# GROUNDINGS

# CONTENTS

# EDITORIAL

The university lives of undergraduates in the arts, humanities and social sciences have been lived in the context of change and transition. The political backdrop, first in the United States of America, and now too in the United Kingdom, has been one in which adversaries battle to monopolise the discourse of change.

The breadth of the articles included in this journal, however, poses a challenge to such a narrow definition of change. A major theme of these articles has been to track broad historical trends and to draw from them an understanding and analysis of the agents of change to which people from diverse backgrounds have in the past been subjected. Many of these changes have been more profound than those which define our current political discourse. Throughout history, they have provided both challenges and opportunities to the relevant disciplines.

Our common transition is as undergraduates at the University of Glasgow. This period has come to mark a time in which we are subject to strong agents of change: the courses we study, the interests we pursue and the people we meet often provide both a challenge to our existing values and an opportunity to refine them. The aspiration of *Groundings* is to add another agent of change to undergraduate life at the University of Glasgow. Its purpose is to provoke thought in subject areas which might otherwise remain undiscovered by students.

And as we must seize the opportunity of change, so must this journal. This volume of *Groundings* contains a record number of eight articles. The authorship of seven of these is drawn from outwith the membership

of Glasgow University Dialectic Society, from which *Groundings* emerged.

Our campus debating society has, over the centuries, brought together students from all disciplines in shared pursuit of knowledge through discussion. Our aim, today, is to further debate on change and transition, in interdisciplinary perspective, through the critical insights of talented undergraduate students.

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# The Evolution of the Jihad Doctrine: Can Modern Islamic Terrorism Be Justified in Terms of Classical Jihad?

Fraser D. Galloway

The proponents of modern Islamic fundamentalism draw on elements of the Islamic religion as a justification for terrorist acts. An examination of the sources of Islamic law – the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the principal Islamic schools of thought – questions the similarities between modern terrorism and the classical jihad doctrine. A distinction is drawn between the offensive and defensive theories of jihad and these are then applied to the modern context in which Islamic terrorism is perpetrated.

To supporters of the modern phenomenon of Islamic terrorism, the Kalashnikov wielding freedom fighter is the rightful successor to the scimitar brandishing Turk, gloriously vanquishing the infidels and upholding the Qur'an. The voices that link the two clearly intend to give legitimacy to an act which may be seen to both other Muslims and people in general as murder. The aim of this article is to critically examine this purported connection, not through a narrative of the historical development of jihad, but through Qur'anic analysis, with the aid of the *Sunnah* and the principal Islamic schools of thought, these being the sources of Islamic law.

That said, it is important to give an historical background to jihad in order to establish working definitions for the concepts involved. For the purposes of this

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article, the modern use of jihad can be traced to the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood. During the 1948 Palestine War, it sent a unit to fight against what were then referred to as the Zionist settlers, and began calling the struggle for Palestine 'jihad'.[1] Since then, jihad has been increasingly used as an ideological justification for violence against both Muslim and non-Muslim governments who are perceived to be in violation of Islam. It is not easy to define modern Islamic terrorism as practices vary widely but, for the purposes of this article, it can be said to be those acts since 1948 which involve the pre-emptive indiscriminate killing of civilians by non-State actors in the name of Islam.

The reference point for these terrorists is the Qur'an, and sometimes also the *Sunnah*. Jihad is derived from the Arabic word *juhd*, literally meaning to exert, strive and struggle.[2] In a famous *hadith* (tradition) of the Prophet, after returning from the Battle of Badr, he referred to war as the smaller jihad, in contrast to the greater jihad of the self, the internal struggle in oneself for goodness and piety, referred to as jihad *ul-nafs*.[3] Jihad by the sword is the last resort but it is, of course, the sole focus of this article as it is this jihad to which modern Islamic terrorists refer when carrying out terrorist acts.

THE DECLARATION OF JIHAD

According to the Qur'an, it was the Prophet Muhammad and, after his death, a Muslim *Imam* or *Caliph* who had the authority to declare jihad.[4] Although the Sunni and Shia doctrines of jihad are virtually identical, the crucial difference is that, according to classical Shia scholars, jihad can only be waged under the

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[1] Bassiouni, Cherif, *Evolving Approaches to Jihad: From Self-Defence to Revolutionary and Regime-Change Political Violence*, Chicago Journal of International Law, 8 (2007) 119, p. 137.

[2] Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, (1989), Maryland: Amana Corporation.

[3] Bassiouni, *Evolving Approaches to Jihad*, p. 124.

[4] Shah, Niaz A., *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, (2005-2006) 12 Yearbook of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, 181, p. 190.

leadership of the *Imam*.[5] As the last *Imam*, Muhammad al Mahdi, disappeared in 873A.D., Shia Muslims generally avoid the jihad nomenclature. As such, this article will focus solely on the Sunni doctrine of jihad. In Sunni jihad, the declaration of war is a matter of public safety. It is therefore a matter reserved for those "charged with authority".[6] In a nation State, this is clearly the government.

However, if the government is considered un-Islamic, then those who have the support and trust of the public can make decisions of public safety after being put in a position of authority according to Islamic law.[7] Thus, there is no inherent prohibition on non-State actors declaring jihad, provided they have public support; for example, the insurgency led by the Mujihadeen in Afghanistan in response to the communist Soviet invasion could be justified in terms of jihad. As such, a declaration of jihad by a modern Islamic terrorist is not invalid just because he does not compromise a government recognised by the international community.

STIPULATIONS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF JIHAD

Following the declaration of jihad, there are certain explicit stipulations relevant to this article laid down regarding its conduct. First, there are limitations on who can take part in jihad. Minors and the insane are not legally capable (*mukallaf*) of taking part in jihad. A *hadith* regarding Ibn Umar suggests that the age of majority is 15.[8] Women are also denied permission due to their constitution.[9] Finally, those who have not obtained permission from their parents may not take part in jihad.[10] When Muslim territory is under attack, all

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[5] Peters, Rudolph, *Islam and Colonialism*, (1979), The Hague: Mouton Publishers, p. 2.

[6] Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary*, (1946), 4:83.

[7] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 190.

[8] Wensinck, A. J., *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, (1936-69), Leiden: E. J. Brill, Vol. IV, p. 180.

[9] Wensinck, *Concordance*, Vol. I, p. 389.

[10] Wensinck, *Concordance*, Vol. I, p. 388.

people who are able to fight must fight. However, modern day terrorism, as hereby defined, is pre-emptive and so any purported jihad which involves these individuals is explicitly unjustifiable according to classical jihad. The requirement for the permission of a jihadist's parents must render many of the terrorist activities of second-generation Muslims in Western Europe and elsewhere unjustifiable.

Secondly, Muslims are required to summon their enemies before they attack them:

> …*nor would We*
> *Visit with Our Wrath*
> *Until We had sent*
> *An apostle (to give warning).*[11]

A *hadith* tells Muslims that,

> *When you meet your heathen enemies, summon them to three things. Accept whatsoever they agree to and refrain then from fighting them. Summon them to become Muslims. If they agree, accept their conversion. In that case summon them to move from their territory to the Abode of the Emigrants [i.e. Medina]. If they refuse that, let them know that then they are like the Muslim bedouins and that they share only in the booty when they fight with the Muslims. If they refuse conversion, then ask them to pay poll-tax [djizyah]. If they agree, accept their submission. But if they refuse, then ask Allah for assistance and fight them.*[12]

According to Rudolph Peters, the function of the summons is to inform the enemy that the Muslims do not fight them for worldly reasons, like subjecting

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[11] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 17:15.
[12] Wensinck, *Concordance*, Vol. II, p. 131.

them and taking their property, but that their motive is a religious one, the strengthening of Islam.[13] This stipulation *prima facie* rules out pre-emptive indiscriminate attacks characteristic of modern Islamic terrorism. However, Muslim scholars agree that a summons is not required if it is impossible, as when the Muslim force is so weak that it can only attack by surprise. Proponents of terrorism may argue that this is the case. This stipulation alone therefore does not render modern Islamic terrorism unjustifiable.

Thirdly, there are stipulations about who may be killed by Muslims carrying out jihad. All schools agree that minors and women may not be killed, unless they fight against the Muslims.[14] This derives from a *hadith*:

> *Once Mohammed said: 'Do not kill a decrepit old man, nor a small child, nor a woman'.*[15]

However, another *hadith* potentially contradicts this:

> *Once the Prophet was asked about the children of the polytheists. Could they [the polytheists] be attacked at night with the possible result that they [the Muslims] would hit some of their women and children? He then answered: 'They belong to them'.*[16]

This has been interpreted as prohibiting only the intentional killing of women and children, not unintentional killing.[17] Most scholars hold that Muslims may continue the struggle and target the enemy when they shelter behind women and children; for Malikites and Shaf'ites, this is only when there is no other way of conquering the enemy.[18] In terms of modern Islamic terrorism, this

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[13] Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 18.
[14] Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 21.
[15] Wensinck, *Concordance*, Vol. V, p. 285.
[16] Wensinck, *Concordance*, Vol. II, p. 175.
[17] Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 20.
[18] Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 20.

*hadith* suggests that attacks targeted on a public place are not prohibited solely on the basis that women and children may be present.

The Shafi'ites and Ibn Hazm, while agreeing that women and children must generally be spared, do not regard the first *hadith* as authentic. As such, they condone the killing of old men because they regard unbelief as the justification for killing, rather than ability to fight.[19] The justification they use for this is another *hadith*:

> *The Messenger of Allah has said: 'Kill the old men of the polytheists and save the lives of their children'.*[20]

Also, Mohammed gave orders for Durayd ibn al-Simmah, a very old and blind man, to be killed.[21] Thus, at the very least, minors and women may not be intentionally targeted by modern Islamic terrorists and, depending on the Islamic school, old men may also be spared.

There is an element of disagreement as to whether Muslims may expose other Muslims to fatal injury in the pursuit of the enemy. The example given is whether it is permissible to attack a fortress by means of mangonels when there are Muslim captives and Muslim children inside.[22] Al-Awza'i and others rely on the following passage from the Qur'an to argue that such an attack is not permitted:

> *If they [the believers and the disbelievers] had been*
> *Apart, We should*
> *Certainly have punished*

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[19] Ibn Rushd, *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer*, translated by Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee, (1994), Reading: Garnet Publishing Limited, p. 460.

[20] Wensinck, *Concordance*, Vol. III, p. 227.

[21] Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 22.

[22] Ibn Rushd, *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer*, p. 460.

*The Unbelievers among them*
*With a grievous punishment.*[23]

Al-Layth permitted such an attack. His justification relies on *maslahah*, which can be loosely translated as public interest. According to Wael Hallaq, public interest analysis may lead to the conclusion that an attack on Muslims is justifiable if it constitutes the "lesser of two evils"; for example, in circumstances where not launching such an attack would allow the enemy to win.[24]

Taking the *maslahah* approach, it is difficult to apply this stipulation accurately to modern Islamic terrorism. It is certainly possible to argue that an attack on a public place cannot be justified because it might involve the murder of Muslims when the enemy could be killed individually; however, it is not impossible for extremists to argue in response, for example, that in Palestine indiscriminate attacks which may kill Muslims are the only method to prevent the enemy from winning due to the Palestinians' military disadvantage. What is patent is that the modern practice of terrorist groups' declaring a given ruler to have become a *kafir* – meaning that he has strayed away from Islam – and killing him is undoubtedly contrary to Islam; the death penalty in the Shari'ah is limited and it is subject to trial with procedural safeguards.[25]

Examining all three of the above stipulations, it is clear that they place certain limitations on jihad. Several of these limitations explicitly prohibit acts of modern Islamic terrorism which have taken place since 1948. An example of a terrorist who clearly breached explicit Qur'anic provisions on jihad is Hasib Hussein, the youngest of the '7/7' London bombers, whose parents later contacted Scotland Yard worrying that he might have been a victim of the

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[23] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 48:25.
[24] Hallaq, Wael B.,*Shari'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations*, (2009), Cambridge University Press, p. 383.
[25] Bassiouni, C., *Evolving Approaches to Jihad*, p. 139.

atrocity.[26] However, as a general principle, these stipulations alone do not prevent such acts, provided that they are carried out within the provisions. It is therefore necessary to examine the principles and aims of jihad more generally in order to ascertain its purpose and, moreover, whether modern Islamic terrorism can be justified by that purpose.

ALTERNATIVE THEORIES OF THE JUSTIFICATION FOR JIHAD

Assuming that the above stipulations are met, it is necessary to examine whether, in principle, the pre-emptive indiscriminate killing of civilians in the name of Islam can be justified in terms of classical jihad. The theory of jihad rests on the concept of the division of the surface of the world into two parts: the Abode of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) and the Abode of War (*Dar al-harb*).[27] The Abode of Islam is the part of the World where Muslims rule in accordance with the *Shari'a*; the rest of the world is the Abode of War. Jihad takes part in the Abode of War. Abu Hanifah (d.150/767) laid down three conditions for the Abode of Islam becoming the Abode of War: (1) application of the laws of the unbelievers; (2) adjacency to the Abode of War; and (3) absence of the security of life and property of Muslims.[28]

According to those who see Islam as inherently threatening,

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[26] The Independent Newspaper, *Hasib Hussein: The boy who grew up to bomb the No 30 bus*, (14th July 2005), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/hasib-hussain-the-boy-who-grew-up-to-bomb-the-no-30-bus-498746.html>, accessed 10 October, 2008.
[27] Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 11.
[28] Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 12.

> *Islam expresses…division between friend and foe … by dividing the world into the Dar al-harb – the domain of war – and the Dar al-Islam – the domain of Islam, where war is forbidden.*[29]

However, Niaz Shah argues that the Qur'an does not actively encourage the division of the world into two hostile camps; rather these states are referred to in order to describe the *status quo*, not necessarily to perpetuate it. Indeed, Shah argues further that,

> *The Qur'an is absolutely consistent and spells out consistent rules for three different situations: (a) the state of neutrality, (b) the state of peace and (c) the state of war.*[30]

These conflicting interpretations of the references to Abodes in the Qur'an have raised the question of whether the purpose of the doctrine of jihad is a means for the Abode of Islam to subjugate the Abode of War; or whether the doctrine of jihad is merely a means of securing the Abode of Islam. These alternative theories are referred to respectively as the offensive and the defensive theories of jihad. It is vital to draw a distinction between defensive jihad, which condones violence only to protect Islam, and offensive jihad, which calls for pre-emptive jihad against unbelievers. If modern Islamic terrorism is to be justified, with the pre-emptive character by which it has been defined, then it can only be justified in terms of offensive jihad.

THE THEORY OF OFFENSIVE JIHAD

According to Shah, the offensive theory of jihad is founded on two premises: (1) the universality of Islamic faith and (2) the obligations incumbent upon its

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[29] Westbrook, D., *Islamic International Law and Public International Law: Separate Expression of World Order*, (1992-1993) 33 Virginia Journal of International Law, 819-897, p. 819.

[30] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 208.

followers to spread it to the rest of the world.[31] Two verses, commonly known as the Sword Verses[32], are often quoted to support the theory:

> But when the forbidden months
> Are past, then fight and slay
> The Pagans wherever ye find them,
> And seize them, beleaguer them,
> And lie in wait for them
> In every stratagem (of war);
> But if they repent,
> And establish regular prayers
> And practice regular charity,
> Then open the way for them:
> For God is Oft-forgiving,
> Most Merciful.[33]

And

> Fight those who believe not
> In God nor the Last Day,
> Nor hold that forbidden
> By God and His Apostle,
> Nor acknowledge the Religion
> Of Truth, (even if they are)
> Of the People of the Book,
> Until they pay the Jizya
> With willing submission,
> And feel themselves subdued.[34]

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[31] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 191.

[32] Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, p. 14.

[33] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 9:5.

[34] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 9:29.

Maududi and Qutb, the two major proponents of the offensive theory of jihad, who have immensely influenced the debate on jihad in the twentieth century, use the Sword Verses to justify their stance.[35] Two further verses suggest that Islam inherently seeks violence as a means of subjugating other religions:

> *And fight them on*
> *Until there is no more*
> *Tumult or oppression,*
> *And there prevail*
> *Justice and faith in God*
> *Altogether and everywhere;*[36]

and,

> *It is He Who hath sent*
> *His Apostle with Guidance*
> *And the Religion of Truth,*
> *To proclaim it*
> *Over all religion,*
> *Even though the Pagans*
> *May detest (it).*[37]

Certainly, the concept of universality of religion which these verses *prima facie* advocate potentially causes problems for those who believe that world religions are not incompatible. However, Cherif Bassiouni argues that the verses refer to the Muslims' right to freedom of religion, including the right to propagate it, which was a novel concept in the seventh century C.E.; only when that

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[35] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 191.

[36] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 8:39.

[37] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 9:33.

freedom to practice and propagate religion is prohibited may Muslims call for jihad.[38]

As stated previously, Niaz Shah argues that the offensive theory of jihad is founded firstly in a belief in the universality of Islamic faith. However, the Qur'an makes it clear that,

> *If God had so willed,*
> *He could have made them [humanity]*
> *A single people…*[39]

More explicitly, the Qur'an states that,

> *Those who believe (in the Qur'an),*
> *And those who follow the Jewish (scriptures),*
> *And the Christians and the Sabians, –*
> *And who believe in God*
> *And the Last Day,*
> *And work righteousness,*
> *Shall have their reward*
> *With their Lord: on them*
> *Shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.*[40]

These verses clearly establish that Islam does not call for a universal religion. Therefore, there is no inherent incompatibility, between Islam and other religions, which calls for a permanent jihad. Furthermore, the second premise upon which Shah argues that the aggressive theory of jihad is based is that Muslims have an obligation to spread their religion. However, the Qur'an explicitly states,

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[38] Bassiouni, *Evolving Approaches to Jihad*, p. 133.
[39] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 42:8.
[40] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 2:62.

> *Let there be no compulsion*
> *In religion…*[41]

Without compulsion in religion, it cannot be argued that there is a requirement for Muslims to be permanently at war with other religions. Rather, this idea has been propagated by those who, for political reasons, seek a permanent conflict between religions.

It is worth noting that violent sentiments are not unique to Islam. It is surely hypocritical that those Christian fundamentalists who incite hatred of Islam overlook verses in the Bible which have the potential to encourage Christian extremism. For example, the following Old Testament verse justifies offensive violence towards civilians:

> *Everyone that is found shall be*
> *thrust through; and every one that*
> *is joined unto them shall fall by the*
> *sword.*
> *Their children also shall be*
> *dashed to pieces before their eyes;*
> *their houses shall be spoiled, and*
> *their wives ravished.*
> *Behold, I will stir up the Medes*
> *against them, which shall not regard*
> *silver; and as for golf, they shall not*
> *delight in it.*
> *Their bows also shall dash the*
> *young men to pieces; and they shall*
> *have no pity on the fruit of the womb;*
> *their eye shall not spare children.*[42]

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[41] Ibid., 2:256.

The references to women and children describe acts seemingly permitted in Christianity, in certain circumstances, which are explicitly prohibited under the doctrine of jihad. Violence in the Bible is also apparent in the New Testament:

> *[Jesus said] Think not that I am come to*
> *send peace on earth: I came not to*
> *send peace, but a sword.*[43]

The point is not to condemn Christianity as an inherently violent religion. Rather, the point is that any religion may be deemed to be violent if it is examined only through a narrow lens. In order to ascertain whether offensive jihad is truly compatible with Islam, the texts must be read holistically and within their interpretive contexts.

To understand jihad, it is vital to recognise that Islam was not born into a vacuum of history; it is a product of the context in which it was revealed. According to Professor Fred Donner, the entire Qur'anic interpretation underlying the verses relating to jihad reflects the political reality of the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century C.E.:

> *In this society, war (harb, used in the senses of both an activity and a condition) was in one sense a normal way of life; that is, a 'state of war' was assumed to exist between one's tribe and all others, unless a particular treaty or agreement had been reached with another tribe establishing amicable relations.*[44]

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[42] *The Holy Bible, King James Version*, Isaiah 13:15-18.

[43] Ibid., Matthew 10:34.

[44] Donner, F., 'The Sources of Islamic Conceptions of War', in Kelsay and Johnson (Eds.), *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions*, (1991), New York: Greenwood Press, 31-70, p. 34.

As a result of this state of war, individuals relied upon the protection of their tribes[45]. There are verses in the Qur'an which make it abundantly clear that Muhammad's followers feared that supporting him would mean losing the support of their tribes , which would therefore make them vulnerable to attack from all local tribes:

> They say, 'If we were
> To follow the guidance with thee,
> We should be snatched away
> From our land.'[46]

And:

> Men said to them:
> 'A great army is gathering
> Against you':
> And frightened them.[47]

Thus, the verses which were revealed were not done so *ab initio*, but rather they were revealed into a culture in which violence was the norm. Indeed, the word *jihad* pre-dates Islam as a religion by centuries and was used commonly to describe *inter alia* war-making endeavours.[48]

This article does not seek to use historical precedent to justify the subsequent practice of jihad; rather history is being referred to here to submit that, if Islam were to survive on the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, it could only have been revealed by Muhammad with the doctrine of jihad included, as that

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[45] Rahim, A., *Mahammadan Jurisprudence*, (1911), Lahore: PLD Publishers.
[46] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 28:57.
[47] Ibid., 3:173.
[48] Bassiouni, *Evolving Approaches to Jihad*, p. 123.

was the culture of the age. To ignore this cultural reality would have rendered Islam untenable and irrelevant to the lives of Arabs. According to Shah, the Qur'anic verses relating to jihad can be categorized as: (1) justification of jihad; (2) exhorting Muslims to jihad; (3) conduct of jihad; and (4) reward for participating and punishment for not participating in jihad.[49] The Sword Verses do not seek to justify jihad. Rather, they act to codify the conduct of war. That is why Verse 9:5 begins by describing when jihad can take place – "when the forbidden months are passed" – and finishes by ordering mercy if the Pagans repent. Islam had to survive in circumstances where "fighting, sometimes pre-emptively, sometimes defensively, was understood to be the only way to do so".[50]

THE THEORY OF DEFENSIVE JIHAD

Having established that in no way do the Sword Verses justify the genocide of non-Muslims, it is necessary to examine when jihad should be regarded as legitimate. As the Qur'an, like other religious texts, is open to multiple interpretations, in order to find the true purpose of jihad it is necessary to refer to the general principles of Islam from which the doctrine must have been derived. Shah describes the major themes of the Qur'an as: "(a) peace, (b) freedom of religion and (c) justice for all God's creatures".[51] The obvious way of reconciling the Sword Verses with these fundamental principles of Islam is to conclude that jihad is fundamentally a doctrine of self-defence.

There are numerous Qur'anic verses to support the theory that jihad should be interpreted as a defensive doctrine. It is clear that jihad is justifiable in two circumstances: (a) when a Muslim land is attacked or when such an attack is imminent or (b) when Muslims are persecuted for believing in Islam and are

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[49] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 200.

[50] Jackson, S., *Jihad in the Modern World*, Journal of Islamic Law and Culture, Spring/Summer (2002), pp. 1-26.

[51] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 198.

unable to defend themselves.[52] Regarding the former circumstance, the Qur'an states,

> *To those against whom*
> *War is made, permission*
> *Is given (to fight), because*
> *They are wronged...*[53]

This verse clearly describes violence only in response to those who are directly victimised by the violence of others. It does not in any way legitimise offensive jihad. Indeed, this was the first Qur'anic verse which gave Muslims permission to fight in self-defence, and it was revealed only after Muslims had been persecuted in Mecca for thirteen years.[54]

The scope of self-defence does, however, extend to the second of the aforementioned circumstances, namely collective self-defence:

> *And why should ye not*
> *Fight in the cause of God*
> *And of those who, being weak,*
> *Are ill-treated (and oppressed)? –*
> *Men, women, and children,*
> *Whose cry is: 'Our Lord!*
> *Rescue us from this town,*
> *Whose people are oppressors;*
> *And raise for us from Thee*
> *One who will protect;*
> *And raise for us from Thee*

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[52] Ibid., p. 183.
[53] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 22.39.
[54] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 184.

*One who will help!'*[55]

The language of this verse makes it clear that the Qur'an's primary concern is for the vulnerable, not for conquering the infidel. Indeed, in asking the opening rhetorical question, the Qur'an implies that Muslims were at first questioning and sceptical as to whether any such violence is compatible with Islam.

The Qur'an even prescribes limitations on the use of self-defence:

> *And fight them on*
> *Until there is no more*
> *Tumult or oppression…*[56]

Although admittedly this is a widely drafted limitation, inherent in this verse are the twin limitations of necessity and proportionality.[57] These are further substantiated in the Qur'an: "fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits…"[58] From these verses, it is apparent that in the Qur'an jihad is deemed as a necessary doctrine, but not one which should be used aggressively.

These limitations are reiterated in the second Sword Verse, referred to previously:

> *Fight those who believe not*
> *In God nor the Last Day,*
> *Nor hold that forbidden*
> *By God and His Apostle,*
> *Nor acknowledge the Religion*

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[55] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 4:75.
[56] Ibid., 2:193.
[57] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 185.
[58] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 2:190.

*Of Truth, (even if they are)*
*Of the People of the Book,*
*Until they pay the Jizya*
*With willing submission,*
*And feel themselves subdued.*[59]

For some scholars, such as Maududi[60], this verse, despite the fact that it reiterates the limitations of defensive jihad, is seen as legitimising the subjugation of non-Muslims. Here, the Qur'an does not condone the killing of non-Muslims, but it does require them to pay the *Jizya*, which *prima facie* appears to be discriminatory subjugation. However, the root meaning of *Jizya* is compensation.[61] It was a paltry sum, payable partly symbolically as recognition of sovereignty and partly as commutation for military services, in which non-Muslims were not obliged to partake; *Jizya* was not a specific Muslim invention but was the norm of the time.[62] Further, as there can be no compulsion in religion, non-Muslims were exempted from paying *zakat*, the poor tax.[63] Thus, non-Muslims were not the victims of Muslim subjugation when living in Muslim territory.

Any demand that non-Muslims respect Muslim sovereignty, as stated above, derived from the culture of the Arabian Peninsula whereby Muslims had to fight for control of areas in which they themselves were free to practice Islam. As freedom of religion required sovereignty, it is not unnatural that the Qur'an should demand respect for Muslim sovereignty after it had been won by means which, at the time, were universally regarded as legitimate. This interpretation of jihad as a doctrine of self-defence corresponds with what Shah describes as

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[59] Ibid., 9:29.
[60] Maududi, S.A., *Al-Jihad Fil-Islam* (Urdu), (1996), Lahore, p. 202.
[61] Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, p. 445.
[62] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 188.
[63] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 188.

the underlying themes of the Qur'an. The theme of peace is substantiated in numerous verses, including the following:

> …*If the enemy*
> *Incline towards peace,*
> *Do thoust (also) incline*
> *Towards peace…*[64]

And,

> …*God loveth not transgressors.*[65]

Jihad, therefore, was a means to an end for Muslims to freely practice religion; it was not intended as a permanent state of conflict.

The theory that the Qur'an does not prescribe jihad as a permanent conflict corresponds to the locations in which the Qur'anic verses relating to jihad were revealed. The majority of such verses were revealed at Madina. Here, Muhammad was attempting to consolidate a nascent community. According to Bassiouni, the early Madina-revealed verses balance self-sacrifice and fighting in self-defence; they are generally conciliatory.[66] Subsequent verses regarding jihad revealed at Mecca are generally more assertive.[67] The reason for this rise in aggression was that Banu Bakr breached the *Treaty of Hudaybiyah*, which he had agreed with Muhammad, leading to a period of military and political turmoil in the Arabian Peninsula.[68] An-Na'im has argued that the Meccan verses abrogate the Madinan verses, stating specifically that Chapter 9 of the

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[64] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 8:61.

[65] Ibid., 2:190.

[66] Bassiouni, C., *Evolving Approaches to Jihad*, p. 127.

[67] Ibid., p. 129.

[68] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 204.

Qur'an repealed "all previously revealed inconsistent verses of the Qur'an".[69] However, Shah argues, "Abrogation is the right of God and the only human agent through whom God revealed the Qur'an was the Prophet Muhammad".[70] Further, the Qur'an explicitly states that,

> *This day have I*
> *Perfected your religion*
> *For you, completed*
> *My favour upon you,*
> *And have chosen for you*
> *Islam as your religion.*[71]

Thus, the theory of abrogation is flawed: all Qur'anic verses regarding jihad are valid and should be interpreted as a whole. The Meccan verses are more aggressive because of the context in which they were revealed; they were not revealed as the sole verses relating to jihad. Indeed, according to Bassiouni, as the threat to Islam abated,

> *The propagation of Islam by peaceful means, as the Prophet's Sunnah evidenced during his lifetime, became the rule and not the exception.*[72]

THE DOCTRINE OF ANTICIPATORY SELF-DEFENCE

For the sake of clarity, it should be acknowledged that the Qur'an does not prohibit anticipatory self-defence. This provision primarily envisages situations in which a non-Muslim party to a treaty with Muslims is likely to breach that treaty:

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[69] An-Na'im, A., *Islamic Law, International Relations, and Human Rights Challenge: Challenge and Response*, (1998) 20 *Cornell International Law Journal*, 317-339, p. 327.
[70] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 205.
[71] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 5:4.
[72] Bassiouni, *Evolving Approaches to Jihad*, p. 132.

> *They are those with whom*
> *Thou didst make a covenant,*
> *But they break their covenant*
> *Every time, and they have not*
> *The fear (of God).*[73]

It is made clear that the purpose of this provision is not to give Muslims an unethical advantage but to counter the historical reality that many Arab tribes failed to honour the terms of peace treaties:

> *If thou fearest treachery*
> *From any group, throw back*
> *(Their Covenant) to them, (so as*
> *To be) on equal terms…*[74]

Anticipatory self-defence does not undermine the principle that the Qur'an prohibits offensive jihad; it is rather a nuance of defensive jihad.[75] Regardless, as modern Islamic terrorists do not generally have pre-existing treaties with non-Muslims, it is not strictly relevant to the question, other than to submit that it is not contrary to the argument that jihad is an inherently defensive doctrine.

INTERPRETATIONS OF JIHAD IN MODERNITY

Thus far, this article has sought to critically analyse the circumstances in which classical jihad was justifiable in antiquity. It is therefore now appropriate to examine how this classical doctrine may be applied in modernity. In modernity, there has been a debate concerning the interpretation of the doctrine of jihad between Islamists and modernists. Islamists, such as Maududi and Qutb,

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[73] Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 8:56.

[74] Ibid., 8:58.

[75] Shah, *Self-Defence in Islamic Law*, p. 189.

advocate a very literal, and often selective, interpretation of the Qur'an. This leads them to the conclusion that it is the offensive theory of the jihad which is righteous. Indeed, Qutb claims that,

> Islam is not a party of preachers and missionaries but rather of divine enforcers. Its mission is to blot out, by force if necessary, oppression, moral anarchy, social disorder, and exploitation…and replace evil with good.[76]

Evidently, Qutb has abrogated all those Qur'anic verses which denounce aggression.

Alternatively, modernists seek to reconcile jihad with modernity. This process can be traced to British India, where some Muslims saw British colonialism as beneficial. A product of this school of thought was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), who advocated the defensive theory of jihad. In Egypt, Muhammad Sa'id al-'Ashmawi, a former Chief Justice of the Criminal Court of Egypt, has articulated a similar modernist view. He argues that there is a crucial distinction between religion as a pure idea and religious thought, including law, as an elaboration of that idea.[77] As such, although God's religion is constant, Muslims and Islamic law should adapt to modernity. This is not entirely different to An-Na'im, who when expressing his support for abrogation, conceded that,

> It should be possible for modern Muslim jurists to reverse this process of abrogation in order to reinstate the principle of peaceful co-existence with non-Muslims.[78]

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[76] Qutb, S., *In the Shade of the Quran*, Vols. 8 and 9, Salahi, (translated 2003), Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, p. 34.

[77] Hallaq, *Shari'a*, p. 392.

[78] An-Na'im, *Islamic Law*, p. 329.

The crucial difference between An-Na'im and al-'Ashmawi is, of course, that it is not necessary for the Qur'an to be subject to abrogation in order for it to be interpreted such that modern Islamic terrorism is unjustifiable.

Al-'Ashmawi's modernist argument corresponds with those who have studied jihad in the embryonic stages of Islam when it was a necessary means of defending religion. Indeed, Sherman Jackson contends that,

> *A prevailing 'state of war', rather than difference of religion, was the raison d'être of jihad.*[79]

That jihad existed before Islam – as stated previously – is further evidence that a distinction can be made between the religious and secular elements of jihad. Clearly, defensive jihad was a religious duty; had Islam been a purely pacifist religion, it would have been unlikely to survive for long on the Arabian Peninsular in the seventh century C.E.. However, offensive jihad was not a religious duty and, indeed, such an interpretation would be a contradiction of the Qur'an's major theme of peace.

This article has already submitted that the classical defensive theory of jihad is the one which most closely complies with the Qur'ans holistic meaning. The modernist theory is a clear extension of the classical defensive theory of jihad. Jihad can only be justified if the Abode of Islam is threatened by the Abode of War. However, as Jackson argues,

> *This 'state of war' has given way in modern times to a global 'state of peace'.*[80]

Since at least the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the concept of sovereignty of nation States has in principle described a relative balance of

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[79] Jackson, *Jihad and the Modern World*, p. 25.
[80] Ibid.

peace internationally; conflicts are the exception to this respect for sovereignty. As such, permanent jihad is no longer required to secure the Abode of Islam and, in turn, freedom of religion. Where there is persecution, there are prescribed mechanisms for countering it. The principal mechanism for countering a breach of the Abode and *inter alia* its freedom of religion is Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which recognises,

> *The inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations.*

Patently, this is merely a codification of the classical doctrine of defensive jihad. Moreover, it includes collective self-defence as well as individual defence, which is crucial to the doctrine of jihad.

There is a potential problem with this theory: Qutb argues that as institutions such as the United Nations were not created by Muslims, they should be ignored by Muslims. However, Muhammad often endorsed realities that were not the products of Muslim efforts, including the system of tribal alliances, the 'Forbidden Months' and honouring pagan marriages contracted before Islam.[81] Moreover, as stated previously, Article 51 is not imposing a new doctrine of war and peace on Islam; rather it is codifying the inherent right to self-defence, which is as much an Islamic concept as it is western. In modernity, jihad can therefore be justified only in the same way that Article 51 can be justified – as a response to aggression. As such, modern Islamic terrorism is entirely incompatible with Islam, in both its classical and modernist guises.

CONCLUSION

There are certain stipulations regarding the conduct of jihad which explicitly render some of the modern Islamic terrorism the world has seen since 1948 contrary to Islam. I have already given the example of the London bomber who

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[81] Ibid.

carried out jihad without his parents' permission; another example would be the reported going trend in female suicide bombers.[82] However, this article is more concerned with the general principles of jihad, particularly whether jihad is an offensive or defensive doctrine. The entire discourse of the Qur'anic verses relating to jihad is of a religion which is struggling to counter persecution. This ultimately leads to the conclusion that jihad can only ever be a doctrine of self-defence.

Jihad is a response to an international backdrop of perpetual conflict and persecution. In modernity, the number of possible justifications for invoking self-defence is vastly reduced. The purpose of jihad is to secure freedom of religion; provided there is freedom of religion, there can be no justification for modern Islamic terrorism. Where a state of war does arise, then of course jihad may be justified, but this is an accepted principle of international law, as codified in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. In purely Qur'anic terms, it is clear that where a state of war is avoided, jihad is unjustifiable. As such, it follows that the fewer perceived threats to the freedom of Islam, the less likely there is to be modern Islamic terrorism. There comes a point in analysing a concept such as jihad where it is necessary to defer to the general principles of Islam. While, in my opinion, there is far greater evidence that modern Islamic terrorism is contrary to those general principles – and I have sought to demonstrate that link – it remains merely a corroborated opinion. This article can only ever be an artificial academic exercise; those who seek to wage war against civilians will always find their own justifications for doing so.

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[82]The Jamestown Foundation (2008),
<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369824>, accessed 16 October, 2008.

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# How has NATO enlargement impacted on NATO-Russia relations?

Tom Disney

Relations between NATO and the Russian Federation have been turbulent, particularly since the end of the Cold War and the 'second wave' of NATO expansion. Despite some initial evidence of cooperation between the two, this has not been present in the majority of cases, and Russian concerns have often been sidelined. Vital in understanding this relationship is the attitudes of both to the Baltic States, and the strain that their status brought to early Russo-NATO engagement. Indeed, perhaps the greatest tension has been caused by NATO expansion into those states, illustrating a central concern in contemporary international society.

The eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (hereafter NATO) since the collapse of the Soviet Union has had a notable impact on each of the post-Soviet States. Here it will be argued that this expansion has resulted in aggravated relations between NATO and the Russian Federation. This will be explored by focussing specifically on the second wave of NATO enlargement since the collapse of the USSR and using the specific example of the Baltic States as they were seen as the most contentious area during this phase of NATO's eastern expansion. While the prospect of NATO membership for the other ex-Soviet republics has arguably been even more controversial, I have decided to discuss to the Baltic States as they have actually been successful in gaining admission to NATO, and there is, so far, no definite plan for the other ex-Soviet republics to become NATO members. NATO expansion will be discussed in three different periods in post-socialist Europe, the first being the

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immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the second being from the 'Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and Russia' (hereafter the Founding Act) and the Madrid Summit till the year 2000, finally the third being the 2004 enlargement and beyond. In each period the article will look at the perspectives of the West/NATO, the Baltic States and Russia. Obviously this subject area is incredibly complex and therefore these three areas are not completely separate, and they frequently overlap, but the issues are divided thus for the sake of clarity.

THE END OF THE COLD WAR

The end of the Cold War brought the West to a difficult crossroads; what was the security threat now? Was NATO still relevant? The general consensus among the Western countries was that NATO was still relevant because 'while conventional dangers were declining, there was a corresponding increase in the probability of a different, multifaceted, and a hard to contain type of risk.'[1] There was fear of a security vacuum allowing conflicts which had been suppressed for more than half a century to erupt. NATO quickly set about diversifying its role within Europe and produced a series of initiatives such as 'the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (now renamed the Euro-Atlantic Co-operation Council), the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the establishment of a security council between NATO and Russia, the offer of NATO forces for utilization by the UN and OSCE in peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions'[2]. NATO expansion in some regards began with the Partnership for Peace (hereafter PfP) programme, whose purpose 'is to increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build strengthened security relationships between individual Partner countries and NATO, as well as among Partner countries.'[3] It

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[1] Gheciu, A. (2005) *'NATO in the "New Europe": The Politics of International Socialization after the Cold War'* California: Stanford University Press. P 60

[2] Lane, T. (1997) *'The Baltic States, the enlargement of NATO and Russia'* Journal of Baltic Studies. P 299 (Volume 28, Issue 4)

[3] http://www.nato.int/issues/pfp/index.html

was the alliance's first foray into the former Warsaw Pact, and even Russia joined the programme, albeit reluctantly.

NATO expansion itself was not initially considered as the Central and East European States showed little interest in joining, preferring EU membership, and, as in the Czech case, some were considering whether or not they really required an army anymore.[4] But as NATO adapted to its new role within the 'new Europe' there was a realisation that the organisation could be used to cement democratic changes in Eastern Europe. As Lane argues NATO members felt that 'NATO should emphasize its general security functions by incorporating the East Central European states into the alliance.'[5] It was felt by some in the West that Russia would not be threatened by this as enlargement was seen to offer many advantages to Russia as well; consolidating stability and democracy in the states on her boarders and locking German power into Europe.[6] There was even some speculation that perhaps Russia might also join NATO at some point.[7] On the other hand 'there was a strong conviction on the part of many leading figures in the Alliance that "pushing Russia away" would be too high a price for NATO enlargement.'[8] There were also fears that 'expansion of NATO was sure to encourage anti-Western political forces in Russia,'[9] and a strongly democratic pro-Western Russia was seen as the greatest guarantee of European security.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania emerged as independent states in 1990-1991 and their shared history with the Soviet Union is crucial to understanding their position on NATO enlargement. As Andrus Park explains the incorporation of

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[4] Barany, Z. (2004) "Europe moves Eastward: NATO's Peaceful Advance", Journal of Democracy, 15 (1): 63-76. p. 64

[5] Lane, T. (1997) p. 298

[6] Ibid. p. 298

[7] Black, J. L. (2000) *'Russia Faces NATO Expansion: Bearing Gifts or Bearing Arms?'* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, inc. p. 9

[8] Lane, T. (1997) p. 301

[9] Ibid.

the Baltic States into the Soviet Union was seen as entirely illegal, for Estonia 'from a legal point of view there is no difference between the 1938-1945 Nazi occupations of various European countries and the Soviet occupation of Estonia.'[10] The other two Baltic States feel the same about the Soviet occupation; Lithuania has repeatedly demanded recognition of the occupation, and Latvia has equally fought for Russia to accept that the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic States.[11] While Western countries tend to side with the Baltics, Russia has never accepted that the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic States, and this issue has continued affect Russo-Baltic relations and has been a cause for strained relations.

Park describes the security environment in Estonia in the period of 1990-1994 as being characterised by the following points:

- Russia was perceived as the only tangible source of foreign threat by Estonian politicians and security experts;
- Estonian thinking was deeply sceptical about the prospects of Russian democracy;
- Speedy integration with the West was considered to be the main means of guaranteeing Estonia's security.[12]

The National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia confirms Park's points, but suggests that Russia does not constitute a direct military threat: 'Estonia does not see a direct military threat to its security neither now, nor in the foreseeable future.'[13] However fears about the stability of Russian democracy are reflected in the National Security Concept; 'the major risk to

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[10] Park, A. (1995) *'Russia and Estonia Security Dilemmas'* Europe-Asia Studies 47:1:27-45. p. 30

[11] Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) *'EU and NATO Enlargement: Russia's Expectations, Responses and Options for the Future'* European Security: 16:3:307-328. p. 311

[12] Park, A. (1995) p. 27

[13] National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia. p. 8

Estonia's security is potential instability and developments in the international arena that are politically uncontrollable,'[14] and in the section devoted to 'Relations with the Russian Federation', reference is made to the 'ongoing instability in Russia' representing a general threat to the security of the Baltic Sea region.[15] Baltic scepticism regarding the stability of Russian democracy has been a key factor in their desire for NATO membership, and while the early government of Yeltsin was pro-Western and pro-reformist, nationalists prevailed in the 1993 Duma elections who took a 'hard-line' approach to the Baltic States and the West.[16]

Russian opposition to NATO expansion into the Baltic States was clear, but only served to strengthen the Baltic desire for NATO accession; Estonian Foreign Minister Jüri Luik responded to an address by Yeltsin and 'said that Russia had made its interests absolutely clear, giving itself 'liberty to interfere in other states' domestic affairs whenever it thinks it necessary'[17].

The new approach for NATO as an organisation that could be used to consolidate democracy is reflected in the National Security Concepts of the three Baltic States. Estonia's desire to join NATO is explained as 'the best way to protect and consolidate the modern democratic state.'[18] Similarly the National Security Concept of the Republic of Lithuania states that NATO membership is key to 'ensuring both internal and regional security and stability in the future.'[19] Latvia's State Defence Concept also refers to the stability that NATO memberships brings.[20] There was also considerable widespread support for

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[14] Ibid. p. 8

[15] Ibid. p. 15

[16] Black, J. L. (2000) p. 8

[17] Park, A. (1995) p. 30

[18] National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia.  p. 10

[19] National Security Concept of the Republic of Lithuania. p. 8

[20] State Defence Concept of the Republic of Latvia. p. 2

NATO membership among the population with 65% in Estonia, 64% in Latvia and 84% in Lithuania supporting NATO membership in 1996.[21]

Russia's perspectives on NATO enlargement can be characterised as principally negative, and were influenced by the situation in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. As Black points out the Russian Federation 'inherited everything from the USSR except its territorial integrity, secure borders and a sense of being an impregnable power.'[22] With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia lost not only territory but also influence, which made it sensitive to NATO's actions within its traditional 'sphere of influence'. Russia also questioned the point of NATO's continued existence, preferring (as the Soviet Union had) the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (hereafter OSCE) as a pan-European security organisation, and Russia criticised NATO for becoming involved in peacekeeping exercises which Moscow claimed 'lay entirely within the domain of the United Nations Security Council.'[23] In this sense it is obvious that to some extent relations were already strained in other areas before the issue of expansion was considered.

While some in the West thought in this period that expansion might consolidate democratic states on Russia's borders and therefore be advantageous to Russia, Moscow saw NATO enlargement 'as the creation of a buffer zone in reverse, a means to isolate the new Russia from continental Europe.'[24] The Baltic States in particular were a 'red-line' for Russia which it warned the West not to cross and from the very beginning 'Moscow regarded the prospect of Baltic membership in NATO as a threat to Russia's military security.'[25] Not only did (and still does) Russia fear encirclement by a 'hostile' security organisation,

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[21] Kostadinova, T. (2000) *'East European Public Support for NATO Membership: Fears and Aspirations'* Journal of Peace Research 37:2:235-259. p. 242

[22] Black, J. L. (2000) p. 7

[23] Ibid. p. 8

[24] Ibid. p. 9

[25] Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 314

but the use of former Soviet by NATO was also considered a threat and unacceptable.[26]

THE FOUNDING ACT AND THE MADRID SUMMIT

At the Madrid Summit from 8th – 9th July 1997 the first wave of NATO enlargement since the Cold War began, but critically no countries outside the Visegrad were admitted to the accession process. Gherciu argues that the countries outside this group were not asked due to 'considerations of cost and concerns about the impact of a "big bang" enlargement on NATO's effectiveness'[27] which were clearly were issues for NATO, but a central concern remained Russia's intense resistance to NATO expansion into the Baltic States and Russia's opposition became even more apparent when on 20th February 1997 Russia threatened Estonia with economic sanctions if it still continued with its policy of NATO accession.[28]

As Gherciu points out, it is interesting to note that NATO was never under any obligation to ask any of the post-socialist states to join, and as described in Article 10 of the Washing Treaty if a state is to gain admission it 'must not only subscribe to the principles of the treaty but also contribute to the security of the Atlantic area as a whole.'[29] Applying this to the Baltic States it is possible that many of the NATO states questioned whether they would be able to contribute to the alliance. This is also a criticism that Russia has employed when attacking the policy of NATO expansion into the Baltic States, as characterised by Vice-Prime Minister Sergey Ivanov in a 2008 interview in the Russian newspaper Izvestia asking what the Baltic States brought to the alliance:

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[26] Ibid. P 315
[27] Gheciu, A. (2005) p. 73
[28] Black, J. L. (2000)
[29] Gheciu, A. (2005) p. 74

'If Georgia and the Ukraine are chosen, as previously with the Baltic States, will it strengthen the security of NATO? Did the appointment of the Baltic countries sharply increase their authority in the struggle with international terrorism?'[30]

Despite the fact that support for the Baltic States at this time was weak among the strongest European powers in the alliance (Germany, France and Great Britain,[31]), America and Turkey actively encouraged the Baltic States to pursue NATO membership.[32] The Clinton administration in America went as far as creating the 'Charter of Partnership with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania', which stated that the integration of the Baltic States into 'European and transatlantic political, economic, security and defence institutions is a common goal of all parties.'[33] While there was still a sense that NATO enlargement to the Baltic States could undermine the democratic forces in Russia, NATO was firmly reoriented to reward democratisation in Eastern Europe with membership, and in 'the Madrid Declaration NATO specifically recognized the progress achieved in Romania, Slovenia, and the Baltic countries.'[34] This sent a clear signal to Russia about the aims of NATO in terms of enlargement, and effectively ignored Russia's objections; 'already in early 2000 the prevailing understanding seemed to be that NATO should not postpone launching a new wave of enlargement beyond 2002-2003.'[35]

Relations with Russia had already begun to chill by 1997 as accession for the first wave of post-Cold War enlargement started, and in attempt to repair relations 'NATO suggested an agreement that would assure Russia's

[30] Ivanov, S. B.  (2008) Interview in Izvestia *'Vise-Premier Sergey Ivanov: "Rossiya yavlayetsya idealnym chelnom NATO"'*

[31] Asmus, R. D. & Nurick, R. C. (1996) *'NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States'* Survival: 38:2:121-142. P 123

[32] Black, J. L. (2000) p. 207

[33] Gheciu, A. (2005) p. 75

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

participation in European affairs through a mechanism of regular consultations.'[36] This resulted in the signing of the Founding Act and formation of the Permanent Joint Council (hereafter PJC). The Founding Act and the PJC were a success for NATO; they improved relations with Russia by giving her a voice but not a veto in European security[37] because the Founding Act was not binding in any juridical sense, and the PJC was kept separate from NATO's own decision making body, the North Atlantic Council. The Founding Act also reiterated that NATO would not station nuclear weapons on the new member states territory, which had been a major concern for Moscow and an important factor in straining relations.[38]

The Baltic States continued to actively pursue NATO membership throughout 1997 despite obvious objections from Russia and relatively lukewarm support from various NATO members. Relations with Russia became predictably strained with Moscow threatening economic sanctions against Estonia for its continued calls for NATO membership.[39] Tensions increased between Russia and Latvia after Valdis Birkavs the Latvian Foreign Minister 'told a German correspondent in Munich that his country wanted NATO membership precisely to guarantee its security against Russia.'[40] Russian-Latvian relations further soured when a Soviet war memorial in Liepaja was vandalized in March, and when protests by Russian pensioners were broken up by the police it sparked an outcry in Russia. Further outrage was caused when the Latvian government gave permission for the Latvian voluntary SS to celebrate its 55th anniversary.[41]

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[36] Ponsard, L. (2007) *'Russia, NATO and Cooperative Security: Bridging the gap.'* London: Routledge. P 70

[37] NATO (1997), 'Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation'

[38] Ponsard, L. (2007) p. 70, p. 10

[39] Black, J. L. (2000) p. 203

[40] Ibid. p. 204

[41] Ibid. p.215

It is important to bear these factors mind when considering the impact that NATO enlargement into the Baltic States had on NATO-Russia relations, because Russia's grievances with the Baltic States were soon directed at NATO as it became clearer and clearer that the Baltic States would become NATO members.

While the Founding Act and the PJC managed to repair relations between NATO and Russia to some extent, the Baltic States arguably undid some of the goodwill in their reactions to the Founding Act and PJC. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania's reaction to the Founding Act was to call for early admission in NATO, and as Black points out, the Baltic meetings 'ensured that the cautiously optimistic attitude with which the Russian media greeted the Founding Act would dissipate quickly.'[42]

In 2000 Russia affirmed a National Security Concept that stated fundamental threats included:

- The strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances, above all NATO's eastward expansion.
- The possible emergence of foreign military bases and major military presences in the immediate proximity of Russian borders.[43]

Showing to what extent relations had been affected by NATO's expansion, and further potential expansion.

While the Founding Act initially served to improve relations between Russia and NATO cracks soon appeared; Russia took the Founding Act as an 'indication that NATO was ready to grant Moscow a new mechanism to influence the Alliance policies.'[44] But as it has already been stated in the article,

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[42] Ibid. p.206

[43] National Security Concept of the Russian Federation.

[44] Ponsard, L. (2007) p. 70

the Founding Act was not a legally binding document, merely political, and the PJC did not give Russia the kind of political leverage it was hoping for in NATO, and because of this Moscow felt somewhat betrayed by NATO.

In an attempt to avoid NATO expansion into the Baltic States Yeltsin again reiterated that Baltic accession into NATO was unacceptable, and offered 'to provide security guarantees to the Baltic States, jointly with NATO if necessary.'[45] This in many ways seemed like a solution to the issue of NATO expansion and Baltic security fears, but his 'guarantees were unanimously rejected in the Baltic capitals.'[46] Baltic rejection was another step in further aggravating relations with Moscow.

Karabeshkin and Spechler argue that Russia's determination at this time to look at NATO as a military alliance means that Moscow misses the point of NATO membership to solidify democracy.[47] But the fact remains that NATO is fundamentally a military organisation with additional traits of democratisation, this also ignores the other organisations that help to solidify democracy and stability as more primary goals such as the European Union and the OSCE which have both worked in the Baltic States to ensure democracy with the offer of potential membership of both organisations. Zoltan Barany's arguments in 'NATO Expansion, Round Two: Making Matters Worse' further undermines their claim. His theory is that NATO expansion was in response to Russia, which rings true if only from the perspective of the Baltic States, and gives credence to the idea that NATO expansion was instrumental in causing poor relations between NATO and Russia.[48]

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[45] Ibid. p. 96

[46] Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 319

[47] Ibid. p. 318

[48] Barany, Z. (2002) *'NATO Expansion, Round Two: Making Matters Worse'* Security Studies:11:3:123-157. p. 126

Russia's relations with NATO worsened further after Moscow called for the Baltic States to ratify the Agreement on Conventional Forces in Europe (hereafter CFE) if Russia was to even consider Baltic membership of NATO. This was rejected, and NATO in turn demanded that Russia withdraw its own forces from Georgia and Moldova.[49] To date none of the Baltic States have signed the CFE treaty.[50]

The status of the exclave of Kaliningrad was also a source of contention for Russia. Moscow feared that 'military transit through the territory of the Republic of Lithuania could be disrupted.'[51] Lithuania decided not to sign a new bilateral agreement on military transit and this has been a source of discomfort for Russia, and strained relations further.[52] Again Russia's sense of encirclement is key as NATO expansion would leave Kaliningrad completely surrounded by NATO countries.

Perceptions of NATO as an unwanted force in the former Soviet states was echoed in this period in the Russian population, much in the way that the populations of the Baltic States were pro-NATO, Russians were becoming progressively anti-NATO; 'polls taken in Russia in March [1998] showed that a majority of citizens wanted their government to levy sanctions against Latvia,' and 'economic sanctions were, indeed imposed as of 1st July.'[53]

2004 ENLARGEMENT AND BEYOND

The West continued to encourage the Baltic States to apply for membership in NATO, on 8th November 2001 an article appeared in the Baltic Times hinting that Germany would support Latvian membership of NATO.[54] Similarly on 7th

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[49] Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 315

[50] http://www.osce.org/documents/doclib/1999/11/13760_en.pdf (Accessed on 03/03/09)

[51] Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 316

[52] Ibid.

[53] Black, J. L. (2000) p. 216

[54] http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/5667/ (Accessed 20/02/09)

February 2002 the Baltic Times reported that Canada would support Lithuanian candidacy for NATO membership.[55] At the Prague Summit on 21st November 2002, despite Russian concerns, NATO formally invited Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia to begin accession talks to join the alliance.

At the same time the West attempted a balancing act of trying to placate Russia and repair some of the grievances that arose from the period of the Founding Act and the Madrid Summit; 'the NATO-Russia Council, created in May 2002, established nine different areas for cooperation, all of them of real interest to Russia, and enlargement to the Baltics has not affected joint work on these issues.'[56] This went some way to repairing the damage done by what Russia felt was a betrayal after the Founding Act.

On 29th March Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO, and 'since 2004, the air space over the Baltics has been patrolled on an *ad hoc* basis by four aircraft from various NATO member states.'[57] At the time of writing no land forces have been positioned in the Baltic States, and Karabeshkin and Spechler correctly argue that the regional instability that Russia so feared has not occurred, and they quote Ivanov as saying that the aircraft patrols do not constitute a threat to Russia's security.[58]

However relations between NATO and Russia have most certainly been damaged by the West's insistence on expansion, and they rightly go on to point out that 'up to 30 military sites have reportedly been reconstructed with financial assistance from the US, and a system of electronic reconnaissance is

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[55] http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/5989/ (Accessed 20/02/09)
[56] Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 316
[57] Ibid. p. 315
[58] Ibid. p. 315-6

being created in the Baltic States. The Russian military cannot be too pleased with these developments.'[59]

First and foremost the Baltic States' position on Russia since accession has remained largely the same; they still call for Russia to accept that the Baltic States were illegally annexed by the Soviet Union. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have if anything become more strident in their interaction with Russia; in 2004 Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga again called for Russia to accept responsibility for the annexation of the Baltic States, and 'in 2006 she suggested that NATO [should] not invite Russia to its summit to be held in Riga, arguing that Russia's presence would unreasonably widen the agenda.'[60] Lithuania has acted in a similarly bold fashion, demanding compensation from Russia in the region of twenty billion dollars for the years of occupation suffered under the Soviet Union, Russia angrily rejected this demand, and it has done little to improve relations since the accession of the Baltic States.[61]

The Baltic policy since accession has also been interesting; they have all been active in the Commonwealth of Independent States[62] which Russia sees as its sphere of influence. On 4th April 2008 the Baltic Times reported that at the Bucharest Summit Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania would voice their support for Ukrainian and Georgian membership of NATO.[63] Russian opposition to this is clear, and again it has strained relations between NATO and Russia.

Russian reactions to the 2004 accession of the Baltic States were predictably negative, but some politicians comments in the press were particularly extreme; on the 24th of March 2004 Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia gave an interview to the Russian newspaper Pravda

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[59] Ibid. p. 316

[60] Ibid. p. 317

[61] http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1143601.html (Accessed 03/03/09)

[62] Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 312

[63] http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/20167/ (Accessed 20/02/09)

in which he stated 'Russia will bomb Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn.'[64] Zhirinovsky is symbolic of the more nationalist sentiments in Russia, and his views are not necessarily that of the Kremlin, but it is a useful example to illustrate the extent to which relations were strained in the eyes of some Russians.

In his address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 26th April 2007 Vladimir Putin argued that NATO countries such as the Baltic States, which have not signed up to the CFE treaty 'represent a real threat for us'.[65] As previously stated, Russia had called for Baltic States to sign the CFE treaty as a prerequisite to even potential NATO membership. He cites this a reason for Russia pulling out of the CFE treaty, which is yet another indicator of how NATO-Russia relations have been affected by NATO enlargement, albeit in an indirect fashion.

Karabeshkin and Spechler argue that Russia's fears about the effect Baltic admission into NATO on regional stability and security have not appeared, but they eventually concede that 'overall, however, NATO membership in the Baltic States has not had a positive impact on Russia-Baltic relations'[66] or NATO as a whole for that matter.

CONCLUSION

Post-Cold War relations between NATO and Russia have been turbulent. However in the initial phase of post-Cold War relations there seemed to be a genuine opportunity for an effective partnership to be created between NATO and Russia; Russia joined NATO's PfP and there was dialogue between the alliance and Moscow. NATO was also initially considerate of the effects that enlargement could have on the democratic forces within Russia, the loss of

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[64] Zhirinovsky, V. V. (2004) Interview in Pravda *'Rossiya budet bombit Vilinus, Rigu i Tallin'*

[65] Putin, V. V. (2007) Speech *'Poslaniye Federalnomu Cobraniu Possiiskoi Feredatsii'*

[66] Karabeshkin, L. A. & Spechler, D. R. (2007) p. 318

which could have serious destabilising effects on the security environment in Europe. As previously described, strained relations were an early feature of Russo-Baltic relations for various reasons such as the Baltic States' continued calls for recognition of their annexation by the Soviet Union, and Russian threats against moves towards NATO membership. These relations fed into NATO-Russian relations and NATO attempted to improve relations by means of the 1997 Founding Act and the creation of the PJC, however while these were clearly a success from the perspective of NATO, initial Russian optimism evaporated as NATO continued to act seemingly ignoring Russian concerns. That NATO expansion was labelled as a threat in the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation exemplifies the extent to which this affected relations between the alliance and Moscow. Equally the state of relations between NATO and Russia are demonstrated well in the Russian press which has seen several prominent politicians show their displeasure with NATO enlargement. Perhaps the greatest strain on NATO-Russia relations has been since expansion into the Baltic States, as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have stepped up their activity in the Commonwealth of Independent States, which Russia sees as its traditional sphere of influence, and have become increasingly bold in their interactions with Russia, and as members of NATO the poor state of Russo-Baltic relations has been inherited by NATO itself. The effect then of NATO expansion into the Baltic States has had negative impact not only since accession, but beyond it as well.

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# Scotland is Fucked[1]: Irvine Welsh, Andrew Drennan and the Deconstruction of Nationalism

Anikó Szilágyi

Welsh and Drennan's work demonstrates significant changes in the literary depiction of the Scottish nation. Moving away from traditional counter-colonial and separatist rhetoric, they direct attention to the problem of consumerism as a new colonising power. Their discourse is permeated by violence, which is also made manifest on a thematic level. Drennan's novel inverts the implications of the treatment of violence by suggesting that it can be both self-inflicted and self-indulgent.

Irvine Welsh's debut novel, *Trainspotting*, became an instant success after its publication in 1993. It was followed by *Marabou Stork Nightmares* in 1995, a text that deals even more explicitly with questions of national identity. *Cancer Party* by Andrew Raymond Drennan, published in January 2009, treads a similar path exploring Scotland and Scottishness in terms of an all-pervasive violence. All of these texts were written in and about postcolonial Scotland and are concerned in different ways with the legacy of its colonial history.

The first three words of the title nicely encapsulate the essence of the strand of Scottish fiction that the texts discussed in this essay represent. Of course Welsh was not the first to depict urban working-class Scotland using the vernacular, or the first to write about drug abuse: Trocchi shocked his reading audience with

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[1] A reference to Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine*. See Zoë Strachan, "Is that a Scot or am Ah wrang?", in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene, 51-56 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 53.

*Cain's Book* as far back as 1960, and James Kelman's first novel, *The Busconductor Hines*, was published in 1984, the year Michael Gardiner identifies as the starting point of 'the current Scottish literary boom'.[2] However, when *Trainspotting* came out in 1993, it was still seen as transgressive, representing 'contemporary counterculture' and part of a literary tradition which can now safely be said to have become 'mainstream'. The fact that many 20th and 21st century Scottish writers – Alexander Trocchi, Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard, James Kelman, Louise Welsh, Zoë Strachan, and so on – invariably engage with the themes of poverty, deprivation, drug addiction, sexual abuse and crime, coupled with the proliferation of Scottish crime fiction as well as 'true crime' writing since the 1980s,[3] suggests that as far as literature is concerned, Scotland does indeed seem to have 'a culture of failure'.[4] In other words, it is 'fucked', and vulgar language is nothing but appropriate for this kind of subject matter.

The word 'fucked' also has clear connotations of sex and sexual abuse, an important trope in postcolonial literature in general. The idea of colonial subjection as 'rape' lies at the very heart of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, where the protagonist, Roy Strang, struggles in vain to come to terms with his involvement in the the violation of a young girl. In a chapter titled 'The Praying Mantis', Roy recounts his vision of two prostitutes suddenly turning into giant insects. The imagery is highly suggestive: the female praying mantis often eats the male during intercourse, and Roy's perception of the women as threatening can be read as a symbol of anxiety of reverse colonisation. Drennan's novel includes an interesting 'reversed rape scene' where Adam, the main character of *Cancer Party*, is bullied into sexual intercourse by a girl he sees as pushy, intimidating and physically repulsive.

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[2] Michael Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory Since 1960* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 10.

[3] I find the fact that the major bookstores in Scotland have a separate 'Scottish crime' section both appalling and intriguing.

[4] Strachan, "Is that a Scot", 55.

> *It's nae good blamin it oan the English fir colonising us. Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation. Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots.*[5]

If such a term existed, this would be called a counter-counter-colonial rant. Renton makes two important points here: Scots are miserable, and Scots can only blame themselves. These ideas are picked up on (a little more subtly) in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, where one of the characters explains that it is only weak lions that attack humans, only those unable to deal with anything stronger or more agile.[6]

Welsh's second novel, with its "continued interrogation of the Scottish past",[7] is particularly relevant to a postcolonial enquiry. It is the story of the coming of age not just of Roy Strang, but also of Scottish state-of-the-nation literature. Lying half-conscious in a hospital bed, Roy reminisces about his childhood spent partly in South Africa, where he experienced violence on a public as well as a private level as he witnessed the dynamics of apartheid and was sexually assaulted by his uncle. Later he gives a graphic description of the rape that has

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[5] Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting,* in *The Irvine Welsh Omnibus,* 1-350 (London: Random House, 1997), 84.

[6] Irvine Welsh, *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, in *The Irvine Welsh Omnibus,* 649-920 (London: Random House, 1997), 700.

[7] Robert Morace, "Irvine Welsh: Parochialism, Pornography and Globalisation", in in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene, 227-235 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 228.

weighed on his conscience ever since. Trying desperately to cope with guilt, Strang and Scotland are seen as both victim and aggressor. What emerges from this coalescence of identities – coloniser and colonised, rapist and rape victim - is a clear message: violence breeds more violence. Although the novel is explicitly anti-imperialist – Roy's uncle is described as "an unreconstructed pro-apartheid white supremacist"[8] whose justification of British rule in Africa, that "blacks couldn't organise themselves, couldn't do anything right",[9] is more than a little ironic – instead of bewailing Scotland's own past as a colonised state, it addresses its complicity in the colonisation of Africa. It is pre-devolution in its date but it is post-devolution in its ethos: the rhetoric of blame is replaced by self-examination. It goes beyond the limited framework of a narrow-minded nationalist discourse and recognises the relativity of the subject position, viewing it from a more international perspective, as Roy acknowledges that "Edinburgh had the same politics as Johannesburg: it had the same politics as any city. Only we were on the other side".[10] Welsh's approach is almost subaltern here, recognising that issues of nationality may overshadow the subjection of "other marginalised identity categories, such as gender, sexuality and race".[11] *Marabou Stork Nightmares* deconstructs both traditional colonial

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[8] Irvine Welsh, *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, 718.

[9] Ibid., 721.

[10] Ibid., 736.

[11] Stefanie Lehner, "Subaltern Scotland: devolution and postcoloniality", in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene, 292-300 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 293. 'Subaltern' is a highly controversial term often used in the context of Postcolonial Studies. Homi Bhabha defines it as "oppressed, minority groups whose presence [is] crucial to the self-definition of the majority group" and who are "also in a position to subvert the authority of those who [have] hegemonic power." See Homi K. Bhabha, "Unsatisfied: notes on vernacular cosmopolitanism", in *Text and Nation: Cross-Disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities*, ed. Laura Garcia-Moreno and Peter C. Pfeiffer, 191-207 (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996). For Gayatri Spivak, the key terms are difference and silence: a subaltern group is defined in terms of its difference from the elite and its inability to speak for itself. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

and counter-colonial discourses by exposing the metropolitan city as "the grizzled fag-end of the British Islands" rather than "somewhere distant and exotic",[12] and presenting a completely de-romanticised view of Scotland as the hotbed of crime, sectarianism and having the 'crappest' schools in Europe.[13] Politics is approached with complete scepticism, such as in John Strang's grotesque patriotism: "Ah voted SNP, no thit ah believe in Scottish independence. The Scots built the empire n these daft English cunts couldnae run it withoot us",[14] which is just as pathetic as Uncle Gordon's anti-Thatcherite rants: "Maggie Thatcher. Fucking whore! Fucking treacherous fucking stupid communist fucking whore!".[15]

Debunking the myth of Scotland as the passive victim of colonial subjection does not, however, absolve the coloniser, it only shows the bigger mechanisms at work which inevitably lead to some form of oppression. This is what Fanon refers to as 'inferiorisation', whereby a group of people attempt to 'achieve a sense of superiority' by looking down on another oppressed grouping and scapegoating them.[16] Scotland's participation in the imperialist project, the rape, Roy beating up his weaker brother Bernard, can all be explained in terms of processes similar to Fanon's 'racial distribution of guilt'.[17]

SELF-HARM AND POLITICS

In *Marabou Stork Nightmares* guilt finds an outlet in outwardly directed violence. Drennan takes this one step further by presenting a world where the

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in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271-313 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

[12] Irvine Welsh, *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, 743.

[13] Ibid., 732.

[14] Ibid., 781.

[15] Ibid., 738.

[16] Derek Hook, "Fanon and the psychoanalysis of racism", in *Critical Psychology*, ed. Derek Hook, 114-137 (Lansdowne, South Africa: Juta Academic Publishing, 2004), 126.

[17] Ibid.

only way of coping with trauma seems to be self-harm. He opens the novel with a quotation from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, which foregrounds the idea of self-torture as one of the major themes of the novel. Whether it is meant as self-punishment for 'being ugly', as in Adam's case, Cat's desperate attempts to draw attention to herself, or the unnamed customer's last link with reality and a happier past, a reminder "that she used to be alive[, s]till bleeding, still breathing",[18] the slashing of one's wrists is as much a part of the characters' daily routine as eating and sleeping. Should this channelling of aggression into self-harm be seen as something more than a 21st-century manifestation of Social Realism? If the perpetuation of violence in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* can be read on two levels, individual and national, what does *Cancer Party*'s obsession with self-harm say about the contemporary Scottish experience? With its overt political dimension, Drennan's novel can be viewed as part of a narrative of the nation, of post-devolution Scotland's struggle to assume responsibility for its problems, its dehumanised consumerist culture and appalling crime rates.[19]

The *Scottish Literary Voice*'s review of *Cancer Party*, printed on the front cover, immediately establishes *Trainspotting* as its conscious intertext, inasmuch as the reader's consciousness is concerned.[20] The novel is set in 1997, after the New Labour takeover and the referendum which resulted in the creation of a semi-autonomous Scottish Parliament in 1998. The face of Tony Blair beaming from the election posters carries the promise of all-round

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[18] Andrew Raymond Drennan, *Cancer Party* (Glasgow: Cargo Publishing, 2009), 215.

[19] "The University of California claims that Scotland's murder rate now exceeds the United States' and Israel's. The WHO study says that you're three times more likely to meet violent death north of the border than you are in England and Wales" Irvine Welsh, "Scotland's Murderous Heart", www.caledonia.org.uk/murderous.htm (accessed 25 March 2010).

[20] It is clear from Drennan's *Manifesto* that he himself regards Welsh as an important predecessor: "*Lanark* by Alasdair Gray was published before I was born. *Trainspotting* was more than ten years ago. We should be ashamed. What are we waiting for?" Andrew Raymond Drennan, "A Manifesto", www.myspace.com/cancerparty (accessed 8 December 2009).

improvement, 'Because Britain Deserves Better'. A Thatcherite gang of Scottish youths called the Eton Boys, wearing striped suits and bowler hats, carrying canes, proud of their Rachmaninov and 'long live the union' slogan, set out to batter to pieces – at times quite literally – everything the 'New Labour' GOMA kids hold sacred.[21] Selling exam papers with wrong answers to desperate university students, the Eton Boys represent free market capitalism, where everything is allowed. Eton Boy Charlie neatly sums up their manifesto:

> I'm surprised you didn't see me at the university, Adam. Giving those bloody liberals their stupid exam papers. All wrong unfortunately. For them. Just wait until their results come back. Daddy will not be proud. You see, the time has come to re-establish some natural order around here. At the bottom is you, and at the top is... will... be us.[22]

Drennan picks up where Welsh left off: the GOMA kid is like the junkie in *Trainspotting*, "published after fourteen years of Conservative government", who in the uncaring Thatcher years "assumed a permanent seat at the bottom of the social ladder in a system which had reinstated the 'deserving poor'".[23] Political promises notwithstanding, things only get worse. As Adam is battling against loneliness and alcoholism, hope, like Tony Blair's face, is "fading every day", and "the red in the New Labour election poster [is] starting to discolour".[24] In the end the posters are finally taken down, a confirmation of the novel's utter disillusionment with politics:

> Adam stared at the last sheet; at the wide cancer-curing smile and the Eton Boys' tag beside it. Their wonderful father showing them the way forward. And he was leaving like all the other fathers did. [...] In the

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[21] The gang is named after its symbolic gathering place in front of the Gallery of Modern Arts.

[22] Drennan, *Cancer Party*, 156.

[23] Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting*, 89.

[24] Drennan, *Cancer Party*, 143.

*rear view mirror the last sheet of Tony's face came down, and just like that, he was gone, erased from Adam's memory, along with the unquestionable mantra, 'Things can only get better.*[25]

It is important to emphasise here that the political scepticism of *Cancer Party* is universal rather than nationalist. Drennan's critique of nationalism is anything but subtle: "[Adam] had never felt like much of a patriot. How can you, when you don't even feel part of this world? It's just reductionism. Why not go further and feel patriotism for your county, your street, your house, your living room, your head. You don't feel a part of any of those things".[26] Scotland matters and does not matter: the idea, the flag, the Parliament are completely devoid of meaning, the Prime Minister is seen merely as another commodity the new Scotland demands for itself, lumped together with clothes, television shows and Swedish furniture.[27] "We have to look outwards. We have to be more international", writes Drennan in his *Manifesto*, and he accordingly makes Adam debunk what he bluntly calls the 'triumph-of-the-Scottish-spirit shit' in a university lecture on Hugh MacDiarmid, founder of the Scottish National Party. Adam's philosophy, however, is cosmopolitan rather than nihilistic: what matters is people, "trying to survive, tossed out like satellites into space".[28]

The confrontation between tourists and football hooligans exposes nationalism as a subcategory of sectarianism and as bound up with violence.[29] This brings us to an important aspect of contemporary Scottish writing: concern about the disparity between the 'real' and the newly created, tourist-friendly, marketable Scotland.

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[25] Ibid., 254.

[26] Ibid., 223.

[27] Ibid., 35.

[28] Ibid., 58.

[29] Ibid., 182. The problem is shockingly relevant, as a Google search of 'sectarianism' shows – the second hit is the Wikipedia entry 'Sectarianism *in Glasgow*'.

CONSUMERISM AND THE REBRANDING OF SCOTLAND

 The website of the Glasgow City Council proudly announces that Glasgow, once an industrial city, is now "the second largest shopping centre in the UK."[30] In his essay on twenty-first century Glaswegian novellists Alan Bissett argues that

> [i]n an attempt to recast Glasgow as a shopping, business and tourism magnet the city has been subject to a slick rebranding exercise loudly proclaiming 'the transformation of Glasgow from its inward-looking, post-industrial slump to a confident, outward-looking, economically regenerated destination city' (Glasgow City Council 2005)[31]

The city's reinvention of itself as 'centre of consumption' rather than production, however, has a price, and scepticism is a ubiquitous feature of literary voices exploring the new identity of Glasgow. The dark side of Edinburgh, 'marketed' since 2005 as a City of Literature, is exposed in detail in Welsh's work, who draws attention to the fact that "murderous violence happens out of view of tourists and the urban-dwelling professional classes; often it's deemed not to occur at all".[32] The oppressive colonising state has been replaced by a new 'other', the all-pervasive consumerism which an economy based on urban tourism inevitably entails. As Bissett observes, "[i]n this climate, even Kelman's invective against the British state and English linguistic hegemony now seems curiously historical".[33] The analogy of commercialisation

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[30] See http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/Visitors/Shopping/ (accessed 8 December 2009).

[31] Alan Bissett, "The 'New Weegies': the Glasgow novel in the twenty-first century", in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene, 59-67 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) 59.

[32] Irvine Welsh, "Scotland's Murderous Heart". Ironically enough, the murders committed in the centre of Edinburgh which constitute the main subject matter of crime writing by mega-popular Scottish authors like Ian Rankin, Christopher Broomyre and Quintin Jardine hardly ever occur in real life.

[33] Bissett, "The 'New Weegies'", 60.

as a colonising force is made explicit in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, where Roy, his imaginary friend and colleague Sandy and their employer have a discussion about whether "sport has colonised capitalism" or "the other way around".[34] *Trainspotting* also addresses the issue of commercial colonisation: Renton might simply dismiss the English as 'wankers' but cannot ignore the serious problem of consumerism.

> *Society invents a spurious convoluted logic tae absorb and change people whae's behaviour is outside its mainstream. Suppose that ah ken aw the pros and cons, know that ah'm gaunnae huv a short life, am ay sound mind etcetera, etcetera, but still want tae use smack? They won't let ye dae it. They won't let ye dae it.because it's seen as a sign ay thir ain failure. The fact that ye jist simply choose tae reject whit they huv tae offer. Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines, choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced. Choose life.*[35]

Renton and Adam rebel against "[t]he apparent inevitability of historical progress" which "tends to assert free-market ideology not only as the best, but as the only option".[36] Drennan's portrayal of Glasgow echoes that of Louise Welsh's novel *The Cutting Room*: "a restless, postmodern panorama of neon light"[37] where free market capitalism thrives, so much so that literally everything is for sale, from antiques to human bodies and lives. The ever-present lights are a constant reminder of the dynamics of commerce pervading urban life:

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[34] Irvine Welsh, *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, 702.
[35] Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting*, 193.
[36] Lehner, "Subaltern Scotland", 295.
[37] Bissett, "The 'New Weegies'", 61.

> *We slipped through a fluorescent white tunnel, then climbed high over the city on the curving expressway; the River Clyde oil-black and still beneath us, a backdrop to the reflected lights of the city; the white squares of late-night office work; traffic signals drifting red, amber, green, necklaces of car headlamps halting then moving in their sway; the Renfrew Ferry illuminated at its permanent mooring; scarlet neon sign of the Daily Record offices suspended in the dark sky to our right.*[38]

Louise Welsh's critique of 'Thatcher's white-collar revolution',[39] which has also produced Renton the estate agent and Strang the computer programmer, and her insistence on the sharp contrast between the false optimism of the neon lights of the city's shopping centres and the soulless, lonely and depressing lives of its inhabitants recur in *Cancer Party*, where "Scotland appears to be looking for light – no matter how artificial – in all the wrong places".[40] Adam's 'friends' regularly get together under the netting of fairy lights surrounding the museum, "a desperate attempt to fake a starry sky" in a city where "[t]he real ones [are] obscured by the thousands of streetlights beaming up thoughtlessly to the night sky".[41] The artificial lights become emblematic of the cheap solutions available to people in these 'dark times': recreational drugs, alcohol, parties and vandalism, anything that makes them forget, none of which work in the long run. Outraged at their hypocrisy and empty sparkle, Adam tears down the Christmas street decorations in a climactic scene towards the end of the book. Although it brings him relief and can be interpreted as a victory over his almost Hamletian reluctance to take action, it is yet another act of vandalism, and as such its redeeming power is highly questionable. The problem of Adam's passivity is highlighted in the chapter where a group of young people torture a

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[38] Louise Welsh, *The Cutting Room* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002), 98-99.

[39] Bissett, "The 'New Weegies'", 60.

[40] Drennan, *Cancer Party*, back cover.

[41] Ibid., 117.

stray dog to death and he just stands by and watches, which leaves him with a deep sense of failure and guilt - "[d]efeat, defeat. And he had done nothing. This he knew".[42] Even when a colleague of his decides to quit his job at the DIY shop 'Fix It' and tells the customers through the tannoy to 'fuck off home', he just keeps dreaming about "screaming around the aisles, raging at the lack of compassion, the denial of humanity in favour of value for money [...] and everyone would listen. Boy, they would listen!"[43] People do not listen, of course, as he does none of it. The only thing that might make up for Adam's cowardice is the fact that the narration lapses into the first person from time to time, as if it was Adam who is telling the story, which of course means that he *is* speaking out, and there *are* people – the readers – listening. The idea of Scotland as a place of isolation where people will not listen to each other is another link between *Cancer Party* and *Marabou Stork Nightmares,* the latter featuring a main character who is forced to listen to others *and* 'forces' the reader to listen to an account they probably do not want to hear. *Cancer Party* is full of such characters: Adam and Cat, who are "like everyone else, and typically Scottish: fatherless",[44] Nicola, whose mother only cares about TV shows and food and whose step-father only cares about prescriptions, Arthur, who, like Bernard in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, keeps trying to shove his poetry in the face of unwilling audiences, all inhabit a world where, in Louise Welsh's words, "[p]eople talk, talk, talking to a distant party while the world marche[s] by."[45]

THE GREAT SCOTTISH PLAY

> ”You look like shit,” Cat assured me. “Is that a Joy Division T-shirt? I love how their singer tries to sound really miserable.”
> “Well, he did end up hanging himself –”

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[42] Ibid., 192.
[43] Ibid., 220.
[44] Ibid., 18.
[45] Louise Welsh, *The Cutting Room*, 65.

> *"Hanging yourself? Slash your wrists for fuck's sake – now that's fucking hardcore. None of this hanging yourself bollocks."*
> *Only Cat could embrace the public spectacle of self destruction via razorus bladus. Slashing had become the way forward for suicide in the soundbite generation. What do you do when killing yourself isn't good enough?*[46]

In many ways *Cancer Party* undoubtedly fits in with the literary tradition that systematically portrays Scotland as a failed country. However, much as it has in common with other contemporary state-of-the-nation novels, it can also be seen as challenging the very strand it feeds off. Adam's 'theatrically depressed clientele' who consider mental illnesses and self-harm fashionable stand as a metaphor for Scotland revelling in its own misery and self-pity. The figure of self-appointed 'celeb' Cat, writing a column for an English magazine, trying to attract a reading audience by posing as a promiscuous, suicidal drug addict regularly indulging in self-harm, is an implicit critique of both the reader who is perversely hungry for such graphic depictions of misery, and the writer who is more than willing to satisfy this hunger. Drennan's writing is anything but cosy, but at the same time it questions the raison d'être of the tendency of some contemporary Scottish fiction to depict Scotland as a 'fucked up' country. Facts cannot be questioned – Cat *is* a promiscuous, suicidal drug addict, and Scotland *is* "the most violent country in the developed world"[47]; the problem is with the way they seem to *use* their identity to fish for sympathy, which is seen as a characteristically Scottish phenomenon: "In London no one kills themselves. They just overdose."[48] The novel undermines its own legitimacy when Cat tells Adam that she is writing a story called *Cancer Party* about a boy called Adam, as it immediately alerts us to the possibility that we might be reading just another of Cat's made-up magazine stories, that the whole poignant narrative

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[46] Drennan, *Cancer Party*, 17.
[47] According to a United Nations report. See Irvine Welsh, "Scotland's Murderous Heart".
[48] Drennan, *Cancer Party*, 160.

might be just a prank. When merciless naturalism has been exhausted, the abrasive discourse permeated by self-pity or self-blame must come to an end, and other modes of writing about Scotland must be found.

Concern about the commercialisation of Scotland (and the rest of the world) as the primary threat to identity and a dedication to continuous self-examination are characteristic of both Welsh and Drennan's work. *Cancer Party* is a good example of "'overtly political' voices" lingering "in the cultural sphere",[49] although its emphasis is on the soul-destroying effects of consumerism rather than political rhetoric. It lacks the clear-cut causality of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, where everything can be traced back to a series of 'unfortunate' events in the past, like the sexual assault of young Roy and the dog attack. The difference between Welsh's overt sermonising and Drennan's dark and more or less static picture of Scotland is that the latter offers no easy solutions or obvious message, and the seemingly positive note it ends on is unconvincing. The 'Scottish Play' Adam is trapped in, as said in the suicide note from his lecturer – yet another father figure who 'leaves' –, is all about gratuitous theatricality that makes the depiction of violence, especially self-harm, seem almost passé. What Welsh and Drennan have in common is the recognition that Scottish fiction has to move beyond nationalism and that facing its own problems of fear and self-loathing, the fact that the only person Roy Strang hates may turn out to be Roy Strang, should take priority over the quest for futher political independence. The now supposedly "forward-looking country with its own parliament, making decisions like grown-ups do",[50] still has plenty to worry and write about. *Trainspotting*, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* and *Cancer Party* all share with Kelman's *You Have to Be Careful in the Land of the Free* and Kennedy's *Paradise* what Lehner calls "the commitment to exposing the continuing injustices perpetrated by society's faith in a capitalist utopia."[51]

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49 Lehner, "Subaltern Scotland", 295.
50 Welsh, "Scotland's Murderous Heart".
51 Lehner "Subaltern Scotland", 300.

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# 'The age of chivalry is gone.'[1] A discussion of the sense of crisis afflicting the British aristocracy in the late eighteenth century within the military portraiture of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

M. J. von Ferscht-Fountain

During the latter half of the eighteenth century Britain was in her 'Golden Age' of empire. From the defeat of the French in the Seven Years War (1756-1763) until the British loss of the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), she claimed herself as the 'premiere' kingdom of the world. But during this period, a growing unease prevailed amongst her people. This was social, with an increasing middle-class born of capitalism, economic through her trade and dominance of the seas, and political through the rise of anti-imperialism against the prevailing absolutist monarchy.

In this essay I wish to examine how the sense of crisis in the aristocracy manifested itself in public depictions, namely the military portraits of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and to analyse through the social history of art the pictorial rhetoric that the artist employed for these paintings. I hope to be able to show that the determinations of these

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[1] Burke, E., *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in, Idem, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, vol. 2, London: Henry G. Bohn (1864), pp. 515-516. The full quotation reads, 'But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever.'

aristocratic patrons in asserting 'heroism' and 'civic virtue' through their portrayals unconsciously exposed their self-conscious condition. Their endeavours in creating a modern, patrician appeal reflected the fractured social and political circumstances of the period into which they desperately attempted to adjust, and maintain power.

In 1757 the minister John Brown wrote that the nation had, 'reached a Crisis so important and alarming… (we) are rolling to the Brink of a Precipice that must destroy us.'[2] Such a bleak outlook had been widely felt by a public that witnessed a deteriorating national condition. As Brown later writes, society had reached a state of 'vain, luxurious, and selfish effeminacy.'[3] These bitter sentiments were expressed at a time when rising prices, the Jacobite invasion and the disastrous defeats early in the Seven Years War had knocked society's confidence. But over twenty years later the same grievances arose. Despite the success of the Seven Years War, which set Britain as 'the world's foremost imperial power,' the loss of America to the colonists, the majority of whom were British and Protestant, deprived the British of 'a part of themselves' and forced them to re-examine their identity and carefully consider their public image.[4] The most devastating defeat fell upon the British elite whose competence was now questionable.

It is in military portraiture that we might deconstruct what at first appears gallant and chivalric to expose the underlying concerns of a fraught and self-conscious aristocracy. The main focus of this paper will be Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Portrait of Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre Tarleton* (1782; National Gallery) [Fig.

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[2] Quote of John Brown from his *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757) pp. 15-16, mentioned in Carter, P., 'An "Effeminate" or "Efficient" nation? Masculinity and Eighteenth-century Social Documentary' in *Textual Practice* 11 : 3 (1997), p. 429. Brown's book went to seven editions in the first year of its publication and its widespread popularity is a testament to the public's agreement with his views.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Colley, L, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, London: Pimlico (2003) p. 148.

1] but other portraits by Reynolds will be examined and the paper will focus mainly on the period immediately after the loss of the American war.

Sir Banastre Tarleton was born in Liverpool in 1754. He was the second son of John Tarleton, a very prominent Liverpool merchant and shipowner trading in sugar and slavery, who was also mayor of Liverpool for 1764.[5] Tarleton was educated in Liverpool, then admitted to Middle Temple in 1770 and matriculated at University College, Oxford in November 1771.[6] In 1773 Banastre's father died leaving him £5000, which he soon squandered on gambling and by 1775, with the assistance of his mother, he bought his commission in the army. With the outbreak of the American war in 1776, Tarleton volunteered for service, presumably to escape his debtors.[7]

Reynolds' portrait of Tarleton was commissioned soon after his return to London in early 1782. Tarleton had made a name for himself during the American war as 'Bloody Ban' through his infamous massacre of the defending colonists near the town of Waxhaws, South Carolina.[8] But because of his many successful skirmishes (and the loss of two of his fingers) Tarleton was lauded as a hero by the establishment, whilst being publicly scrutinised in the daily newspapers, particularly in the highly emotive and anonymous letters published in *The Morning Chronicle* of the 6th and 9th August 1782, which ridiculed his personal and military conduct.[9] Tarleton was a notorious figure, his character encapsulated by Horace Walpole's famous quote, 'Tarleton boasts of having butchered more men and lain with more women than anyone else,' to

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[5] Conway, S., 'Tarleton, Sir Banastre', *Oxford DNB*, Internet publication,
http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26970, accessed 05/01/10.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid. John Bonehill believes this a likely reason for Tarleton's readiness for war.
Correspondence with the author 11/01/10.
[8] Bonehill, J., 'Reynolds' *Portrait* of *Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre Tarleton*
and the Fashion for War', *British Journal* for *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 24 (2001),
p.133.
[9] Ibid.

which Sheridan retorted, 'Lain with… what a weak expression; he should have said *ravished* – rapes are the relaxation of murderers!'[10] Faced with such a controversial character as Tarleton, Reynolds must have had a very difficult task in portraying him, for he was an embodiment of a public divide that extended beyond the legitimises of war with America, but as Colley states, the very 'legitimacy of the power elite.'[11] For Reynolds the commission was doubly important because Tarleton was also commissioning a portrait by Gainsborough entirely conceived to give maximum public coverage to himself in the Royal Academy's summer show that year.[12] The summer exhibitions at the Royal Academy functioned as a 'crucible of celebrity,'[13] and as John Bonehill has shown, Tarleton 'revelled in his own notoriety' and this ploy sought to actively occupy the public gaze.[14]

In Reynolds' painting, Tarleton is depicted in the green uniform of his troop, known as the Green Dragoons.[15] He coolly adjusts his leggings whilst a battle ensues in the background, the terror of which is reflected in his horse's face.[16] He is poised for action and as one contemporary critic wrote the painting depicts 'Colonel Tarleton as he is taking Horse to attempt the recovery of a lost

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[10] Ed. Postle, M., *Sir Joshua Reynolds; The Creation of Celebrity*, London; Tate (2005) p. 252.

[11] Colley, op. cit., p. 152.

[12] Bonehill, op. cit., p. 127.

[13] Hallett, M., 'Reynolds, Celebrity and the Exhibition Space' in Ed. Postle, M., *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity*, London: Tate (2005) p. 35.

[14] Ibid, p. 140. Indeed further into the essay the reader will be acquainted with the importance of the Royal Academy's summer exhibitions for publishing celebrity.

[15] Mannings, D., *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings*, London: Yale University, (2000), p. 440.

[16] Perini suggests that Tarleton is adjusting his sword which seems more fitting to the subject but as from the mezzotint after the portrait by John Raphael Smith, which was described by Reynolds as 'having everything but the colour' it is quite clear that Tarleton pulls at his leggings. See, Perini, G., 'On Reynolds' Art of Borrowing; Two More Italian Sources', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 136, no. 1090 (Jan, 1994) p. 26, and Ed. Penny, N., *Reynolds*, London: Royal Academy, Exh. Cat., (1986), pp. 300-301.

day.'[17] The pose has been much discussed and it is taken that Reynolds devised Tarleton's pose from the statue of Hermes (then believed to be Cincinnatus) which had been recently bought by Lord Shelburne and a caste of which was displayed prominently at the Royal Academy.[18] The inference here is that Reynolds aligned Tarleton with the great hero of Rome associated with leadership, modesty and civic virtue.[19] The latter quality of civic virtue is of particular importance for it conveys the 'patrician service' done by Tarleton for Britain. For the elite the 'service to the nation' was their honourable duty and the key justification of their position, which now lay at stake.[20] As Hallett sums up, 'Reynolds' portrait… provided a powerful pictorial counterweight to the narratives of colonial loss and military decline being articulated in the period.'[21] It is Reynolds' focus on Tarleton's fighting spirit against imminent defeat (by now the American war was clearly lost) that immortalises his image.

Nevertheless in this portrait the effect is of a conflatory Tarleton whose confidence and self-possessed masculinity present a fantasised image of war.[22] It is exactly this idealisation of war that the young officers who performed a mock battle as chivalrous, medieval knights sought to escape in after their disastrous defeat at Saratoga just seven months earlier, as part of the celebrations for General William Howe's *mischianza* in May 1778 in Philadelphia.[23] 'Sword-in-hand and on horseback they reconstructed the war with the American colonists, as they would ideally have liked it to be: a splendid crusade fought according to the rules by men of birth, and fought successfully.'[24] To a class of

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[17] Hallett, M., 'Reading the Walls: Pictorial Dialogue at the British Royal Academy', Eighteenth-Century Studies, vol. 37, no. 4, (2004), p. 600. The source is not cited.

[18] Mannings, op. cit., p. 440.

[19] Myrone, M., *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinity in British Art, 1750-1810*, London : Yale University Press (2005) p. 220.

[20] Colley, op. cit., p. 170.

[21] Hallett, *Reading the Walls*, op. cit., p. 600.

[22] Bonehill, op. cit., p. 125.

[23] Colley, op. cit., p. 147.

[24] Ibid, p. 148.

society spoilt and made complacent by their swelling empire, Tarleton's portrait was in effect a masking of the realities of the situation and was as much a form of propaganda for the elite as it was intended for the public. Curiously there is a later portrait of Tarleton as a knight in armour executed by his wife, Lady Susan Priscilla Tarleton and still remaining in the family's collection today [Fig. 2].[25] Lady Tarleton has portrayed her husband in the chivalric ideal that he and men amongst him saw themselves beholding. Through the vogue for van Dyckian costume she associates Tarleton with the establishment immediately before the disastrous conflict that had traumatized the British hierarchy for generations afterwards; the Civil War.

The portrait of Tarleton was first displayed at the Royal Academy summer exhibition of 1782 to high critical acclaim. In the *Public Advertiser*, the critic Fresnoy wrote of the painting's 'profound investigation and subtle Display of Character,' whilst another critic wrote, 'The sublime Effect [of the picture] led the Mind into a Train of Ideas [that brought the] whole engagement before it.'[26] Yet of course there were satirical responses such as in the well-known print *The Thunderer,* where the polarity of the heroics of Reynolds' portrait to the cynicism of the satire reflect more faithfully the public's opinion of Tarleton.[27] Peter Pindar's witty, 'LO! Tarleton dragging on his boot so tight!' found something of the effeminate in the soldier.[28] Whatever the immediate effect, the image was popular enough to counter such ridicules and there still exist no fewer than six copies.[29] Though it no longer survives, Gainsborough's equestrian portrait of Tarleton was not so well admired. Critics saw the painting as exposing too much of Tarleton's vanity and self-interest and 'the Painter has

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[25] Bass, R., *The Green Dragoon*, South Carolina; Waterloo: Sandlapper Press, (1980) opposite p. 363.

[26] Both quotes are from, Bonehill, op. cit., p. 123.

[27] Donald, D., 'Caricatures' in Penny, op. cit., pp. 377-8.

[28] Egerton, J., *The National Gallery: The British School*, London, National Gallery (1998), p. 224.

[29] Manning, op. cit., p. 440.

evidently sacrificed too much to the full-speed ideas of a spirited *Martinet*.'[30] Reynolds won this 'rivalry match' against Gainsborough for he concentrated on one aspect that could not be denied of Tarleton, his reckless courage, despite his dubious military record.[31]

If we now turn our attention to another portrait by Reynolds, we might explore further this vogue for heroic virtue in military portraiture. In the summer exhibition of 1784, Reynolds displayed his equestrian *Portrait of the Prince of Wales with a Horse* (1783-4; Private Collection) [Fig. 3].[32] In 1783 the young prince had come of age and was under the full attention of the newspapers and gossip columns on an obsessive level.[33] Anxiety grew increasingly around the prince's public life, as he was perceived to be vain and extravagant, keeping a circle of friends who were 'flatterers… gamesters and debauchees!'[34] The suggestion here is that the prince was 'effeminate' and for civic commentators, as well as the public itself, effeminacy was a sign of mental weakness that led to a shift 'from simplicity and customs which alone keep us from slavery.'[35] In other words, and considering the now official loss of America, there was a fear of a shift from liberty to Absolutism.[36]

Much of the work on the portrait had been carried out in 1783 and it was intended to be displayed that year but was not submitted, for the Prince, 'out of respect for the artist and himself, was unwilling so capital a Work should be hastily finished.'[37] Clearly it was of considerable importance, for 'celebrity is the

[30] Egerton, op. cit., p. 226.

[31] Hallett, *Reading the Walls,* op. cit., p. 600.

[32] Hoock, H., *The King's Artists*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (2003) p. 164.

[33] Hallett, Reynolds and Celebrity, op. cit., p. 45.

[34] Reported in the Public Advertiser on 20th January 1784 in Hallett, *Reading the Walls*, op. cit., p. 590.

[35] Carter, op. cit., p. 433.

[36] Ibid.

[37] The Public Advertiser, 1st May 1783 quoted in, Hallett, Reading the walls, op. cit., p. 598.

codification of fame.'[38] As previously mentioned the summer exhibitions became a theatre for the 'celebrity' and the dissemination of prints after the portraits was a key way of publicising the image the Prince wished to broadcast.[39]

Reynolds depicts the prince exploiting the vogue for military dress to the full.[40] He wears a red military coat, with blue garter ribbon just visible underneath, and a pink sash round his waist. The red coat is picked out by gold epaulettes and braid, and to add to the flamboyance of the prince's style, a leopard-skin shabracque on his charger.[41] This uniform however is completely fictitious and the prince never did ride into battle.[42] The picture of a prince obsessed with the military reasserted the dignity of the Royal family; clearly Reynolds wished to assert the prince as the leader of men.[43] Unfortunately the painting on its own merits could hardly fight off the already scandalous public image he had amassed. Reynolds, however, mobilised the painting's pictorial associations with others hung around it as well as the memory of previous paintings to give an added sense of authority to the Prince's portrait.[44]

Unfortunately there is not time to discuss pictorial dialogue further with but one exception, for Reynolds aligned the Prince with the memory of Tarleton's portrait of two years earlier, which had been one of the most celebrated and discussed paintings of that year's display.[45] The visually-literate viewer would be able to establish that the Prince's painting depended upon and responded to Reynolds' predecessor as a kind of pictorial sequel, borrowing elements of Tarleton to graph onto the prince a language of heroism and fervour. The way

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[38] Hallett, Reynolds and celebrity, op. cit., p. 37.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Hallett, Reading the walls, p. 590.

[41] Mannings, op. cit., p. 216.

[42] Penny, 'An Ambitious man' in Ed. Penny, op. cit., p. 38.

[43] Hoock, op. cit., p. 164.

[44] This is the basis for Mark Hallett's essay 'Reading the Walls'.

[45] Ibid, p. 600.

in which the prince is situated as if he has stretched out from Tarleton's crouched position, unsheathed his sword and is moments from engaging the offensive ultimately embodies the vigour so praised in Tarleton.[46] Even so it proved less effective as one critic wrote, 'The promise Sir Joshua made in his portrait of Col. Tarleton is badly kept by his performance in the Prince!'[47]

The war had a profound effect on domestic politics and both the Wales and Tarleton portraits represented the Whig cause.[48] It can be seen that the portraits imbue a political motive, especially because Reynolds' *Portrait of Charles Fox* (1782; Holkham Hall) was hung nearby to *Wales* in the 1784 exhibition.[49] As Martin Postle has noted, Reynolds himself had increasingly exposed his Whig sympathies since the early 1770s.[50] However, it would be wrong to say that these portraits were composed to express Reynolds' own political leanings; rather it was an expression of the sitter's. Wendorf defines Reynolds' politics as sharing Burke's 'ambivalence' in the hierarchical structures that his portraits supported and yet, 'he chafed at the embarrassing abuses, at the misuse of aristocratic privilege, rather than at the system itself.'[51] On the other hand Reynolds followed Samuel Johnson's incessant mantra on 'subordination of rank'.[52] In a capacity, the Wales and Tarleton portraits acted as visual propaganda for their sitters but as far as Reynolds was concerned, '(he) simply

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[46] Ibid, p. 601.

[47] Quote of Morning Herald, 27th April 1784 in Ibid.

[48] The Prince of Wales was the patron of the Whig party, whilst Tarleton was to become MP for Liverpool uninterrupted for almost twenty years.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Postle, M., 'The Modern Apelles' in Ed. Idem, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of a Celebrity*, London: Tate (2005), p. 22. It should be noted that Reynolds was also close to oppositionist circles executing numerous portraits of his good friend Admiral Augustus Keppel, a key oppositionist figure.

[51] Wendorf, R., *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Painter in Society*, London: National Portrait Gallery (1996), p. 162. Read Chapter 5, 'Patrons and Politics' for a full discussion of Reynolds' political views.

[52] Ibid.

could not afford, as a portrait-painter, to ally himself too closely with either political party.'[53]

The last painting by Reynolds that I wish to examine was not a commission but a speculative work not dictated by either patron or politics, and was of an earlier period perhaps giving a more neutral insight into Reynolds' own thinking on the establishment's condition. The *Portrait of Captain Orme* (1756; National Gallery) [Fig. 4] was painted a year after the shocking defeat of the Battle of Monongahela in which a force of 2,000 British troops in Canada were ambushed by a much smaller combined force of French and native Americans.[54] General Edward Braddock who led the force had 'five Horses killed under him, was shot through the arm and the Lung, of which he died the fourth day' (after the attack).[55] Captain Orme had been one of three of the General's aides-de-camp. This disaster was heavily reported on for weeks afterward and shocked the nation. Orme is depicted some distance from the battlefield, his body half-turned but his gaze fixed directly to meet the viewer's eye and he holds a piece of paper in his left hand. It is Reynolds' treatment of Orme's face where the viewer is addressed to the double meaning of Orme's expression.[56] The bright half of Orme's face is a reassurance of the resolute British officer with his calm gaze and upturned mouth, but the other, darker half exposes Orme's mental image of the massacre behind him.[57] His left eye is wider displaying signs of what might perhaps be called 'shell-shock', his mouth is slightly downturned and most eerily of all, the light that hits his left cheek somewhat unsettles the viewer exposing his fragility. This portrait is surely designed to play off both readings, for as Hallett sums up it acts as 'an allegory, not only of the shocking military experience at Monongahela, but also of the troubled nation itself.'[58]

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[53] Ibid, p. 174, and Penny, op. cit., p. 35.

[54] Hallett, M., 'Out of the Shadows: Sir Joshua Reynolds' Captain Robert Orme', *Visual Culture in Britain,* vol. 5, no. 2, (2004) p. 43.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Egerton, op. cit., p. 207-8.

[57] Ibid,

[58] Hallett, out of the shadows, p. 49

Today the modern viewer would sense melancholy surrounding Orme's portrayal but to the eighteenth-century viewer the subtlety of his expression would have appeared wholly more acute. In Samuel Bever's *The Cadet: A Military Treatise*, published in the same year as Reynolds' painting, the danger of 'young, debauched and effeminate officers,' was being preached.[59] Bever offers up a resolution to young officers to hone their status as refined gentlemen and it could be taken that Reynolds' portrait aspires to this ideal. Orme is shown as the gallant officer yet at the same time exposes the sensitivity of a gentleman in his witnessing the atrocities of the battle. Reynolds, then, presents to us the modern image of the army officer, at a time of military crisis, and very different to Bever's description of the 'rude and ignorant' individuals perceived in the army at the time.[60] How different to the portraits of Wales and Tarleton, whose sensitivity is lost, instead replaced by aggressive reclamation and ardent masculinity rather than gentlemanly ideals.[61]

The speculation proved unsuccessful and Orme's portrait remained with Reynolds for five years before being sent to the Society of Artists' exhibition in spring 1761.[62] There it was hung near to Reynolds' *Portrait of Lord Ligonier* (1760; Fort Ligonier, Pennsylvania) [Fig. 5] who since 1757 had successfully pushed the war towards British success as Commander-in-Chief of the army.[63] Spirits were high and one officer described Orme as being, 'mixed with rage that war and love of his country can give.'[64] Reynolds' success at altogether changing the response of his painting through his hanging and pictorial dialogue with other paintings clearly shows ingenuity, but also it is clear that the officer's comments signified the public's inability or refusal to empathise with Orme, particularly in the euphoria of British dominance.

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[59] Ibid, p. 52.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Myrone, op. cit., p. 220.
[62] Penny, op. cit., p. 187.
[63] Hallett, out of the shadows, p. 58.
[64] Lloyd's Evening Post, 25th-27th May 1761 mentioned in Penny, op. cit., p. 187.

I would like to suggest then that by the time of Reynolds' Tarleton and Wales portraits the need for a politicising, classicising and more radical rhetoric had become necessary in his portraiture. However, this was not through Reynolds' own development but through the increasingly political determinations of his patrons. The anti-imperialists saw that the threat posed by the merger of heroic virtue and the vice of savage criminality was realised in the figure of Tarleton.[65] The Wales portrait continued this marriage of exemplary civic virtue with effeminacy and 'Quixoticism' and shows to us that in the wake of the American war, 'Heroism' had incorporated foolhardiness and absurdity as central elements, displacing the stern heroics of classicism.[66] And why had this happened? Like Captain Orme's jubilant critic, Britain was very quick to shake off her pessimistic air in the triumph of the Seven Years War, but with the defeat of America, an unfamiliar enemy grown from Britain's own stock, the psyche was forever altered. America was the 'modern' republic and France was to follow just a few years later. The British Aristocracy were in crisis and their fractured, and often-polarized reactions are signs of the complex yet uniform attempt to maintain power.

[65] Myrone, op. cit., p. 220.
[66] Ibid, p. 226.

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# Transitions in the Avant-garde: Dada to Surrealism as illustrated by Ramón Gómez de la Serna's novel *El Incongruente*?

Emma Wadsworth-Jones

Written on the cusp between two movements, *El Incongruente* by Ramon Gómez de la Serna eloquently illustrates the transition between Dada and Surrealism. Utilising key Dadaist principles – such as the renunciation of logic, chance combinations of chapters and the juxtaposition of contradictory imagery – combined with Surrealist elements such as a focus on dreams and the passing of time, Gómez de la Serna constructs the puzzling world in which Gustavo lives. *El Incongruente* breaks with literary tradition eulogizing Dadaist elements whilst still representing the harbinger of Surrealism.

The avant-garde refers to those artists and writers who attempt to move away from the status quo, who push the boundaries of what is acceptable and challenge 'popular' thinking. Many studies into the avant-garde have been carried out in an attempt to better understand and define it. Whilst a neo-avant-garde can be witnessed today, it has been said that the avant-garde emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. Two of the most influential movements were Dada and Surrealism. The illustration of these two movements, and indeed what could be argued to be the transition between them, in *El Incongruente* will be the focus of my study.

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A statement by Cardona eloquently explains how Gómez de la Serna achieved his own unique style, *ramonismo;*

> *not only do we find in his works attitudes, themes, ideas, and styles which one would ordinarily connect with the various "isms" of the twentieth century, but in most cases he seems to have heralded these attitudes.*[1]

It is a style in which he incorporates and manipulates a wide range of elements reflecting the different artistic and literary movements of the age, without ever directly affiliating himself with any one in particular. It is evident through the course of his works, that Gómez de la Serna not only was influenced by the avant-garde[2], but anticipated and pioneered some of its most influential movements. This can be no better exemplified than in his novel *El Incongruente.* Written in 1922, in the wake of the Dadaist movement, the novel not only demonstrates the key Dada principles but also hints towards the movement's successor, Surrealism.

Born out of the devastation of the First World War, Dada was a phenomenon that was to last until 1924 and was witnessed simultaneously developing in various cities across the globe; the most influential of these being Zurich in neutral Switzerland. Dada was a movement that defied all logic. With a strong sense of destruction at its core - even to the extreme of self-destruction - it sought to fight against rationalism, which it held in increasing disdain following the outbreak of the First World War. As Grossman explains, 'the destructive activities of the Dada movement are not so much a manifestation of nihilism in

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[1] Rodolfo Cardona in "*Ramón: A study of Gómez de la Serna and his works*" (Eliseo Torres & Sons; New York, 1957) p 9.

[2] "su particular *ramonismo* asimila y adelanta rasgos del cubismo, del futurismo, del dada, del creacionismo y del surrealismo" (His particular *ramonismo* incorporates and furthers features of cubism, futurism, dada, creationism and surrealism) César Nicolás in "*Imagen y estilo en Ramón Gómez de la Serna*", found in "Studies on Ramón Gómez de la Serna" Nigel Dennis (Ed.) Ottawa Hispanic Studies 2, Dovehouse Editions Canada (1988) p145

the arts as they are an expression of moral outrage by a group of disillusioned young artists and writers who realized, above all, that they must arrive at the *reductio ad absurdam* of life and art so that they might begin anew'[3]. Indeed, one of its creators, Hugo Ball, saw it as an opportunity to create a form of "constructive anarchy"[4]. Writing in 1946, Gómez de la Serna himself says, 'ahora que el mundo ha entrado en una pausa de paz, voy a dar en serie varias novelas de la nebulosa, pues cada vez estoy más convencido de que decir cosas con sentido no tiene sentido'[5] (Now that the World has entered into a pause of peace, I am going to produce a series of nebulous novels, I am increasingly convinced that to say things that make sense doesn't make any sense). Here he refers to his collection of novels *novelas de la nebulosa*[6] written over the course of his lifetime that began with his 1922 novel *El Incongruente.* Dada, although short-lived, had a profound effect on the art and poetry of the time, emphasising the importance of chance, spontaneity and doubt. In a literary context, this was realised through the implementation of such devices and forms as negation, juxtaposition, contradiction, phonetic poetry, simultaneous poetry, and free association in its earliest form. Whilst it is true to say that, 'la vanguardia ha tenido poca suerte con la creación de textos largos; en especial la novela y el teatro resultaron obstáculos difíciles de vencer'[7] (The avant-garde has had little luck with the creation of long texts; the novel and play have posed

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[3] Manuel L. Grossman in *"Dada: Paradox, Mystification, and Ambiguity in European Literature"* (Pegasus; New York, 1971) p166.

[4] Ibid p61

[5] Ramón Gómez de la Serna in *Prólogo a las novelas de la nebulosa* found in "El Hombre Perdido" (Espasa-Calpe; Madrid, 1962) p8

[6] Gómez de la Serna's *Novelas de la Nebulosa* tried to 'buscar cosas menos convencionales, menos amaneradas, en otras dimensiones de la vida...revelando como nos ataca el mundo confuso de hoy.' (Look for less conventional things, less affected, in other...revealing how today's confusing world attacks us) (ibid, p10)

[7] Manuel Durán in "*Origen y function de la greguería",* found in "Studies on Ramón Gómez de la Serna" Nigel Dennis (Ed.) Ottawa Hispanic Studies 2, Dovehouse Editions Canada (1988) p 117

to be obstacles that are especially difficult to overcome), key elements of Dada can be observed in Gómez de la Serna's work *El Incongruente*.

From the opening of the novel it is apparent that Gómez de la Serna has broken with the traditions of the literature of the age. Devoid of logical transitions from chapter to chapter, *El Incongruente* is a novel that presents the reader with a series of incongruent events that happen over the course of its central character Gustavo's life – from the moment at the age of four when he declares to his father 'mira, necesito un bastón'[8] (look, I need a walking stick), to the day he unexpectedly views himself on screen in a cinema and realises he is sitting next to his co-star and as a consequence decides that he should listen to Destiny's call and marry her, thereby putting an end to the incongruous stage of his life with 'la más lógica de incongruencias'[9] (the most logical of incongruities).

Each chapter stands alone and whilst, on occasion, some nexus may be found between two chapters, for the most part the presentation of the events is as incongruous as the events themselves. Indeed Gómez de la Serna writes, 'tiene que ser una incongruencia la misma historia de su vida y la de la elección de capítulos'[10] (The self-same story of his life and the choice of chapters must be an incongruity), which would suggest that, as in Tristan Tzara's use of chance combinations of sounds and words in poetry, the author uses chance combinations of chapters to form his novel[11]. *El Incongruente* represents 'la descomposición del discurso lineal y de la trama o el argumento convencionales en un sin fin de greguerías, de imágenes, de *unidades digresivas* ensartadas en

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[8] Ramón Gómez de la Serna "El Incongruente" p9
[9] José Camón Aznar "Ramón Gómez de la Serna en sus obras" (Espasa-Calpe, S.A; Madrid, 1972)
[10] Ramón Gómez de la Serna "El Incongruente" p15
[11] "It was left to Tzara to follow the principle of chance to its logical or illogical conclusion in literature. Sounds are relatively easy to put together, rhythmically and melodically , in chance combinations" Hans Richter "Dada: art and anti-art" (Thames & Hudson; London, 2001)

un *collage* metonímico...o en un *collage* matefórico'[12] (The decomposition of the convencional lineal discourse and plot or argument in a never-ending barrage of *greguerías*, images and *digressing units* strung together in a metonymic *collage*...or in a metaphorical *collage*).

Breaking with traditional literary techniques in this way, Gómez de la Serna heightens the sense of irrationality and illogicality that is pervasive throughout his novel and depiction of Gustavo's life. From the first Dada manifesto[13] it becomes apparent that to write in a Dadaist manner means to break with all tradition that has come before it. Dada produced many short-lived publications – some only producing one edition – all of which attempted to break with preconceived notions of literature and rejected 'all forms of punctuation including the use of capital letters...and the typography was violently disjointed, combining texts and illustrations in a perfectly arbitrary manner'[14]. Whilst the use of disjointed typography is not seen in Gómez de la Serna's work, the arbitrary way in which the text is put together along with the 'collage' of imagery is very similar to that of Dada.

In *El Incongruente*, the main protagonist, Gustavo, like the 'plot' of the novel in which he features, is left underdeveloped throughout; we learn little about him as a person. It would appear that Gómez de la Serna wishes to direct the reader's attention away from Gustavo the character toward his experience, real or imaginary, and the objects that surround him. As Manuel Durán describes, 'los detalles brillan más que el conjunto, nos distraen de la esencia y existencia

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[12] César Nicolás "Imagen y estilo en Ramón Gómez de la Serna" in "Studies on Ramón Gómez de la Serna" Nigel Dennis (Ed.) (Ottawa Hispanic Studies 2, Dovehouse Editions; Canada, 1988)
[13] Published by Tristan Tzara in 1918.
[14] Manuel L. Grossman "Dada: Paradox, Mystification, and Ambiguity in European Literature" (Pegasus; New York, 1971) p 63

de los personajes centrales y de su possible evolución a través de la novela'[15] (The details shine brighter than the whole, they distract us from the essence and existence of the central protagonists and from their possible evolution through the novel).  Gómez de la Serna dedicates much of the novel to the description of the objects that surround Gustavo, often in the form of *greguerías* but also in his personification of them.  Gustavo describes in one passage how, 'las que más disfrutaban en el baile de mascaras eran las lámparas'[16] (Those who enjoyed the masked ball the most were the lamps) and later Gómez de la Serna gives Gustavo's motorbike animal characteristics writing, 'la motocicleta parecía seguir una pista como un perro policía y él la dejaba ir sin apretar las orejas, sin conducirla apenas'[17](The motorcycle seemed to follow a clue like a police dog and he let it go without gripping its ears, barely driving it at all). Gustavo's motorbike is the subject of a series of 29 humorous *greguerías*; Gustavo describes it as a 'bicicleta con dolor de tripas' (bicycle with a stomach ache), a 'pistola que se ha escapado con cargador y todo' (gun that has escaped with the magazine and everything), a 'triciclo trotón, ultravertebrado, evoluto, que ha perdido una rueda y ha salido corriendo para mantener su equilibrio'[18] (trotting tricycle, extravertebrate, evolved, that has lost a wheel and set off at a run so as to maintain it's equilibrium).  These *greguerías* serve not only to draw the reader's attention to the motorbike, and add humour – a quality that Grossman deems important in the works of Dadaists - but also to attack rationalism and our understanding by juxtaposing conflicting imagery.  Gómez de la Serna's subjectivisation of objects can be likened to Dadaist Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-mades' where he chose already existing objects and declared them art 'when it was lifted from the limbo of unregarded objects into the living world of works of art: looking at it made it into art.'[19]

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[15] Manuel Durán "Origen y función de la greguería" in "Studies on Ramón Gómez de la Serna" Nigel Dennis (Ed.) (Ottawa Hispanic Studies 2, Dovehouse Editions; Canada, 1988)

[16] "El Incongruente" p53

[17] Ibid p128

[18] Ibid pp123-124.

[19] Hans Richter "Dada: art and anti-art" (Thames & Hudson; London, 2001) p88

Another linguistic tool that Gómez de la Serna employs is contradiction, which serves to subvert the reader's expectations.  When Gustavo finds himself in a town of wax dolls he is taken by his guide to see the queen.  Gustavo is surprised to discover that she can speak. When he looks to his guide for an explanation he receives the response 'hablan, sí… Porque no son muñecas de cera, sino muñecas de cera'[20] (Yes they speak…Because they aren't wax dolls, but wax dolls).  Another example, comes in the form of Gustavo's description of his visit to the town of the wax dolls, when he notes that, 'parecía una pura ruina, la ruina ideal, la ruina de lo nuevo'[21] (It looked like a mere ruin, the ideal ruin, the ruin of the new).  Whilst Gustavo might have viewed this response as sufficient the reader is left feeling confused.  In the light of Hans Richter's statement, 'Dada invited, or rather defied, the world to misunderstand it, and fostered every kind of confusion'[22] it would appear that Gómez de la Serna has embraced another of the Dada principles.

Gómez de la Serna plays with the concept of time, dedicating only a short chapter, or paragraph, to an event that spans a few days, whilst devoting long chapters to mere moments in time, explaining in the utmost detail Gustavo's surroundings. An example of this is his dedication of only one chapter to Gustavo's early life, in which many incongruent events happen.  He dedicates only a passing sentence to each incongruity, including the occasion when Gustavo extinguishes a bomb that, had it gone off, would have killed thousands.[23] If this event had occurred in his later life, Gómez de la Serna might have dedicated pages to the episode.  Similarly, Gómez de la Serna dedicates a chapter[24] to a seemingly random collection of incongruences that occur in

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[20] "El Incongruente" p118
[21] Ibid p116
[22] Hans Richter "Dada: art and anti-art" (Thames & Hudson; London, 2001) p9
[23] '…y en una occasion apagó la mecha de una bomba que si hubiese estallado habría matado a más de mil personas' (and on one occasion the fuse of a bomb went out, which had it exploded would have killed more than a thousand people) p10
[24] Chapter II "Batiburrillo de incongruencias" pp16-22

Gustavo's life, each detailed in no more than a single paragraph. Inez Hedges[25] indicates that Gómez de la Serna's move away from the traditional narrative style of the beginning, middle and end, and his manipulation of apparent time clearly demonstrate the application of Dada principles in this novel. This becomes even more apparent in light of José Camón Aznar's assertion that, 'estamos seguros que cuando comienza a escribir una novela ignora su final. La casualidad proveerá'[26] (we are sure that when he begins to write a novel he ignores its end. Luck will provide). If this is the case then like the Dadaists, Gómez de la Serna allowed chance to dictate the passage of his novel.

Throughout *El Incongruente*, Gustavo is a character that epitomises the role of chance and spontaneity. Chance was one of the strongest influences on Dada's work, both in art and literature, so much so that Hans Richter described himself and his fellow Dadaists as following chance "like a compass"[27]. This can also be seen in Gustavo's behaviour; Gustavo puts his faith in 'la casualidad' (chance) and 'la incongruencia' (incongruence). Indeed, he describes his dislike for Sundays because 'es un día en que está cerrada la Casualidad…¡Qué se va a esperar de un día que está cerrada la Casualidad! Es un día en que mejor sería que nos cloroformizasen'[28] (it is a day on which Chance is closed…what can one hope for from a day on which chance is closed! It is a day on which it would be better that we were chloroformed), it would appear that a day without chance is a day that is worth skipping. Further to this, Gustavo firmly believes that each of the incongruities he faces is part of his 'Destino' (Destiny). When he receives a summons to court accusing him of having abused a young girl, Elena, Gustavo notes 'de los malos pasos en que le metía la incongruencia era la

[25] Inez Hedges "Languages of Revolt: Dada and Surrealist Literature and Film" (Duke University Press; Durham N.C., 1983)

[26] José Camón Aznar "Ramón Gómez de la Serna en sus obras" (Espasa-Calpe, S.A.; Madrid, 1972) p33

[27] "Chance became our trademark. We followed it like a compass" Hans Richter in *"Dada: art and anti-art"* (Thames & Hudson; London, 2001) p 51

[28] Ramón Gómez de la Serna "El Incongruente" (Orbis, S.A; 1982) p100

incongruencia misma la que le venía a sacar'[29] (of the bad situations that incongruence got him into, it was incongruence itself that came to get him out again). He has no fear whatsoever of being imprisoned, believing it to be another one of life's jokes and consequently when he arrives at court the next day makes a mockery of the proceedings 'su aparición en la sala tuvo algo de clownesca y más teniendo en cuenta que se había vestido de una etiqueta seduciente con americana ribeteada'[30] (his appearance in the room was clownesque[31], more so taking into account that he had dressed in a seductive style with trimmed jacket). Gustavo believes himself to be subject to chance's whim, which is at its most evident in the chapter in which he receives a telegram summoning him to the side of an unknown old woman. Once he has met the woman he sets about discovering why it came to be him – a man she admits she has never met before – whom she summoned, only to discover that he was chosen by her at random from the *Guía de Vecinos de la Capital*[32] (telephone directory).

Gustavo lives in a world where reality and dreams are almost interchangeable. Whilst Gustavo may accept the things that happen to him without deeper questioning, the reader might view this suspension of reality as alluding to the Surrealist movement even in spite of Gustavo's claim that 'a mí nunca me ha pasado nada completamente sobrenatural… Todas esas bromas que me gasta el Destino han tenido siempre una base de realidad'[33] (Nothing completely supernatural has ever happened to me…All of these jokes that Destiny spends

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[29] Ibid p 153

[30] Ibid p156

[31] Translation note: As is common in his work, Gómez de la Serna chose here to invent the word "clownesca", as it does not exist in the Spanish lexicon I chose to reflect the same sense of play with words whilst still conveying the essential meaning by translating the word as closely as possible to the original.

[32] Ibid p98

[33] Ibid p90

on me have always had a basis in reality).  Richter[34] would argue that the disintegration of reality and creation of irrationality that we see throughout the novel was a Dada principle. However, in his writing, Gómez de la Serna sometimes hints beyond Dada towards Surrealism, in both his imagery and his focus on dreams. This impression becomes more substantial in the light of Grossman's statement that, 'the influence of Dada was so all-pervading in the early days of Surrealism that it is often impossible to distinguish what was Surrealist from what was Dadaist'[35].

Some of Gustavo's experiences, like that of finding himself in the town of the wax dolls, seem so bizarre – bordering on the surreal –  that readers finds themselves questioning whether Gustavo can really be experiencing it or whether it is, in fact, a dream.  Another example of this is when during a search for the lost pawn of his chessboard, Gustavo uncovers the fourth dimension in the corner of his room by the skirting board[36].  On another occasion, Gustavo takes it upon himself to empty out a fish tank. Whilst he, and the reader, expects the fish to fall to the floor he actually witnesses them continue to swim in mid-air and watches as the tank itself floats up towards the heavens as if it

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[34] "Dada is involved in this progressive disintegration of reality…Dada desired this disintegration…wanted to be destructive" Hans Richter "Dada: art and anti-art" (Thames & Hudson; London, 2001) p91

[35] Manuel L. Grossman "Dada: Paradox, Mystification, and Ambiguity in European Literature" (Pegasus; New York, 1971) p153

[36] "logró una tarde encontrar, junto al zócalo de los pasillos, un trozo del zócalo de la cuarta dimensión, donde encontró un guante, muchas horquillas, muchas cerillas gastadas y, entre todas esas cosas, el peon perdido" (One afternoon  in he succeeded in finding, alongside the skirting board in the hallway, a piece of the skirting board from the 4th dimension, where he found a glove, lots of hairpins and used matches, and amongst these things the lost pawn) "El Incongruente" p61.  Gómez de la Serna further explores the idea of other dimensions in his later work, part of the *Novelas de la Nebulosa* collection, *El Hombre Perdido* where not only does he suggest that in order to fully understand life we must experience its dimensions but he deals more comprehensively with Surrealist techniques expanding on what can be seen in this novel.

were a helium balloon[37]. This subversion of our expectations adds humour which 'obtained a high place among the Surrealists, since through it they could effect a grotesque parody of all things that the ordinary man believed in, and even revered.'[38] Gómez de la Serna does not solely write about the incongruences that occur in Gustavo's waking hours but also dedicates two chapters of his novel to the description of Gustavo's dreams, which seem to have been ruled by the same illogicality and irrationality as his waking experiences. The exploration of dreams and the subconscious were constant and important themes of the Surrealist movement.

A further focus of surrealist imagery that may be seen throughout the novel is the focus on time. Unlike previously mentioned Dadaist imagery related to time, a surrealist perspective comes not from the meddling with time and its passing within the structure of the novel, but in the contemplation of it and how its passing affects the characters themselves. Time is obviously an important motif in Gustavo's world as he is constantly mentioning his watch. It is however, the other characters whom he comes across that bring time to the foreground. When Gustavo goes to the aid of an old woman in Segovia he finds her worried, attempting to clean her hair. Gustavo describes her saying, 'tenía la sensibilidad del tiempo; los relojes la desesperaban'[39] (She felt the time; clocks made her desperate); the old woman describes how 'tengo la cabeza llena de

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[37] "Gustavo descolgó la pecera y soltó los peces como si fuesen pájaros y los peces se hubiera dicho que, en vez de precipitarse en la calle, siguieron su camino como peces en el agua, y después, con la pecera en la mano, se le escapó a Gustavo y se vio cómo la pecera sin peces subía al cielo como un globo de los niños" (Gustavo picked up the fish tank and released the fish as if they were birds and the fish, instead of swiftly falling to the street, continued on their way like fish in water, after this the fish tank, which Gustavo held in his hands, now empty of fish escaped from his clutches and floated up towards the sky like a child's balloon) "El Incongruente" pp41-42

[38] Rodolfo Cardona "Ramón: A study of Gómez de la Serna and his works" (Eliseo Torres & Sons; New York, 1957) p 19

[39] "El Incongruente" p98

segundos'[40] (my head is filled with seconds) and how it has been snowing minutes. A further example of Surrealist imagery within the novel is that of the beach filled with paperweights where Gustavo sees them as living objects, 'se veía claramente que esos pisapapeles estaban mucho más vivos que esos que ya instalados sobre las mesas de despacho no tenían el soplo de una vida interior'[41] (one could clearly see that those paperweights were much more alive than those already installed on office desks that didn't even have a breath of internal life) and spends the whole chapter describing the various facets of them – he even likens the paperweights to the 'hermanos de esos relojes encerrados en un cristal'[42] (siblings of those clocks enclosed in glass).

In conclusion, Ramón Gómez de la Serna's novel *El Incongruente* 'creates a completely irrational atmosphere, a complete liberation from logic. Gustavo's world is chaotic, without the slightest trace of logical organisation'[43] - both in the diegesis and the novel's structure – placing the utmost importance on chance, spontaneity and contradiction; as such the novel demonstrates many of the key principles of the Dada movement. However, unlike the Dadaists, 'Ramón's subversive attitude had been confined to aesthetics and unlike the Dadaist agitators, had never extended itself to the social and political plane'[44]. In this work, Gómez de la Serna even goes so far as to employ some elements more usually associated with the Surrealists – in his use of imagery and exploration of dreams – even before such a movement existed.

Written on the cusp between two artistic movements – Dadaism and Surrealism - *El Incongruente* is the very expression of what is 'the avant-garde'. In its pages, we witness the passage of one movement and the arrival of another. If the purpose of the avant-garde is to push the boundaries to challenge all aspects

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[40] Ibid p98

[41] Ibid p136

[42] Ibid p136

[43] Rodolfo Cardona "Ramón: A study of Gómez de la Serna and his works" p23

[44] Ibid p18

of what has gone before and what is expected, in *El Incongruente*, Ramón Gómez de la Serna expresses this challenge completely. Gómez de la Serna is not simply influenced by the avant-garde, through his genius he expresses the very spirit of the avant-garde as he explains, 'hay una realidad que no es surrealidad ni realidad subreal, sino una realidad lateral'[45] (There is a reality that is neither surreal, nor unreal, but a lateral reality).

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[45] Gómez de la Serna "El Hombre Perdido" (Espasa-Calpe S.A; Madrid, 1962) p7

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# The evolution burial practice among the Ertebølle; an attempt to apply the concepts of agency and structure to the study of cultural change in the past.

Coralie Acheson

Archaeology has traditionally failed to identify the ability of individuals in the past to make conscious decisions and act creatively. Individuals with the power to act are referred to as agents, with the ability and creativity to make decisions and act independently. They are however constantly influenced by structural norms: deeply ingrained ideas about how to live their lives properly. This tension can be observed archaeologically in the cemeteries of the Ertebølle of Denmark. While there are clear norms in the burial practice, such as the style of inhumation and the type of grave goods, there are also variations. One grave has the body of a young woman and a baby boy, the child laid on the wing of a swan; another burial has full male grave goods, but the body of a dog. It is suggested here that these variations are evidence of individuals reacting to unusual situations and personalities. When people act in ways which do not fit into the usual structure there is the potential for both the structure and, as a result society, to change.

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of agency and structure, based primarily on the work of the sociologists Giddens and Bourdieu, are frequently discussed within post-processual archaeology. It has been seen as a way of reaching the individual in the past, one of the key stones of interpretive archaeology. This article explores

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these concepts, in particular looking at the way they relate to each other. They will be discussed in turn, before the relationships between them are explored. These theoretical ideas will be explored through a case study of mortuary ritual within the Ertebølle culture of the Southern Scandinavian Mesolithic. This will focus on seeking evidence for decision making, and the role that conscious, self aware thought played in comparison to the ideological structures shared by the people and the relationship this has with change in that structure.

AGENCY AND ACTORS

The concept of agency, while widely discussed in post-processual archaeology, is a rather ambiguous one. Barrett describes agency as the "means by which things are achieved", clearly linking agency with action[1]. Berggren claims that "agency is understood as the ability of a conscious subject", which relates more directly to the ability of an individual to act[2]. Finally Gardner asserts that it "concerns the nature of individual freedom, the role of socialisation in forming persons, and the role of particular ways of doing things in the reproduction of cultures" which links both action and actor albeit in a rather vague way[3]. The lack of a clear definition is problematic. The problem is that agency itself is a rather vague concept. For the purposes of discussion agents, or actors, are those who have agency, and they are considered to be self-aware, knowledgeable individuals. Agents act, and these actions are very important for archaeologists, particularly in studying how cultures change. Agency is the quality of the individual which gives them the potential to act. Archaeology has been plagued traditionally with a tendency to ignore the potential of individuals to act

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[1] J.C. Barrett, 'Agency, the Duality of Structure and the Problem of the Archaeological Record' in I. Hodder (ed.), Archaeological Theory Today (Cambridge, 2001), 141.

[2] K. Berggren, 'The Knowledge-Able Agent?: On the paradoxes of power' in C.Holtorf and H.Karlsson (eds.), Philosophy and Archaeological Practice: Perspectives for the 21st Century (Göteborg, 2000), 39.

[3] A. Gardner, 'Introduction: Social Agency, Power and Being Human' in A.Gardner (ed.), Agency Uncovered: Archaeological Perspectives on Social Agency, power and Being Human (London, 2004), 1.

intelligently and purposefully, resulting in a vision of the past peopled by pawns. By drawing the study of agency into archaeological dialogue the way is opened for a new awareness of people in the past.

There is much debate over the universality of agency. As action requires power, it can be argued that many members of a society do not have agency[4]. Bourdieu's work encompasses the study of what he calls 'capital', the amount of which a person has affecting the power they have to act. This is affected by things such as gender and social status[5]. There are two important ways in which an individual's power can be considered; 'power to' and 'power over'. 'Power over' is the ability for one individual to impose his or her will on another. It may indeed be true that only certain members of society can act in this way. However, 'power to', simply the ability to act, is shared by most, if not all, individuals[6]. The question, therefore, is whether or not the actions resulting from agency are brought about by 'power to' or 'power over'.

The anthropologist Maurice Bloch has argued that in order to truly understand a society the most basic of actions and choices must be studied. These are rarely vocalised and appear too obvious to even consider by those embedded within the society: they 'go without saying'[7]. While there is a difference between individual potential for action, the agency behind the most minor and everyday activities is shared by almost every person. The results of even small actions can

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[4] K. Berggren, 'The Knowledge-Able Agent?: On the paradoxes of power' in C.Holtorf and H.Karlsson (eds.), Philosophy and Archaeological Practice: Perspectives for the 21st Century (Göteborg, 2000), 42.

[5] A. Gardner, 'Introduction: Social Agency, Power and Being Human' in A.Gardner (ed.), Agency Uncovered: Archaeological Perspectives on Social Agency, power and Being Human (London, 2004), 7.

[6] A. Gardner, 'Introduction: Social Agency, Power and Being Human' in A.Gardner (ed.), Agency Uncovered: Archaeological Perspectives on Social Agency, power and Being Human (London, 2004), 5.

[7] M. Bloch, 'What goes without saying: the conceptualisation of Zafimaniry society' in A.Kuper (ed.) Conceptualising society (London, 1992) 143.

have far-reaching implications, and Giddens identifies this inadvertent agency as an important source of change, as individuals are forced to reflect on the unexpected consequences of their actions[8]. It is important that we do not exclude these actions from our consideration of agency and individuals in the past, as the result is likely to be a past peopled by knowledgeable, self aware, powerful individuals, who will be mostly middle aged and predominantly male[9]. Eleanor Scott has illustrated this potential by using the example of a game of Happy Families, where the mundane occupations are removed and the cards representing Mrs, Miss and Master characters are excluded as their presence is implied by the adult male in each family. This leaves cards representing, for example, Mr Ritual Shaman, Mr Paramount-Chief, and Mr Specialised Craftsman, rather than the whole family of Bunns the Bakers. As this would not present a particularly accurate view of society, likewise the exclusion of individuals with mundane roles or a more dependent position would leave a very empty view of any community[10]. Agency at every level of society needs to be considered.

If agency is fundamental to the study of a society then archaeologists must move away from considering the study of it as an optional extra, if meaningful conclusions are to be drawn. The challenge for archaeologists is their removal from the people they are studying. This removal is made particularly apparent when archaeologists face their subjects in the grave. This study attempts to take buried remains as a starting point for approaching the agent. The Ertebølle were complex hunter-gatherer-fishers of the Late Mesolithic in Denmark. They were semi-sedentary and at least some communities buried their dead in

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[8] M.A. Dobres and J. Robb, 'Agency in archaeology: paradigm or platitude?' in M.-A. Dobres and J. Robb (eds.), Agency in archaeology (London, 2000), 5.

[9] M.A. Dobres and J. Robb, 'Agency in archaeology: paradigm or platitude?' in M.-A. Dobres and J. Robb (eds.), Agency in archaeology (London, 2000), 13.

[10] E. Scott, 'Introduction: On the incompleteness of archaeological narratives' in J. Moore and E.Scott (eds.), Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology (London, 1997), 2.

cemeteries[11]. They buried at least a portion of their dead in cemeteries. While children were not generally buried with gravegoods one infant male, eight to nine month foetal stage was buried with adult male items, specifically a stone knife. This burial is particularly poignant as the baby was buried with an eighteen year old female, presumed to be his mother, the body of the child laid on a swan's wing[12]. No other burial includes a swan's wing, which would seem to indicate that this was a deliberate and unique action taken by those conducting the burial in response to particular circumstance or as a response to the deaths of these particular individuals.

STRUCTURE

Agency exists within a structure, which provides a framework within which agents act[13]. It is not an external 'system' like those drawn up in the systems analysis of New Archaeology, or like the 'superstructure' that Marx envisaged; the individuals do not act mindlessly within it[14]. According to Anthony Giddens, structure is made up of 'structuring principles', deeply embedded rules and resources through which agents act. Rules, in this sense of the word, are constitutive rather than regulative; Giddens suggests the difference between the rules of chess, without which there is no game, and the rule that says that workers have to clock in at a certain hour as an example of this distinction[15]. Many rules within a structure are so deeply buried in the subconscious that

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[11] P. Rowley-Conwy, 'Cemeteries, Seasonality and Complexity in the Ertebølle of southern Scandinavia' in M. Zvelebil, L. Domańska and R.Dennell (eds.) Harvesting the Sea, Farming the Forest: The Emergence of Neolithic Societies in the Baltic Region (Sheffield, 1998), 193.

[12] S.E. Albrethsen and E.B. Petersen, 'Excavations of a Mesolithic cemetery at Vedbæk, Denmark' (1976) 47 Acta Archaeologica 8-9.

[13] J.C. Barrett, 'A thesis on agency' in M.-A. Dobres, J. Robb. (eds.), Agency in Archaeology (London, 2000), 61.

[14] M. Johnson, Archaeological Theory: An Introduction, (Victoria, 1999), 79 94.

[15] A. Giddens, The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration, (Cambridge, 1986), 17-19.

individuals are barely aware of them; they simply know, as Giddens puts it, 'how to go on'[16]. The structure is made up of deeply embedded beliefs and values which provide a framework for action[17][18]. While constraining action it could also be said to provide a wide range of possibilities from which individuals can choose from[19]. While internal, structure is shared between members of a group. Individuals draw upon memories, expectations, and experiences when they act[20]. Action carried out within a group creates and reinforces a shared knowledge of 'how to go on'. One of the ways this occurs is through ritual, which after all is made up of actions, which are either done as a group or carried out individually by everyone[21]. Structure and ideology are related; structure is an internalised system of going about life that is shared by members of a certain group; ideology forms a part of this, constraining action through recurrent, often ritualised, practice[22].

It was suggested above that the non-typical aspects of the burial of the young woman and child indicates the agency of those conducting the burial. However, the event would have taken place against a background of complex structural ideas about how such an event was to occur. Ritual events, of which burial is an example, are structured actions which would have been known, if not

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[16] A. Giddens, The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration, (Cambridge, 1986), 22.

[17] J. Robb, 2001 'Steps to an archaeology of agency.' Paper presented at Agency workshop, UCL, November 2000: http://www.arch.cam.ac.ukk/~jer39-steps-to-an-archaeology-of –agency.html. Last checked: 3/10/08.

[18] M. Shanks, and C. Tilley, Social Theory and Archaeology (Cambridge, 1987), 71.

[19] J.C. Barrett, 'Agency, the Duality of Structure and the Problem of the Archaeological Record' in I. Hodder (ed.), Archaeological Theory Today (Cambridge, 2001), 150.

[20] J.C. Barrett, 'Agency, the Duality of Structure and the Problem of the Archaeological Record' in I. Hodder (ed.), Archaeological Theory Today (Cambridge, 2001), 152.

[21] J.C. Barret, 'The living, the dead, and the ancestors: Neolithic and Early Bronze Age mortuary practices' in J.C.Barrett and I.A.Kinnes (eds.), The Archaeology of Context in the Neolithic and Bronze Age: Recent Trends (Sheffield, 1988), 3.

[22] M. Shanks, and C. Tilley, Social Theory and Archaeology (Cambridge, 1987), 75.

understood, by those involved in them[23]. While certain aspects of the inhumation are unique, the style of the burial, an extended inhumation in an area used as a cemetery for similar burials, the grave goods buried with the woman, and the double inhumation of a woman and a young child are all things which would have been known and considered normal. It is very likely that the people concerned were acting according to how they perceived a 'proper' burial to be. This 'norm' is a practical expression of the structure. By following the pattern of what was right and proper, the norm was reinforced and recreated, joining a body of memories of proper burials which would have been subconsciously referred to again and again[24].

AGENCY AND STRUCTURE

According to both Bourdieu and Giddens structure and agency are deeply connected[25]. Structure both constrains action and is itself created by the actions of individuals who are part of it[26]. The mechanism for this, according to Bourdieu, is the *habitus*[27]. The *habitus* is a system of actions that perpetuate the structure; at once recreating the structure, while at the same time being a product of it[28]. These are unconscious, everyday actions which in the very

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[23] L.N. Stutz, Embodied Rituals and Ritualized Bodies: Tracing Ritual Practices in late Mesolithic Burials, (Lund, 2003), 318-320.
[24] L.N. Stutz, Embodied Rituals and Ritualized Bodies: Tracing Ritual Practices in late Mesolithic Burials, (Lund, 2003), 322-323.
[25] M.A. Dobres and J. Robb, 'Agency in archaeology: paradigm or platitude?' in M.-A. Dobres and J. Robb (eds.), Agency in archaeology (London, 2000), 5.
[26] I. Hodder and S. Hutson, Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology (Cambridge, 2003), 94.
[27] M. Dietler, and I. Herbich, 'Habitus, techniques, style: An integrated approach to the social understanding of material culture and boundaries' in M.T.Stark (ed.) The Archaeology of Social Boundaries (Washington, 1998), 247.
[28] M. Postone, E. LiPuma, and C. Calhoun, 'Introduction: Bourdieu and Social Theory' in C.Calhoun, E. Lipuma, and M.Postone (eds.), Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives (Cambridge, 1993), 2.

nature of being done reinforce the structure they flow from. Giddens described this as the practical consciousness, the knowledge of 'how to go on' and the practical daily outworking of that[29]. Every action has a past in the sense that it draws on the structure, a resource of past actions and experiences. Bloch's study of the Zafimaniry gives several examples of this, such as the connection between the man of the house and its central post. This 'ideology' if it can be called that, was recreated by the man's role in the building of the house, and in chopping down the tree to provide the wood for the post. This would be reinforced day by day in the way the man would sit at the foot of the post while in the house[30].

Structure always has the potential for change because of its relationship to agency[31]. It is not an external but an internal force, sustained through memory and continual practice. The actions which sustain and create it are taken from the structure, which is itself a resource for action. The rules which make up the structuring principles present a variety of choices rather than a single option. The structure constrains an agent's choice of actions to choose from, but there is still variation. If one variant is consistently chosen over another, or new options are introduced creatively the structure will change as it is created continuously from action. Structure can also change through deliberate decision. A characteristic of agency is the reflexive monitoring of action[32]. Many of the actions which get us through the day may be unconscious, but we constantly monitor them. If something unexpected occurs, this will affect the

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[29] I. Hodder and S. Hutson, Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology (Cambridge, 2003), 91.

[30] M. Bloch, 'What goes without saying: the conceptualisation of Zafimaniry society' in A.Kuper (ed.) Conceptualising society (London, 1992), 141.

[31] A. Gardner, 'Introduction: Social Agency, Power and Being Human' in A.Gardner (ed.), Agency Uncovered: Archaeological Perspectives on Social Agency, power and Being Human (London, 2004), 2.

[32] A. Gardner, 'Introduction: Social Agency, Power and Being Human' in A.Gardner (ed.), Agency Uncovered: Archaeological Perspectives on Social Agency, power and Being Human (London, 2004), 6.

next performance of that action. When things do not work, or when there is a crisis, the knowledge of 'how to go on is disrupted'; Giddens described the reaction to this as 'discursive consciousness'[33][34]. This is where change is likely to occur, and new ways of doing things introduced. Decisions will have a social element, as individuals discuss what is to be done. Action always occurs within a social setting although it is conducted by individuals[35].

Structure and agency are two opposing forces which must be held in tension with each other if we are to study human action and the potential for change. To take another of the burials from Vedbæk Bøgebbakken: that of an elderly male. His body was laid on antlers, which are only included in the burial of old people, male and female, in the cemetery[36]. He was buried with tools, which was typical for adult male burials[37]. In the way of the burials at both Vedbæk and at other cemeteries, he was laid on his back, and there was red ochre present in the grave. Unusually, his legs were weighed down by large stones, which is a practice not found in any other graves at the cemetery[38]. It is interesting to wonder what an onlooker at the burial might think of the archaeological analysis of the grave today. The onlooker's experience would have been infused by memories of other burials, and of the life of the man being buried. Many things picked up on by archaeologists today might seem far too obvious to even mention, they would have, to use Bloch's term, 'gone

[33] J.C. Barrett, 'Agency, the Duality of Structure and the Problem of the Archaeological Record' in I. Hodder (ed.), Archaeological Theory Today (Cambridge, 2001), 154.
[34] I. Hodder and S. Hutson, Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology (Cambridge, 2003), 91.
[35] I. Hodder and S. Hutson, Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology (Cambridge, 2003), 104.
[36] S.E. Albrethsen and E.B. Petersen, 'Excavations of a Mesolithic cemetery at Vedbæk, Denmark' (1976) 47 Acta Archaeologica 22.
[37] S.E. Albrethsen and E.B. Petersen, 'Excavations of a Mesolithic cemetery at Vedbæk, Denmark' (1976) 47 Acta Archaeologica 21.
[38] S.E. Albrethsen and E.B. Petersen, 'Excavations of a Mesolithic cemetery at Vedbæk, Denmark' (1976) 47 Acta Archaeologica 22.

without saying'[39]. The onlooker would, however, know things that we may never know, such as the activities that accompanied the burial, the significance of the cemetery and what the deceased meant to the community.

There is more that we can take from this evidence, however, than just these bare facts. We know that he was buried, which was not the case for the entire population, so the decision to bury this individual was not the only option available[40]. We can tell that the place of the burial was significant; it was within a cemetery, suggesting that memory and tradition played a role in the placing of the grave[41]. This style of burial is found throughout the known Ertebølle cemeteries, with some variations, such as multiple instead of single inhumation, and different positions for the body[42]. This practice was, it seems, generally accepted; what we can call the norm. The inclusion of antlers and weapons also fit within a pattern, reflecting his age and his gender, suggesting that this was also a structured practice. The stones, which are unique, may have a particular significance to the individual buried, or may have been a practical solution to a problem; perhaps the body was in rigor mortis[43]. According to Chapman, people

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[39] M. Bloch, 'What goes without saying: the conceptualisation of Zafimaniry society' in A.Kuper (ed.) Conceptualising society (London, 1992), 143.

[40] L. Larrson, 'Man and Sea in Southern Scandinavia during the Late Mesolithic. The role of cemeteries in the view of society' in A. Fischer (ed.) Man and Sea in the Mesolithic: coastal settlement above and below the present sea level (Oxford, 1995), 19.

[41] L.N. Stutz, Embodied Rituals and Ritualized Bodies: Tracing Ritual Practices in late Mesolithic Burials, (Lund, 2003), 363.

[42] L. Larrson, 'Big Dog and Poor Man. Mortuary Practices in Mesolithic Societies in Southern Sweden' in T.B.Larrson, and H.Lundmark (eds.) Approaches to Swedish Prehistory: A Spectrum of Problems and Perspectives in Contemporary Research (Oxford, 1989), 215.

[43] S.E. Albrethsen and E.B. Petersen, 'Excavations of a Mesolithic cemetery at Vedbæk, Denmark' (1976) 47 Acta Archaeologica 22.

always have choices at a burial and it is probable that there were indeed a range of choices to be made during the burial of this man[44].

When the man died decisions were made as to how to treat the body. The result is what remains today, although we may not know how the decisions were made. The burial followed certain norms, in the style of the inhumation, the choice of grave goods and the inclusion of ochre. The burial may have been accompanied by some kind of ceremony which would also have followed a set pattern. The antlers, which are unusual, may have represented his posistion in the community, or had some kind of religious significance.

As has been discussed, however, structure is not static; it has the potential for change: this is perhaps demonstrated by the change in the pattern of the burials between the two cemeteries at Skateholm in Sweden. At the first cemetery the inclusion of red deer antlers with bodies is common, yet this is effectively non-existent at the second, while at the same time the number of bodies in a hocker, rather than a supine position increased greatly. This may reflect a change in the components of a 'proper' burial within the structure of the people at Skateholm[45]. Some of the most intriguing finds at both the two excavated Ertebølle cemeteries, Vedbæk Bøgebbakken and Skateholm are the graves without bodies. These follow the pattern for burial of a pit dug and quickly filled in again containing items normally associated with burial, like antlers, grave goods, and ochre, but without the presence of a body[46]. There are enough of these that it can be included in the picture of a burial norm, particularly at

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[44] J. Chapman, 'Tension at funerals: Social practices and the subversion of community structure in later Hungarian prehistory' in M.-A. Dobres, and J. Robb (eds.), Agency in Archaeology (London, 2000), 192.
[45] L. Larrson, 'Big Dog and Poor Man. Mortuary Practices in Mesolithic Societies in Southern Sweden' in T.B.Larrson, and H.Lundmark (eds.) Approaches to Swedish Prehistory: A Spectrum of Problems and Perspectives in Contemporary Research (Oxford, 1989), 22.
[46] L.N. Stutz, Embodied Rituals and Ritualized Bodies: Tracing Ritual Practices in late Mesolithic Burials, (Lund, 2003), 208.

Skateholm. One of the interpretations of these is that they are cenotaphs. If this is the case then there must have been a situation where a person died without leaving the community a body, perhaps lost at sea. The individuals in the community would have been faced with a dilemma; how to have a funeral without a body. Perhaps a decision was made to do everything the same, but without a body. The structural norms demanded a burial, but the individuals were forced to work out how to do this in unusual circumstances themselves. A related phenomenon may be the canine burials found at Skateholm. There is no evidence that dogs were particularly revered by the Ertebølle, with canine remains found at many domestic sites, often just dumped with other rubbish[47]. However at Skateholm II, the older of the two cemeteries, a dog has the most richly furnished grave; indeed the grave goods would have lead the excavators to think him the chief or certainly an important figure, had he not been a dog. It is possible that the dog plays some kind of role as substituting for a human[48]. Actions in response to unusual, even crisis situations, may have played a role in recreating the structure.

CONCLUSION

According to Chapman, in his study of mortuary ritual in the Hungarian Neolithic, funerals are moments when a community reflects on itself, the actions surrounding a burial become statements of their culture, reinforcing the structure in the process[49]. The mortuary practices of the Ertebølle demonstrate both the role of individual agency in the decisions surrounding a burial,

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[47] T.D. Price, and A.B. Gebauer, Smakkerup Huse: A Late Neolithic coastal site I northwest Zealand, Denmark (Gylling, 2005), 96.

[48] L. Larrson, 'Big Dog and Poor Man. Mortuary Practices in Mesolithic Societies in Southern Sweden' in T.B.Larrson, and H.Lundmark (eds.) Approaches to Swedish Prehistory: A Spectrum of Problems and Perspectives in Contemporary Research (Oxford, 1989), 219.

[49] J. Chapman, 'Tension at funerals: Social practices and the subversion of community structure in later Hungarian prehistory' in M.-A. Dobres, and J. Robb (eds.), Agency in Archaeology (London, 2000), 188.

including the potential for creativity and change, while at the same time showing that most decisions fit into a norm, providing evidence of the role of structure and ideology in the decisions that were made. Almost all the burials shared features in common, and were placed within an area which was set aside for burial. It is easy to assume that people in the past were controlled by ideological rules, which instructed them on how to go about their lives. But if we are to accept that individuals had agency, and were conscious and self-aware, then we cannot simply believe that their decisions were forced by subconscious structuring principles. It is clear that the role of agents should not be discounted from archaeological study. If agency is fundamentally connected with the ability to act then the decisions that lead to action are very important. Decision making is an internal balance of agency and structure. The structure, a resource of memory, knowledge and awareness of 'how to go on', provides a set of possibilities for the agent which can be chosen between. The agent brings their own conscious awareness to the decision, as well as their creativity and the advice of those around them. Our consideration of the past should not merely have an 'add actors and stir' approach[50], but should consider agency as a vital part of the ability of individuals to interact with their world.

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[50] Dobres, M.-A. and Robb, J. 2000 'Agency in archaeology: paradigm or platitude?' in M.-A. Dobres and J. Robb (eds.), Agency in archaeology, Routledge, London, 13.

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# 'The blissful change': Thomson's Calvinist Scepticism in the Face of the Nineteenth Century Radical Progressive Agenda

Joanna Małecka

This article traces the manifold satirical and poetic manifestations of James B.V. Thomson's questioning and sceptical attitude towards the progressivist agenda of the Victorian Britain. It presents both Thomson's proudly blazoned 'healthy scepticism' from his biting satirical works, and the dark, contradictory spirit of Thomson's most accomplished poetical work, *The City of Dreadful Night*, as two faces of the same moral attitude.

> *I think the only thing that's strange*
> *Is our illusion as to change.*
>
> James Thomson, *Vane's Story*

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Age in Britain witnessed some of the greatest social, economic, and political changes in a period of time unprecedentedly short. What was perhaps especially new about the cultural context in which these changes were taking place was the extreme self-awareness and preoccupation among the

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contemporary commentators for the direction into which the fast-developing world was heading. Among these commentators, the insightful position of James B.V. Thomson, a Scottish poet, essayist, and satirist, merits special attention. As I will argue, Thomson's deep-running scepticism embedded in the Calvinist distrust of the worldly order challenged some of the most progress-driven agendas of the nineteenth century.

THOMSON'S 'HEALTHY SCEPTICISM'

Pointedly drawing from Jonathan Swift, the Augustan master of the genre and 'the greatest of our divines'[1], James Thomson announces his modest proposal for a radical social change in one of his sharpest and most poignant satires. The reform expounded in *Proposals for the Speedy Extinction of Evil and Misery*, which promises to swiftly and effectively rid the humanity of all 'evil and misery, both as suffering and vice' and to ensure that 'everybody will be good and happy everywhere evermore'[2] is, in itself, very straightforward. It consists, according to the author, simply of a 'universal change to perfection of *Nature* and human nature.'[3] To this purpose the writer propounds the foundation of the Universal Perfection Company Unlimited, the leading board of which will include 'all honest Christians and genuine Christian Societies (supposing any such still extant) (...), The National Secular Society, with all Atheists, Theists, Deists, Pantheists, Pottheists, Necessitarians, Utilitarians, Positivists, etc., etc, (...) The International League of Peace and Liberty, together with all other Peace Societies and Liberal Associations, Socialists, Communists, Internationalists (...), The various Temperance Societies (...), The Vegetarians (...) all sincere politicians, radicals, republicans, conservatives, royalists' and, finally, all the 'worshipers of Mumbo Jumbo'[4] willing to contribute to the

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[1] James Thomson, *Proposals for the Speedy Extinction of Evil and Misery*, in *Essays and Phantasies*, (London: Reeves and Turner, 1881) pp. 51-103, p. 56
[2] Ibid., p. 55
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., pp.76-80

perfection creed. The author has no doubt that all the above mentioned will be interested in joining the Perfection Company, for 'every one who has faith that his own doctrine is true and his own plan of life good, must have faith that the better and wiser men become, the more will they believe his doctrine and adopt his plan of life'[5]. Once the leading board is established, The Universal Perfection Company will then proceed to convert the rest of the society and – deeply concerned for their ultimate good – eliminate the resistant elements, thereby accomplishing its first aim, the perfection of humanity.

By means of fulfilling his second proposal, the perfection of Nature, the writer sets out a clever plan for an emotional blackmail: should its demands remain unfulfilled, humanity is to menace Nature with its *decapitation* (man being rightly recognised as the *head* of Nature) by an act of universal suicide[6]. In the face of such a 'dreadful *ultimatum*'[7], The Perfection Company can rest assured that Nature will humbly yield to its demands for improvement (some of which include ridding the earth of the more *ugly*-looking insects; or abolishing sex distinctions – by either unsexing or 'androgynising' the human race – in the name of, on the one hand, absolute equality of man and woman, and, on the other, of putting an end to the indecency that may arise out of this morally doubtful subject).

Although with the Universal Perfection Company Thomson gave voice to a truly universal symbol of the perils of entrusting one's lot into the hands of a self-appointed committee of 'perfect' radical well-wishers and reformers, the vigour and sharpness of Thomson's *Proposals* (which would have been apparent

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[5] Ibid., p. 80

[6] The writer hastens to add that 'lest the fascinated reader should make away with himself hurriedly and for inappropriate reasons (while appropriate ones too surely abound), as Cleombrotus in a fine frenzy threw himself to death in the sea after studying the *Phœdo*, I call special attention to the fact that it is only our *universal* suicide which would prove a panacea for all the ills our flesh is heir to; individual suicides can do little or no good, save to the individuals themselves.' (p. 90-91)

[7] Ibid., p.92

to the nineteenth century readers) surges from a bitter reflection on the late nineteenth century political and social realities. As a regular contributor to the *National Reformer*, a liberal weekly paper which announced itself as 'the only British journal that advocates atheism'[8], and set as its target to expose the falsity of all religious systems, Thomson was at the centre of fervent political, religious and moral debates. The scope of such debates ranged from Thomson's own contributions ridiculing the notion that Swinburne's poetry is not decent enough to be read to young ladies in drawing rooms[9], to uncountable attacks on the Bible under the catchy headings: 'Was Moses Bacchus?' and 'What Has the Bible Done for Women?'[10]. Launched in 1860 by Thomson's close friend Charles Bradlaugh[11] (whose much-telling pseudonym at the time was 'Iconoclast') under his Reformer Newspaper Company Limited, the paper campaigned, on a political level, for a parliamentary reform in alliance with the Reform League (former Universal League for the Material Elevation of the Industrious Classes) In broader social terms (with Bradlaugh as the president of the National Secular Society) it aimed at promoting progress, improvement and happiness of the society by abolishing 'childish and absurd superstitions'[12] (i.e. religious 'superstitions').

That the *National Reformer* agreed to publish Thomson's *Proposals for the Speedy Extinction of Evil and Misery*, a bitterly sarcastic comment on the newspaper's own progressive, secularist, and utilitarian agenda, can perhaps be attributed to the special privileges Thomson enjoyed as Bradlaugh's intimate friend. In this capacity, he was even initially allowed to polemicise in print with the atheistic spirit of the newspaper from an openly religious stance.[13]

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[8] Cf. Tom Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, (London: Johnatan Cape, 1993), p. 66

[9] Ibid., p. 133

[10] Cf. William David Schaefer, 'The Two Cities of Dreadful Night', *PMLA*, 77:5 (Dec., 1962), 609-616, p. 52

[11] Bradlaugh remained the editor of the paper until 1863.

[12] Leonard, p. 128

[13] Thomson's first publication was a refutation of Bradlaugh's article on P. B. Shelley in which Bradlaugh claimed that Shelley was an atheist. Thomson answered with a deeply

Despite this friendship, and his close collaboration with the *National Reformer* throughout the years, though, Thomson remained deeply sceptical of the proposals of social change expounded by the National Reform League and the National Secular Society (neither of which he joined), and never failed to openly question their implicit linear reading of human history as a glorious 'march' towards progress. This 'healthy scepticism'[14], as Thomson proudly blazoned his own challenging stance deeply rooted in the Calvinist distrust of the worldly order, refuted easy answers to the moral and social dilemmas of his times. It was to remain the essential tenet in Thomson's worldview, a tenet which he was not prepared to discard even after his self-acknowledged 'conversion' from Calvinism to atheism[15]. That Thomson never missed a chance to argue against the progressivists is best attested by the fact that he even rebuked his great master, Shelley (whose middle name he adopted as the first letter of his literary pseudonym, B.V., as a tribute to his spiritual guide) for his misled faith in the perfectibility of human nature.

Thomson wittily juxtaposed such naive optimistic assumptions of human progress with his own vision of historical development: a perpetual return of humanity to its original point of departure. In another skilful satire, *A National*

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religious reading of Shelley's poetry, albeit he argued that Shelley's religious outlook was closer in spirit to Greek pantheism, rather than Christianity.

[14] James Thomson, *Bumble, Bumbledom, Bumbleism*, in *Essays and Phantasies* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1881) pp. 104-123, p. 117

[15] Schaefer draws our attention to the fact that Thomson's 'conversion' from Calvinism to atheism occurred soon after the publication of a mocking letter written by one of his readers as an answer to Thomson's passionate religious article (a refutation of a progressive vision of history based on Darwin's theory). In his article Thomson demonstrated his total lack of knowledge of Darwin. The impact that the ridiculing letter had on Thomson can be attested by the fact that he refrained from publishing in the following two years (and indeed never published a manifestly religious article or poem afterwards). So much Schaefer. Without overestimating the incident, it seems fair to surmise that it left some mark on Thomson's subsequent writing. Thomson decided he would not be mocked again.

*Reformer in the Dog-Days*, the author playfully refuses to write his contribution to Bradlaugh's newspaper and, by doing so, to engage in the metaphorical march of progress that he has been witnessing. He argues provocatively that by staying behind the 'improvement team' he is in fact only patiently awaiting their imminent return: 'Extremes always meet; and the farther I linger behind them, the nearer are they to overtaking me.'[16] Given the round shape of the globe, he rests calmly convinced that 'our separation is but for a brief period'[17], and that before long, the National Reformers will re-emerge behind him, even as just now he can see them disappearing in the distance.

Thomson continues to challenge the progressive schemes of his times with a satirical inversion of the Victorian doctrine of work[18] (which presented work as means of moral improvement) in yet another contribution to the *National Reformer* entitled *Indolence: A Moral Essay*. The satire bears a humorous warning to the potentially over-eager work activists: 'Calculated for a temperature of about $90°$ in the shade'. Setting out to praise the 'inestimable value of (…) inertia or supreme repose'[19], the essay begins with a 'humble enquiry' into the moral justification for the necessity of work, claiming provocatively that, as a matter of fact, 'in our England of to-day there is more peril to be feared from overwork than from underwork'[20]. It aptly finishes with a paean in praise of the writer's only true love, Indolence, which, however, remains unfinished on account of the author's extreme laziness.

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[16] James Thomson, *A National Reformer in the Dog-Days*, in *Essays and Phantasies*, pp. 166-176, p. 174

[17] Ibid., p. 175

[18] Thomson is particularly referring to Thomas Carlyle's 'gospel of work', first presented in Carlyle's novel *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34). Thomson was greatly influenced by Carlyle, even though here he is ostensibly parodying Carlyle's thought.

[19] James Thomson, *Indolence: A Moral* Essay, pp. 142-165, p. 150

[20] Ibid., p. 161

In between this flirtatious monologue, only cut short by the Indolence's deep kiss which puts an end to the writer's already too industrious essay by stealing his breath (or should it read 'yawn') away, Thomson manages to insert an elaborate treatise on the typology of the 'suitors of Indolence'. Most attention is devoted to the last type, the idlers by faith, further subdivided into the categories of pessimists and optimists. This last division, though, is emphatically described as inconsequential, the difference between the pessimistic and the optimistic idlers (both of whom choose wise indifference in the face of the incalculable mysteries of the universe, depositing their entire faith in Providence) being merely a question of an *intellectual nuance*, rather than of *essence*. Both worldviews evidently stem from the same spiritual root. This is significant in the light of the heavily religious language associated with the optimist group. On the other hand, the pessimist creed draws its dark tenets from an emphatically philosophical stoic stance. In stressing the similarities between both groups, Thomson suggests that the 'indolent' moral attitude runs deeper than religious and philosophic positions:

> *Let me note that the faith which is the root of indolence in this class may be of despair instead of assurance, of pessimism instead of optimism. It may be a profound and immutable belief in the absolute tyranny of blind Fate, in the utter vanity of all efforts to assuage or divert the operation of the inexorable laws of the universe. The difference, however, as regards our subject, is intellectual merely, not essential. The spiritual root is the same in both, though the one bears blossoms of mystical ravishment under the heaven of Providence, and the other dark leaves of oracular Stoicism under the iron vault of Destiny. Extremes meet; always, extremes meet.*[21]

The 'idlers by faith' are clearly yet another ironic name for Thomson's 'natural sceptics' who remain unimpressed by the Victorian urge to progress. By focusing on the discord between the progressivists and the followers of the

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[21] Ibid., p. 159

creed of 'indolence', Thomson was perhaps capturing the late nineteenth century attitudes on a more profound level than that reached by many other contemporary commentators. As we shall see, the open warfare staged between those who now would be regarded as close-to-fanatical religious preachers, and their no less fervent opponents was underscored by some more fundamental assumptions about human moral development, to a large extent shared by both groups.

Thomson knew the former from his earliest memories. His mother was a zealous follower of Edward Irving's proselytising preaching. She kept his depictions in central places of the house, and followed the preacher after his dismissal from the Kirk of Scotland up to the establishment of the new sect, Holy Apostolical Congregation, commonly known as the Irvingites. Irving preached a return to the first ages of Christianity in a very literal sense. This journey back in time was, according to him, made manifest in the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit among the faithful, who experienced the miraculous 'gift of tongues' (rendered in frequent outbursts of what to an uninitiated sounded like 'unintelligible *gibberish*'[22]). Above all, Irving urged his followers to prepare for the imminent second coming of Christ and the foundation of New Jerusalem on earth. In his thorough study of James Thomson and his times, Tom Leonard[23] describes a rather comical situation in May 1832 when Irving's congregation moved to a building which at the time served as the meeting quarters for the followers of the radical social reformer Robert Owen. Leonard quotes Thomas Carlyle's incredulous remarks upon learning the news: 'Owen the Atheist, and Irving the Gift-of-Tongue-ist, time about: it is a mad world'[24]. However, as Leonard notices, the radical doctrines expounded by both leaders, were perhaps not too far from each other, in as much as they both preached the imminent end of the old ways and the establishment of the new ideal communities of followers: in Irving's case – of God's New Jerusalem, in

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[22] Cf. Leonard, p. 7

[23] Leonard, *Places of the Mind*, (London: Johnatan Cape, 1993)

[24] Ibid., p. 45

the case of Owen – of new, perfect, economically self-contained communities (to give an example, Owen's doctrines led to the establishment of New Lanark in Scotland).

Such gross miscalculations of historical processes, envisioning the Promised Land of New Ideas, a utopian 'Canaan flowing with milk and honey', Thomson's 'healthy scepticism' could regard in no other way than as a 'good joke'.[25] He argued instead, at first from a religious stance, the inscrutability of God's grand plan. All attempts to explain or rationalise God's ways are seen as presumptuous and liable to God's just punishment. In his apocalyptic *Doom of a City*, the author charges the haughty patroness of the doomed metropolis (bearing a somewhat disturbing similitude to Queen Victoria) with the sin of pride: 'Thy voice throughout the world, complacently serene,/ Proclaims (...) I am rich and strong, I am wise and good and free;/ Thronèd above them, Empress sole of the earth-surrounding Sea!'[26]. The author humbly leaves her fate in God's hands, but the reader is sternly warned by the preceding ominous image of a proud Sage 'who handed on the torch of Wisdom, bright/ With growing splendour, 'thwart the billowy night/ Of shoreless Ignorance'[27] before being turned into stone by God's hand (with the liberal theses of his own composition, a symbol of his rationalist arrogance, now lying at his feet).

Reasoning from an ostensibly atheistic position, Thomson gives expression to the same hard-line scepticism in an essay published in the *Secularist* in 1876 under the title *On the Worth of Metaphysical Systems*. In it he presents all attempts at ordering and structuring the universe under man's flawed laws as laughable in the eyes of the good-natured mother Nature (who, nonetheless, fittingly sends madness on those who persist in vain attempts at confining her in the narrow strait-jackets of their ludicrous theories):

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[25] Thomson, *Bumble, Bumbledom, Bumbleism*, p. 114
[26] James Thomson, *The Doom of a City*, in *A Voice from the Nile and Other Poems* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1884), pp. 92-159, Part III: 'The Return', Section IV, p. 153
[27] Ibid., Part One: 'The City', Section XVII, p. 111

> *It is strange that we have to appeal to history to show the worthlessness of absolute systems. How can man, an infinitesimal atom in the infinite universe, embrace that infinity? How can man, whose life is an inappreciable moment in eternal time, comprehend the laws of that eternity?*[28]

The pattern of argument in the essay traces closely the reasoning of *The Doom of the City*, albeit the punishment sent by God on the presumptuous is here substituted by a no less terrible sentence of Mother Nature. As always in Thomson's worldview, 'extremes meet' and the ostensibly Godless world ruled by Nature proves to feature many religious characteristics.

DEVIL IN *THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT*

*The City of Dreadful Night*, Thomson's best-known and most-accomplished poem, strikes the reader with its gloomy vision of a nightmarish city whose ghost-like inhabitants are imprisoned within its bounds with no hope of improving their situation. The ironic joke spelled in the poem's dark humour is that they are even refused the admittance to the hell (last means of escaping from the City), as the hell guard chooses to read literally Dante's motto – 'Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here' – and requests a payment in hope currency from each entrant. Perhaps the main problem with *The City of Dreadful Night* is that, despite such signposts of the poem's slippery, hellish surface, it has often been read too literally. When the devilish undertones permeating the body of the poem are ignored, *The City of Dreadful Night* temptingly presents itself as a Godless poem advocating atheism[29], as has been argued, and lacking in any

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[28] James Thomson, *On the Worth of Metaphysical Systems*, in *Essays and Phantasies*, pp. 296-302, p. 300

[29] Compare: ed. Simon Reynolds, *Novalis and the Poets of Pessimism*, (Norwich: Michael Russel, 1995), p. 58

ethical feeling[30]. Such interpretations, as I will show, are guilty of relinquishing Thomson's scepticism and thereby they implicitly fall into the devil's trap set for those too eager to convert to the poem's explicit anti-creed. With *The City of Dreadful Night* Thomson also reveals the dark pessimistic side of his 'healthy scepticism', which nonetheless, according to Thomson's own diagnosis, stems from the same root as his optimist take on the idea. Despite the apparent sharp contrast in tone, they both share Thomson's deep Calvinist distrust of the worldly order as the domain of the devil's activity.

The labyrinthine structure of *The City of Dreadful Night* based on the pattern of repetition and manifold mirror reflections (the poem experiments with various rhyming patterns, and its twenty-one sections folded in the middle reveal a close fit between the first and last three sections) warns its readers against any attempts at straightforward reading of its meaning. The structure mimics the unfathomable substance of the City, which is suspended between dream (or nightmare) and reality. Yet, Thomson cautions against reading the City only as a nightmare, by pointing to the oneiric quality of the reality itself:

> *For life is but a dream whose shapes return,*
> *Some frequently, some seldom, some by night*
> *And some by day, some night and day: we learn,*
> *The while all change and many vanish quite,*
> *In their recurrence with recurrent changes*
> *A certain seeming order; where this ranges*
> *We count things real; such is memory's might.*[31]

Thus, Thomson's *City* parallels the a-logical fragmented nature of the reality, over which man superimposes his shabby constructs thereby locking the endless process of changes under the appearance of order. The reality, though,

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[30] David Daiches, *Some Late Victorian Attitudes*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969), p. 49

[31] James (B. V.) Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night*, in *'The City of Dreadful Night' and Other Poems*, (Glasgow: Kennedy & Boyd, 2008), Section I, stanza 3, p. 5

ultimately refutes all such attempts at straight-jacketing its mysterious processes. Despite the great number of causeways, piers and 'noble bridges' built as connection points between the scattered parts of the City, it remains a fragmented, labyrinthine space, and a frail human emanation mocked by such natural wonders as 'trackless wilderness', 'savannahs', and 'savage woods' which surround it threateningly (I, 5:4-5). The poem is almost too emphatic in its fragmented and constructed texture, with its twenty-one sections arranged according to the pattern of recurring (yet each time altered – according to the logic of the nightmare) themes, which implicitly encourage the reader to shuffle and rearrange them into new patterns.[32]

The poem's slippery oneiric structure mirrors the thematic tangle which presents no easy key to its readers. Although there is temptation to regard it as a mere parody of Thomson's earlier poem, *The Doom of a City*, what *The City of Dreadful Night* features instead is a complex and unclear 'nightmare' on the themes and images drawn from *The Doom of a City*. These themes are endlessly repeated, altered, and inversed, in an on-going process of a mad devilish construction. One striking difference between the two poems is the removal of God from *The City of Dreadful Night*, whose governing Voice in *The Doom of a City* (capitalised all along) announces His will, thereby 'tuning' the whole universe into one perfectly harmonious tone. However, assuming that God is absent from *The City of Dreadful Night*, the same cannot be said of the devil. The first sign of the devilish presence, is the resounding multi-voicedness of the poem, which turns the Godly harmony of Thomson's original vision into a true pandemonium of struggling sounds and 'strange voices' (among which, as we will see, the hissing tongue of a Snake can be indistinctly heard – in sharp contrast with God's clear voice in *The Doom*).

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[32] Shaefer for example argues for a separate reading of the parts of the poem written in 1870 and those written in 1873, each of which, according to him, constitutes a thematic unity.

Throughout the poem, the Devil makes no appearance *in persona* and yet the poem resonates with devilish undertones. The three crucial moments permeated with his presence are all linked by the common Northern motive, alluding to the depiction of Satan in the *Old Testament* as the lord of the North.[33] We are first informed of the Devil's presence in the City by a solitary preacher-like figure, who describes a 'hillock burning with a brazen glare' on which the preparations for Devil's feast are in progress: 'A Sabbath of the Serpents, heaped pell-mell/ For Devil's roll-call and some *fête* of Hell' (IV, 4:6-7). The preparations for the Devil's celebration rather slyly lead to the anti-homily delivered in an 'anti-church' in the Section XIV of the poem. In it in a dark figure with 'intolerable' burning eyes (not a priest) preaches to the gathered congregation from the 'unillumed' pulpit an anti-homily which disconcertingly oscillates between the tones of elevated joy and ultimate despair. Presenting himself sympathetic to the sufferings of his congregation and eager to ease their pain, the preacher begins in an apocalyptic language of utter despair. He presents the inhabitants of the City as those doomed to suffer without respite within the realm of the 'unholy night', only to shift suddenly to the elevated tones of joy as he proposes to the faithful the ultimate solution to their sufferings which will guarantee their undisturbed peace – suicide:

> *And now at last authentic word I bring,*
> *Witnessed by every dead and living thing;*
> *Good tidings of great joy for you, for all:*
> *There is no God; no Fiend with names divine*
> *Made us and tortures us; if we must pine,*
> *It is to satiate no Being's gall. (...)*
> *But if you would not this poor life fulfil,*
> *Lo, you are free to end it when you will.*
> (XIV, 6:1-6 and 11:4-5)

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[33] Cf. 'I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.' (Is, 15:13)

If the passage bears dark reminiscences of Thomson's *Proposals for the Speedy Extinction of Evil and Misery*, the devilish message is further confirmed by another Devil-inspired voice coming from the congregation. The 'vehement voice' pointedly coming from 'the northern aisle' reinstates the preacher's terrible vision while pretending to rage against it: 'Our life's a cheat, our death a black abyss:/ Hush and be mute envisaging despair' (XVI, 10:3-4).

The extortion is taken literally by the last 'mute' preacher of *The City of Dreadful Night*, the winged Melancolia, sombre Patroness and Queen of the city, who oversees her demesne from a 'northern crest' (XXI, 1:1). Thus, from the northern hillock, through the northern aisle to the northern crest, Devil's voice deliberately mistunes the messages of the three preachers in the poem, reminding the reader of Thomson's strong mistrust in preaching techniques (in Thomson's firm statement: 'I don't believe the world capable of being benefited much by having any opinion whatever preacher to it'[34]). In an appropriate conclusion to the poem, the last section re-instates this scepticism by declaring that 'all the oracles are dumb or cheat'[35]. Thomson is here engaging with Milton's nativity 'Hymn' in praise of the 'peaceful night' of Christ's birth, which brings a temporary silent pause to the world's 'hideous hum': The oracles are dumb,/ No voice or hideous hum/ Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving'[36]. Also, the Nature's guilty speeches are hushed momentarily by the appearance of the Saviour.

Unlike in Milton's 'Hymn', *The City of Dreadful Night* offers to the reader no silent pause in the 'hideous hum' of its multi-voicedness. The apparent silence of the City's Queen, Melancolia, is filled in by the narrator with a hum of his own bustling thoughts. Overlooking the City from her 'high throne in the

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[34] Cf. Leonard, p. 163

[35] Thomson is reversing a passage from Milton's nativity 'Hymn': The oracles are dumb,/ No voice or hideous hum/ Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving'

[36] John Milton, 'The Hymn', in 'Read Print, Online Books' (http://www.readprint.com/work-1241/The-Hymn-John-Milton), Accessed: 11/02/2010

north' (XXI, 11:1), Melancolia, the 'superhuman' statue of a winged-woman, is not only a clear depiction of Dürer's famous engraving of the same title, but also mimics the Queen from *The Doom of a City*. Melancolia's 'old despair' in the face of the 'dreadful mysteries of Time' is, thus, a Devil-inspired wrong answer to the intractable questions of the universe. Her 'heroic' engagement in a fight with Time (perhaps an explicit answer to the 'Devil's roll-call') is implicitly arrogant and doomed to failure. Time itself emerges as a venomous Snake (another devilish presence) incessantly circulating the Earth 'distilling poison at each painful motion,/And seems condemned to circle ever thus' (XIII, 3:6-7). In this vision, the linear movement of Time is substituted by the idea of constant return, and, in as much as Time never keeps still and continues spraying venom with its every twist, no direct return to the past is possible: 'The thing which has been, never is again'[37] (XVIII, 12:6). Thus, the endeavours to return to the Eden state of innocence of another devilish snake-like hissing figure in section XVIII, who threatens the narrator with his 'poisoned blade', are doomed to failure, because the past never returns under the same but always under altered/distorted forms.

In this world of deceit, the narrator revels in the role of an active participant in the poem's slippery multi-voicedness, presenting his role in the Proem as that of a preacher of a new anti-homily reserved only for the initiate, his Sad Fraternity. In consonance with the Devil's dreadful 'roll-call', he advocates a military vision of life, emphatically rendered in Scots, whereby man's true purpose in life is to 'dree his weird' (V, 4:4) (the phrase, which can be rendered

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[37] Although, compare also George M. Harper's notes on this snake-like figure, an image which Thomson derives from Blake's famous depiction of the Old Testament Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. Harper points out that Thomson appears to both recognise *and* deny the value of the mystical experience of return to the state of innocence and child's simplicity untainted by venom. On the one hand, by presenting the mystic as a degraded and despicable figure, Thomson can be argued to be rather explicitly ridiculing his quest; on the other, it also seems that Thomson's own sympathy and even longings are with the mystic looking for his way back 'to Eden innocence in Eden's clime'.

as 'to endure one's fate', originally signified 'to perform military service' – from Gothic *driugan*[38]).

The Devil's presence in a rather fitting way haunts Thomson's poem, in the light of Thomson's own life-long struggle with the concept of Christian devil, whom he regarded as an offence to human intelligence, and against whom he argued fiercely.[39] In the dreadful nightmare of *The City*, the Devil returns, permeating the world of Thomson's creation, sowing the venomous seeds of doubt and deception in his wake, and revealing the mystic's scheme of return to the past, the 'blissful change' spelt in his onomatopoeic hissing tongue, as both a deceptive and an impossible dream. Thus, the Victorian dreams of moral progress undergo a Calvinist check. Judged as presumptuous, they are 'justly' turned into a ghastly nightmare in which the expected new Jerusalem upon earth becomes the 'unholy' City of never-ending night in which the Devil revels uncurbed.

CONCLUSION

On the nineteenth century cultural stage James Thomson reveals himself as profoundly engaged in the social and moral debate of his times, while he remains deeply sceptical of the predominant progressivist propaganda based on linear visions of history propagated by the radical political, religious, and social groups in the Victorian Britain. Both his biting satires and his poetical works

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[38] Oxford University Press Online Dictionary
(http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50069763?query_type=word&queryword=DREE&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=3&search_id=cDXR-9a9RgU-3811&hilite=50069763) Accessed: 05/02/2010

[39] Cf. For example Thomson's *Vane's Story* (London: Reves and Turner, 1881), and his satire *The Devil in the Church of England*, in James Thomson, *Satires and Profanities* (London: Progressive Publishing Company, 1884)

challenge such simplistic visions of time-flow and the concept of humanity's development seen as a competitive race, by offering an alternative oneiric-like vision of history, in which the same motifs are doomed to endless return, yet always under altered shapes (not dissimilarly from a perpetual reoccurrence of the same patterns in a reverting nightmare). In this dangerous landscape, any utopian vision of human perfection is seen as a demonic call to a 'blissful change', tempting the readers with its hissing tongue.

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# The significance of the changes that Sulla made to the Roman constitution, and to what extent these changes had been reversed by 70 B.C.

Ruth MacDonald

The time when Sulla rose to the dictatorship of the Roman Republic was one in which the power of the Senate was waning. On his accession Sulla implemented changes which sought to re-establish the authority of the Senate thus regaining stability within the state. Here I consider: the impact the reforms had on the existing Roman constitution; the reception of the reforms by different social groups; the political and social context surrounding their implementation and, where applicable, their reversal with the ultimate aim of establishing the reforms' overall success in achieving the goals of their author.

The Sullan reforms were ultimately a scheme by which the perpetrator of these changes sought to re-establish a level of Senatorial authority, arguably not seen since the tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus, with the aim of recovering stability within a state at this time much shaken by civil war. At the time of the Sullan reforms there were two dominant factions apparent in Roman politics: the *optimates* and the *populares*.

The *optimates* were made up of conservative Senators who wished to curtail the influence of the people, keeping power in the hands of the Senate[1]. They were

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[1] The Senate acted as an advisory board for magistrates.

opposed by the *populares* who addressed the problems directly facing the people. Neither faction should be seen as a political party in modern terms. Those involved in political life were not formally grouped in such a way. In fact, at different points in a political career, depending on which position most benefited his ambitions, an aspiring magistrate could change his stance as the situation required. The *populares* encouraged the people to assert their authority as the primary legislative body of the Roman state whereas the *optimates* opposed any such threat to Senatorial authority. In the years leading up to the Sullan reforms the frictions between the two factions had lead to serious outbreaks of violence.[2] It was such disruptions which lead to action being taken to restore the authority of the Senate which would, by extension, ensure the stability of the state overall. The four primary reforms were: the curtailment of the tribunes' powers, the expansion of the Senate, the increase in the number of magistrates and the reorganisation of the law-courts. Taken individually, it is easy to see how reforms in these three areas were pinnacle in achieving Sulla's aims. The office of the tribune was distinctly *popularis*[3] and the Gracchi demonstrated the potential power of this office and how it could lead to the diminution of the power of the Senate. The brothers Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (tribunes 133 B.C.; 123 B.C., 122 B.C. respectively) years' in office damaged the authority of the Senate, developing something akin to political organisation which could eventually threaten the aristocracy. Not only were the people given the opportunity to vote on legislation which directly affected them (such as regarding corn doles and land distribution) but now the people were being given the chance to vote on important issues (issues which heretofore the Senate had regarded as their private sphere of interest)

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[2] Appian ed. J Carter, *The Civil Wars*, (New York/London: Penguin, 1996) 4. 77-78
[3] The tribunate office was shared by ten individuals who had been voted in by the people. Their role included proposing legislation before the people, vetoing the acts of magistrates and acted as legal protection for individuals from members of the aristocracy.

such as those regarding state finance and foreign policy.[4]  The Senate had been considerably weakened not only by being thus undermined but the civil war and the following proscriptions meant that numbers were at an all-time low and so the expansion which Sulla enacted was, at this point, necessary.  The introduction of members of the equestrian class[5], including Sullan appointees, also ensured that these new members would maintain the constitution which had brought their Senatorial careers into being.  The re-organisation of the law-courts also sought to further consolidate power in the hands of the Senate.  However, by 70 B.C. all of these reforms had been, if not completely reversed, significantly altered.  Whereas the Gruen school of thought touts this as a sign that the Sullan reforms were simply means to an end (i.e. stability within the state) others point towards it as evidence that the reforms were so rigid that they were inevitably doomed to failure.[6]  It is the purpose of this essay to look at the impact of the reforms on the Roman constitution and why they were, or in some cases why they were not, repealed within the space of a decade.

The years between 80 and 70 B.C. saw the only period in the Roman Republic where the people did not possess the unlimited right to pass legislation via the tribunes.[7]  Not only did the tribune allow the people to vote on legislation proposed to them by their own representative (the tribunate office could not be held by a patrician, a member of Rome's aristocratic class, as it was their role to

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[4] Appian, *The Civil Wars* 1.100; E.Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 22; A.W. Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1999), 209; F. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Roman Republic* (New York: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 50

[5] The equestrian class (*ordo equester*) made up the lower order of Rome's two aristocratic classes (the upper class being the patrician class).  Unlike the patrician class, which was hereditary, the equestrian class was defined in terms of a property qualification.

[6] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 46; Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, 211; Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Roman Republic*, 49

[7] Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Roman Republic*, 49

eliminate oppression of the people by the Senate) but could veto legislation on behalf of the people and acted as the advocate of individuals experiencing aristocratic oppression. Their role was a vital part of the political scene, so much so that they were forbidden from travelling more than a day's distance from Rome and their person became sacrosanct, that is to say their person was made inviolable from patrician magistrates. As previously stated in terms of the Gracchi, the office held the potential to undermine the authority of the aristocratic elite and tensions between this office and the Senate further inflamed the *optimates/ populares* division. As the office of the tribunate comprised the larger part of Rome's democratic element the reforms regarding this office[8] had a large impact on the balance of power in the state (as was indeed the intention) putting the control firmly in the hands of the Senate. Although there is no direct evidence on the principles behind, or the exact substance of, Sulla's reforms some indications can be derived from ancient texts. All legislation required Senatorial approval prior to being put before the people[9] and now the office could no longer be used as a political path paving the way to the Senate[10]. Restrictions on their rights of veto and intercession on behalf of an individual against a member of the elite seem to have also been affected but the sources do not fully reveal the extent of the changes. Lintott writes that these reforms upset the balance of the constitution as the tribunes could no longer as effectively check the Senatorial elite.[11] For Millar, although Sulla's tribunician legislation was passed in order to curtail the potential of the assembly as constituting a threat to Senatorial authority, the force of popular politics gained in momentum throughout the decade, resulting in the full

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[8] Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.59, 100; Caesar ed. J. Carter, *The Civil War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.5, 1.7

[9] It is unclear whether the tribune could still propose legislation within these terms or if the power was removed from the office altogether

[10] Previously, a tribune would follow a *popularis* stance in order to gain votes for any forthcoming elections in which he might be a candidate. This included, as previously mentioned, proposing legislation which encroached on the Senatorial sphere of interest

[11] Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, 211

restoration of tribunician powers in 70 B.C.[12]  According to Cicero, the people now sought to have its voice heard through other, more violent means.[13]  In 75 B.C. potential famine due to corn shortages and the cost of maintaining armies overseas led to a reinstatement of the tribunes' right to hold further office,[14] placating the people for the time being.  Although tensions remained high until the full powers of the tribune were restored by Pompey and Crassus in 70 B.C.[15]

It seems that despite the curtailment of tribunician powers, the people still played a fundamental part in the political system.  Millar writes that:

> Nearly all the functions of the various elements of the res publica [the Roman Republic], with the significant exception of meetings of the Senate, had to be acted out in front of the people, involved persuasion addressed either directly or (in the case of speeches before quaestiones [criminal proceedings] in the Forum) indirectly to them, or required them actually to vote, in elections, legislations or trials.[16]

Despite the fact that the tribune could no longer propose bills to them, the people remained the legislative body in Rome.  This power was not transferred to the Senate in its entirety (although Senatorial decrees also had force of law).[17]  However, all legislation passed was now on the proposal of the consuls[18] or another presiding magistrate.  Almost from the moment of its inception up until

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[12] Sallust ed. P. McGushin, *The Histories* Volume 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989-1992),  1.48, 3.34

[13] Cicero, 'The Laws', in Niall Rudd (ed.), *Cicero: The Republic and The Laws* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1998), 3.23-4

[14] *Lex Aurelia de tribunicia potestate;* R. Seager, *Pompey: A Political Biography*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 18

[15] *Lex Pompeia Licinia de tribunicia potestate*

[16] Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Roman Republic*, 54

[17] Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.59

[18] The consulship was the highest magistracy in the Roman Republic, serving as heads of state.  Each year, two men were voted into the office.

70 B.C., the tribune question was a dominating one on the political scene (with conservative Senators resisting the reinstatement).[19] From Sallust's *Histories,* in a speech attributed to Aemilius Lepidus to the Roman people it is apparent that the issue of the tribune reforms was one which was politically live, and furthermore can be cynically interpreted as a ploy by Lepidus to gain popular favour.[20] However, as a plebeian[21] and a staunch *popularis* we cannot therefore be certain of the accuracy of his information and von Fritz accuses him of being an 'unscrupulous, though very subtle propagandist who gave a deliberately distorted view of the events which he describes and above all of the motives of the main actors on the political scene.'[22]

Nevertheless, the tribunician reforms saw a complete reversal by 70 B.C. and although it is tempting to surmise that such a rigid constriction of the powers of the people was inevitably doomed to failure, Gruen argues that the Sullan constitution was a far more flexible body and the total reversal of the tribunician reforms did not adversely affect the Sullan constitution and aims in general (i.e. the restoration of senatorial power in Rome).  C. Aurelius Cotta (the author of the *lex Aurelia* of 75 B.C.) was a central figure in the Sullan establishment and Gruen therefore summarises that allowing the tribunes to hold further office did not rip a hole in the Sullan constitution.[23]

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[19] Sallust ed. P. McGushin, *The Histories*, Volume 2*,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989-1992) 3.34

[20] Sallust, *The Histories* Volume 1, 48; Gruen, *The Last Generatio of the Roman Republic*, 13

[21] Plebeians made up the general citizen body and were therefore distinct from the aristocratic patricians.

[22] K. von Fritz, ‚Sallust and the attitude of the roman nobility at the time of the wars against Jurgurtha (122-105 B.C.)', (1943) 74 *Transations and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 134

Henceforth von Fritz, 'Attitudes of the Roman Nobility'

[23]Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 27-6

However it seems that the people still saw the right to pass legislation proposed to them by their own representatives as a fundamental part of government.[24] Gruen underestimates the importance of the curtailment of tribunician rights writing that '[t]he tribunate as an institution represented no threat to the established order.'[25] Even if in the general sense the tribunes tended to follow conservative ends[26], it is apparent that the office could also be used as a mechanism for civil unrest.[27] Although Gruen acknowledges the potential of this,[28] if the threat were truly as negligible as he purports then surely such controversial measures would be deemed unnecessary; not only that but if the tribunate did not pose a threat to the constitution then why were objections to the reinstatement of their powers so great? One reason he gives is that perhaps Senators viewed the question as being associated with disruption to the state[29] yet it could be said that in the face of potentially violent popular opinion surely it would be more peaceful to restore the powers of the tribune (although perhaps such haranguing of the people reminded them why their powers had been curtailed in the first place). However, by 70 B.C. it was apparent that even the most conservative had accepted – if grudgingly – the inevitability of the reform.[30] To counter Gruen, Lintott writes that far from not affecting the Sullan regime in any significant way, the full restoration of the tribunates'

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[24] Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Roman Republic*, 54; Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, 211

[25] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 23

[26] Though the office of the tribune was normally associated with *populares* inclinations however aspiration to higher offices in the future ensured that many tribunes chose not to infuriate the Senators by proposing radical legislation which could thwart their political objectives.

[27] The Gracchi being the most obvious example of this.

[28] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 24

[29] Such as in the case of Aemilius Lepidus whose exploitation of the political situation eventually led to war (Appian, *The Civil Wars,* 1.107; Gruen, *Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 26)

[30] Cicero 'In Verrem' in D.H. Berry (ed.), *Cicero: Political Speeches*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 1.44. Henceforth Cicero 'In Verrum'

power led to a surge of tribunician legislation most of which was linked to what the Senate viewed as their own personal field of authority such as the assigning of governors to provinces and finance[31]. This left the Senate in a vulnerable position between 'tribunes who, following the example of the Gracchi, were reasserting the theoretical decision-making at Rome, and pro-consuls[32] who were exploiting the discretion granted to them to manage affairs in the empire.'[33]

As well as curtailing the legislative powers of the people (through the diminution of the powers of their tribunes) Sulla sought to further consolidate the power of the Senate through its expansion. Furthermore, Lintott points out that although it could have been claimed that the large surge in the population made the assembly[34] too non-representative for it alone to be entrusted with the sole power to legislate so firmly rooting the power of the state within the Senate caused a political imbalance resulting in a corrupt political climate such as that delineated by Cicero in the speeches against Verres, including factors which contributed to this such as judicial bribery, blatant exploitation of provincial commands which went unchecked etc.[35], however the use of Cicero as a source for the late Republic is problematic as shall be discussed later. This led to a breakdown in confidence in the Senate amongst the people.[36] Instead of being able, through their tribunes, to pass their own legislation and veto that of the Senate, they now had to endure more limited political representation and could no longer ensure that their needs were being met.

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[31] Plutarch 'Life of Pompey' in R. Warner (ed.), *Fall of the Roman Republic: Six Lives by Plutarch,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) 25. Henceforth Plutarch 'Pompey'

[32] After spending a year as consul, the man would (as a pro-consul) spend a year as the governor of a province.

[33] Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, 212-213

[34] The main legislative body in Rome made up of citizens.

[35] Cicero 'In Verrem' 1.49, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5

[36] Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, 211

In 81 B.C. the numbers in the Senate were at a low point due to the civil war and the following proscriptions[37] and so it was necessary for Sulla to expand it by including members of the equestrian classes, increasing the number of *quaestors*[38] to twenty (making this office the route into the Senate), the number of praetors[39] to eight[40] as well as adding some of his own followers in the region of 300 men[41] leading to a Senate numbering 450-500 on average[42] eventually increasing to 500 or 750.[43] If Hawthorn and Santangelo's calculations of the numbers of Sullan appointees are correct, then, as Gruen[44] also notes, the new Senators would have significantly outnumbered the old and, as a result would be keen to maintain the political system which brought about their rise to the Senate. This could be seen as undermining the role of the Senate which was as an advisory body for magistrates constituting of serious and experienced

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[37] According to Hawthorn, 1962: 54, the number of Senators at this point was around 200 whereas Santangelo, 2008: 7, claims that it would have been nearer 150

[38] Magistrates who supervised the state's finances.

[39] A magistracy to which were assigned various duties but was particularly linked to the lawcourts. The next step on the political ladder was the consulship.

[40] More praetors mean that the provincial governors can be changed regularly so they do not become powerful enough to threaten the state. However there is a disparity between the ideal and the reality: there was a lack of the competent leaders which the numbers of battles fought around this period required. As a result the long-term command which Sulla sought to discourage continued in the form of e.g. Metellus Pius in Spain and Pompeius (Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman* Republic, 211-212). It also increases competition for the consulship.

[41] Appian, *The Civil Wars,* 1.100; J. Hawthron, 'The Senate after Sulla', (1962) 9 *G&R* 54. Henceforth Hawthorn 'The Senate after Sulla'.

[42] Hawthron, 'The Senate After Sulla, 53: numbers the planned Senate at 500 from his calculations, whereas F. Santangelo, 'Sulla and the Sentae: a reconsideration' (2006) 17 *Cahiers du Centre Gustave-Glotz* 7; places the number at 450 based on his. Both base their calculations on Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.100

[43] Although this would be somewhat offset by the fact that the tribunes (their right to obtain higher office removed) would no longer be included in the calculations

[44] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 9

members. Far from consolidating its power, in his expansion Sulla could be seen to have in fact weakened it.

To counter this, Gruen argues that the more important roles (such as the consulship, the censorship[45] and important provincial posts) would remain in the hands of the old aristocracy (for the people seemed more inclined to vote for those whose names they recognised as opposed to new men[46]); it was they who still held the sway of power in the Senate, in elections and in the law courts. According to Gruen and Hawthron, fewer new men were elected to the consulship in the years following Sulla's reforms than in the years preceding them;[47] the Sullan reforms although they sought to prevent disruption to the state via individual men (such as the Gracchi or ambitious military commanders (perhaps such as himself) or factions (such as the *optimates* and *populares*) they did not, nor did they aspire to, end the in-fighting between Senatorial families for the higher offices.[48] If Lintott's line of argument is followed and the consulship was the central feature of the Roman Republic then the most important changes would be those affecting it.[49] As well as chairing Senatorial meetings, they commanded two legions in the Roman army apiece, held the highest juridical authority and could interpose in the decisions of lesser magistrates. For Polybius the consuls held an almost sovereign position.[50] Only Senatorial decrees, the decrees of the Assembly or the vetoes of their fellow consul or tribune (if the tribunes still maintained this power after the Sullan reforms) could curb their ultimate authority. As all Sulla did was increase competition for the office through raising the number of praetors it could be

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[45] A magistracy which was concerned with public morality, as well as some financial aspects, in the running of the Roman state.

[46] A term used to describe a man who was the first in his family to be admitted into the Senate upon election to a magistracy.

[47] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 9; Hawthorn, 1962: 55

[48] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 9

[49] Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, 192

[50] Polybius ed. Ian Scott Kilvert, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, (London: Penguin, 1979) 6.11

argued that he left the most fundamental part of the Roman constitution, the ultimate authority of the consuls, almost entirely intact. Leach concurs, writing that for a candidate who was not a member of the nobility the possibility of reaching the higher offices was further complicated by Sulla's reviving of earlier norms through the imposition of restrictions imposing age limits, mandatory intervals between offices and enforcement of the prescribed path of the *cursus honorum*[51] before being eligible for election.[52] These Senatorial reforms remained beyond 70 B.C. (the time by which most of Sulla's reforms had either been reversed or significantly altered) until 52 B.C. when Pompey passed a law which imposed a five year break between holding office in Rome and a governorship to prevent the bribery and extortion which resulted from increased competition for the consulship. From this it can be deduced that the changes Sulla made did not greatly threaten the established order or adversely affect the existing constitution in any significant way. If it had, we could expect to see earlier reform in this area.

Although the Sullan appointees would probably be wealthy enough to qualify as equestrians[53] Hawthorn writes that it is likely that many Senators did not possess the wealth necessary to maintain the lifestyle of a Senator.[54] Campaigning for political office required vast sums of money which many Senators, both old and new, simply did not have. Many, including Julius Caesar, accumulated large debts, the money being lent to them on the proviso that once they were elected to the higher magistracies they would be in a

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[51] The *cursus honorum* was the sequence of political offices which men had to systematically obtain before moving on to the next starting with the least significant (the quaestorship) through to the highest office of the consulship.
[52] This was waived in the case of Pompey in 70B.C. (Plutarch *Pompey* 21; Appian *The Civil Wars* 1.131) and rather than viewing it as a great breech of the Sullan regime Seager (*Pompey: A Political Biography*, 23) writes that in consideration of Pompey's various military achievements during the period no other option could be considered.
[53] Appian, *The Civil Wars* 1. 100; Sallust, 'Catiline's War' in A.J. Woodman (ed.) *Sallust: Catiline's War, The Jugurthine War, Histories*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2007), 37.6
[54] Hawthron, 'The Senate After Sulla', 55

position to pay it back as a pro-consul or a pro-praetor in a province (as the governorship of a province gave great oppurtunites for the accumulation of personal wealth both legitimately and illegitimately). Furthermore, with men in potential financial difficulty presiding over trials, it is not a great stretch of the imagination to suppose that bribery may have played a part in the judicial proceedings. When Sulla moved control of the law-courts over from members of the equestrian order to the Senate although it may be assumed that the former holders of the office would be wholly antagonistic to the change, it must be remembered that many members of the equestrian order were included in the newly-enlarged Senate and would therefore still be eligible as jurors.

However with many Senators unable to cope with the financial burden of their office, Hawthorn touts evidence from Cicero as proof that the introduction of these poorer men into the Senate was responsible for the alleged wave of judicial bribery and corruption in the years following the reforms.[55] In fact, most of the evidence available with regards to the corruption in the law-courts which resulted in the counter- Sullan legislation of 70 B.C. is from Cicero[56] whom Gruen of using the threat of judicial reform in order to secure a conviction against Verres.[57] Gaius Verres is an example of the type of men previously mentioned who bribed their way into office with the promise of lucrative gain for supporters upon their election. After his praetorship in 74 B.C. he was awarded the governorship of Sicily, a position which he abused to the detriment of the inhabitants and for his own great benefit.[58] He was also accused of using the crisis of the slave revolt led by Spartacus as an opportunity to extort money from men. In some cases he would falsely accuse key slaves of plotting revolution and unless a bribe was paid he would have them executed.[59] Another ploy was to accuse slave-owners of harbouring rebellious slaves and imprison them until a sum of money was paid to secure their release. Upon his

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[55] Cicero 'In Verrem ',1.38; Hawthorn, 'The Senate After Sulla', 57
[56] Cicero 'In Verrem' , (particularly  1.47-49; 2.1-3, 5)
[57] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 35
[58] Cicero 'In Verren', 1.11-14
[59] Ibid., 2.8-12

return to Rome, he was prosecuted by Cicero for his misconduct in Sicily but fled the country before his trial was completed. In his prosecution speeches against this man, Cicero informs the jury that the people have lost faith in the law courts due to their corruption and threatens that if this continues (i.e. if they do not find Verres guilty) then the Senate will lose their stranglehold of the law courts.[60] However, according to Gruen, Cicero highly exaggerates the reputation of the law courts to succumb to bribery, in order to secure acquittals, during this period.[61] Seager agrees, writing that there is very little evidence other than Cicero's accounts that the supposedly infamous corruption of the law courts had any effect on the *lex Aurelia iudiciaria*.[62] It cannot be proved on the basis of this unreliable evidence that judicial corruption was in fact as widespread as has been supposed. Although Seager accepts the possibility of a wholly equestrian court[63] being implemented to replace the Senatorial one, it is unlikely that such a measure, if it ever existed, would have got as far as a formal proposal; furthermore, as Seager continues, it is perhaps the hyperbole of Cicero in his attempts to secure a conviction which has lead to the idea of a possible total transfer of power as a possibility.[64] Although based on the evidence of Cicero the counter-Sullan legislation of 70 B.C. regarding the law-courts was a reaction to judicial corruption,[65] there are few recorded cases where bribery played a part in the proceedings and a third of the new jury panel was still constituted of Senators. This does not seem to support a theory of widespread corruption throughout the Sullan law courts. Gruen argues that there are only three certain cases of bribery in the 70s and that '[o]n the whole, however, the evidence on juries in the 70s indicates that they were no more susceptible to

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[60] Ibid., 2.174

[61] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 35

[62] The *lex Aurelia* took the control of the lawcourts and divided them equally between the Senators, members of the equeatrian class and another class called the *tribune aerarii* (although it is unclear exactly who compromised this class) (Seager, *Pompey: A Political Autobiography*, 25)

[63] Cicero 'In Verrem', 1.49, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5

[64] Seager, *Pompey: A Political Autobiography*, 25

[65] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 31; Cicero 'In Verrem' 2.174

bribery and no less subject to politics than their predecessors in the pre-Sullan generation.'[66] As juries were still chosen by lot those who were allegedly open to bribery, acquitting their friends etc could still influence the verdict. This could be a direct result of a lack of tribunician scrutiny in the decade where their powers were diminished. Furthermore, while there was legislation which deterred Senators from conspiring to convict a man there was no such legislation aimed at the equestrian class: 'Instead of eliminating the potential for judicial bribery, men were introduced who could be corrupt without the same fear of prosecution.'[67] Gruen again argues that the changes to Sulla's reform of the courts did not adversely affect the Sullan constitution or its aims. The law was put forward by L. Aurelius Cotta, a member of the aristocratic class, who would therefore have sought to maintain the stranglehold of the Senate not to undermine it.[68]

Members of the equestrian class had moved from that order into the Senate (and were now therefore eligible) due to Sulla's enlargement of that body;[69] in contrast to the calls for tribunician reform, there is very little evidence to suggest that reform within the courts was as pressing an issue. Whereas the restoration of the powers of the tribunes was proposed by two consuls, the final bill concerning court reform was passed by a lesser magistrate, a praetor[70], indicating that this was not seen as a such an immediate issue in Roman politics at the time. Despite this, it cannot be said that Sulla's reorganisation of the courts was wholly supported otherwise the *lex Aurelia* would never have come into being, it is just that in the face of greater controversy (the matters relating to the restoration of tribunician powers) it had become a background issue only to resurface after the initial reforms of 70 BC.[71]

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[66] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 32-33

[67] Ibid., 29

[68] Ibid., 33

[69] Ibid., 30

[70] Plutarch, *Pompey* 22

[71] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 34

In conclusion it is apparent that the reforms of Sulla which most seriously affect the pre-existing constitution were those affecting the powers of the tribunes, and thus the powers of the people, whereas the reorganisation of the courts and the Senate were more flexible. It could be said that the changes to the reforms in the decade following them ensured their success whereas rigid adherence would have secured their failure. To say that Sulla's changes were reversed by 70 B.C. due to being insupportable is to assume that the changes to the constitution were ends to themselves. Such measures were to be seen as drastic necessities in the aftermath of civil war and as necessary precautions against further disruption; they were not intended as permanent legislation. The changes that occurred during the decade between 80 B.C. and 70 B.C. can be seen as aiming to make the government more popular and the administration of that body run more smoothly.[72] They in fact consolidated the Sullan regime rather than undermined it. What Sulla ultimately aimed at was stability within the state and once threats to that body abated then the legislation could safely be removed without the aims of the Sullan constitution being adversely affected. It was not a rigid system inevitably doomed to crack but a flexible scheme to ensure the continuing safety of the principles of the Roman state.

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[72] Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 46

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