 *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 3–22.

A. Goudie & P. Ladd, 'Economic growth, poverty and inequality' (1999) 11:2 *Journal of International Development* 177-195.

C-N. Kang & B. Valeriano, 'Can an Interstate Rivalry Be Positive?' *International Studies Association Annual Meeting*.

L. Lu & C. Thies, 'War, Rivalry, and State Building in the Middle East' (2013) 66:2 *Political Research Quarterly* 239-253.

P. Rudloff, J. M. Scott & T. Blew, 'Countering adversaries and cultivating friends: Indirect rivalry factors and the allocation of US foreign aid' (2013) 48:3 *Cooperation and Conflict* 401-423.

S. Sample, B. Valeriano & C-N. Kang, 'The Societal Determinants and Impact of Military Spending Patterns' (2013) 41 *Political and Military Sociology – Annual Review* 109-135.

D. Sobek & C. Thies, 'War, Economic Development, and Political Development in the Contemporary International System' (2010) 54:1 *International Studies Quarterly* 267-287.

C. Thies, 'Political Violence and State Building in Central America' (2006) 39:10 *Comparative Political Studies* 1263-1282.

C. Thies, 'State Building, Interstate and Intrastate Rivalry: A Study of Post-Colonial Developing Country Extractive Efforts, 1975-2000' (2004) 48:1 *International Studies Quarterly* 53-72.

C. Thies, 'The Political Economy of State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa' (2007) 69:3 *The Journal of Politics* 716-731.

C. Thies, 'War, Rivalry, and State Building in Latin America' (2005) 49:3 *American Journal of Political Science* 451-465.

INTERNET SOURCES

'Country and Lending Groups', *World Bank*. Available: <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups> [Accessed 16.01.2015].

'High-income OECD', *World Bank*. Available: <http://data.worldbank.org/income-level/OECD> [Accessed 20.01.2015].

'panelAR: Estimation of Linear AR(1) Panel Data Models with Cross-Sectional Heteroskedasticity and/or Correlation', K. Kashin. Available: <http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/panelAR/index.html> [Accessed 12.01.2015].

DATASETS

J. Klein, G. Goertz & J. Diehl, 'The New Rivalry Dataset: Procedures and Patterns' (2006) 43(4), *Journal of Peace Research*, 331-348.

W. R. Thompson, 'Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics' (2001) 45:4 *International Studies Quarterly* 557-586.

'PovcalNet: the on-line tool for poverty measurement developed by the Development Research Group of the World Bank' World Bank. Available: <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/index.htm> [Accessed 12.12.2014].

'World Development Indicators', World Bank. Available: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators> [Accessed 12.12.2014].

APPENDIX A

Variable short name	Variable definition	Source
Aid	Net official development assistance and official aid received (constant 2011 US$)	World Development Indicators, World Bank
Finance	Domestic credit to private sector (% of GDP)	World Development Indicators, World Bank
GDP	GDP per capita (constant 2005 US$)	World Development Indicators, World Bank
Age Dependent Ratio	Age dependency ratio (% of working-age population)	World Development Indicators, World Bank
Imports	Imports of goods and services (% of GDP)	World Development Indicators, World Bank
Exports	Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	World Development Indicators, World Bank

Identifying the Ideological Social Construct: What are its Implications for Sociology?

Connor William Evans Moreland

In contemporary western discourse the concept of the social fact has gradually been diluted in favour of what many activists refer to as the 'social construct'. However, this approach to constructivism is not truly sociological, and is based on discourse rather than analysis. This has led to a rise in 'pop' sociology. The first half of this article will explore what I have deemed the 'ideological social construct', its origins in western discourse and its relation to contemporary identity politics. The second half will focus on possible reconstructive methods for the harm that the ideological social construct has done to social science methodology.

Emile Durkheim defines social facts as such:

> They consist of manners of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual, which are invested with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him.[1]

It is important to first of all distinguish the ideological social construct from the sociological and philosophical concept of social constructivism. The key distinction lies within the motivations of these two schools of social constructivist thought. While social constructivism serves as a philosophical tool that is used to question the apparently innate nature of social behaviour, and is largely neutral, the same cannot be said for the ideological social construct.

The ideological social construct is instead primarily motivated with ending what its proponents see as social ills. Instead of employing the social construct as a means of historical and psychological analysis to determine the ideological origins of social behaviour, the ideological social construct seeks to diagnose social ills in a somewhat medicinal manner, and then refer to such ills as being a social construct. In the context

CONNOR WILLIAM EVANS MORELAND is a second year sociology student at the University of Glasgow. His academic interests include the role of identity politics in the creation of discourses, and the role that online communities have in shaping social environments. He hopes to continue this work at a postgraduate level, and to contribute to the academic community.

[1] E. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (London, 1982), 50.

of the ideological social constructivist, this would heavily imply that the construct is 'not real' (a common misunderstanding of the social construct[2]) and therefore easily discarded.

This approach is favoured by many contemporary journalists and self-styled social justice activists as it allows for the creation of a narrative based around moral injustices, such as oppression and other forms of harmful social control. Thus, ideological social constructivist discourse is a largely activism based concept.

However, this approach makes the fundamental mistake of ignoring the sociological concept of the social fact.[3] A social fact can be described as an aspect of our lives, while not the result of biology or natural instinct, is still able to exert control over us due to the pressures of societal influence.[4] The social fact is crucial in that it allows us to view social phenomena within a wider, structural context, rather an abstract view of oppression by a more privileged group in society. For Emile Durkheim social facts 'consist of representations and actions, they cannot be confused with organic phenomena, nor with psychical phenomena, which have no existence save in through the individual consciousness'.[5]

Such an approach is useful in that it allows for a more neutral and overall more rigorous approach to social science. Importantly, such an approach also allows us to examine ourselves, and the possibility that much of our own discourses may be based on ideological narrative rather than a strict adherence to sociological principles. In contrast, the ideological social construct is concerned above all else with justifying its own necessity through social activism, meaning that it has little opportunity to examine the bias in its own methodology.

An example of the ideological social construct being employed to justify a worldview can be found in the viral videos of popular internet sex educator Laci Green. Green identifies the social aspects of female virginity (the association of female virginity with purity) as a social construct and as something that is, along with sex, primarily

[2] C. S. Vance, *Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality* (London, 1989), 16.
[3] Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, 50.
[4] Ibid., 52.
[5] Ibid.

harmful.[6] As such, virginity as a social construct is viewed fundamentally as being something that needs to be eliminated in order to encourage a more positive and healthy view of sexuality.

Although it would be correct for Green to view virginity as a social construct, the analytical implications of social constructivism, at least when approached sociologically, are in reality far more complex than Green's moralist assumptions would imply. Such an example shows how the complexities of social constructivism as a philosophical concept can be diluted in order to serve a progressive stance, often at the expense of further critical analysis of the topic in question - in this case, the social implications of virginity. This becomes largely problematic for a truly sociological understanding of virginity and human sexuality.

To go into further detail, Green explores social standards of virginity purely within the contexts of the contemporary, third wave, sex positive feminist analysis of sexuality[7], and as such, her mind is largely already made up, and her argument very much begs the question. That is, the 'solution' to the socially problematic aspects of virginity has already been founded. If we approach such social issues as being an obstacle to our goals first and then a sociological study second, then social constructivism as a form of philosophical analysis becomes diluted, to be replaced by ideological discourse.

Under this simplified form of social analysis that has become popular, a moral high ground is taken prior to the development of any new research. There is no new exploration of the cultural anthropology of virginity, its history in relation to any contemporary sociological findings, or of any post-colonial research concerning sexuality. All of the social analysis needed for Green's understanding of sexuality comes from a preconceived view of virginity as harmful~~,~~ and thus~~,~~ any social research performed afterwards, including the use of accepted 'hard' methodologies such as statistics will invariably carry this contemporary usage of the social construct as a tool for discrediting elements of social life that are viewed as harmful.

[6] 'LET'S LOSE "VIRGINITY"', L. Green. Available: <http://lacigreen.tumblr.com/post/53391165491/lets-lose-virginity-my-new-vid-includes> [Accessed 13.02.15].

[7] Ibid.

Such arguments can essentially be boiled down to the reasoning that if something can be defined as a social construct then it ceases to exist on any 'real' level, and as such it can be freely dismissed from any further sociological or anthropological discussion or analysis.[8] This unfortunately transforms the analytical tool of the social construct into a purely ideological method, one that can be employed as a means to shut down any further debate or to discourage any new theories from emerging.

This form of discourse differs from academic sociology in that it is primarily an online social movement~~,~~ rather than a researched based one. However, although this article makes the distinction between 'pop' sociology and academia, it is important to note that due to the increasing influence of the internet, and the activism based around it, sentimental discourse runs the risk of becoming a dominant influence in how mainstream society views social science, and how individuals employ pseudo-sociology in their everyday lives. If we were to perform a complete and well-rounded sociology of virginity, the moral fundamentalism inherent in such views can give us very little in terms of understanding the social behaviour and social expectations associated with the concept of virginity. Instead, it is essential to detach any form of moral sentiment[9] from sociology, as this can cloud our judgement and create a moral narrative than takes precedence over our research.

Such an approach to social constructivism proves problematic for the social sciences for a number of reasons. Arguably the most challenging would be ideological social constructivism's approach towards sociological methodology. As discussed before, a social constructivist discourse rooted in the desire to 'fix' social problems runs on logic that is largely circular, and often starts with its own conclusions already founded. Issues that are viewed as being socially troublesome, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, are viewed through an essentialist spin on contemporary western discourses on the nature of social justice. This means that any sociological data gathered through the ideological social constructivist model is largely pre-determined, existing to prove its own point, which in itself is decided by a postmodern discourse concerned with the protection of individual identities.

In order to properly critique the ideological social construct it is important to understand its origins, both as an ideological tool and in its effect on individual and

[8] Vance, *Social Construction Theory*, 16.
[9] H. S. Becker, 'Whose Side Are We On?' (1967) 14 *Social Problems* 246.

social discourse. One such explanation for the ideological social construct's origin can be found within sociologist Val Ginnes's work on the increasing importance of individualisation in modern social and family life.[10]

Acknowledging hypermodernity and its application to contemporary identity politics is important if we are to understand the changes in personal identity and its effects upon the concept of the social construct. Ginnes views the contemporary family as being an example of how individualisation has become key to our daily social interactions.[11] Ginnes sees the contemporary family as being one that embraces new forms of identity, with homosexual, single and other historically unconventional families now being embraced rather than shunned. This shows that the family is now more concerned with being an individual and largely personalised institution rather than adhering to any clearly defined social conventions.

A similar phenomenon can be seen within the continuous growth of social media. The rise in popularity of micro blogging sites such as *Tumblr* has allowed for the growth of several new online communities based around themes such as social justice, sexual orientation, and identity, as well as fandoms of all sorts. With the globalisation of communication at its highest through online media, individualisation has now arguably reached a new level of importance in many people's social lives. This is perhaps best reflected in the desire to form online communities which has resulted in the emergence of several new social identities.

Such an example can be seen in the rise of alternative sexual identities such as Demisexual[12] and Asexual.[13] Such groups have found solace in online communities. Thus, the internet activism orchestrated by these groups has largely been concerned with defending their right to be acknowledged and accepted as having a genuine sexual identity and as a community.

---

[10] V. Ginnes. 'Family and Intimate Relationships: A Review of the Sociological Research' (2003) *Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group* 9-10.

[11] Ibid., 10-11.

[12] 'Let Them Eat Cake: On Being Demisexual', C. Liebowitz. Available: <http://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/let-them-eat-cake-on-being-demisexual/> [Accessed 13.02.15].

[13] M. Carrigan. 'There's more to life than sex? Difference and commonality within the asexual community' (2011) 14:4 *Sexualities* 462.

As the ideological social construct is mostly used to defend disadvantaged groups and to promote social justice, it can be said that these new sexual identities are more attached to a form of sociology that affirms their right to exist above all else. This justifies the acceptance by these groups of the ideological social construct as a tool, as it allows them to eliminate harmful social practices that diminish their identity politics. Thus, the individual identity can go on, provided that the social expectations that diminish their identities are discredited through use of the ideological social construct.

RECONSTRUCTING TRADITIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL METHODOLOGIES: IS IT A POSSIBLE IDEAL?

This is not to say that social scientists should disregard social constructivism as an analytical tool completely. Doing so would unfairly diminish a large amount of valuable social theory and analysis for no good reason. Instead, it can be argued that the methodology of the social construct should be reconstructed to prevent its contemporary misuse. The key point of this should not be to discredit social constructivism as a form of sociological study, but instead work to effectively separate it from ideological discourse.

One possible, but difficult approach to creating an ideal sociological methodology would be to revaluate the sociological school of functionalism, and possibly attempt to reconstruct it's overtly positivist methods while still being careful not to fall into the methodological traps associated with ideological social constructivism. Functionalism,[14] in its most simple definition, views social behaviour, as well as its analysis and study, as being based around the performance of specific 'functions' in society, regardless of their perceived moral content. For example, crime is functional as it allows for the continuing existence of social institutions such as the police force and the justice system.

This somewhat reactionary approach may have some unexpected benefits for the reconstruction of sociological methodology. For example, traditional functionalism initially seems like a feasible solution to address the biases found within the ideological social construct as it, above all else, acknowledges the need of individuals to locate themselves within a wider societal system. Individuals are influenced by other forces within those systems. Acknowledging the effects that external influences have on the

[14] A. Giddens & P W. Sutton, *Sociology* (Cambridge, 2013), 18-21.

lives of individuals, a part of a greater system, would, in many ways, allow us to view society in terms of power structures, rather than as a list of coercive social influences that need to be restrained or reformed.

However, although it may be tempting to look to past methodologies as a somewhat reactionary stance against postmodern trends, it must also be considered that functionalism itself, like the social construct, should not be taken without a pinch of salt. Take, for instance, feminist sociologists who noted that the traditionally accepted functionalist view of the nuclear family as a form of social organism, with both the male breadwinner and female house worker acting in cohesion, was methodologically dubious and misleading. Their main criticisms were largely directed at the nature of functionalism in itself. Claiming that functionalism was inherently biased and far too accepting of the status quo, feminists argued that the research of functionalists focused too much on the family as a definitive system that was inherently peaceful, and thus ignored conflicting factors in the home such as domestic abuse.[15] Feminist sociologists were thus able to deconstruct the ideological basis that the home was a fundamentally safe and 'functional' place for the nuclear family through proper critical analysis. Furthermore, Feminist sociologists were then, as a result of such critical analysis, able to link their findings to societal influence upon gendered behaviour and familial structure.

This criticism of traditional functionalism serves as an excellent example of how sociologists can perform methodically sound social research without falling into the pitfalls of abstract empiricism and ideology promoting, while at the same time bringing awareness to a social injustice that can be appropriately linked to the wider social hierarchies of sex, gender and family. One factor in particular that makes the above example not just sociologically sound, but scientifically sound would be the focus on building what can be described as a 'sociological narrative' that emphasises the often neglected need to consider context when performing research related to the social sciences. In the aforementioned Laci Green viral video on the social construction of virginity, Green attempts to link the 'creation' of virginity to ancient, Abrahamic societies where men were in charge and then examines virginity primarily as a concept created for the purpose of controlling female sexuality.[16]

[15] Ginnes, 'Family and Intimate Relationships: A Review of the Sociological Research', 6.
[16] Green, '*LET'S LOSE "VIRGINITY"*'.

Religion and theology can definitely be said to have played a large part in defining the social roles and expectations of women throughout history, and no proper social scientist or gender studies scholar could argue against the clear double standard placed on female sexuality and virginity. Yet the use of history for sociological purposes is in reality a far more complex affair.

If social scientists are to employ history to strengthen their argument then we must consider the importance of building a 'sociological narrative.' That is, a historical analysis that is willing to consider all historical changes, rather than the ones that suit our own discourse, in order to build a truly sociological approach to history. It is not enough to simply identify trends in history and apply them to our own discourses. Instead, the application of history should be strictly relevant to the context of our own research. To take a case in point, if we are to perform a social study of virginity, then our concern should be our contemporary social environment. Said study would ideally focus on the relation of individual sexuality to societal expectations of sexuality, and how these societal expectations are able to influence the individual, through acceptance of societal expectations or their rejection. How society views or treats these individuals who have either accepted or rejected society's sexual mores can then be identified, which in turn makes for appropriate social research on the nature of human sexuality as a social institution.

History is obviously very important for understanding the context of any contemporary society. However, social scientists must be willing to accommodate all relevant social, political, and economic changes when analysing history, as opposed to merely cherry picking decontextualized social norms (in Green's case, the role of women in Abrahamic society) without any consideration to the more recent social changes in female sexuality, such as the sexual revolution or the influences of second and third wave feminism.

This form of historical research can be compared to what sociologist C. Wright Mills identifies as 'Abstracted Empiricism.' [17] Abstracted empiricism refers to abstract, unrelated data or research that claims to be sociological, but in reality only gives us a specified form of a particular social event, with no real sociological narrative that allows us to appropriately connect historical or social phenomena with our current

[17] C. W Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York, 1959), 50.

social existence. This effectively sums up how ideological social constructivist discourse appropriates history for its own use.

The sociological narrative is important as its application can prevent social theorists from falling into this trap. If instead of resorting to abstract empiricism to pick out historical events that suit our causes, and then running with that single event, we instead acknowledge history as being in a state of fluidity. In this context, historic fluidity is understood as viewing history as functioning on a path rather than a series of unrelated key events. For example, instead of trying to link virginity's origins directly to ancient history we should view virginity in its contemporary cultural status, and then slowly work backwards, taking into account such things such as the sexual revolution and how economic changes in the twentieth-century have changed societal expectations of the family, and thus female sexuality. This would create a truly sociological narrative, in which a clear path of societal expectations regarding sexuality can be seen.

However, this is not to suggest a wholly positivist view of sociology. It goes without saying that the mentioned model of historical sociology can in itself only be applied lightly. The need for post-positivist subjective study remains important to contemporary sociological thinking. A post-positivist approach would strengthen the argument against ideological social constructivist discourse. As mentioned before, constructivist discourse has the potential to render 'hard' science data somewhat toothless, with the importance of maintaining the discourse coming before, and thus shaping what data is chosen for the research. This emphasises the need to distinguish philosophical social constructivism from ideological discourse. Social data, when analysed in reference to social constructivism, allows us to question the naturalness of social actions with a somewhat objective view. Ideological discourse assumes that social reality can just be forgotten in favour of social justice.

The earlier criticism of functionalism for being too generous to the status quo is comparable to the ideological social construct discussed earlier. Despite being radically different in terms of ideology — traditional functionalism arguably justifies a conservative mind set and the ideological social construct is deployed as a postmodern justification for social justice related causes — both serve an ideological function before a methodological or purely scientific one.

As discussed before, this has become problematic for social science methodology for a number of reasons. If we decide our own outcomes in sociology (that whatever

potentially harmful or otherwise disconcerting social phenomena is to be dismissed as a 'social construct' that we need to 'fix') before we begin to even consider the appropriateness of our methodology and critical analysis, then a social theorist/scientist cannot possibly expect an outcome other than the one that they have already decided. Such an outcome would in itself have been formed as the result of postmodern discourses and the continuing influence of individualisation and identity politics through social media.

If social discourse sees itself as being something of a 'societal medicine' in which social constructivist discourse is viewed as a method of diagnosis for perceived social ills, rather than as a philosophical method of analysing human action, then the more activist sociologists run the serious risk of limiting their research methods in order to suit a preconceived ideology that is taken at face value.

However, while advocating for a more objective and unbiased form of sociology seems at first a simple solution to a methodological problem, the actual implementation may have some hurdles to pass. Likewise, it is important to acknowledge that this issue of bias within the social sciences has been brought up before. In Howard Saul Becker's essay 'Whose Side Are We On?' Becker notes that the very nature of the methodology and research techniques that are used within the social sciences may themselves be inherently biased. Becker uses an example of a mental health institution to illustrate this.

Becker's example is as follows. If we were to perform a sociological study on the lives of mental patients at a particular institution from the perspective of the patients rather than the staff or administrative personal, then we would be accused of having a bias in favour of the patients. This would seem to imply that our research was done solely for the benefit of the patients, and that by ignoring the viewpoints and experiences of the staff, we are only getting one side of the story.[18]

Becker notes that if we do attempt to balance our research by becoming involved with the staff, then sociologists run the risk of entering a cycle of accusations, in which each side accuses the research of being biased.[19] This means that regardless of how we

[18] Becker, 'Whose Side Are We On?', 246-247.
[19] Ibid., 246.

perform our research, any social or political group can accuse sociologists of unfair representation or bias.

Since much of sociology is devoted to exploring power relations and the effects that said power relations have in reproducing social and economic inequalities, this can prove to be quite problematic for qualitative social researchers as it means that their work may run the risk of being dismissed entirely due to its structure. For instance, advocates of free market capitalism and libertarianism might be sceptical of sociological data that may imply a socialist approach to the economy could be beneficial. Likewise, criminologists who are critical of the current justice system may be put under pressure from social conservatives.

However, Becker, unlike the ideological social constructivist, makes a key point in telling sociologists to avoid sentimentality.[20] Arguably this simple notion could be the key to the ideological social construct's downfall. As the examples that I have given throughout this article have primarily dealt with issues relating to personal identity, such as obscure sexual identities and body positivity, it becomes apparent that the activism related to such groups is mostly based on what they perceive to be the diminishing of their social integrity ('erasing' is the popular term of reference in social justice circles), rather than any definitive economic or political inequality. Hence, social constructivism becomes more about the protection of individual identity rather than the analysis of individual identity.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this article I have explored the origins, negative effects, and possible solutions to what I have deemed the 'ideological social construct.' To conclude, it is not enough to advocate for a reactionary 'back to basics' approach in the social sciences, since many of the traditional sociological methods have been largely criticised as being biased and misleading in themselves. Either that or they have been deconstructed or have otherwise become obsolete in regards to contemporary societal structures. Instead, sociologists should arguably deconstruct the deconstruction. That is, to take a more critical stance towards the popular discourse of ideological social constructivism. Social scientists cannot and should not be so readily accepting of whatever new methods have become popular amongst contemporary social justice activists without

[20] Becker, 'Whose Side Are We On?', 246-7

first analysing them sociologically. Overall, sociologists must be willing to differentiate between the proper use of social constructivism, and the discourse of the ideological social construct.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS AND ESSAYS

D. Altman et al, *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?*: *International Conference on Gay and Lesbian Studies* (London, 1989)

H. S. Becker, 'Whose Side Are We On?' (1967) 14:3 *Social Problems* 239-247

M. Carrigan, 'There's more to life than sex? Difference and commonality within the asexual community' (2011) 14:4 *Sexualities* 462-478

E. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (London, 1982).

A. Giddens & P. W. Sutton, *Sociology*, 7th Edition (Cambridge, 2013).

V. Gilles, 'Family and Intimate Relationships: A Review of the Sociological Research', *Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group* (London, 2003) 1-23

C. W. Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York, 1959).

C. Vance, 'Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality' in D. Altman et al, *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?*: *International Conference on Gay and Lesbian Studies* (London, 1989).

ONLINE ARTICLES AND WEB LINKS

'Let Them Eat Cake: On Being Demisexual', C. Liebowitz. Available: <http://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/let-them-eat-cake-on-being-demisexual/> [Accessed 13.02.15]

'LET'S LOSE "VIRGINITY"', L. Green. Available: <http://lacigreen.tumblr.com/post/53391165491/lets-lose-virginity-my-new-vid-includes> [Accessed 13.02.15]

Anti-Body: The Body and the Evolution of Dadaism as Performance Art

Hannah Nailor

This article was originally written for a course entitled 'Body, Flesh, Subject', taught by Dr. Kelli Fuery for Chapman University's Honors Program. The course focused on considerations of the body as the grounds of phenomenological experience and examined both the physical and the socially-constructed borders between bodies. This article brings together those discussions through a history of Dadaism, a radical art movement beginning in World War I, and influencing performance art of the 1970s and of today. By focusing on one key figure in each of these periods, I will seek to demonstrate how Dadaists use their bodies to mediate non-meaning, causing spectators to critically examine the socially-constructed borders of the body.

This article, drawing on scholarship from Michel Foucault, Amelia Jones, Roland Barthes, and Sara Ahmed, will analyse the evolution of Dadaism, an art movement allowing performers to use their bodies in a form beyond typical artistic expression and, ultimately, transcending social constructions of the body. By examining Dadaism as an attempt to produce non-meaning, the article will seek to determine how Dadaists use *affect* and *abjection* to utilize the body as a source of non-meaning. Ultimately, with these things in mind, I will show how Dadaism began by tapping into growing anxiety over strengthening social boundaries, thus creating a dialogue which informed performance art of the 1970s, permeating genre and modes of mediation. With reference to the works of Andy Kaufman and YouTube performer Steve Kardynal, I will illustrate how Dadaism has evolved into the modern era.

Dadaism may be defined as an art movement the central goal of which is to shatter previous notions of truth and meaning without attempting to create any truth or meaning to take their place. According to the pre-existing construct of Dadaism within art history,

---

HANNAH NAILOR was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri in the United States. She is studying Screenwriting at Chapman University in Southern California and is currently on an exchange year at the University of Glasgow. Her academic interests vary wildly. As a result, her philosophy essays always include film references and her film essays always include Barthes and Foucault. She has previously been published in Sapere Aude, the online publication of Chapman University's Honors Program. Her personal interests include film, film, and film (in that order).

> it stands for … the disgusted response of artists to the debacle of Western civilization and its values in the First World War. Dada represents a revolt against art by artists themselves who, appalled by developments in contemporary society, recognized that art was bound to be a product, reflection and even support of that society and was therefore criminally implicated.[1]

Dadaism began during the war, as European artists saw a need to address the crumbling and clashing of the Western world. These artists reacted not only to the unprecedented warfare and pain of World War I, but also the social changes it instigated; Dada was charged by the breaking of Europe and the strengthening of its sociopolitical borders. Throughout the war and into the 1920's, Dadaism sought to challenge these borders and borders in general, attempting to overcome all rules of genre and classification. Of course, despite 'Dada' being a nonsense word applied to a nonsense art movement, nothing is beyond definition. Dada artists automatically insinuated a definition, given that 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations'.[2] Once there were powerful people practicing the same artistic styles in the same areas of Europe and New York, the Dada movement was loosely classifiable as a radical movement in the *avant-garde*, which in this instance, translates as popular male artists whose works were seen as important and 'progressive'. Two innovative types of art were brought about by this movement, both represented below: the photomontage and the assemblage.

[1] R. Short, *Dada & Surrealism* (New York, 1980), 7.
[2] M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1977), 175.

Left: Raoul Hausmann, *ABCD*, 1923-24.[3]
Right: Raoul Hausmann, *Mechanical Head (Spirit of Our Time)*, 1920.[4]

These works offer new insight into Foucault's concepts of the 'body politic,' a concept in which the bodies of the subjugated masses are seen as 'a set of material elements and techniques that service as weapons, relays, communication routes, and supports for … power and knowledge relations'[5]. The Dadaists viscerally display this, recognizing themselves as parts in a power-relation that they choose to revolt against through these works. Although they may lack the composition of works that came before, these works are not nearly as chaotic as their authors might believe. Hausmann's above works clearly demonstrate an adherence to notions of balance and construction. Arguably the most infamous, provocative Dada work, Marcel Duchamp's 'Fountain', seen below, is radical both as a found object displayed as art and as an abrupt statement about the nature of art. The urinal's inverted placement and graffiti give it (albeit minimal) artistic form, but its very display betrays Duchamp's artistic purpose; Duchamp knew that his audience would wring even the most banal object for meaning. He therefore makes a statement that art is arbitrary, that art means nothing, because people will force themselves to see something in nothing. Duchamp questions

[3] R. Hausmann, *ABCD*, photomontage, 1923-24. Availeble: <http://beautyovertime.blogspot.com/2011/05/abcd-by-raoul-hausmann.html>
[4] R. Hausmann, *Mechanical Head (Spirit of Our Time)*, assemblage, 1920. Availeble: <http://www.clg-daumier-martigues.ac-aix-marseille.fr/spip/spip.php?rubrique52> [Accessed 10.12.2013].
[5] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 175-176.

the socially-constructed concept of 'art.' Despite attempting to hide behind absurdity, Dada artists still convey artistic values and intentions.

Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, replica 1964.[6]

Having defined Dadaism, I will now briefly define two terms key to the discussion of Dadaism which will follow: *affect* and abjection. *Affect*, a psychological term, is defined as 'specific physiological responses that then give rise to various effects, which may or may not translate into emotions'.[7] Dadaists create visceral art meant to garner a physical response, typically that of repulsion. This repulsion feeds into the abject, which Kristeva defines as 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules'.[8] Dadaists force a confrontation with the abject, thereby triggering *affects* which overpower a subject, demanding its attention.

Now, to find the true Dadaist in the 1910s and '20s, one must travel to New York where, unlike the Dada movement in Europe, artists acted more or less in a vacuum of self-motivated art. Here, we find a body 'that both epitomized and, in its performative lived forms, radically disrupted the movement from inside and out. This body (and the

[6] M. Duchamp, *Fountain*, found art, 1917, 1964. Available: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-fountain-t07573>

[7] E. Wissinger, 'Always on Display: Affective Production in the Modeling Industry' in P. Clough & J. Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham & London, 2007), 232.

[8] J. Kristeva, 'Approaching Abjection' translated by L.S. Roudiez, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York, 1982), 4.

subject that enlivens it)… [is] the Baroness, a poet, autobiographer, artist, artist's model, and self-performative cultural provocateur'[9].

'Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven working as a model', 1915.[10]

The Baroness, the enigmatic persona of German expatriate Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, established Dadaism in a way that her male bourgeois counterparts did not. She enlivened and embodied Dadaism, her body being the 'intersubjective ground of experience'[11]. Rather than experiencing Dadaism from an objective or subjective standpoint, the Baroness *lived* Dadaism: she wore refuse on her body, walked the streets as a constant performance, and lived her life as an abject Dadaist carnival. The Baroness adopted an identity intended to create an *affect* of abjection. She is described as:

---

[9] A. Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge, 2004), 5.

[10] 'Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven working as a model', photograph, 1915, *Interviewmagazine.com*. Available: <http://www.interviewmagazine.com/fashion/obsession-baroness-elsa-von-freytag-loringhoven#_> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

[11] T. Csordas, 'Embodiment and Cultural Phenomenology' in *Perspectives on Embodiment: The Intersections of Nature and Culture* (London & New York, 2003), 143.

> disruptive and terrifying in terms of gender (a proactively heterosexual female…), ethnicity … , as well as class (... overtly performing her abject poverty, notoriously refusing the personal refinements of the mostly bourgeois or upper-class members of the avant-garde).[12]

The process of becoming abject was a Dadaist aim; the Baroness ultimately sought abjection, disrupting borders not only within society, but within the popular avant-garde:

> from the Baroness's point of view, Duchamp and [William Carlos] Williams exemplified the tendency among male avant-gardists to make radical art in their free time, while living more or less bourgeois lives, driven by neurasthenic fears of the modern challenges to their coherence as male subjects.[13]

Using the body as the canvas in every waking moment, the Baroness aimed to reject typical art forms entirely. Jones clarifies that 'the erasure of the subjectivity of the artist—the messy and potentially compromising aspects of her or his sexuality and other biographical vicissitudes — from the artistic encounter … is a fantasy, one that inevitably fails'.[14] The Baroness attempts to erase her subjectivity from her body, which is of course impossible; but she does come frightfully close.

Her body, made into a site of non-meaning, forced society to see it as disruptive and then to question, if perhaps subconsciously, why it was disruptive. Her hyper-sexuality, her abjection, and her use of objects on her body made her objective identity the primary focus at all times. Her subjective identity is only understood through that objective identity, and her subjective identity is constantly buried beneath Dadaist non-meaning. Ultimately, she divorced herself of as much subjectivity as possible. The Dadaist method is to provoke questions, not to answer. By witnessing the non-truth of the Baroness, the audience must decide whether the social constructs challenged by her body are 'true' or not. The Baroness died in 1927, largely due to her

[12] A. Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 23.
[13] Ibid., 8.
[14] Ibid., 21.

poor quality of life. But Dada's influence marched on and would soon find a new means of expression.

Dadaism in its purest incarnation can be said to have died just before the start of World War II, largely due to the fact that Dada could not sustain itself due to the myriad conflicting opinions of many differing artists, each with an opposing view on the definition of 'Dada.' In its place, surrealism rose to great popularity. Dada's influence, however, permeated into surrealist film, freeform jazz, and stand-up comedy. In the 1970's, performance artists like Nam June Paik and Vito Acconci began to emerge, showing a Dada influence. At the same time, a figure came onto the scene who would later be spoken of as either a genius performance artist or the worst stand-up comic of all time: Andy Kaufman.

Launching his career, Kaufman's performance on the first broadcast of *SNL* showcased him playing the theme from 'Mighty Mouse' on a record player; standing completely stationary, looking nervously at the crowd, and suddenly moving his arm in a gallant gesture to the lyric 'here I come to save the day' then returning to his awkward stationary stance. Barthes argues that if all other signs

> are removed from the image, we are still left with a certain informational matter; deprived of all knowledge, I continue to 'read' the image, to 'understand' that it assembles in a common space a number of identifiable (nameable) objects, not merely shapes and colours.[15]

Kaufman illustrates here the power a Dadaist body can have. His performances are devoid of all other meaning, leaving one with nothing but the knowledge that he is a male body, usually in a ridiculous outfit, on a stage, and supposed to be funny. This vacuum of comedy constantly creates a non-meaning. His simple stage performances reject a need for form. There is 'not only a gap between content and effect. It is also between the form of content—signification as a conventional system of distinctive difference—and intensity'[16]. Kaufman's performances truly encapsulate this notion; there is no definable indicator for his humour, and yet people laugh. Kaufman often drew attention to this.

---

[15] R. Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image' in *Image-Music-Text* (Glasgow, 1977), 35.
[16] B. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, 2002), 24-25.

After being heckled at a separate stand-up performance, Kaufman became emotional, saying, 'I am trying my best. … I have never claimed to be a comedian'.[17] He eventually storms off. After a few seconds, Kaufman returns to the mic, yelling at the audience and sobbing. His sobs become rhythmic moans and his angrily waving hand manages to hit conveniently placed conga drums. He starts a steady beat, his sobbing becoming an African chant. Kaufman manufactures, through *affect*, an empathy that ultimately becomes false when he smacks the conga. It seems he cares what his audience thinks but negates it by using his body to create a separation between himself and the audience. In doing so, Kaufman directs the audience to the socially constructed borders of the body. Kaufman recognizes that 'emotions create the effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish' between bodies, and he uses this distinction to his advantage.[18] He demonstrates the fact that '"most of our ideas and our tendencies are not developed by ourselves but come to us from without"'.[19] Kaufman calls attention to how bodies, their flesh borders, and the subjectivities beneath them are devoid of independent meaning; he forces the audience to question the truth of their own emotions and whether or not those emotions are socially constructed.

The essence of Kaufman, the Performer, was that one never really understood his true identity. He began his career as an Elvis Presley impersonator (said to be the King's favourite). But there were two layers to most of Kaufman's performances as Elvis.

Kaufman performs as 'The Foreign Man' (Left) and Elvis (Right).[20]

[17] Joeyland, 'The real Andy Kaufman part 2' (2012) *YouTube.com*. Available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnLJ2MLDJSs>

[18] S. Ahmed, 'Introduction: Feel Your Way' in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh, 2004), 10.

[19] Ibid., 8

[20] W. C. Miller, *The Johnny Cash Christmas Special 1979* broadcasted originally on CBS (DVD, 2008).

He would come out on stage as a shy man with a stuttering foreign accent, muttering flat impressions of Archie Bunker and Jimmy Carter. The crowd would clap perfunctorily and he would bow, 'thank you very much'. He would then turn, open a suitcase, slick back his hair, change his clothes, twitch his leg, and turn back around, transformed magically into the world's most convincing Elvis impersonator, dancing, singing and talking incredibly like Elvis. This demonstrates a Dadaist artistic approach to identity, using the body as the site of a series of identities, each making less sense than the last. This takes a quite literal stance on Freud's theory of the *Ichspaltung*, 'that the subject [is] fragmented, split, and often at odds with itself and its social surroundings'.[21] Kaufman's subjectivity was split, and thus so were his representations of himself. Kaufman's multiple personas included his Elvis impersonation; the Foreign Man; Tony Clifton, a horrid lounge comic and Andy's alter-ego; and ultimately, his greatest character, himself. Kaufman actively created a representation of himself that was false and Dadaist, much like the Baroness, whose subjectivity was obscured behind her objective façade. Backstage at one of his performances, an interviewer was speaking to his road manager: 'Oh, you thought that was the real Andy?' Bob said. 'That's just a character he does: Andy Kaufman—nice, normal, sweet boy, and all that. That's not really Andy'.[22] In 'true' Dadaist fashion, truth is a non-entity, always to be denied. The representation of his subjectivity presented to the world was never assumed to be his true self; Kaufman himself said it best: 'I'm not trying to be funny. I just want to play with their heads'.[23] This says everything about the *affect* Kaufman attempted to produce.

Kaufman's performance art rested on his ability to provoke. In an *affect* economy, 'value lies in producing variations within the standards'.[24] *Affect* values the unknown and the unquantifiable, the space Kaufman inhabited for most of his career. But the main problem with *affect*, and indeed Dadaism, is that it is 'volatile and difficult to control'.[25] Kaufman could never control how his audience would perceive him, because 'a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination,' the 'meaning-makers'

[21] P. Fuery, 'The Edge of the Mirror: The Subject and the Other' in P. Fuery & N. Mansfield (eds.), *Cultural Studies and Critical Theory* (Oxford, 2000), 160.

[22] J. Hecht, *Was This Man a Genius?: Talks with Andy Kaufman* (New York, 2001), 10.

[23] 'Andy Kaufman', *IMDb.com*. Available: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001412/?ref_=nv_sr_1> [Accessed 10.12.2013]

[24] Wissinger, 'Affective production', 238.

[25] Ibid., 238.

of a performance therefore being the audience.[26] But readers tend to believe that 'when the Author has been found, the text is 'explained'.[27] Dadaist texts are more elusive, and therefore, this tendency is more profound when confronting such a text. As with Kaufman's road manager, even Andy being Andy was seen as an act, because his persona was so strongly Dadaist. Ironically (considering his affiliation with Elvis), people still believe Kaufman faked his own death, because they attribute so much authorship to him. Indeed, a dilemma with Dadaism, especially Kaufman's brand, is that its interpretation is uncontrollable; resolving with either, 'this man is a genius' or, far more likely, 'this man is absolutely insane.'

Ultimately, through use of his body as a site of non-meaning, multiple personas, and mastering of abjection through *affect*, Kaufman was able to remain an elusive subject, forever buried beneath the Dadaist identities that he created for himself. He managed to use his body to *force* the audience to laugh at him, to question what made them think he was supposed to be funny in the first place, and to critically examine the social constructs of identity and the body. Kaufman again said it best: 'What's real? What's not? That's what I do in my fact, test how other people deal with reality'.[28]

Although many struggle to call his videos 'art' (perhaps the true mark of a Dadaist), YouTube performer Steve Kardynal is arguably contributing to what might be termed a new form of Dadaism rooted in the exploration of new media technologies. Kardynal's most viral video, with over 131 million views as of February 2015, is 'Miley Cyrus – Wrecking Ball (Chatroulette Version)', in which he wears a snug white tank top and even more snug white underwear, parodying Miley Cyrus' controversial 'Wrecking Ball' music video.

The video, in split screen, captures the popular website Chatroulette, through which random users utilize webcams and are paired together in order to 'chat'. The unsuspecting users instead find Kardynal performing as Miley Cyrus. The wondrous aspect of the video is that it shows the reactions of the audience, the effect of *affective production*. These reactions demonstrate how 'in the realm of affective production, it is often the unexpected or unassimilable that proves productive'.[29] Kardynal's naked

[26] R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image-Music-Text* (Glasgow, 1977), 148.
[27] Ibid., 147.
[28] 'Andy Kaufman', *IMDb.com*.
[29] Wissinger, 'Affective production', 241.

body creates a point of resistance and beckoning for the observer, drawing attention 'toward the place where meaning collapses' and therefore defining the borders of the body.[30] Like his Dada forbearers, Kardynal utilizes the overpowering *affect* of abjection to disrupt the social constructs defined by *affective production*.

Another initial reaction, 'Miley Cyrus – Wrecking Ball (Chatroulette Version)', 2013.[31]

However, Kardynal's videos also bring something new in that they confront the notion of new media themselves being sources of non-meaning. In a separate video in the style of a video log ('vlog'), Kardynal goes to a concert with his friend. He records the experience, during which he is constantly recognized and asked whether he will be 'performing'; a request he repeatedly denies. However, the presence of technology necessarily conjures performativity; one's subjectivity is altered by the presence of recording technology. There is discussion amongst those of the technological generation that new media has driven us further towards non-meaning, echoing Barthes' hypothesis that 'the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially'.[32] The presence of a camera not only distances the subject from the objective world, it also presents a false reality within which the subject operates. Neither the subject nor the world seen through the camera is real, but rather a

[30] Kristeva, 'Approaching abjection', 2.

[31] Kardynal S. Kardynal, 'Miley Cyrus – Wrecking Ball (Chatroulette Version)' (2013) *YouTube.com*. Available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6DmHGYy_xk> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

[32] R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida* in R. Howard (trans.) (London, 1984), 1.

recreation and, therefore, a source of non-meaning. New technologies create yet another social boundary, one between the subject and the reality of itself. As Wissinger describes, 'these technologies are changing; they are losing their orientation toward 'representation and the narrative construction of subject identities' as they move toward 'affecting bodies directly, human and non-human bodies'. [33] New technologies create a tangible barrier between the body and its ontological being. By using these technologies to draw attention to *his* body, Kardynal attempts to use the power of new media to overcome the undeniable social boundaries installed by those technologies.

In another of his videos, Kardynal struts through a shopping mall with headphones on, singing Eminem's 'I'm Not Afraid'.[34] For the first few minutes of the video, the actual track of the song is superimposed, so the viewer only hears what Kardynal hears. Eventually, however, that audio fades away and we hear Kardynal's actual singing: loud and incredibly off-key. Kardynal demonstrates the false reality that new technology can propagate and the absurd non-meaning that occurs when that false reality is mediated through the body. Perhaps this non-meaning is what Kardynal was attempting to capture in this video. Or perhaps he was just trying to mess with people's heads. Or perhaps it is all just Dada.

Dadaism has evolved from a highly polarized, politically motivated artistic movement only rarely exemplified by bodies, into comedic performance art in the 1970s, and finally into performance altered by new technologies that beg new questions in the modern era. Dadaists like Duchamp and the Baroness confronted the social constructs of art and artist, Kaufman confronted those of comedy and comedian, and Kardynal confronts those of new media and new media performer. In order to disturb borders put in place by *affect*, Dada utilizes the *affect* produced through abjection. In attempting to produce non-meaning, Dadaists produce meaning by uncomfortably drawing attention to bodies and the regimented, socially-constructed boundaries between and separating them.

---

[33] Wissinger, 'Affective production', 233.

[34] Kardynal S. Kardynal, 'Steve Kardynal is NOT AFRAID!' (2010) *YouTube.com*. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhaCnoY4Z_g> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Andy Kaufman', *IMDb.com*. Available: <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001412/?ref_=nv_sr_1> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

'Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven working as a model', photograph, (1915) *Interviewmagazine.com*. Available: <http://www.interviewmagazine.com/fashion/obsession-baroness-elsa-von-freytag-loringhoven#> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

S. Ahmed, 'Introduction: Feel Your Way' in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh, 2004).

R. Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image' in *Image-Music-Text* (Glasgow, 1977).

R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image-Music-Text* (Glasgow, 1977).

R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida* translated by R. Howard (London, 1984).

T. Csordas, 'Embodiment and Cultural Phenomenology' in *Perspectives on Embodiment: the Intersections of Nature and Culture* (London & New York, 2003).

M. Duchamp, *Fountain*, found art, 1917, 1964. Available: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/duchamp-fountain-t07573> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1977).

P. Fuery, 'The Edge of the Mirror: The Subject and the Other' in P. Fuery & N. Mansfield (eds.) *Cultural Studies and Critical Theory* (Oxford, 2000).

R. Hausmann, *ABCD*, photomontage, 1923-24. Available: <http://beautyovertime.blogspot.com/2011/05/abcd-by-raoul-hausmann.html> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

R. Hausmann, *Mechanical Head (Spirit of Our Time)*, assemblage, 1920. Avaible: <http://www.clg-daumier-martigues.ac-aix-marseille.fr/spip/spip.php?rubrique52> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

J. Hecht, *Was This Man a Genius?: Talks with Andy Kaufman* (New York, 2001).

Joeyland, 'The real Andy Kaufman part 2' (2012) *YouTube.com*. Available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnLJ2MLDJSs> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

A. Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge, 2004).

S. Kardynal, 'Miley Cyrus – Wrecking Ball (Chatroulette Version)' (2013) *YouTube.com*. Available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6DmHGYy_xk> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

S. Kardynal, 'Steve Kardynal is NOT AFRAID!' (2010) *YouTube.com*. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhaCnoY4Z_g> [Accessed 10.12.2013].

J. Kristeva, 'Approaching Abjection' in (trans.) L. S. Roudiez, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York, 1982).

B. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, 2002).

W. C. Miller, *The Johnny Cash Christmas Special 1979* broadcasted originally on CBS (DVD, 2008).

Saturday Night Live (1975) directed by D. Wilson & A. Brooks, photographs taken from video.

Short R. Short, *Dada & Surrealism* (New York, 1980).

E. Wissinger, 'Always on Display: Affective Production in the Modeling Industry' in P. Clough & J. Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham & London, 2007).

An Imperial Story: Paul Gauguin and the Idealised 'Primitive'

Disa Persson

This article examines the relationship between the French fin-de-siècle painter Paul Gauguin's (1848-1903) anti-modernism and the ideology behind the colonial project. Setting out to refute the Western materialistic 'civilisation', Gauguin embraced the supposed savage, primitive, and pure 'Other'. In paintings such as 'Breton Calvary' (1889) and 'The Specter Watches Her' (1892), Gauguin uses Breton farmers and Tahitian women as formal embodiments of his imagined 'earthly paradise' and the primordial 'savage' character. However, as the postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) argues, there is always a relationship of power within a discourse. Through defining what is 'primitive' and what is 'civilised' from within a Western paradigm, Gauguin is testifying to a Western hegemony. Though Gauguin's idealisation of the 'primitive' essentially sought to criticise the Western colonial discourse, it essentially reinforces its main ideological justification: the hierarchical dichotomy between the 'primitive' and the 'civilised'.

This article will examine how the Symbolist and fin-de-siècle anti-modernism was part of an Imperialist discourse, in particular, the dichotomy between 'civil West' and 'primitive Other.' Focusing on Paul Gauguin's (1848-1903) time in Brittany and Tahiti, this article will examine *how* Gauguin embraced 'the Other' in order to refute Western civilisation and art, and how it, inevitably, reinforced the binary structure he was opposing. The article will also discuss how the Symbolist discourse, in particular the critic Albert Aurier (1865-1892), celebrated Gauguin's ' essentially non-naturalistic primitivism', as its style was able to grasp deeper truths beyond the deceiving appearances of things.

When Gauguin, in 1886, left Paris for the 'artist colony' that had emerged in Pont-Aven, Brittany, it was in search for a pre-industrialised, non-modernised society. He found in Brittany the antidote to what he considered a materialistic, decaying civilisation. In Brittany and the Bretons, Gauguin considered himself to have found 'the savage, the primitive.'[1]

DISA PERSSON is a third year undergraduate student of History of Art and Film & Television Studies. Her main academic interests lies within Postcolonial and Feminist theory. She dreams of becoming a documentary filmmaker.

[1] G. Perry, 'Chapter 1: Primitivism and the 'Modern'' in C. Harrison, F. Frascina & G. Perry (eds.), *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* (London, 1993.), 8.

To leave urban civilisation can be seen as a crucial feature of late nineteenth-century avant-gardism, rooted in the assumption that the artist's role is to re-discover and advocate a more direct and 'primitive' mode of expression.[2] It was an aspiration for a lost authenticity both in art and in civilisation, a longing for a geographical and spiritual 'elsewhere'.[3]

During his years in Brittany, Gauguin fully developed his Synthetist aesthetic, demonstrated in 'Vision After the Sermon', *(figure 1)*. Influenced by Émile Bernard's Cloisonnism and its flat colour fields combined with broad outlines, the Synthetist simplification and exaggeration in line, colour and form, was considered a sufficiently 'primitive' style needed in order to translate his experience of a 'primitive' setting into painting.[4]

For Gauguin and his friends in Pont-Aven, the 'primitive' aesthetics was an antithesis of conventional Western painting, Impressionism and illusionistic Naturalism. Though the diversity of artistic sources, namely, local religious art, Japanese prints, images d'Épinal (popular nineteenth-century prints showing idealised scenes of French life) had little in common apart from *not* being official academic art. Hence, it was considered the 'Other'.[5]

Through the supposedly 'primitive' subject matter of religious peasants, primarily women, and the 'primitivised' technique of Synthetism, Gauguin sought to translate a particular Breton 'essence'. The formal simplification was *itself* a symbol of 'primitive' culture inhabited with 'savages'. In 'Breton Calvary' as well as 'Yellow Christ', *(figures 2 and3)*, 'primitivism' of the rural landscape, religious superstition and female peasants are synthesised through a simplified, exaggerated aesthetic.[6]

However, the image of 'Brittany' that Gauguin portrays is not a documentary one. Rather, it was a popular myth of Brittany as the region in France where old traditions

---

[2] N. Lübbren, *Rural artists' colonies in Europe: 1870-1910* (Manchester, 2001.), 57-58.

[3] J. F. Staszak, 'Primitivism and the other: History of art and cultural geography' (2004) 60:1 *GeoJournal* 354.

[4] V. Jirat-Wasiutynski, *Paul Gauguin in the context of Symbolism* (New York, 1978.), 75.

[5] J. F. Knapp, 'Primitivism and Empire: John Synge and Paul Gauguin' (1989) 41:1 *Comparative Literature* 56.

[6] Perry, 'Chapter 1: Primitivism and the 'Modern'', 19.

were still vital, articulated in literature and painting, *(figure 4)*. This was further dramatised in an exhibition at the, then newly opened, Ethnographic Museum in Paris around 1885. The room dedicated to 'Europe' presented a reconstruction of a Breton house and peasants in traditional clothing. In a letter to Vincent van Gogh after having painted 'The Vision after the Sermon', Gauguin wrote: 'I have achieved a great rustic and superstitious simplicity in my figures'.[7]

In reality, the social/economic reality in Brittany at the time was one of industrialisation and modernisation. The rural idyll and the 'primitive' Breton essence was imagined by Gauguin: a construction to satisfy his 'earthly paradise'.[8]

In his 1891 article 'Symbolism en Painture: Paul Gauguin' (published in Symbolist art journal *Mercure de France*), the Symbolist art critic Albert Aurier hailed Gauguin, and in particular 'The Vision after the Sermon', as evidence of new, Symbolist art. The synthethist technique 'cannot be the direct representation of objects: the end purpose is to express Ideas as it translates them into a special language'. This is where Aurier considered conventional Western art to fail: in the requirement of transforming objects into signifiers of Ideas (in a Platonic sense).[9]

Aurier's emphasis on the essentially non-naturalistic decorative stylisation as expressive core in Symbolist art extended the Symbolist ornamentalism into an interest in the so-called 'primitive' as a signifier of primordial artistic creativity and its expressive state of being.[10] Aurier argued that 'in primitive societies, the first pictorial efforts could only be decorative' and that Symbolist and Ideist art is 'fundamentally identical with primitive art, to art as it was divined by the instinctive geniuses of the first ages of humanity'.[11]

Aurirer's claims therefore testifies and supports a longing to go back to the origin of art and to project this ideal on a certain historical period or a contemporary 'earthly

[7] V. Gille. 'The Last Orientalist: Portrait of the Artist as Mohican' in B. Thomson (ed.), *Gauguin: Maker of the Myth* (London, 2010), 50.

[8] Knapp, 'Primitivism and Empire: John Synge and Paul Gauguin', 56.

[9] H. Dorra, *The Symbolism of Paul Gauguin: erotica, exotica and the great dilemmas of humanity* (Berkeley, 2007), 114.

[10] J. Simpson, 'Symbolist Aesthetics and the Decorative Image/Text' (2000) 25:2 *French Forum* 186-187.

[11] A. G. Aurier, 'Symbolism in Painting' in C. Harrison, P. Wood & J. Gaiger (eds.), *Art in Theory: 1815-1900: an anthology of changing ideas* (Oxford, 2007), 1028.

paradise'. Free of Western pictorial and narrative conventions, the 'primitive' was able to grasp deeper truth beyond the deceiving appearances of Naturalism.[12]

However, 'primitvism' has little to do with direct inspiration from non-Western art. It lies closer to the French Enlightenment philosopher Rousseau's 'good savage' and the Orientalism in pantings by Ingres and Romanticists. It is a Western definition and testifies of a Western hegemony. Hence, it also has a complex relation to colonialism.[13] The colonial project was built on the notion of a division between the 'civilised' West and the 'primitive' Other: a supposed racial hierarchy that *justified* a structural exploitation as a 'civilising assimilation project'.

A key theory was Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) as its linear development gave a new meaning to the term 'primitive'. In a colonial discourse, the 'explored' cultures were evaluated in terms of this development and seen as closer to 'the beginnings of civilisation' and Western civilisation at top of the ladder. Equating cultural developments with Darwin's biological developments, it was uncritically assumed that inhabitants in so-called 'primitive' societies also had less developed, childish minds. A book on the drawing of children from 1904 describes, characteristically of the time, that 'the development of a child mirrors the development of the race […] our children follow the same path taken by our forbearers, and which the primitive people today still tread'.[14]

At the Universal Exposition in Paris, 1889, where Gauguin and his friends held the iconic secessionist Volpini Exhibition, this dichotomy between the 'civil' and the 'primitive' was formally dramatised in the installations of 'primitive cultures'. For Gauguin, these installations represented a new 'elsewhere', a new escape from Western civilisation. However, the displays of colonial artefacts as exotic and less cultivated of the Western art was not a factual image. Rather it was a decoy and a perverse invention to, again, project the colonised countries as 'primitive', aiming to *justify* the colonial project.[15]

With similar motivation to his 'going away' to Brittany in 1886, Gauguin left Paris for

[12] Simpson, 'Symbolist Aesthetics and the Decorative Image/Text', 187.
[13] Staszak, 'Primitivism and the other: History of art and cultural geography', 354-353.
[14] E.H. Gombrich, *The Preference for the Primitive.* (London, 2002), 199-200.
[15] V. Gille, 'The Last Orientalist: Portrait of the Artist as Mohican', 52-53.

the French colony of Tahiti in 1891. Refuting the Modern project of the West, by embracing the 'Other', the 'primitive' and the uncivilised, Gauguin sought his 'earthly paradise'. However, being colonised in 1880, Tahiti was in the process of Westernisation. The Tahiti Gauguin encountered when arriving in the capital, Pape'ete, was far away from the spiritual and mystical tropical paradise of his imagination.[16]

In early paintings from Tahiti, Gauguin can be seen as depicting this 'assimilation process'. In 'Tahitian Women' *(figure 5)*, Gauguin is depicting two natives, one is wearing traditional Tahitian clothing, however, the other is wearing a typical Christian missionary dress. The traditional female clothing was, by the colonists, considered too revealing and was eventually banned, instead, the moral, covering missionary dress was preferred. This can be seen as a critical reflection of what Gauguin considered the damaging civilisation and the invasion of modernity, ruining his imagined tropical paradise.[17]

However, soon Gauguin would completely emerge himself in a more fictional myth of the Tahitian landscape and its inhabitants as 'savage'. This was not only articulated in his paintings, but also in 'Noa Noa', his fictional travel writings, portraying Tahiti as the unspoiled exotic, sensual paradise of his imagination. Similar to the synthetist aesthethics, the deliberately fragmented style was designed to echo the 'primitive' qualities that he attributed to Tahiti and to juxtapose the Western convention of linear, cohesive narrative. The sources for Gauguin's fictional myth were diverse (oral myths, colonial fictions etc.), suggesting the arbitrary notion of 'primitive' as everything but the current Western convention. Further, the collage synthesis of painting, text and Gauguin's constructed self-image as a 'savage', can be seen as an expression of the contemporary ideal of the 'total work of art', *(figure 6)*.[18]

In painting, the synthetist aesthetic, as in Brittany, became a representation of the 'primitive'. The purity of primary colours symbolised the supposedly 'untainted' primitive character, contrary to the pale, smoothness of academic painting. Gauguin's perceived opposition between 'civilised' and 'savage' colour schemes is evident in

[16] P. Dagen, 'Gauguin's Politics' in B. Thomson (ed.), *Gauguin: Maker of the Myth* (London, 2010), 40.
[17] P. ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth-Century European Art*, 2nd Edition (New Jersey, 2006), 479.
[18] L. Goddard, 'Following the Moon: Gauguin's Writing and Myth of the 'Primitive'' in B. Thomson (ed.), *Gauguin: Maker of the Myth* (London, 2010), 32-35.

'Woman with a Flower' *(figure 7)*. The bold, simplified colours and forms echo the 'primitive' character portrayed. The non-naturalistic decorative element is also emphasised through the flowers that unite the surface.[19]

The myth of the 'primitive' Tahitians, especially women, as one with the luscious nature is articulated in 'Near The Sea' *(figure 8)*. The richly coloured, opulent nature embracing the nude women shows equilibrium between nature and the 'primitive'. In a synthetist manner, the manipulation of line, colour and form create an over-all abstract pattern of arabesque forms suggesting the expressive potential of the 'primitive'.[20]

Similar to his practice in Brittany, Gauguin merged his vision of a 'primitive' society with his vision of a 'primitive' technique, developed from various so-called 'primitive' sources. In 'Breton Calvary' and 'Yellow Christ', it is the rural landscape, female peasants and local religious objects that suggest the spirituality Gauguin saw in the primitive. In Tahiti, Gauguin performs a similar junction of imaginatively inserting superstitious objects into settings.[21]

One example is 'The Specter Watches Her' *(figure 9)*, where Gauguin lets a naked, young Tahitian woman, supposedly his lover, embody the childish, pure 'primitive'. In the background we can see a mystic, statue-like spirit. In 'Noa Noa', the origin of this painting is described as the young woman being 'terrified out of her mind' by the 'specter' and the vision of the spirit. This suggests that she is ruled by emotion and mysticism rather than rational thought, a key distinction in the colonial project.[22]

The fact that Gauguin primarily uses women to represent his 'primitive' imagination is evident in both his Tahitian and Brittany paintings. This suggests that the dichotomy is not only 'racial' but also gendered between the civil, rational masculine and the emotional, spiritual female 'Other'. Hence, the colonial ideology also reflects the structural misogyny of the time as the same defining attributes are given to the 'female'

---

[19] Ibid, 37.

[20] P. ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth-Century European Art,* 479.

[21] B. Thomson, 'Landscape and Rural Narrative' in B. Thomson (ed.), *Gauguin: Maker of the Myth* (London, 2010), 113.

[22] L. Nochlin, 'Symbolism and the Dialectics of Retreat' in S. F. Eisenman (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History,* 3rd Edition (London, 2007), 432.

as to the colonised, racial 'Other.'[23]

Though Gauguin in his preference for the 'primitive' essentially sought to criticise the Western, colonial structure, he is inevitably stuck in a Western paradigm. As the post-modern philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) argued, there will always be relationship of power within a discourse. To paint, analyse or reproduce a view of the 'primitive', from a point inside the Western world, is still to be in power of what is to be defines as 'primitive'. It testifies to a Western hegemony. By applying this structuralist perspective, Gauguin's own initial intentions and self-understanding are played down in favour of the broader, political discourse of colonialism.[24]

Gauguin used different geographical areas and their inhabitants, first Brittany and later Tahiti, as the representational projection area for his imagined 'earthly paradise', as the primordial 'primitive' character opposed to the modern 'civil' Westerner. Celebrated by Symbolist critic Aurier for disregarding the Western illusionistic conventions, Gauguin's non-naturalistic, decorative stylisation, in subject matter and in technique, was hailed as a more expressive, 'archaic' state, able to translate non-material Ideas into painting.

However, by using the constructed dichotomy that the colonial project rests upon, Gauguin inevitably reinforced the colonial stereotype of non-Western societies as the 'primitive Other.'[25]

[23] Perry, 24.
[24] Staszak, 'Primitivism and the other: History of art and cultural geography', 358.
[25] Simpson, 'Symbolist Aesthetics and the Decorative Image/Text', 186-187.

APPENDIX

Figure 1: Paul Gauguin. 'Vision after the Sermon'. Oil on canvas. 1888. Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh. Available: <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/g/artist/paul-gauguin/object/vision-of-the-sermon-jacob-wrestling-with-the-angel-ng-1643>

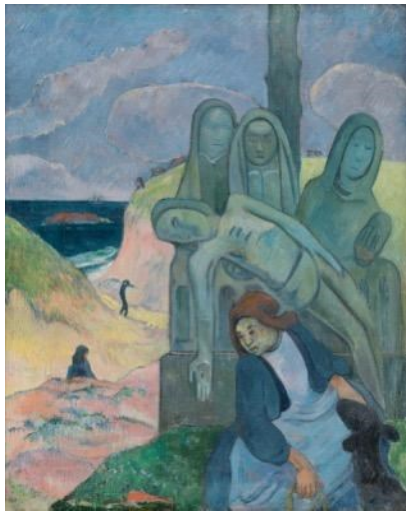


Figure 2: Paul Gauguin. 'Breton Calvary'. Oil on canvas. 1889. Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels. Available: <http://www.fine-arts-museum.be/uploads/museums/images/RVB_72dpi_Gauguin_4416dig_small_large@2x.jpg,

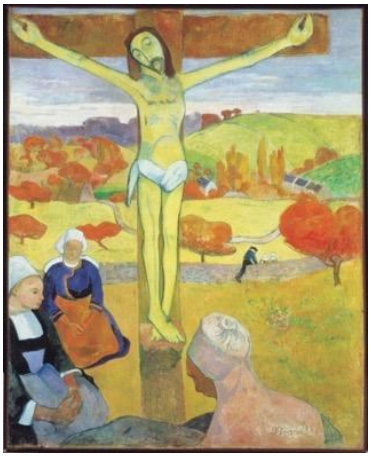


Figure 3: Paul Gauguin. 'Yellow Christ'. Oil on canvas. 1889. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Available: <http://www.albrightknox.org/collection/collection-highlights/piece:gauguin-yellow-christ/>

Figure 4: Pascal Dagnan-Bouvert. 'Les Bretonnes au Pardon'. Oil on canvas. 1887. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Museum, Lisbon. Available: http://museu.gulbenkian.pt/prjdir/gulbenkian/images/mediaRep/museu/colecao/pintura/Inv._206__tratada__copy.294_24_986_955.jpg

Figure 5: Paul Gauguin. 'Tahitian Women'. Oil on canvas. 1891. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Available: <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/painting.html?no_cache=1&zoom=1&tx_damzoom_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=115065>

Figure 6: Paul Gauguin. 'Noa Noa'. Page 119. Musée de Louvre, Paris. Available: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c3Gauguin_Album_Noa_Noa_119.jpg

Figure 7: Paul Gauguin. 'Woman with a Flower'. Oil on canvas. 1891. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. Available: <http://www.glyptoteket.com/explore/the-collections/artwork/paul-gauguin-tahitian-woman-flower>

Figure 8: Paul Gauguin. 'Near The Sea'. Oil on canvas. 1892. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Available: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.46624.html>

Figure 9: Paul Gauguin. 'The Specter Watches Her'. Oil on canvas. 1892. Albright-nox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Available: <http://www.wga.hu/html_m/g/gauguin/04/tahiti12.html>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. G. Aurier, 'Symbolism in Painting' in C. Harrison, P. Wood & J. Gaiger (eds.), Art in Theory: 1815-1900: an anthology of changing ideas (Oxford, 2007).

P. Dagen, 'Gauguin's Politics' in B. Thomson (ed.), Gauguin: Maker of the Myth (London, 2010).

H. Dorra, The Symbolism of Paul Gauguin: erotica, exotica and the great dilemmas of humanity (Berkeley, 2007).

V. Gille, 'The Last Orientalist: Portrait of the Artist as Mohican' in B. Thomson (ed.), Gauguin: Maker of the Myth (London, 2010).

L. Goddard. 'Following the Moon: Gauguin's Writing and Myth of the 'Primitive'' in B. Thomson (ed.), Gauguin: Maker of the Myth (London, 2010).

E. H. Gombrich, The Preference for the Primitive (London, 2002).

V. Jirat-Wasiutynski, Paul Gauguin in the context of Symbolism (New York, 1978).

J. F. Knapp, 'Primitivism and Empire: John Synge and Paul Gauguin' (1989) 41:1 Comparative Literature 53-68.

N. Lübbren, Rural artists' colonies in Europe: 1870-1910 (Manchester, 2001).

L. Nochlin, 'Symbolism and the Dialectics of Retreat' in S. F. Eisenman (ed.), Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History, 3rd Edition (London, 2007).

G. Perry, 'Chapter 1: Primitivism and the 'Modern'' in C. Harrison, F. Frascina & G. Perry (eds.), Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century (London, 1993).

J. Simpson, 'Symbolist Aesthetics and the Decorative Image/Text' (2000) 25:2 French Forum 177-204.

J. F. Staszak, 'Primitivism and the other: History of art and cultural geography' (2004) 60:4 GeoJournal 353-364.

P. ten-Doesschate Chu, Nineteenth-Century European Art, 2nd Edition (New Jersey, 2006).

B. Thomson, 'Landscape and Rural Narrative' in B. Thomson (ed.), Gauguin: Maker of the Myth (London, 2010).

Mythical Measures: The Problem of Objective Inequality Measurement in Economics and the Social Sciences

Max Schröder

The Gini coefficient, one of the most widely used inequality measures in economics, is thought to report income disparity with a reliable degree of objectivity. However, a critical assessment of the Gini's implicit normative assumptions reveals that this objectivity is overstated. Moreover, this critique can be extended to other indices as well, uncovering a more general worry that the perception of distributive justice, which determines the ideal level of inequality underlying such indices, is necessarily subjective. As a result, the prospect of a mutually intelligible and transparent discussion on inequality suffers – both at the scientific and policy level. The implication of this finding is that more work needs to be done in specifying the normative foundations of inequality measures.

The distribution of income has long been a focal point for economics. Divergences in income are seen as the basis of a meritocratic, capitalist society. High incomes are supposed to inspire hard work and reward personal achievement. Those that contribute most to society — it is generally accepted — should also benefit the most. The downside of this incentive structure is quite apparent, and has been at the heart of political and social discussion since the onset of capitalism. Where inequality means wealth for some, it brings poverty for others, and societies divide themselves, most notoriously, along the lines of economic standing.[1]

The following pages will firstly introduce the most widely used measure of inequality, the Gini coefficient, and uncover its hidden moral foundations. This process will expose this particular construct of social aggregation as the imposter that it is and debunk the myth that objectivity is possible when it comes to such a complicated normative issue as the distribution of wealth and income.

MAX SCHRÖDER is a final year student, pursuing a joint degree in Philosophy and Economics. He is interested in issues that lie at the intersection of both fields, such as the methodology of Social Sciences and the use of normative concepts in Economics. Further interests include issues of Inequality and Development. His undergraduate dissertation investigates the properties of alternative measures of inequality. After graduation, Max intends to pursue postgraduate studies in Economics, in order to embark on a research-focussed career.

[1] What sociologists might call 'social class'.

The first section of this article will present a short introduction to the contemporary debate on inequality, and outline why the study and measurement of inequality is of importance today. The second section will introduce the Gini measure of inequality and investigate it with respect to its underlying normative assumptions. The third section will draw on this analysis and highlight its implications for the measurement of inequality. Finally, the article will conclude by outlining potential solutions to the problem at hand.

SECTION 1: ECONOMISTS AND INEQUALITY

In recent years, income disparities between the very poor and the very rich have increased both between and within countries. This has led to political turmoil in the developed world, manifesting itself in the 'Occupy' and '99%' movements, which demand a higher level of redistribution and a more equitable economic system, in particular after the financial crisis of 2007-08.

The economic literature on inequality has two main pillars of investigation n older tradition that investigates the causes of inequality, the factors that influence it, and whether there is a 'natural progression of inequality' that different nations experience while they develop. The more recent strand of analysis deals with the potential effects of inequality on the performance of the economy. It tries to establish mechanisms by which inequality affects other economic variables (for better or worse), and tries to calculate the 'socially optimal' level of inequality.

The results of those works, however, remain controversial. No real consensus has been established on what the 'right' level of inequality is and what the economic causes and consequences of 'too much' or 'too little' inequality might be. What all economists can agree upon, however, is that inequality — if it is to be theorised about — needs to be measured, and this will be the topic of this article.

Economists have devised numerous measures of inequality to use as tools in their empirical and theoretical work on the subject matter. They have constructed mathematical formulas that try to capture the diverse phenomenon of inequality in a single summary statistic. Such measures have gained enormous popularity and are used widely outside the field of economics. Social scientists of all disciplines use inequality measures to illustrate their hypotheses, and politicians and policy-makers refer to them to justify their arguments.

It is, however, a dangerous leap to jump from the notion of mathematical scrutiny to the realm of neutral objectivity, and many users of inequality measurements fall prey to the myth of their scientific nature. The myth that economic measures of inequality are without bias is painfully prevalent in our time. To destroy it, one has to tear down the mathematical flesh from these constructs and look at their bare bones, wherein their normative axioms are hidden.

The theoretical and, even more so, the political and practical work that deals with inequality has a lot to gain from the realisation that inequality measures are not inherently objective, but rather vague, for they make their judgements in accordance with principles and preconceptions of how the ideal distribution should look like.

SECTION 2: THE GINI AND ITS SECRETS

2.1: THE GINI MEASURE OF INEQUALITY

The Gini coefficient is the most widely used measure of income inequality. It can be defined as the relative mean difference between all possible pairs of incomes within a given distribution[2], and it is usually interpreted as the ratio of the area between the Lorenz curve[3] and the line of perfect equality and the total area under the line of perfect equality (Figure 1).[4]

The Gini can take values ranging from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality), and is sometimes expressed in percentage terms. It can be used to characterise distributions of income, wealth, land or just about anything that is quantifiable as well as distributable. For simplicity, this article will be concerned with distributions of income, but analogous results can be drawn for other kinds of distributions.

Those who use the Gini coefficient trust it to give an objective account of the level of inequality that is present in the distribution that is described by it. They believe that by ranking distributions according to their Gini values, one can get a perfectly

[2] Cf. A. Sen, 'On economic inequality' (Oxford, 1973).

[3] The Lorenz curve is the cumulative density function over a population, whose members are ordered according to a certain characteristic (e.g. income) from lowest to highest.

[4] Source: J. A. Charles-Coll, 'Understanding Income Inequality: Concept, Causes and Measurement' (2011) 1:3 *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences* 17–28.

adequate understanding of which distribution is more equal than another. However, things are not that simple, as the following example will show:

2.2 THE PROBLEM OF CROSSING LORENZ CURVES

A criticism that is often levelled at the Gini is the problem of crossing Lorenz curves.[5] The problem refers to the fact that different distributions can yield the same Gini value as long as the ratio of the area above the Lorenz curve to the total area under the line of perfect equality remains the same.[6] This failure of the Gini to pick out a specific distribution can lead to problems when comparing distributions whose Lorenz curves cross. In these cases, simple Gini coefficients can fail to give an unambiguous ranking of the distributions.

Atkinson[7] points to the case of Great Britain and West Germany whose Lorenz curves cross around the 50% population mark. Whilst the Gini ranking favours the British distribution, the German Lorenz curve is closer to the line of perfect equality than the British for the first half of the population (Figure 2). This leads him to doubt whether the Gini is an objective measure of inequality that is independent of any value considerations:

> [T]he degree of inequality cannot, in general, be compared without introducing values about the distribution.[8]

Atkinson's disagreement with the Gini is in no way due to his inability to grasp the 'objective truth' about the distributions of income in Britain and West Germany, but it results from the fact that the Gini favours certain types of equality over others. This bias is, however, well hidden behind the Gini's apparent objectivity — after all, how could a mathematical formula be biased?

---

[5] Cf. A. Cobham & A. Sumner, 'Is It All about the Tails? The Palma Measure of Income Inequality' (2013) *Center for Global Development, Working Paper* 343.

[6] Cf. Charles-Coll, Understanding Income Inequality: Concept, Causes and Measurement, 17–28.

[7] A. B. Atkinson, 'On the Measurement of Inequality' in A. B. Atkinson. (ed.), *Wealth, income and inequality: selected readings* (Harmondsworth, 1973).

[8] Ibid., 66.

2.3 AXIOMATIC APPROACHES TO INEQUALITY MEASUREMENT

To illustrate this point, the following paragraphs will outline two popular technical Axioms of inequality measurement used by those that theorise about such measures. Those axioms are not exhaustive or crucially necessary — many commonly used measures of inequality do not conform to all of them — but are widely believed to be a good yardstick for judging the suitability of a measure. For a detailed discussion, see, for example, Dalton[9], Sen,[10] or Cowell.[11]

Before moving on, some things have to be said about the following analysis. As mentioned before, those axioms are neither exhaustive nor uncontroversial, but their mere existence can provide a good understanding of where the problem with inequality measurements lies: in the complications that arise when one tries to capture normative ideas in mathematical formulas. A mathematical-axiomatic approach might be elegant and rather satisfactorily on a theoretical level, but can nonetheless not guarantee a 'perfect measure'. Axiomatic approaches rely on two caveats for their validity: that their axioms are true and that the deductive system employed is applicable to the subject that is studied. However, neither of those can be said with certainty to apply to the axiomatic measurement of inequality.

2.4 THE PRINCIPLE OF TRANSFERS

The axiom to be considered first is the so-called Pigou-Dalton Transfer Principle.[12] The principle states that a transfer of income from a given individual *A* to a poorer individual *B* should, ceteris paribus, always increase equality[13] and thus decrease any measure of inequality.[14] This principle seems intuitively reasonable and remains fairly undisputed. The Gini conforms to this principle, but this hardly settles the issue.

---

[9] H. Dalton, 'The measurement of the inequality of incomes' (1920) 30:119 *The Economic Journal* 348-361.

[10] Sen, 'On economic inequality'.

[11] F. Cowell, *Inequality: Measurement* (2006).

[12] Cf. Dalton, 'The measurement of the inequality of incomes', 348-361.

[13] Given that the transfer is not large enough to make B richer than A was before the transfer.

[14] The reverse, that transfers from a poorer individual to a richer one should increase inequality, follows.

Some authors[15] criticise the Pigou-Dalton principle on the basis that it does not give any weight to where transfers take place. Atkinson[16] argues that transfers that affect the lower end of the distribution should have a greater effect on equality than those at the top. Sen[17] remarks:

> After all, why should a transfer between two millionaires have the same (or a greater) effect than the same transfer at the lower end of the distribution?[18]

It seems reasonable to amend the principle of transfers with a sensitivity requirement.[19]

It can already be seen that the judgement that any measure of inequality makes about any number of distributions will crucially depend on the weights that it attaches to different parts of the distribution. The 'preferences' of the Gini will be investigated, but before this another issue should be considered:

2.5 THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPORTIONATE CHANGES

The second axiom to consider is the 'Principle of Proportionate Changes in Income'.[20] The principle considers the notion that measures of inequality should be 'scale independent' — that is, not to respond to equal proportionate changes in everyone's income.[21] This seems reasonable at first, but the principle has not been as unanimously accepted as the Transfer Principle. Dalton[22] argues that if the underlying social welfare function [23] exhibits decreasing marginal returns to additional income, then a

[15] E.g. Sen, On economic inequality.

[16] A. B. Atkinson, 'On the measurement of inequality.' (1970) 2:3 *Journal of economic theory* 244-263.

[17] Sen, On economic inequality.

[18] Ibid., 145.

[19] Some authors (Cf. J. Davies & M. Hoy, 'Making inequality comparisons when Lorenz curves intersect' (1995) 85:4 *The American Economic Review* 980-986 have formalised this approach under the name 'ADI' (aversion to downside inequality).

[20] Cf. Dalton, 'The measurement of the inequality of incomes'.

[21] The principle refers to 'real increases in income'– not just a change of the scale of measuring incomes (Cf. Dalton, 'The measurement of the inequality of incomes').

[22] Dalton, 'The measurement of the inequality of incomes'.

[23] A social welfare function describes the distribution of welfare, or utility over the individuals of a population, given a certain distribution of other economic and noneconomic variables.

proportional increase in all incomes will make poorer individuals better off in terms of welfare, relative to richer individuals. A similar discussion is given by Sen[24], when he considers whether inequality should matter more at high levels of income — because richer populations can 'afford' more redistribution, or at low levels of income — because inequality has worse effects in those settings. In this light, there might be two populations (one rich, one poor) with identical Lorenz Curves[25] that differ with regards to their underlying distribution of welfare. Those arguments highlight the problem outlined by Dalton[26], that we are trying to measure intangible welfare by using (measurable) incomes. The problem of the need to specify underlying welfare functions will be touched upon in section 3.1.[27]

A related principle outlined by Dalton[28] refers to equal absolute additions to income instead of proportionate ones. This 'Principle of Absolute Additions to Income' states that inequality should decrease with equal, absolute additions to every individual's income. The reasoning seems sound enough: equal additions to incomes will erode inequality in terms of relative income and thus — given there are no increasing marginal returns to income — welfare would converge for all individuals.

The Gini behaves according to the principles of proportionate and absolute changes in incomes, but it is not free from Sen's critique. By using the Gini, one (often unknowingly) agrees that inequality can be characterised in the same way in different distributions, regardless of how poor or rich the underlying population might be — a tenable, yet not entirely uncontroversial position.

2.6 THE SENSITIVITY OF THE GINI

To return to the discussion about the sensitivity of the Gini to changes within the distribution, many authors are in agreement that inequality measurements should have different sensitivity to changes in different parts of the distribution. Atkinson[29] investigates the Gini accordingly.[30] He finds that the Gini puts more weight on

[24] Sen, 'On economic inequality'.
[25] Which in turn implies equivalent values of scale-independent measures of income inequality.
[26] Dalton, 'The measurement of the inequality of incomes'.
[27] Cf. Atkinson, 'On the measurement of inequality'.
[28] Dalton, 'The measurement of the inequality of incomes'.
[29] Atkinson, 'On the measurement of inequality'.
[30] The mathematical proof is nonessential for the argument.

equality around the centre of the distribution than its tails. In other words, the Gini is less sensitive to the disparities between the poorest and the second poorest individual than it is to the differences in income between two individuals in the middle of the distribution. If the notion of downwards inequality aversion is to have any relevance, his conclusion is rather unfavourable:

> This suggests that for the typical distribution more weight would be attached to transfers at the centre of the distribution than at the tails […]. It is not clear that such a weighting would necessarily accord with social values.[31]

Applied to Atkinson's example, this result implies that the Gini ranking favoured Britain, at least partially, because of its more coherent middle class, while it disregarded West Germany's success in raising the relative incomes of the economically disadvantaged parts of its population. This shows that the Gini's measurement relies on moral preconceptions about the 'right' distribution rather than any purely objective criteria. It is simple to see how this reasoning applies to almost all inequality measures:

> Summary measures such as the Gini coefficient are often presented as purely 'scientific', but in fact they implicitly embody values about a desirable distribution of income. Moreover, when one examines the values implicit in such measures […], there are no grounds for supposing that the values are likely to be widely acceptable.[32]

2.7 THE PROBLEM OF EXTREME VALUES

The Gini's insensitivity to the tails of the distribution is demonstrated by the issue of extreme values: income distributions are aggregated from limited amounts of information[33] and are thus prone to outliers. The sensitivity of an inequality measure to the omission or inclusion of a couple of extreme observations might be a highly relevant property of such a measure. There are generally two types of outliers: those

[31] Atkinson, 'On the measurement of inequality'., 256.

[32] ibid, 42.

[33] These might be caused by accidental oversights, as well as deliberate attempts of individuals to hide the scope of their income.

on the lower and those on the upper end of the distribution. As a general rule, it can be said that the bottom outliers are less disturbing, since their potential value is usually limited by a certain lower bound.[34]

Cowell and Flachaire[35] investigate the effect of outliers on several types of inequality measures, and find that the Gini is less sensitive to the influence of large outliers than other measures.

The importance of this result and its implications might be illustrated by a thought experiment: consider a medieval society in which a few hundred peasants are ruled by a feudal overlord. Concerned about the state of equality in his realm, the lord sends one of his magistrates to measure the level of inequality in the country. The magistrate goes and does his duty, carefully measuring the output of all the small wheat and cattle farms, and finally concludes that all of the lord's subjects have very similar incomes. One could say that inequality is very low in this country. However, upon returning to the castle, he realises that he forgot to account for the income and wealth of his master, who, being the lord of the land, has a wealth many hundred times that of the ordinary inhabitant. If the magistrate was trained in the methods of the social sciences and decided to use the Gini coefficient, then the addition of this unaccounted wealth would increase measured inequality by less, than if he used another measure.

The question to be answered here is whether the disproportionate wealth of the lord should make us think about the country as being 'a little' more unequal, or if the magistrate has to fear for his head for presenting his master with a conclusion that is a better representation of what we think about inequality. In the light of recent revelations at the 2015 Davos Economic Forum[36], this question seems as relevant as ever.

With the rise of extremely high incomes, as the Great Recession continues to undermine the financial situation of the lower strata of society, one might deem it

[34] In terms of incomes, the lower bound tends to be zero.

[35] F. A. Cowell & E. Flachaire, 'Income Distribution and Inequality Measurement: The Problem of Extreme Values' (2007) 141:2 *Journal of Econometrics* 1044–72.

[36] This refers to the announcement that the world's richest 1% own about and over 50% of the world's wealth.

important that a measure of inequality accounts for these 'centrifugal forces'[37] that cause distributions to move to extremes. One might also think that the rapidly increasing levels of inequality in developing economies, such as China and Brazil, should be a cause for concern — even more so than in the developed world. It is not unreasonable to expect a measure of inequality to account for this intuition (or at least be explicit about the absence of this feature).

These considerations aside, it seems likely that the problem of extreme values is going to haunt the inequality discussion, until the super-rich have no more incentives (and avenues) to understate their incomes. Until then, caution is advised – every indicator that relies on empirical data is likely to understate the 'real' level of inequality.

SECTION 3: WHAT THE GINI CAN TEACH US

3.1: BIASED MEASURES

The discussion above leads us to a rather unsurprising conclusion: inequality is a complex social and economic phenomenon and is not easily measured. Inequality measures contain (implicitly or explicitly) moral judgements about the 'right' distribution in a given society. Atkinson and Sen are rather explicit about this failure of inequality indices to provide 'objective' measures of the degree of inequality:

> The conventional approach in nearly all empirical work [to compare distributions] is to adopt some summary statistic of inequality such as… the Gini coefficient – with no very explicit reason being given for preferring one measure rather that another… [W]ithout introducing [judgements about the level of inequality considered 'fair'] it is impossible to measure the degree of inequality. That no such decision has to be made with the conventional measures simply obscures the fact that they embody quite arbitrary values about the distribution of income.[38]

[37] The term is borrowed from Gabriel Palma's work on the homogenous middle (Cf. J.G. Palma, 'Globalizing Inequality: "centrifugal" and "centripetal" forces at Work' (2006) 186 *Revue Tiers Monde*).

[38] Atkinson, 'On the Measurement of Inequality', 46 and 67-68.

This shows that inequality measures are by no means free from bias. Yet many economists use different measures to talk about issues of inequality, just like they use feet or metres to talk about the size of their living rooms — as if they were different ways of measuring the same objective thing. Different measures of inequality are not readily translatable. One cannot take a Gini value and transform it, by some easy formula, into the value that another measure would have obtained, had it been applied to the same population. This failure to take objective measurements makes it even more crucial to develop an understanding of the character of different measures of inequality.

The issue of distributional differences is a highly complex social, political, and philosophical matter that will not be easily resolved. However, economists cannot remove themselves from the debate and declare their measures scientific and objective, because they satisfy some postulated axioms.

3.2: THE GINI REVISITED

The discussion highlights some of the issues that arise with the use of the Gini, mainly its inability to be explicit in its underlying moral framework. The analysis has exposed some of the implicit normative assumptions on which the Gini stands. Anyone using it to measure and make statements about inequality tacitly (and mostly unknowingly) agrees with the moral assumptions embedded in it. To name the three that have been highlighted in the preceding analysis:

i) Changes in inequality should matter most when they occur in the middle of the distribution. Inequality that involves the tails is of lesser importance.
ii) Inequality should be thought of as being independent of the level of wealth of a given society. Rich and poor populations should be judged by the same standards.
iii) Extreme incomes should not matter much. The existence of a few extremely rich individuals should not determine the level of inequality of an entire population.

It can hardly be claimed that these essential traits can be disregarded as mere 'quirks' of the Gini. They influence inequality rankings made by Gini coefficients and thus fundamentally determine the normative judgements made about various types of distributions.

3.3 HIDDEN AND EXPLICIT PREFERENCES

It is now rather obvious that inequality indices have to conform to the conceptions of those that use them, rather than the other way around. If inequality is to be measured, it must be assessed by the normative standards and principles of moral agents, not mathematical formulas. Once this is accepted, practitioners and theorists alike might come to prefer those measures of inequality that are explicit about the value judgments they embody. This would serve to counter the current climate of ignorance: in which most measures hide their normative foundations so well that many believe they are judgement free. It is, however, impractical to construct new measures of inequality by the dozen, to accommodate each and every definition of inequality; and even if it were, it would not serve the desired purpose of encouraging transferability and comparability of results across different authors and disciplines. What might be done, however, is putting a larger emphasis on uncovering these 'hidden' properties. To make implicit value judgements explicit in order to allow users to make better informed choices, rather than just adopting a certain measure for convenience.

The Gini has little to speak for it when it comes to openness about its preferences, and it is this issue that has to be addressed if a meaningful dialogue about inequality is supposed to take place. Such a dialogue is instrumental in aligning the theoretical and empirical work on inequality with political and practical decision-making. Absence of such dialogue can only serve to cause confusion and the misalignment of goals and judgements.

3.4: INTELLIGIBILITY, THE LAYMAN AND PROBLEMS FOR POLITICAL PRACTICE

Judgements motivate actions, and it is hard to talk about inequality in any meaningful way without taking the policy dimension into account. Inequality of incomes is not just a topic of interest for experts and economic researchers; it is a matter of concern for most people in society and thus an important part of political decision-making. This consideration leads to the issue of intelligibility.

There are few non-specialists who could understand many of the measures of inequality or the propositions that are made using them. For example, the statement 'between the years 2000 and 2010, income inequality in the United Kingdom increased from 51.2 to 52.3 Gini points' does not help a lay person to understand the scope of inequality in the UK, nor is the increase of 1.1 Gini points open to any intelligible

interpretation. The Gini only allows vague interpretations and is not open to any intuitive understanding of inequality. This adds to the general problem of unfamiliarity of the general public with the measure. Even if every citizen knew about the Gini and its common value ranges, a certain level of inaccessibility would remain as a result, removing it further from public scrutiny and discourse.

Intelligibility for a large non-technical audience is crucial for any relevant policy variable.[39] Unless the public can understand what is meant by the figures, the democratic legitimacy of the political processes surrounding inequality is severely undermined. The same goes for the monitoring of the efforts made by political, their goals, promises, and achievements — without an intuitive understanding of what measures of inequality represent, accountability is forfeited.

The habit of the Gini to express its judgements in a rather cryptic language might provide the last reason (if any more were needed) to reject it, and along with it, a number of other equally opaque measures. Inequality is, at its heart, a social and political issue, and any variable that is not suited for public dialogue is therefore without much relevance. In this light, preference should be given to those measures that are simple to understand and explicit on their moral foundations.[40]

CONCLUSION

The analysis in this article has shown that the conception that economic measures of inequality are objective and without bias is a myth that is accepted without much reflection, and works to the detriment of the discussion on inequality. What has been shown in detail for the Gini can be expanded to most other indices. It has been highlighted that inequality measures are mathematical constructs that essentially include normative judgements about the distributions they describe. Unless the perception of distributional justice ceases to be a subjective issue this means that there is no ideal measure of inequality.

The fact that inequality rankings might disagree with the principles and ideals of those who use them has been largely ignored. As a result of this ignorance, many actors on

[39] Cf. Cobham & Sumner, 'Is It All about the Tails? The Palma Measure of Income Inequality'.

[40] Such as the Palma measure proposed by A. Cobham and A Sumner, Is It All about the Tails? The Palma Measure of Income Inequality.

the stage of the inequality discussion continue to believe theories and pursue goals that are at odds with their own convictions on the subject matter. To rectify this situation, a new consciousness is needed. Economists will have to stop focusing on devising ever more mathematically elegant measures, and start to uncover the normative foundations of the existing ones. On the other end, political and social scientists and practitioners must cease to accept economic measures without question, and educate themselves about the implicit assumptions that underlie them.

The measurement of an abstract, social, and normative concept is riddled with complications, and one cannot expect to grasp it without using moral principles in turn. Ultimately the choice of these principles should lie with the human observer, not with the tool he uses, and the discussion of the issues of equality and justice should not be limited by the availability of measures, nor influenced by their hidden preferences.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. B. Atkinson, 'On the Measurement of Inequality' in A. B. Atkinson (ed.), *Wealth, income and inequality: selected readings* (Harmondsworth, 1973).

A. B. Atkinson, 'On the measurement of inequality' (1970) 2:3 *Journal of economic theory* 244-263.

J. A. Charles-Coll, 'Understanding Income Inequality: Concept, Causes and Measurement' (2011) 1:3 *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences* 17–28.

A. Cobham & A. Sumner, 'Is It All about the Tails? The Palma Measure of Income Inequality' (2013) Center for Global Development, *Working Paper* 343.

F. A. Cowell & E. Flachaire, 'Income Distribution and Inequality Measurement: The Problem of Extreme Values' (2007) 141:2 *Journal of Econometrics* 1044–72.

F. Cowell, *Inequality: Measurement* 2006.

H. Dalton, 'The measurement of the inequality of incomes' (1920) 30:119 *The Economic Journal* 348-361.

J. Davies & M. Hoy, 'Making inequality comparisons when Lorenz curves intersect' (1995) 85:4 *The American Economic Review* 980-986.

S. Kuznets, 'Quantitative Aspects of the Economic Growth of Nations: VIII. Distribution of Income by Size' (1963) 11:2 *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 1–80.

J. G. Palma, 'Globalizing Inequality: "centrifugal" and "centripetal" forces at Work' (2006) 186 *Revue Tiers Monde*.

A. Sen, 'On economic inequality' (1973) *OUP Catalogue*.

Appendix - Tables and Figures:

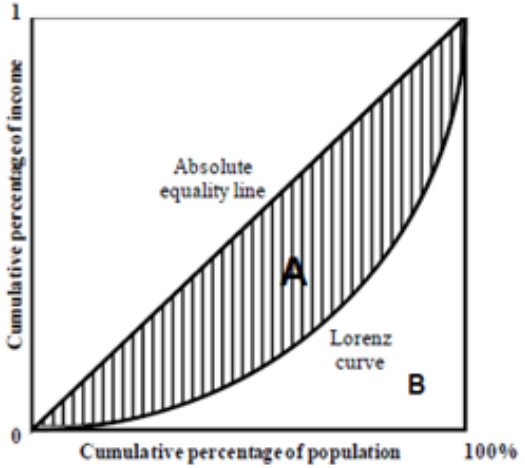


Figure 1 : Graphical representation of the Gini coefficient.

Figure 2: (illustration)

Glasgow University Dialectic Society

Founded c.1451 Reinstituted 1861

Glasgow University Dialectic Society is a student debating organisation at the University of Glasgow. It was formally re-instituted in 1861, although the earliest known records date to 1770, and there are claims that it has existed in some form since 1451. Whilst we are an ancient society, our goal of promoting and fostering debate within the University has remained constant. *Groundings* was founded in 2007, and seeks to further this objective.

The Dialectic also organises a variety of events throughout term-time: these range from formal social events such as the New Members Dinner, to grand showcase debates, such as the Founders of the Union Debate, in addition to lectures and panels such as the Dialectic Question Time event. We also promote involvement in debate through more informal events, such as a weekly speaker training and a plethora of social events. In 2013, the Dialectic Society and seven other student societies spearheaded the first student referendum on Scottish independence, alongside a discussion series.

For more information about the Society, visit www.gudialectic.co.uk