

# CAMDEN

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TITUS PARKER considers different ways of thinking

LIBERTY OSBORNE appreciates Chinese language and philosophy

THALIA ROYCHOWDHURY on Japan's view of the West

# Civilization and Its Discontents

The ebb and flow of pandemic lockdown has brought about an estranged relationship with normal life: the lack of socialisation, the meaninglessness of time as one day blurred effortlessly into the next, a more fragile mentality. It was perhaps this sense of alienation and frustration, amplified through the echo chambers of social media, which paved the way for the long overdue eruption of protest (BLM, violence towards women, and more) and provided a catalyst for calls to square up to problems and injustice at home and abroad. This civic spirit should be the first step in raising awareness of an increasingly bare social fabric.

The context in which these events occurred has highlighted a broader disregard for the individual. The growing contempt for others, the selfishness of not acting in a socially responsible way, the claims that the rights of the individual trump concerns for social cohesion have their roots in decades of government policy and consequent changes in the *Zeitgeist*.

The last half century or so has witnessed significant changes in Britain. From a period of social contract, there emerged under successive Thatcher governments a conviction that markets - rather than government - held the key to prosperity and freedom, and this heralded great swathes of deregulation and a sense of market triumphalism. In the 1990s, the market-friendly liberalism of Blair's tenure consolidated, in moderated form, the belief that markets presented the best means of achieving the public good.

The financial crisis of 2008 was a 'bump in the road' for government and financiers. Banks were too big to fail. Confidence was dented briefly in the wisdom of allowing greed and irresponsible risk-taking to be at the heart of the economy. Yet, the financial crisis not only cast doubt on the ability of markets to allocate risk efficiently, it brought about the realisation that markets had become detached from morals, and that there was a need for correction.

Insisting on greater integrity and responsibility among financiers, desirable though that may be, provides only a partial solution. The truth is that markets, and market values, have seeped into spheres of life traditionally governed by social, moral or cultural norms. Informed debate and thoughtful policy are required to put a brake on greed and decide where the market should recede and government intervention, social values etc should be restored.

The use of markets to allocate health, education, criminal justice, recreation, and other social goods - almost unheard-of a generation ago - are largely taken for granted today. For-profit schools, hospitals, and prisons are accepted without question. It should be a matter of the

utmost concern that everything is up for sale.

This transactional way of thinking has permeated every aspect of life and undermined other values. The introduction of fees for university students, for example, is apt to change the emphasis from process - an exciting intellectual experience - to product: students become customers expecting satisfactory outcomes (good essay grades and top-class degrees); universities are driven not by research, but by market imperatives. Why is this a problem? An education system should embody the moral values of a society. When will the country put these moral values ahead of utilitarian outcomes?

Market reasoning empties public life of moral argument. It is high time to reassess the moral limits of markets, to discuss where markets serve the public good and where they should have no place. In the same way as derivatives have obscured the real value of a bank's asset values, the evolution of market society has meant that we have let our lives be shaped by institutional forces and clouded our perception of the value of citizenship and the common good. Affluence matters in a world where money and self-interest determine everything; growing disparity in wealth distribution simply widens the social divide. Inequality is exacerbated by this rampant free market capitalism. This country is one in which political and economic life is dominated by ideas of individual freedom and self-interest, but at the cost of the erosion of social capital, i.e. that which allows a society to function as a whole through trust and shared identity, norms, moral values, and mutual relationships.

Learning about the world and our place within it should offer proper perspective and an alternative to the 'chauvinism of the present', as one philosopher aptly terms it. Social media train minds on the immediate; one is encouraged to live through platforms and on platforms, for developers' unaccountable and unprincipled purposes. The irony is that social media have played a role in eroding social values, as freedom of expression and open access to information are prized far above the right to privacy or any ethical considerations.

Perspective, a sense of place, worth and responsibility are the product of an alchemy of parenting, education and community. Ideas on citizenship, culture and respect for others have their roots in all three factors. Evolving opinion should be informed by analysing evidence and critical thinking, not by the marketplace or algorithms. That is why the role of the humanities remains essential. They serve to challenge and dismantle the conundrum that we know what things cost, but have no idea what they are worth.

*Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay*



Dean's Yard, Winter



6



10



47



52



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## CAMDEN

– A Liberal Arts Magazine –

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The editor warmly invites alumni and current pupils to submit articles for publication in the next edition of Camden. Please contact the editor for further information.



Front cover:  
Le Jardin Majorelle is botanical garden in Marrakech, created by the Frenchman Jacques Majorelle. It features a Cubist villa designed by the architect Paul Sinoir. Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé bought the villa in 1980 to save the site from being turned into a hotel complex.

# The Setback of Democracy

Nicolas Rackow is anxious about a confluence of factors which are undermining the democratic process.

Amid the hubris of the post-Communist era, many echoed the sentiment of Francis Fukuyama that our species' ideological development had concluded, and in the form of liberal democracy we had reached the 'end of history'.<sup>1</sup> America had triumphed over the Soviets and the world was still experiencing what Samuel P. Huntington described as a 'third wave'<sup>2</sup> of democratisation as countries including Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary and the Philippines, along with much of South America were swept away from authoritarianism. However, it appears the optimism of the nineties has now subsided. The coverage of autocratic takeovers around the world and the erosion of our democratic institutions suggests we have now entered a state of democratic backsliding. Two things are now clear: firstly, the ideological argument did not conclude with the fall of the Berlin wall and secondly, democracy is currently experiencing challenges around the world. The question, then, is whether these challenges are meaningful and long-lasting enough to constitute a setback, or whether they represent temporary events which shouldn't cause concern.

Almost 35% of the world's population live in nations becoming increasingly autocratic

The immediate question is how one can measure the strength of democracy around the world. Ought we rely on narratives given to us by the media? This may leave us exposed to the prejudices of those who create that media – editors who are incentivised to drive clicks by catastrophising every event. Alternatively, should we look to statistics and try to approach the question from a scientific standpoint? While this certainly offers a more concrete method of measuring progress, it isn't perfect either. The vast quantity of conflicting data available makes drawing solid conclusions difficult and again, this data may be collected or distributed by actors with a particular interest in promoting a certain angle. However, they make a good place to start, from which one can build with historical context and analysis of current political trends. Freedom House, a US-based NGO that researches democratic trends, claims 2019 was 'the 14th consecutive year of decline in global freedom'.<sup>3</sup> Almost 35% of the world's population live in nations becoming increasingly

<sup>1</sup> (Fukuyama 1992)

<sup>2</sup> (Huntington 1991)

<sup>3</sup> 2019 was the most recent year analysed in Freedom House's annual report. Information on their practices and the report itself are available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy>



'Black Protest' takes to the streets of Poland against the government's ban on abortion

autocratic, while only 8% live in those trending towards democracy.<sup>4</sup> While this immediately suggests democracy is in decline, it does little to explain the reasons for that and, crucially, whether it is a cause for concern in the long-term. In order to do that, one must analyse the events and the challenges which have led to these bleak statistics, assessing whether these trends are likely to continue and the impacts they will have.

Such challenges can be split into two areas: external and internal. The first and most immediately pressing of these external factors is the Covid-19 pandemic. The restrictions imposed have caused worrying disruptions to our democratic norms. At least seventy-five countries have seen their elections postponed or cancelled.<sup>5</sup> Not only could these disruptions remove the necessary checks and balances to prevent corruption and abuse of power, they could also have disastrous impacts on trust in democracy, particularly in newly democratised states where the electorate now seem to be losing their recently gained rights. More worrying still is the way certain leaders have exploited the pandemic to roll back democratic protections. Viktor Orbán, Hungary's prime minister passed a bill in March 2020 allowing him to effectively rule by decree – suspending existing laws in the name of fighting the virus, prompting The Washington Post to declare 'Coronavirus kills its first democracy'.<sup>6</sup> While this is a dramatic example, powers have been ceded to the state in an unprecedented manner all around the world and it is too early to say whether it will be as easy for the people to claim them back. It appears that without a sustained effort from democratic institutions, the pandemic could speed up the move towards autocracy already shown in the statistics.

However, in addition to the immediate effects of the pandemic, the way different nations have responded to this crisis raises a more fundamental – and potentially more damaging – ideological question. While the United States was pre-occupied with tackling the pandemic, China emerged from lockdown and offered support to struggling nations around the world. The suggestion that perhaps democracy isn't the most effective form of government, particularly during a crisis, highlights democracy's second external threat – the rise of China. The Centre for Economics and Business Research has forecast that China will surpass the US as the world's largest economy by 2028.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will be able to claim with confidence that authoritarian rule and a state-run economy is the most efficient form of governance. The post-Soviet rhetoric that freedom was a necessary prerequisite of a state's success is being publicly discredited.

Chinese economic supremacy isn't just an ideological

<sup>4</sup> (Maerz 2020)

<sup>5</sup> (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2021)

<sup>6</sup> (Tharoor 2020)

<sup>7</sup> <https://cebr.com/service/macroeconomic-forecasting/>

defeat for democracy either, it is already having very practical impacts around the world. The enormous revenue created by Chinese industry has funded the global infrastructure project known as The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Through the BRI, the Chinese government has expanded its soft power in emerging economies around the world through what critics have termed 'debt trap diplomacy'.<sup>8</sup> The Chinese government negotiates secretive loans with the countries in which it builds infrastructure, with rights to the infrastructure used as collateral. The result is a chain of Chinese funded and influenced ports, mines and trade routes extending from China towards Europe and emerging economies becoming dependent on Chinese support. An increase in Chinese economic and soft power threatens democracy in two ways. Firstly, it encourages states to move towards authoritarian rule by presenting it as an efficient method of alleviating poverty – the World Bank estimates that the BRI 'could lift more than 8.7 million people from extreme poverty and 34 million from moderate poverty'.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, Chinese dominance of important trade routes could threaten Western businesses, drastically reducing the West's ability to impose sanctions or restrain the CCP for fear of an economically devastating backlash. This is already having a material impact on democracy worldwide – despite warnings that Beijing was threatening 'Hong Kong's significant autonomy'<sup>10</sup>, the West was powerless against China's crackdown on peaceful

protestors last year. The rise of China is already acting as a counterbalance to democracy, both in the West and around the world. As Chinese economic power grows, this threat will only increase.

Western democracy has been opposed by authoritarian powers and shaken by unforeseen disasters throughout its history – these pressures are nothing new. Huntington points out that after a first wave of democratisation during the nineteenth century which introduced democracy to Western Europe and North America, the next two waves both followed major social upheavals and direct challenges.<sup>11</sup> Following the Second World War, the number of recognised democracies tripled from 12 in 1942 to 36 in 1962.<sup>12</sup> This impressive growth was topped by a later third wave as former Soviet satellites, as well as Catholic countries in South America turned to democracy. In both cases, intense challenges, similar to what we are currently observing, led to an expansion of democracy worldwide rather than a sustained setback. There is hope, therefore, that these pressures will strengthen rather than decay our institutions.

What is potentially more concerning is the damage

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.hudson.org/events/1610-vice-president-mike-pence-s-remarks-on-the-administration-s-policy-towards-china102018/>

<sup>9</sup> (World Bank 2019)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/background/democracy-hong-kong>

<sup>11</sup> (Huntingdon 1991)

<sup>12</sup> (ibid)

## The rise of China is already acting as a counterbalance to democracy

being done to democracy from within. In recent years, openly illiberal leaders such as Poland's Duda, Hungary's Orbán and the Philippines' Duterte are using democratic methods to gain power, and then using that power to corrupt democratic institutions and break down the vital separation of powers. For example, Viktor Orbán, in addition to exploiting the Covid-19 pandemic, used his democratic majority to increase the number of judges on the constitutional court and reduce the age of retirement for judges – allowing his Fidesz party to appoint hundreds of loyalists.<sup>13</sup> Increased control by Fidesz over the judiciary is worrying in itself – a party which openly campaigns for 'illiberal democracy' now lacks the checks and balances to stop it clamping down on individual freedoms. However, what makes this particularly concerning is the fact that Orbán gained power without a single bullet fired. His path to an autocratic regime is one which could be emulated in any democracy around the world. Through presenting himself as the only thing saving Hungary from the 'existential threat' of Muslim refugees<sup>14</sup>, Orbán persuaded the Hungarian people to vote away their own rights. In nearby Poland, President Duda employed similar attacks on the judiciary, enabling his Law and Justice party to enact its anti-LGBT policies. The only way to protect against these sorts of attacks on democracy is by maintaining strong institutions to prevent these leaders gaining power in the first place. However, even in the United States, a nation regarded as having strong democratic institutions, Donald Trump successfully drove Republican trust in media to 32% – the lowest point on record.<sup>15</sup> This is important because it suggests not only is democracy currently in decline but that this decline is liable to expand to more states in the future.

It is apparent, then, that democracy is currently facing a significant setback. Ought these challenges worry us, or are they simply part of a process that is strengthening our institutions? Fukuyama himself acknowledges that democracy will experience setbacks but the long-term trend will lead to its success.<sup>16</sup> It is still too early to assess the long-term impacts of the pandemic on our institutions, nor can we yet judge whether China's strategic goals have been achieved. The statistics showing a sustained decline and disturbing current events suggest things may well get worse before they get better. However, we may be comforted in noting that democracy has been challenged before, externally and internally, and in all those cases, democracy has endured.

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<sup>13</sup> (The Economist 2019)

<sup>14</sup> (Beauchamp 2018)

<sup>15</sup> (Gallup 2020)

<sup>16</sup> (Spencer 2019)

# Abrahamic Religions

**Toby Levy and Sinan Aramaz** chart the origins and similarities of two of the Abrahamic religions.

Judaism and Islam, while each a distinct and culturally diverse religion, have much in common. From their Abrahamic origins to shared traditions and principles, there are historic links and modern crossovers aplenty. Nonetheless, the Judaeo-Islamic rapport has been increasingly found and framed at its basest, often shrouded by projections of intrinsic incompatibility. This article aims to deconstruct these prejudicial outlooks by exploring some of the cousin faiths' manifold links. As we shall lay out, these range all the way from those present at the foundation of Islam to the overlooked bridges in today's heated climate and indeed those that could be built in our shared future.

Islam was born as the youngest of the Abrahamic trio in the 7th Century. It fundamentally differed from its cousin religions of the book or 'al-kitab' through

its veneration of the Prophet Muhammad, who is seen as the final prophet and purveyor of a direct return to the heavenly observance and faith of his prophetic predecessors. This reflects the literal meaning of the word Islam - submission. Many of these aforementioned figures share great importance in the other Abrahamic texts, from Moses/Musa to John/Yaya to Isa/Jesus. Crucially, there exists also a shared reverence for Abraham, the primary patriarch of Judaism and father of monotheism: being the first to depart from the polytheism of Canaan. As told by one of the most famed legends of the Old Testament

Pentateuch in Genesis 12:2, God promises Abraham 'I will increase your numbers very, very much, and I will make you into nations', a promise that has indeed been fulfilled by Abraham's two sects of progeny, the Arabs descended from his son Ishmael and the

**This article aims to deconstruct ... prejudicial outlooks by exploring some of the cousin faiths' manifold links**

The Dome of the Rock is an Islamic shrine on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem



Israelites descended from his son Isaac. Their distinction is dependent on maternal origin of the two. Sarah, Abraham's wife, was infertile and so permitted Abraham to have his son Ishmael with her handmaiden Hagar. It was some 13 years later that Sarah was miraculously made fertile, leading to her conception of Isaac. Not limited to their linked origin, though, the two faiths' ancient links also permeated societal contexts.

Of special importance is the Quran, the Islamic holy text which is believed to be a revelatory account of the Prophet Muhammad's enlightenment. The city of Medina, whose tribes had been united under the Prophet Muhammad's constitution of Medina, became the epicentre of Islamic influence after the migration from Meccan persecution known as Hijra. This birthplace of Islam was in fact a multi-faith state, marking Judaeo-Islamic cooperation as one of the earliest cornerstones upon which the Islamic world was built. Since then, Jews have always lived under Islamic rule in some part of the world, historically taking refuge in Muslim lands during events such as the mass emigration into the Ottoman Empire following the 16th Century 'Alhambra Decree', the expulsion of Spanish Jews from the Iberian Peninsula following the Spanish Inquisition. With the unification of Medina succeeded by the caliphates and sultanates of the Islamic golden age, interfaith tolerance and academic coalescence characterised great leaps made in culture, arts and sciences fostered by Muslim and non-Muslim minds alike. Perhaps the most famous case

of such societal precedent, now dubbed 'convivencia' in modern Spain, occurred in the aforementioned Iberian peninsula's Al-Andalus, the collection of Islamic states in modern day Andalusia as ruled by the second Umayyad Caliphate. Jizya taxes offered Jews and Christians 'dhimmi' status, affording military protection as well as rights to autonomy over the practice of faith. The Umayyad regional capital of Córdoba became known globally for its affluence and culture, an 'ornament of the world' in the words of the Saxon nun Hrosvitha. Córdoba, in particular, also became an epicentre for Talmudic study, the Talmud being the primary source of Rabbinic Judaism from which the religious Halakhic laws are derived. The flourishing of Jewish thought was embodied by prolific academics and polymaths such as Moses ibn Ezra, Solomon ibn Gabirol and Moses Maimonides. However, Maimonides also played a significant role as a mediator and bridge builder. Maimonides was known to have publicly shown respect for Muslim academics including the Persian polymath Al-Farabi, an intellectual predecessor to the Muslim and Jewish greats of the Golden Age alike. Maimonides' outlook on Islam further showed marked tolerance, transforming its view amongst Halakhic authorities. Born only 1 year apart, he was linked to his Córdoba contemporary Averroes by their shared body of work on Aristotelian philosophy. A Jew and a Muslim, they came to represent the core of 'convivencia' and interfaith mutuality of respect that had been illuminated by the Islamic Golden

Age's fleeting sparks and that had fuelled its progress.

Moving to some more modern intersections, the religions of Islam and Judaism alike have been nourished and fed into by the cultures they share and occupy, with cultural interplay often framing contemporary outlooks. This is made clear by a quick trip through the modern Islamic diaspora, which ranges from the burkas of the Gulf to Turkey's mystic whirling dervishes to the striking baju attires of Southeast Asia. The originally European Ashkenazi Jews and African-Iberian Sephardim strike parallels on the adjacent edge of Semitic culture too. These often-overlooked cultural proximities could also play a key role in religious unity. The cousin religions' religious tongues of Arabic and Hebrew share in linguistic roots as Afro-asiatic Semitic languages rooted in the Middle East. The two share fundamental 'word-building' systems of inflection: injecting suffixes, prefixes and vowels into consonant roots. A commonality of the Abjad scripts, the latter is most often done diacritically and left out in publication or writing, making the scripts notoriously contextual and frustrating for learners of the languages. Incidentally, this has acted and continues to act as a bridge of shared struggle between the co-authors, being the initial inspiration for our collaboration.

**The religions of Islam and Judaism alike have been nourished and fed into by the cultures they share and occupy**

Another key shared aspect of the two religions is their approach to charity departing somewhat from our general Western understanding, which connotes a giving to those in need out of generosity. The English word charity is itself

derived from the Latin *caritas* from translations of the New Testament. The first texts written in the Alexandrian dialect of Koine Greek use the word ἀγάπη (*agapē*) which in Christianity signifies God's love for man and man's love for God. This concept differs somewhat from the Muslim Zakat and the Jewish Tzedakah. These involve more of a moral obligation to giving, usually in the form of charitable donation. They are forms of giving not for personal satisfaction but to serve a faithful duty towards helping the needy. The two terms sound similar but aren't directly etymologically related. Zakat is derived from the Arabic for 'that which purifies', accentuating the essential nature of relief as a fundamental human experience and not just a spontaneous choice. It comprises a quantitative element of giving a minimum 2.5% of one's wealth each lunar year for those whose earnings satisfy a certain threshold. Similarly invoking a sense of moral obligation, Tzedakah is the Hebrew word for 'righteousness'. Many Jewish families follow the tradition of keeping a Tzedakah box at home to deposit spare change that will be donated at a later time. The concept of Sadaqah in Islam has similar etymological roots to Tzedakah, though acts as an adjacent form of 'good will' charity closer to our 21st century understanding of the word. In Judaism there is also the idea of Mitzvot. The literal meaning is commandments, but it has similarly come to represent the dutiful nature of good deeds.

Finally, food and the interplay of food and tradition

## The false dichotomy of Muslim food and Jewish food has thus often become a harmful misnomer



First Gathering of European Muslim and Jewish leaders in Brussels, December 2010  
Left to right: Grand Mufti Mustafa Ceric; European Council President Herman Van Rompuy; Rabbi Marc-Schneier; Imam Dr. Abduljallil Sajid. Photo by Michael Thaidigsmann

constitutes a major Judaeo-Islamic linkage. In Judaism, food and religious observance are intrinsically linked due to an abundance of culinary traditions for the Jewish festivals. Shabbat is the perfect example of this. Kiddush – the blessing of wine and challah – occurs after every Shabbat service and is accompanied by refreshments in the form of cakes, biscuits and other confectionary items preceding a meal. Perhaps the only Jewish festival without a specific culinary tradition is Yom Kippur, which is notable for its complete lack of food since it is a day of fasting. Intriguingly, though, Yom Kippur has ties to the Islamic fast-day of Ashura due to their shared commemoration of Moses’ parting of the red sea. Islamic cultures share a prolific celebration of food, with some of the most diverse gastronomy stretching outward and away from its Arab roots as aided by the religion’s global distribution. This permeates both cultural and celebratory contexts especially in light of the religion’s prohibition of alcohol. The dietary laws of the two religions are also an area of great intersection. It is better known that pork is forbidden for both religions, but the required

ritual slaughter processes both strike similarities in each religion. Termed Shechita in Judaism and Dhabihah in Islam, they both involve cutting across the neck of the animal in one swipe of a blade to sever the main artery, differing most substantially by the prayers implicated yet often intersecting in modern contexts.

This leads to another point about food, though. In particular, its thematic intrinsicality to the nationalist and populist wedges that currently punctuate and divide the Muslim and Jewish world. The map of cuisine is analogue, continually shaped by its reception and integration of influences both religious and non-religious. The false dichotomy of Muslim food and Jewish food has thus often become a harmful misnomer and thematic guise of a channelled malice that permeates interaction on the broader scale. This is perhaps best characterised by the story of the falafel. Falafel is an Arab food, first recorded in Egypt then myriad states thereafter, with each variant adding its own unique flourishes to the dish. However, it was upon the fifth wave of European immigration to Israel that falafel started to be othered alongside many other

## Cultural interplay extends to the very hubris of the 21st century Muslim and Jew

typically Arab foods in the unfortunate socio-political precedent of the Israel-Palestine conflict. This tension was faced not only by Arab Muslims, but also the local Jewish Sephardic and Mizrahim populations, lingering in part even to this day. However, their increased immigration into Israel in the following years from countries such as Yemen led to a steady uptake of falafel consumption. The simple fritter became a tool of propaganda, shifting discriminatory orientalist outlooks to religiously and culturally divisive ones as their creation was attributed to the Israeli Yemenis. This has transformed the once universally loved food to an instrument of division today, acting as a sort of modern-day parable and showcase to the often meaningless and fundamentally socio-political rifts that have become increasingly mistakenly perceived as religious incompatibility between the faiths.

Cultural interplay extends to the very hubris of the

21st century Muslim and Jew, with highly politicised destructive and reactive approaches seemingly shaping modern day interaction. The clashes of the sibling faiths are often superficial, being born of recurring socio-political precedents that now threaten to replicate themselves and their instructions moving into tomorrow. Constructive proactivity has placated such conflict throughout history: it was the cohesion of belief and the plurality of cultural embrace that led not only to the philanthropic and academic advances of the Islamic golden age but also to the motif of societal progression that has linked our achievements across space and throughout time. It was reconciliation and mutual respect that fostered these hopeful sparks amongst the intolerance and turmoil that we have become all too used to. The Muslim and the Jew of today are closer than they might think and better armed than ever to break the cycle.

The Cave of the Patriarchs, known to Jews as the Cave of Machpelah and to Muslims as the Sanctuary of Abraham. According to the Abrahamic religions, the cave and adjoining field were purchased by Abraham as a burial plot. The Arabic name of the complex reflects the prominence given to Abraham in Islam. Photo by Grant Barclay





## Art in the Time of Covid-19

Konstantinos Haidas considers how the art world is standing up to a financial crisis and a lack of visitors.

Covid 19 Artwork on\_Square\_Anne\_Frank\_(Tournai,\_Belgium)

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected almost every aspect of our lives, from education to businesses to sport. The world of art is no exception, and the community of museums and galleries has been forced to develop strategies to maintain their profile during lockdown and the consequent lack of visitors. Throughout time, artwork has been a reflection of identity, culture and society that provides the viewer with an insight into the artist's life and the society they live in. Art has always been a method of expression and a tool used to connect people and to evoke feelings and emotions. The movement to online viewings of art and digital discussions of art have been important effects that have come about from the global lockdown. Some artists have been inspired by the pandemic to produce work to honour key workers or help lift up spirits in such a harsh and difficult time. The Covid-19 crisis has also led to the opening up of the art world to a wider audience that will continue to be a part of the community afterwards.

The pandemic has accelerated changes that had been slowly taking shape and that will result in audiences being comfortable with viewing and engaging with culture online. The digitalisation of art has led to wider accessibility to all interested in artistic expression. In the past, some had viewed art as a restrictive community as they have not had the opportunity to properly engage with it due to geographical, economic or social factors. Most galleries have made virtual tours available on their

websites that can be used by all, providing them with an experience as close as possible to one in person. Online viewing does not allow the same physical experience when encountering artwork in galleries, but it does offer viewers time to completely immerse themselves in the art for as long as they want, free from others who create distractions and take away from the experience and the absence of restraints in visiting these places. Moreover, many people who wish to explore new art, and who have remained nervous of the frosty environment in some higher-end galleries, may do so online; this will erase some of the sense of elitism in the art community.

However, the pandemic has also resulted in artists struggling to produce new works. Despite the fact that artists have always worked alone in studios, the lockdown has had enormous effects, both financially and creatively, as artists find it onerous to concentrate on both old and new projects. The uncertainty of the future in terms of shows and gallery exhibits has made it very difficult to know what to work on. This lack of hope and clarity combined with an absence of resources, money and inspiration has left many artists feeling unmotivated, unsupported and stressed. The role of the surveyor of the Queen's pictures, a title that was created and has been fulfilled since 1625 under Charles I's reign, has been abolished and held in abeyance, in response to the financial crisis brought on by the pandemic. The role has historically been responsible for the conservation and the

care of the Royal collection of pictures and has preserved cultural history for years. A spokeswoman for the Royal Collection Trust (RCT) said that "following a restructure that was necessary due to the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, 130 roles at the RCT are to go by the end of the year". According to the Times, the RCT had lost £64 million in the past year due to the Covid-19 crisis. This abolition has raised concerns as it could demonstrate the demise of expertise in the field. What could this illustrate for the future of the art world as a whole? Art has the ability to both represent society but also criticise society and it is important to not let such a force dissipate and lose influence.

Art plays a crucial role in capturing and preserving important historical moments, whether it be wartime art that informs us about the experiences of many or portraits of royals that teach us rich history. The Covid-19 pandemic has been no exception, and art has been used to reflect the current global state. Some artists have drawn on the sense of fear and isolation felt by the public in these times, whilst others have taken inspiration from the heroes who have emerged from the crisis. Michael Craig-Martin's "Thank You NHS" is an uplifting template of flowers that is intended to be coloured in and displayed as a way of showing gratitude to the NHS. He hoped that people would colour in the flowers he outlined and then think to themselves that they didn't really need his help at all and so consequently, he would raise spirits in a time of stress, desperation and isolation. Sir Michael's main aim was to show appreciation for the courageous work of the NHS, by colouring in his design and sharing it, people could show their own personal support for the selfless work of NHS staff. The flowers that he chose to use were African Daisies which grow in a riot of colours, allowing the public to personalise their poster and demonstrate their own unique appreciation. There is added symbolism to his choice of flowers as they were named after a German medical doctor and hold a variety of meaning and representations to different cultures. Egyptians believed that they represent a close connection to nature whilst Celts believed that they lessened the sorrows and stresses of everyday life and so his choice of flower pays homage to the dire situation in a multitude of ways. The final layer of his work is the added benefit of being a mindful activity that allows people to distract themselves from their worries whilst also being able to express their emotions. Martin's art is a perfect example of how the pandemic has inspired art which has been made to unite, inspire and engage the public.

Another example of the pandemic being used to create art is Nathan Wyburn's collages of NHS workers. His inspiration came from many of his friends, including his housemates, who work for the NHS and the heartbreak he felt every time they would go to work. He collected over 200 photos and collaged them together to create the image of a health worker wearing a mask. Another one of his murals was made to present an image of Florence

Nightingale on International Nurses Day. He hoped that people would see his work and be proud of their job and how they have helped during this pandemic. After his work was greatly received, he began to make T-shirts and other items of clothing with the image on in order to raise funds for charities. Art has metamorphosed into a way to show appreciation to key workers, a way to distract people from the repetitive and isolated nature of every day whilst also uniting people in a time of stress and desperation.

Plato once noted that "necessity is the mother of invention"; we have seen the effect of this as the pandemic has led to innovations and new trends in the art world. We have seen an increased popularity of arts and crafts as a way for people to stay connected, keep active and support their local community. During the lockdown, Hobbycraft, an arts and crafts superstore retail chain in the United Kingdom reported a 200% increase in online sales. One of the biggest challenges in lockdown for most people has been the feelings of loneliness and isolation. Through online art clubs like Noel Fielding's online art club and Grayson Perry's Art Club TV show, people have been able to be inspired by art, get involved in a new hobby and also make connections across the country.

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**Art has metamorphosed  
into a way to show  
appreciation to key workers**

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Independent retailers and companies have made similar attempts to keep people social through online classes, many of which include art classes. Art has frequently been used to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression and so many have resorted to taking part

in these activities in lockdown as a way to encourage the release of dopamine and endorphins. Many have also used this new hobby to create PPE (personal protection equipment) for key workers. This trend has resulted in the opening up of the space to more people who did not have previous exposure or experience in art, who now have a new-found interest in it. This interest will surely remain after lockdown is over and they will then go on to visit galleries and contribute to the art community even more. The experience of connecting, introducing and reaching out to different networks offers a model for collaboration in the future. The crisis has led to a shift in artists' thinking as they migrate their interests from the micro to the macro scale. Just as when in 1968 people first saw pictures of the Earth from space, we have suddenly become aware that we are all united together in one world.

Despite the colossal effects of the pandemic, both artists and art itself have found ways to develop and adapt to the current challenging situation. The successful move online has allowed a broader range of people to immerse themselves in the art world. Whether it be in the form of new trends such as recreating famous paintings with household objects or the rise of arts and crafts, art has been able to keep people active whilst also being a very rewarding and expressive activity in tough times. But what does this mean for the future of art? When restrictions are eased, and the world slowly goes back to normal, people will flock to the arts sector: art and culture form a vital component of the warp and weft of society.



# Tortoises, Turmeric and Time: Thinking Rhizomatically

The rhizome is non-hierarchical, heterogeneous, multiplicitous, and acentered, and is considered a key concept in the thinking of Jung, Deleuze and Guattari. Titus Parker explores how the metaphor of the rhizome has influenced philosophy, politics, economics and computing.

A wise tortoise once said 'Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift. That is why it is called present.' Master Oogway, the archetypal 'sensei' figure of the popular film Kung Fu Panda says this in order to console Po, the eponymous protagonist of Kung Fu Panda. For all its mystical poignance, Oogway's conception of time is flawed: firstly, he views the present as a reified single point unconnected to the past and future, and secondly, Oogway's conception of time is too spatial. Oogway's first error is present in conceiving the past, 'yesterday' as 'history', separate from the present. Consider a human cell – the cell contains genetic code borne from the past that constitutes, even defines the existence of the cell. The past, therefore, isn't something which exists in the past, separate to and reified from the present; it exists in the present, which 'actualises' the past, manifesting the past's influence into existence in the 'right-now'. The second issue with Oogway's conception of time is its 'spacial-isation' of time. Oogway's conception of time is similar to many others' – it can, at first, be imagined as a number line, with the past progressing 'left' as the

number line's numbers grow smaller, and the future extending to the right as the numbers of the number line grow. To many, time is linear, conceived of as similar to a number line. However, where there are numbers on a number line, there are no such single units of time. The present moment can be mathematically subdivided into the smallest measurement and yet we will still never have a single instance of time – it will always be durational. The existence of the present 'moment' poses significant challenges to this spatial, linear, numerical conception of time. Perhaps time as a whole should not be considered as so linear and spatial: the present, being defined as a point on a number line can be considered

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To many, time is linear,  
conceived of as similar  
to a number line

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more abstractly, with a conception of the present as a confluence point of the future and the past; the present, therefore, actualises the past. Crucially however, it does so not by manifesting parts of the past that have just occurred – the present is a flux state constantly subject to random facets of the past from 5 seconds ago and 5 centuries ago simultaneously in an infinitely complex process of manifestation of history. This non-linear process is key to understanding a non-linear view of time

A thynnine wasp (*Lophocheilus anilitatus*) is tricked into mating with an Orchid (*Caladenia phaeoclavia*)

and dispelling a linear, spatio-numerical conception of time.

Enter the rhizome, a network of underground plant stems. They allow a plant to grow in a non-hierarchical mass of roots, shoots and stems underground without any central authoritative structure of specialised parts. A rhizome can best be compared to a tree to understand its botanical, and philosophical significance. A tree has distinct parts – roots, a trunk, stems, branches and leaves, each which serve a function in some sort of ordered hierarchy that contribute to the growth of the tree. A rhizome, such as a ginger or turmeric plant, on the other hand, has no such beginning, middle, end nor top and bottom. Instead, it's a mesh of interconnected rhizomatic mass, with each part able to be connected to any other part of the rhizome. French philosopher Giles Deleuze saw something revolutionary in the rhizome. To Deleuze, much of Western thinking has been too arborescent – the tree, to Deleuze represents hierarchy, rigid structure, and a form of static, rigid and unadaptable thinking that has plagued western thought since the Pre-Socratics. Therefore, when Deleuze describes systems

of thought as arborescent, he is referring to the notion that an idea is rigid, hierarchical, static and vertically structured, in contrast to rhizomatic structures of thought, which are like ginger: horizontal, dynamic and elude hierarchical interpretation. After all, cutting off any part of ginger and replanting it will lead to another ginger

rhizome, and when this grows large enough to connect to the first ginger rhizome, the two merge together, wiping away the previously-imagined boundary and becoming one rhizome again, that arguably contains more rhizomatic systems inside. Rhizomes therefore can also contain recursive attributes. Deleuze and his academic partner, psychoanalyst Felix Guattari, with whom he wrote a couple of books, identified a series of features unique to a rhizome. A rhizome is connective – any part of the rhizome can connect to any other part of the rhizome, and is thus non-hierarchical. Rhizomes are 'multiplicative' – there are no central points, and thus everything within the rhizome is important. To Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome can be broken off and start anew in both of these now separated rhizomes. Rhizomes also have cartographic and decalcomanic elements. To the pair, this means that rhizomes have no hierarchical start and end point; much like a map they are can be entered at any location and are constantly evolving and changing. Deleuze's works elude hierarchical interpretation by very nature of what he was writing about – much of his work seeks to do away with constricting arborescent thinking, and as such, there is no definitive 'central' concept to Deleuze's work that defines the rest of his work. In fact, in writing about rhizomes, Deleuze and Guattari have stated that their book 'A Thousand Plateaus' can be read with its chapters following any order the reader wishes. That said, the rhizome is a

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### Rhizomatic structures of thought, which are like ginger: horizontal, dynamic and elude hierarchical interpretation

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nice way to enter the 'map' of the rhizome that is his work. That said, many of their other concepts, which connect branches of mathematics, physics, ecology, film studies, psychoanalysis, politics, history, economics, and of course biology in a rhizomatic structure, can be interpreted through a lens of Deleuze and Guattari seeking to dispel arborescent thinking where it is not justified.

As a method of interpretation and thinking about systems, rhizomatic thinking isn't ontologically absolutist – not everything is a rhizome: a tree is not a rhizome, nor is a car, yet the ecosystem within which the tree exists might be rhizomatic, as might the travel network within which the car is driven. It is not as if nothing is arborescent, just that thinking solely arborescently misses a great deal.

Deleuze and Guattari trace this tendency towards arborescent thinking back to Plato. Plato, through his division and categorisation of things into 'perfect' forms that don't exist in the material world, and imperfect, impure forms that we interact with through experience daily, sets up an arborescent, hierarchical system of interpreting reality from the get go. Deleuze

and Guattari note that this kind of thinking is present throughout history since Plato: western Christianity, especially since Augustine of Hippo, Kant, with his noumenal-phenomenal hierarchy, companies, built with a clear arborescent with a CEO, Director, Vice-President and so on, schools, with the headmaster, board of directors and senior management, school syllabuses that divide subjects into arbitrary categories that categorise and divide a subject with more and more precision – all are arborescent. Even Oogway's misrepresentation of time earlier in this essay is flawed in this regard – time cannot be understood as linearly as most people think; instead it is more rhizomatic and non-linear. In their magnanimous tract 'A Thousand Plateaus', the second volume of their work 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia', Deleuze and Guattari try and pull the arborescent wool from the eyes of the reader, extending rhizomatic thinking to politics, history, economics, ecology et cetera.

Since writing this work in 1980, however, a newly applicable setting for their concept of the rhizome has surfaced – the internet. Contemporary political and philosophical analysts have struggled to understand the nature of how the internet facilitates political exchange; consider the media criticising '4chan hackers' despite 4chan neither being a united entity nor harbouring said 'hackers' the political establishment fears. Ultimately, this is because networks like 4chan, Instagram and facebook all function rhizomatically with networks within networks within networks, all connecting to each other in such ways that it eludes rational hierarchical categorisation, especially to outsiders to said informatic ecosystems. In fact, contemporary 'meme culture' is a good example of this: people above a certain age struggle

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## Deleuze and Guattari trace this tendency towards arborescent thinking back to Plato

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to comprehend the symbols and subtle signifiers many memes convey to the extent that they are completely unable to resonate with their younger acquaintances when both shown the same meme. Consider the important implications of this disconnect. Firstly, to the extent that social media networks, and internet networks as a whole account for a large portion of information transfer between humans and 'bots', an inability to conceptualise and understand the dynamic nature of this type of communication is devastating as far as any type of understanding of the internet and its function within society goes.

Secondly, social media networks take an ever-increasing role in contemporary politics,

and scandals such as the Cambridge Analytica scandal of the 2016 elections or the Russian electoral interference scandals following are only on the rise. The problem with a non-rhizomatic approach to these kind of issues is it ignores the extent to which electoral interference is fundamentally rhizomatic. An inability to trace the ever-changing flows of human political opinions in an ever-changing rhizomatic landscape will always render intelligence agencies and investigative journalists late to recognising and adapting to interference. Thirdly, and perhaps most fundamental

is the notion that the internet itself, to some extent is ontically comprised of pseudo-rhizomatic networks. There are three types of networks: centralised, decentralised and distributed networks. Centralised networks contain one central node connected to every other node in the network. This single central node can be considered the most important 'authority' in the network. Imagine the spokes of a wheel as a network – the central point to which all the spokes connect can be considered the 'central node' of the network, with the link between the spokes and the wheel's frame being the nodes that connect to the central node. A decentralised network is a bit different – multiple 'central' nodes exist, that have some level of importance and to which all the other nodes singularly connect to. Imagine a university or school, absent of a headmaster of course – there are different department heads under which teachers and professors teach. Here, the teachers function as lesser nodes in the network that all report (if of course the school is functional) to

the respective heads of departments. Finally, there is a distributed network – this is most similar to a rhizome of the three. The different nodes of the network can connect to each other freely in a large lattice of connections that eludes hierarchical interpretation. This isn't to say that every node is connected to each other node, but there is nothing inherent to the definition of this kind of network that prohibits a node connecting to any other. There exist all of these kind of networks on the internet, in terms of social networks, but also with entities like bitcoin, which is a distributed network and thus most similar to a rhizome.

Decentralised and distributed entities are increasing in number and importance, and the informatic zeitgeist is one of decentralisation – everything from the recent surge in popularity of cryptocurrencies to Peter Thiel, PayPal co-founder, Trump donor and venture capital firm manager, seeding Urbit, which is an attempt to wean individuals away from reliance on the centralised servers of Google and Facebook, shows this. Considering that, to Deleuze, we as a society have historically approached things solely arborescently, clearly therefore is there a need to approach things more rhizomatically necessary for the modern world.

Deleuze and Guattari also sought to shed new light on political philosophy. Their most significant contribution to the field of political science is the concept of the 'machine'. Imagine the entire political sphere: Deleuze and Guattari create a politico-ontological building block of political exchange which they term 'a machine' - humans are instances of machines. Machines seek to connect to other machines in order to produce some form of action – in the same way that the past and future connect to actualise the present, so do political machines all connect together to actualise a political effect. This allows for a certain dynamism of understanding politics – movements connect with politicians who connect with institutions who connect with individuals who connect with the state in a fractal of rhizomes within rhizomes within rhizomes. Why not use the Hegelian term 'the subject' or a more classical liberal 'individual'? In dividing the political sphere into a complicated mesh of machines, Deleuze and Guattari seek to remove the humanism inherent to both



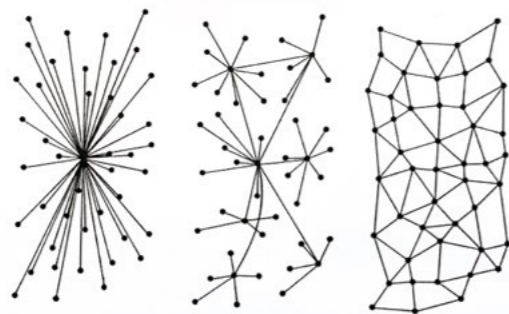
## Social media networks take an ever-increasing role in contemporary politics

terms. For both, the interpretation of society as a series of choices of individuals and conscious subjects ignores the influence of movements and other political entities which Deleuze and Guattari also bring under the term 'machine'. This dynamism allows for comprehensive analysis of non-human political entities, which can only come about through a more detailed analysis of the relations of machines. Deleuze and Guattari call these relationships of machines 'flows', a term they politely lift from economics' flows of capital or cash flows. To Deleuze, the way flows work is through processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Machines are not fixed entities – through the connection with other machines, the machine becomes defined by the connection and the flow comes to comprise part of their identities.

Consider a thynnine wasp.

A thynnine wasp is a type of wasp that pollinates orchids: the male wasp, attracted by fake female pheromones, attempts in vain to mate with the orchid flower, and in doing so, picks up pollen which the wasp then takes to the next orchid flower. This process can be considered as a flow between two orchids, with the thynnine male playing a crucial part in this reproductive flow. Crucially, to Deleuze and Guattari, the wasp has become deterritorialised in this context of this flow – the wasp is defined by the flow and is crucially part of the territory of the orchids' flow. The wasp is itself a part of the flow between the two mating orchids. Now witness the bigger picture – this flow doesn't exist in a vacuum but is part of a wider network of rhizomatic mass within nature as a whole: the rhizome of the local ecosystem, the rhizome of the wasp hive, the rhizome of someone's house/garden within which the orchids are tended to, all complex and all multiplicative and all decalcomanic. If this seems complex, then a society of millions, if not billions of political machines all being territorialised by numerous more flows while constantly in flux is significantly more so. This is precisely the novelty of this new system of interpreting politics. Instead of the rigid analysis of 'individuals' or 'classes' to which liberals or marxists might subscribe, this framework allows for a flexibility and dynamism that is crucial to analysing a world that gets ever increasingly filled with more and

more machines. It allows for the bypassing of conventional political schools and their dogmatic division of the world into arbitrary categories of classes, individual humans, races, sexes, nationalities all which certain ways of political schools arbitrarily prioritise. This isn't to say that there aren't situations where certain identities of machines (or one of their flows) aren't more important in certain situations than other parts of the machine; it's precisely this however – that the extra importance of a machine's class in one situation or race in another situation is situational and thus not fixed. There has arisen a recent trend in the humanities and politics especially to consider the 'intersectionality' of identity among other categories; critically, however, Deleuze and Guattari provide the framework for a full and dynamic analysis of intersectionality and variance within the political rhizomatic fractal as a whole.



Baran's three types of networks

Rhizomes, of course, aren't limited to politics and the internet. One can view economies rhizomatically. Countries and companies are constantly engaging in flows of capital and information, and any single listing on the stock market can also be interpreted as a flow between thousands of different machines at any one time. This isn't the most radical application of rhizomes in economics however; economics as a discipline is largely comprised of various schools of thought: monetarists, neo-keynesians, neoclassicals, Austrians among others. Each school subscribes to various economic claims surrounding whether production is a priori the most important domain of an economy when contrasted to exchange or consumption, or whether economies change primarily through technological innovation or technological innovation or class struggle. Fundamentally, each of these claims are normative – classical economists necessarily believe that economies change through capital accumulation and investment, whereas Marxists necessarily believe that fundamental economic unit is that of the class. The world is complex, and economics is no exception; policy institutes, banks, consumers and governments all have complicated flows between each other, and crucially, the roles of these respective types of machines are fluid and not fixed. Banks can function

as lenders of last resort for governments, as creators of currency or as subjects of central bank price signalling, interpreting changing interest rates as probability values for the success of certain investments and consequentially a benchmark for issuing loans; to a degree, they probably do all of these things at once in a constant process of territorialisation and deterritorialisation with other economic machines. Problems start to arise when economists view the world through fixed prisms. For one, it ignores multifaceted roles and functions that economic actors play – this entrenches dogma between schools of economics as economists refuse theoretical pluralism on the grounds that other economists' interpretation of the function of certain institutions are fundamentally flawed. This leaves potential gaps between different schools of economics; naturally, this has vast policy implications as governments and Bretton Woods organisations like the IMF adopt certain ideological and policy positions – it's easy to see the problem with inherently weak economic policy at the international level. 'Externalities', if you will, at the level of institutions then have knock on effects at the international level. Rhizomes are applicable to history as well – rhizomatic views of history can seek to dispel flawed Whig historiography, which has a very impact on the experience of real experiences, not least because Whig historiography can justify colonial apologists. Rhizomes can further empower theoretical ecology. This can be applied on a micro level or macro level. Ecosystems like the Amazon is a rhizome with millions of human and non-human machines interacting, entering in and out of relationships with the forest. Bolsonaro's green-lighting of deforestation is a flow, itself comprised of multiple flows of individual farmers acting like machines, interacting with an area of land which might push certain animals to migrate, this migration pattern itself influencing ecological collapse in another place. On a macro level, the environment itself is a rhizome, comprised of flows between other smaller rhizomes such as global politics or global wind patterns. The unique interconnectedness of rhizomatic thinking allows for deeper and more effective conceptions of the environment. To Guattari especially, himself a psychoanalyst, Freudian-inspired conceptions of the subconscious carve three fixed portions into the self and assign each certain hierarchical relations, with the id visually underpinning the ego and superego. The pattern should be making itself clear – to Deleuze and Guattari, there is no governing, transcendent, hierarchical 'absolute' when it comes to history, politics, psychoanalysis, economics, philosophy, ecology and even time itself.

The potential fallout from such a groundbreaking theoretical framework is massive. One can view so many sets of situations where rhizomatic thinking might be applicable, or even enlightening. Perhaps the most valuable gift Deleuze and Guattari have left us are the intentions behind the rhizome: dogmatic obedience to unnecessary and outdated hierarchical relationships is a good in itself, and recognising the power of the individual to question seemingly unquestionable paradigms is noble. Looking forward to the future, a rhizomatic approach to issues will be ever more important.

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# Disunited Democracies: A Comparison of Populism in Spain and the UK

**Rafael Leon-Villapolos** analyses the growth of populism in two countries with a very different heritage. Politicians in both have sown seeds of division and dissatisfaction through instrumentalisation of identity politics and nationalism.

In the past ten years, populist politics has taken hold in many nations, including Spain and the UK. When both nations most recently held elections in 2019, populist politicians were in the foreground, with Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn offering brands of right and left-wing populism respectively, whilst in Spain the far-left Podemos joined the coalition and far-right Vox became the third-largest party, taking 52 of 350 seats in the Congress of Deputies. Yet, while populists have achieved political influence in both nations, the issues that fuelled their rise are markedly different, coloured by the cultural and historical legacies of both countries.

**A surge in nationalist sentiment was the catalyst for populist fervour**

Spanish politics has always exhibited extreme divisions, with the political philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset coining the term “las Dos Españas” to describe the near-perpetual factionalism of the country. After the Civil War of 1936-39, General Francisco Franco took power, ruling as *Caudillo* for 36 years. Upon his death in 1975, however, democracy was established, with a new constitution formed and elections held in 1977. Politics was dominated by the centre-right Partido Popular (PP) and centre-left Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), with Spain seemingly immune to the wave of populism that swept Europe following the financial crisis of 2008 as the technocratic Mariano Rajoy was elected Prime Minister.



VOX website declares the party as Un movimiento de extrema necesidad

## Populists in both nations broadened their focus following their “trigger issue”

British politics since the end of World War Two has been centred on the Conservative and Labour parties, with the socialist, Keynesian agenda of the post-war Attlee government being the main narrative until the 1970s. Entry into the European Union, a humiliating IMF bailout and ravaging union strikes, culminating in the Winter of Discontent in 1978-9, then led to a change in the dominant ideology. With Margaret Thatcher in No 10, union powers were curbed, government spending cut, and the financial sector deregulated. This was succeeded by the “third way” of Tony Blair, in a Labour Party much less left-wing than its pre-Thatcher incarnation, and then by the “compassionate conservatism” of David Cameron, in coalition with the Liberal Democrats. Ironically, this increased centrism allowed populism to flourish.

Although the theme was exploited differently in the two countries, a surge in nationalist sentiment was the catalyst for populist fervour. In Britain, fears about immigration allowed Nigel Farage’s UKIP and the previously minor European Research Group (ERG) to pressure Cameron’s government towards a referendum on European Union membership, whereas in Spain, the illegal Catalan independence referendum of October 2017 allowed the minor party Vox to gain support for its plans to revoke regional autonomy. In 2010, only 31% of Britons thought that immigration was the most salient issue facing the UK, but by 2016, this had increased to 56%, showing the populist right’s success in turning it into a hot-potato issue. Farage especially seized on feelings of disenfranchisement amongst voters who no longer felt represented by mainstream parties. Particularly targeted were Muslims and Eastern Europeans, as Farage claimed that Muslims were “coming here to take us over” and saying he would be “concerned” about having Romanian neighbours, playing into fears about job losses and replacement in communities already hit hard by economic stagnation. A famous poster depicted the EU as “at breaking point”, while Boris Johnson in the referendum campaign warned that “80 million Turks would come to this country”, fomenting worries about job losses and marginalisation for political gain.

In Spain, however, what turned Vox into a major political party was Cataluña. Vox was originally founded in 2013 by hard-liners from the PP, but after Cataluña declared independence following an illegal referendum in 2017, many conservative Spaniards turned against devolution because of the resulting chaos, ending in direct rule being imposed from Madrid. Just as UKIP did, Vox

used dramatic gesture politics to draw attention to itself, calling for the arrest of Regional President Quim Torra and suing the *Generalitat* (Catalan Parliament), following which its membership jumped by 20% within a month. Unlike UKIP, however, this support translated into electoral success, with its share of the vote rising from 0.2% in 2016 to 15.08% in November 2019 and taking 54 seats, only 35 behind the PP. The issue of Cataluña galvanised the party by allowing it to point to an “Anti-Spain” which wants to dissolve the nation, and blame this on devolution, just as Farage warned of immigrants destroying British culture. Vox’s leader, Santiago Abascal, garnered support from unexpected communities, such as Andalucía, traditionally a socialist stronghold. A similar phenomenon was observed in former “red wall” seats which backed Brexit in 2016 and Boris Johnson in 2019, with trade unions and industries which tied them to the left declining, leaving them feeling no longer represented. Union membership in Britain fell below 6 million for the first time since the



Populism on the road. The slogan was subsequently acknowledged to be misleading.

1940s and Spanish unions also lost over 600,000 members between 2009 and 2016, showing a break with long standing socialist traditions, leaving opportunity for parties which claimed they stood for “real people” or supported *Hispanidad* (Spanish cultural identity).

A significant difference between the emergence of populism is, that it succeeded in

Britain by infiltrating major parties, whereas in Spain new parties gained influence. Under the first-past-the-post system in the UK, UKIP took 3.9m votes yet just one seat, whereas Vox took 15.1% and 52 seats under proportional representation, meaning it was able to exercise influence more directly in Congress. Populists in Britain managed to turn mainstream parties towards their ideas: on the right, Cameron was pushed to call the referendum after 100 of his own MPs, many from the ERG, backed a motion for one and UKIP outperformed the Conservatives in the 2014 European Parliament elections, raising fears of voters defecting to UKIP and leaving the Conservative position fragile. Post-referendum, ERG MPs repeatedly frustrated Theresa May’s Brexit deal, meaning it became the main issue, occupying 20% of debate time and much of media coverage. His campaign focused on “getting Brexit done”, and, while sparse on detail, was well-received by those frustrated by the deadlock since 2016, allowing populism to gain power.

Populists in both nations broadened their focus following their “trigger issue”. Podemos added Euroscepticism, as it believed free trade promoted

inequality, and action on climate change, key to its capture of the Madrid mayoralty, to its original platform of corruption and anti-austerity, though this was damaged after illegal funding from Venezuela and tax fraud were exposed in the party, meaning it lost momentum. Vox expanded into anti-Islamism and social issues such as abortion: Abascal's campaign video featured him horse-riding with the slogan "The reconquest starts in Andalucía", evoking ideas of defending Christian culture against Muslims, linking this to increased immigration from North Africa and helping it win Murcia province, where many refugees have settled. Andalusian party leader Francisco Serrano also raged against "psychopathic feminazis", and the party manifesto calls for repeal of gender-violence laws and banning "non-health-based surgery" (abortion). This exploited the disconnect felt by many traditionalist Catholics following the legalisation of abortion and gay marriage and the loss of church as a social anchor. Hence, one of Vox's ads ended with the slogan "Make Spain great again", seeking support by playing on nostalgia for an imagined glorious past.

Post-Brexit, the British populist right is increasingly focused on culture wars. Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said his party would protect controversial statues from "woke mobs" in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests which toppled the statue of slave-trader Edward Colston, provoking anger from many on the right. Cummings' criticisms of "the

blob", including lawyers, civil servants, and the BBC, shows new populist bugbears, with "left-wing bias" a familiar criticism of the BBC and plans being made to reform the civil service, leading to the removal of Cabinet Secretary Mark Sedwill. Contrastingly, Labour's failure to make inroads post-2017 was down to its vacillating Brexit position, planning to negotiate a deal it would campaign against, and its perceived lack of patriotism, such as when Corbyn refused to say that Russia was behind the Salisbury poisonings, meaning it was constantly on the backfoot on cultural issues, with a tangled manifesto failing against the simple message "Get Brexit Done". Momentum also influenced the party enough to anger moderates, but not enough to achieve dominance, meaning internal divisions hampered it.

An alarming similarity is streaks of populist anti-Semitism across left and right. In the Labour Party, Ken Livingstone claimed Hitler had supported Zionism and Corbyn retweeted a mural depicting stereotypical Jews playing Monopoly with people, leading to anti-Semitism often going unchecked under the guise of pro-Palestine sentiment, making Jews feel unwelcome in the party. General-Secretary Jennie Formby and communications director Seumas Milne also faced allegations of preventing investigation of anti-Semites, demonstrating how, despite the horror of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism still lurks in populist parties. Vox also proposed Holocaust-denier Fernando Paz to be an Albacete deputy,

### Varieties of Spanish and British populism present worrying parallels and tendencies

Populist photo-op - Boris represented as pugnacious negotiator



and deputy leader Javier Ortega Smith frequently claims that Muslim immigration is facilitated by George Soros, invoking anti-Semitic tropes of puppeteering Jews. Vox has often disguised anti-Semitism by its overt support of Israel, urging that "ties between Spain and Israel should be deepened in all areas" as part of its campaign against Islam, showing innate contradictions in populism and how multiple "enemies of the people" can be vilified to suit the "them-and-us" narrative at different times. Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias also called Israel an "illegal country" and criticised "the power of the Zionist lobby over American politics", using an often-seen disguise of anti-Semitism as anti-Zionism and again referencing the conspiracy theory of Jews manipulating politics for their own ends, demonstrating a shameful parallel between Podemos and Momentum.

This ties into classic populist tactics of targeting "the other" as minority groups, (be they be Jews, Muslims, immigrants or metropolitan elites), which are presented as a danger to 'the people', are unpatriotic, and have nefarious purposes. Populists portray themselves as the only ones willing or able to save the nation from "the other", whether it be through leaving the EU to allegedly reclaim sovereignty, put "real people" ahead of elites, or to keep immigrants out. "Others" are often accused of having brought the nation down from past glories which populists will supposedly return it to: Priti Patel, Liz Truss and Dominic Raab, with little awareness of geopolitics or trading realities, wrote of their desire to see "Britannia Unchained"; calls to "take back control" envisaged the return of a non-existent past, underlined by Boris Johnson's frequent invocations of Winston Churchill. Vox has been more flagrant in its demonisation of "others", attacking the "Anti-España", or Anti-Spain, which they claim is working to tear Spain down from the inside. However, once it is perceived as having gone too far, attacks on "others" can harm populists: Corbyn's past associations with Hamas and tolerance of anti-Semitism were cited as a factor in Labour's crushing election defeat in 2019. Podemos also came to power on an anti-corruption and anti-elite platform, but after key figure Juan Carlos Monedero was exposed as having received €425,000 from Venezuelan sources and Pablo Iglesias as having kept the stolen SIM card of another politician's phone, this message was perceived as hypocritical, with its seats almost halving between 2016 and 2019 as its main line of attack was blunted.

Populist lies are, of course, never acknowledged. When Remainers warned of border disruption and unrest in Northern Ireland in the event of Brexit, this was dismissed as "Project Fear", yet border controls risk disruption to supply chains, non-tariff costs increase prices of imports, and the refusal of populists to admit this possibility earlier has ironically harmed border security and exacerbated Northern Irish tensions. The over-simplification and sloganeering in the Leave campaign, increased polarisation because many different Brexits had been envisaged, meaning any deal was bound to disappoint some, and angered those who believed an exit would be quick by not admitting how drawn-out Brexit would be. Repeated attacks by the ERG on Theresa May's

Chequers Plan as turning Britain into "a vassal state" or being "a suicide belt" also led to parliamentary gridlock, preventing other much-needed bills from being passed and leading to further political resentment between Remainers and Leavers. The domination of Brexit and both sides' lies can be seen in a 2018 poll which showed that 72% of Britons identified "strongly" with Remain or Leave, more than 66% with any political party. Vox's claims that Muslim neighbourhoods were "multicultural dunghills" and that Muslims were responsible for 93% of delinquency complaints were actively harmful, leading to a rise in hate crimes against Muslims, and their proclamations that only Vox will save the country will lead to anger amongst their supporters when their incompetence is shown up in governance, leading them to turn to an even more extreme party or foment unrest, harming democracy further and creating a vicious populist circle. The harm that disaffected voters can do has already been seen in the Capitol storming, and the economic setbacks that Brexit will bring, in contrast to the promised sunlit uplands will result in disenchantment with democracy in the UK, generating further populist waves.

The socio-economic upheaval that Covid-19 will bring, with GDP already losing 9.9% in the UK and 11% in Spain, will provide further fuel for populism, as inequalities between rich and poor widen. Young people, who have had to endure economic harm for a disease that affects them less, will also become increasingly dissatisfied with the status quo, meaning populism could mutate. Brexit drew much support from pensioners, 64% of whom backed it, but young people could provide a long-term well of support for populist parties. Vox have also not been in power during the pandemic, and with Spain having a high rate of 126 deaths per 100,000, the PSOE could easily be attacked for mismanaging the pandemic. Vox support for anti-lockdown protests could provide another populist path to power.

Overall, links and contrasts exist between Spanish and British populism. While both launched using different "trigger issues" and achieved electoral success in different ways, the factors that allowed them to develop are similar, including the loss of social anchors like unions and churches, the perception that traditional parties no longer represented voters, and fast-paced socio-economic and cultural changes. We should now be wary of how easily populists can overturn norms and we must seek to rebuild trust in civilised discourse and political respect to prevent populism taking a far darker turn.

Varieties of Spanish and British populism present worrying parallels and tendencies. While both launched using different trigger issues and achieved electoral success in different ways, the factors that allowed them to develop are similar: the loss of social anchors like trades unions and churches, the perception that traditional parties no longer represented voters' concerns, and fast-paced socio-economic and cultural changes. We should now be wary of how easily populists can overturn norms and we must seek to return to civilised discourse and political respect to prevent populism taking a far darker turn.

# Were the Luddites Right After All?

Jasper McBride-Owusu traces the conflicts between innovation and economic conservatism through history and considers the impact on the job market of 21st century technological advances.



Manpower replaced by robotics and automation

For decades, workers around the world have dreaded the apparently unstoppable march of automation, waiting for the day that their jobs would be wiped out by a machine or a piece of software. This widespread, long-term redundancy of human labour, however, always seemed to be postponed. Instead, new industries, often unimaginable before their creation, have arisen to provide new jobs to replace those which have been lost, arriving in time to stave off the complete dislocation of the existing societal order. But now things are not so certain. A new wave of technological innovation, perhaps different from what we have seen before, seems to be on the horizon. This technology could imperil the livelihoods of so many of us that our current economic and political systems could fracture.

But this is not a novel concern. For millennia, the huge long-term benefits reaped by technological innovation have been weighed up against the immediate disruption they bring about. From Ancient Egypt and the classical

era empires through to the Middle Ages and early modern period, workers, guild masters, burghers, nobles and monarchs have been concerned by how technological innovation will threaten existing employment structures and upset the balance of society. The Roman Emperor Vespasian, when approached with an innovation which would allow for the cheaper transportation of heavy columns refused, famously objecting that “you must allow my poor hauliers to earn their bread”. Our own Elizabeth I, when declining a patent for a Mr Lee who had just developed a novel knitting machine, responded “Thou aimest high, Master Lee. Consider thou what the invention could do to my poor subjects. It would assuredly bring to them ruin by depriving them of employment, thus making them beggars”.

Nevertheless, these economic power structures were swept aside by evolving enlightenment thinking and a tidal wave of innovation: the UK was to become the leader of the industrial revolution and any fears of the

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**Increasingly draconian Acts of Parliament from the 1700s began to punish individuals for ‘breaking machines’**

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spinning jenny were soon cut out of the public mentality. Parliament set out to remove the barriers any remaining ‘fringe’ groups posed to further innovation, commerce and profit. Increasingly draconian Acts of Parliament from the 1700s began to punish individuals for ‘breaking machines’. Lengthy imprisonments gave way to transportation overseas and even, with the 1812 Destruction of Stocking Frames Act, the penalty of death. What fright had instigated such drastic legislation? In part, movements such as the Luddites.

They arose in the early 19th Century as former high-status textile workers, now beggared, attacking textile machines and their owners for the destruction of their livelihoods. Their reasoning seemed sound. Many had trained long and hard to develop respected skills, only to be ‘fraudulently’ supplanted by machines operated by fewer, lower skilled people. The machines were the manifestation of a ruthlessly exploitative and unequal system. It took the British Army, extra-judicial killings and legislation such as the 1812 Act to snuff out the Luddite rebellion by around 1817. Yet the struggles and debate continued. A rollcall of influential thinkers such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx and J.S. Mill weighed in with views on the impact of automation ranging from utopian optimism to deep pessimism.

Generous rewards were common in the hunt for Luddite saboteurs. But by the late 19th century and into the post-World War Two era it seemed empirically obvious that there was really nothing to worry about. Whilst technological innovation did cause short-term and often localised employment issues, long-term structural unemployment was of no concern.

In the more than 250 years since the start of the industrial revolution, the world’s population has grown by 7 billion people, up from the 800 million people that it took all of human history beforehand to reach. Despite this explosion in population, employment remains high across the world, with the global unemployment rate standing at around 5.4%. The highest ever global average living standards and productivity which we enjoy today are a reflection of the fruits of automation and innovation. In 2019, in an article published in The New York Times, Nobel Prize winning economist Paul Krugman confidently warned US Democrat leaders not to fall into the “Rabbit Hole” of automation, arguing that the new wave of automation which we are witnessing today is no different from that which has gone before it.

Increased automation continues to be the critical goal for all organisational processes today. If that is the case, history would tell us to keep calm and carry on.

But maybe not. There is a growing argument that the automation we face in this emerging ‘information age’, with an economy increasingly dominated by information technology, is unlike anything that has gone before it and may well finally make a significant proportion of human labour permanently redundant. Futurists and Artificial Intelligence (AI) experts around the world increasingly

suggest that the so called ‘cognitive revolution’ into which we are currently entering offers automation on a scale and rigour to finally unravel labour markets. Artificial Intelligence is a catch-all term used to describe complex software algorithms and computer architectures designed to mimic human cognitive capabilities – able to learn and solve real world problems and make judgements based on real world information.

AI and robotics has the capacity to replace a vast array of seemingly human only tasks. A study by AI experts as early as the 1980s arrived at the rather daunting conclusion that AIs find it easy to do what humans find difficult, and difficult to do what humans find trivial. In the words of Hans Moravec, one of the researchers behind the study, “It is comparatively easy to make computers exhibit adult-level performance on intelligent tests or playing checkers, and difficult or impossible to give them the skills of a one year old when it comes to perception or mobility”. The implication of this “Moravec’s Paradox” is that jobs such as lawyers and analysts, aspirational careers valued for their use of logic that represent the foundations of the middle class, will be filled by AIs that find these tasks easy. On the flip side, the skills of perception and mobility common in gardeners and nurses, for example, that society does not currently reward highly, will become the very tasks that AIs find it most difficult to complete.

In Martin Ford’s 2015 book *Rise of the Robots*, entrepreneur and author Martin Ford demonstrates how today’s

AI enabled automation will substitute more broadly defined and skilled cognitive jobs spanning a swathe of managerial, professional and technical roles. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the job growth in new industries which has historically staved off widescale unemployment from automation is already starting to decline. The new tech companies meant to give us the next wave of jobs in fact employ fewer and fewer people while generating greater profits. In 1979, US car making giant General Motors, a key example of a traditional manufacturing company, recorded sales of some \$25 billion (about \$95 billion in today’s money) and had roughly 850,000 employees. Compare that to Google, which in 2019 earned \$160.8 billion in revenue and employed around 130,000 people. Although the comparison between these two companies may seem an odd and perhaps unfair one, Google is an archetype of the kind of new firm which is meant to replace lost jobs and stave off automation-driven unemployment. This effect is already starting to become visible in labour markets in developed economies. A decline in job creation in new high-tech industries could pose a serious threat to long term employment, especially given that this creation is supposed to overcome unemployment and underemployment stemming from both automation and population growth.

The impacts of this on the structure of employment and the wider economy will be profound. It seems

## Increasing productivity already disproportionately benefits owner stakeholders

plausible that this turbo charged automation will in fact lead to major job losses and a rise in the 'natural' rate of unemployment by reducing the number of people required to complete tasks throughout the economy. A 2016 study by the independent research foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung found that global unemployment could reach 24% or more by 2050, while McKinsey estimates that more than half of all work tasks could be automated with currently demonstrable technologies, with 400m-800m jobs lost by 2030. A 2016 United Nations report further stated that 75% of jobs in the developing world were at risk of automation. And in case you're sitting comfortably in the UK, a 2017 study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers found that up to 38% of jobs in the US and 30% of jobs in the UK were at high risk of being automated by the early 2030s. As well as unemployment, there would be ever growing frustrations over underemployment, as individuals find themselves working short hours in roles they are over-qualified for.

While coming up with reliable estimates for future unemployment levels is more or less impossible given how much it may rely on unforeseen innovations, these predictions demonstrate the possibility, if not the likelihood, of sustained structural unemployment

at unprecedented levels. The effects of, perhaps, 10-30 years of over 20% unemployment and growing underemployment due to automation, occurring across high, middle and low-income countries alike, are therefore well worth considering. They would likely include record levels of inequality, the end of capital's reliance on labour and the decline of the middle classes who have been so influential in the fortunes of many nations. But is this an issue of automation or inequality?

One of the driving forces behind rising economic inequality today is the rising concentration of corporate profitability and returns to capital in general. Unprecedented increases in shareholder wealth and profitability are already dominating 21st century corporate structures. This concentration of profitability further liberates profits and capital from labour, redrawing the fundamental laws of demand and supply which have kept labour markets in balance for centuries. Already, the share of wealth and power of workers in the labour markets is declining. Despite productivity gains of over 72% from 1973 to 2014 in the US, real median wage growth rose by just 8.7% in the same period. This indicates that productivity growth is already increasing the wealth

Robots could become commonplace in hospitals, replacing nurses and doctors



of business owners, shareholders and CEOs far more than it is rewarding the very workers who are becoming more productive. The average Apple employee makes some £25,000 per year. By comparison, Apple CEO Tim Cook took home in excess of \$125 million in 2019. These data reflect the wider trend of executive pay's extraordinary growth compared to that of the median worker in the past decades, particularly in the Anglo-American economic sphere. If increasing productivity already disproportionately benefits owner stakeholders, then it is likely that the marvels automation is expected to do for economic output and productivity will worsen the situation even more. As automation becomes cheaper and more efficient relative to human workers, firms will continue to move towards artificial rather than human labour in the interests of greater profits and output. The erosion of the ability of workers to exchange their labour for income will lock them out of the cycle of income and expenditure. This replacement will strip workers both of their means of survival and their ability to strike and negotiate pay. The dependence of firms on workers for labour has for centuries guided societies to become more equal by giving workers a voice that cannot be ignored. Automation could help relieve owners from the influence of those they employ, reducing the power workers can exert on politics and policy.

The nature of labour and work will change dramatically in the coming decades, perhaps in ways in which policymakers have not yet foreseen. Even a relatively modest but sustained increase in unemployment due to automation could irrevocably redefine labour markets and present serious challenges to society's foundations. The roots of these challenges already exist today and lie completely distinct from speculation and theory: the world is already becoming more unequal, while the middle classes are starting to be eroded by declining pay and rising costs. In the social and political turmoil that could follow, would we see widespread fear and the return of the Luddites?

What can be done? The challenges appear to present both risks and opportunities. Preparations for other crises such as pandemics and climate change can sometimes seem low priority, but it is the cost of not preparing for them, not just their likelihood, which should inform our decision to do so: we need look no further than the current pandemic to remind ourselves of this. Now is the time for governments, non-governmental organisations and the public to start asking some very broad and challenging questions about the nature of the future and automation. Foremost of these is what kind of future world do we want to live in, and what is the world we are on track for right now?

It seems prudent, then, to rigorously investigate what policy measures can be implemented to support the positive trends from automation, AI and productivity growth. The debate will need to involve all perspectives, from anthropologists to social scientists, philosophers to economists, politicians to business leaders. Before the 40-hour work week became the post-World War Two norm, the 80-hour work week was considered normal. Indeed, an 1890 survey of US manufacturing workers found the

average was 100 hours! In the Netherlands today, the new normal is 30 hours. Reimagining the future of work and the work-life balance is an ongoing conversation. Can productivity gains from AI be used to subsidise lifelong learning and leisure? In coping with an ageing population, can technology make it affordable to deliver 24-hour care to our relatives? Governments, enabled by voters, can use their power to bring out the best in innovation: to ensure it subsidises the needs of all society, not just an exceedingly fortunate few. In order to survive an automated world, markets and states will likely have to set new norms of wealth redistribution and worker-shareholder relations, perhaps even merging the latter two together, as is becoming increasingly common in Scandinavia and continental Europe. Trying to persuade a group of automation oligarchs 20 or 40 years down the line to share their spoils among the rest of us might well prove tricky; starting the conversation now could make the digital age one of impressive economic equality and social prosperity. The Luddites may have been wrong for their time, but their reaction illustrates the consequences we may face if we find ourselves surprised and unprepared for the road ahead.

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# How the Coronavirus Pandemic Saved Bitcoin from Obscurity

**Daniel O’Keefe** traces the history and development of the cryptocurrency Bitcoin. He argues that its more widespread use represents an advantage over government-backed currencies.

The Coronavirus pandemic has completely changed the economic future of Bitcoin, rescuing it from its limbo existence of hovering on the periphery of the global economy, and propelling it to its newfound status as a useful currency on platforms all over the world.

Bitcoin is just one of many cryptocurrencies around today – in January 2021 there were more than 4,000 cryptocurrencies in existence. Bitcoin, however, is by far the most famous and the most valuable, partly because it was the first (created in 2009) and partly because it has the greatest take up among users. Its huge popularity, along with the mechanism that controls supply, has led to an astronomical valuation.

## Bitcoin has all the characteristics of a useful Currency

The successful adoption of a currency has two essential elements: its functional characteristics and its economic uses. Bitcoin compares well to fiat currencies when measured against the six key characteristics of a successful one: scarcity, divisibility, utility, transportability, durability and “counterfeitability”. However, in the three intrinsic uses of a currency it has been less successful: its price volatility has severely affected its use as a store of value, as a unit of account and as a medium of exchange.

The basic use of a currency is as a store of value. In the past, precious metals – notably gold and silver – were used because they were universally accepted. When the first coins were minted, they were made from gold and silver and their value was directly linked to the amount of the precious metal they contained.

Over time, governments needed to have currencies that were easier to manage, and paper was introduced. The gold that would otherwise be issued into circulation was put into secure storage. Currencies were born that could be exchanged for gold on demand. This continued until the Great Depression in the US when the government feared a run on the gold reserves, so it broke with the gold standard in 1933. At the end of the Second World War the Allied Nations agreed a new international monetary system with individual currencies backed by gold called the Bretton Woods agreement. This worked well for thirty years until, in 1971, the US broke from the Bretton Woods agreement, effectively cancelling it because US dollars could no longer be exchanged directly for gold. The currencies of most countries in the world, including the US and the

UK, became fiat currencies, meaning that their value was backed by the good faith of the government. When that country’s economy is unable to support the value of the issued currency, the value of that currency falls; this is a devaluation.

The risk of a currency losing its value increases if the country issues too much debt where its GDP is unable to cover the interest payments. For this reason, government bailouts can be high risk exercises for the value of currencies.

## Bitcoin Volatility

Over the past ten years Bitcoin’s volatility has prevented it from being accepted as a reliable store of value. In 2013 its price fell by more than 60% in a single day. In 2014 it fell 80% in a single day. In 2017 its value ranged from \$1,000 to \$19,000, before settling at \$8,000 in 2018. In the past three years the volatility in the bitcoin price has reduced considerably, although until recent months its volatility has remained far outside the acceptable boundaries of traditional investment classes. Even in January 2021 the price volatility of Bitcoin was almost ten times higher than the volatility of major currency exchange rates, for example the US dollar against the euro.

Furthermore, if it is to be accepted as a unit of account and a medium of exchange, Bitcoin needs

to have a stable price range that is driven by fundamentals of supply and demand rather than market speculation. It is difficult, however, for Bitcoin to establish a record of use in everyday transactions if its interface with the traditional fiat currency system is restricted in the way that it is. The reason for this lies in an inherent mistrust of Bitcoin by the establishment.

Suspicion of Bitcoin by governments around the world – from concerns surrounding its intention, its function, its independence, its lack of transparency and its origins – has excluded it from participation in mainstream economic activity since its inception. The hope must have been that, given time, and with no possible expectation of widespread adoption as a digital currency, it would simply fade into obscurity. That hope has now completely evaporated due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

**Bitcoin price volatility has severely affected its use as a store of value**

## The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Bitcoin

When the Coronavirus pandemic arrived in January 2020 Bitcoin was priced around \$6,000. It grew slowly from that point, rising gradually as multiple rounds of Quantitative Easing and bailouts by governments around the world grew to unprecedented levels, with Bitcoin reaching a price of \$10,000 in October. Then sentiment towards the digital currency changed dramatically. Major

institutions, corporations and individuals began to buy Bitcoin in large quantities for the first time. Previously the marginal price was driven largely by incremental mining contributions and speculative trading. This time, purchases were for fundamental economic reasons arising out of its use as a medium of exchange. By late March 2021 Bitcoin was priced at an all-time high, above \$60,000.

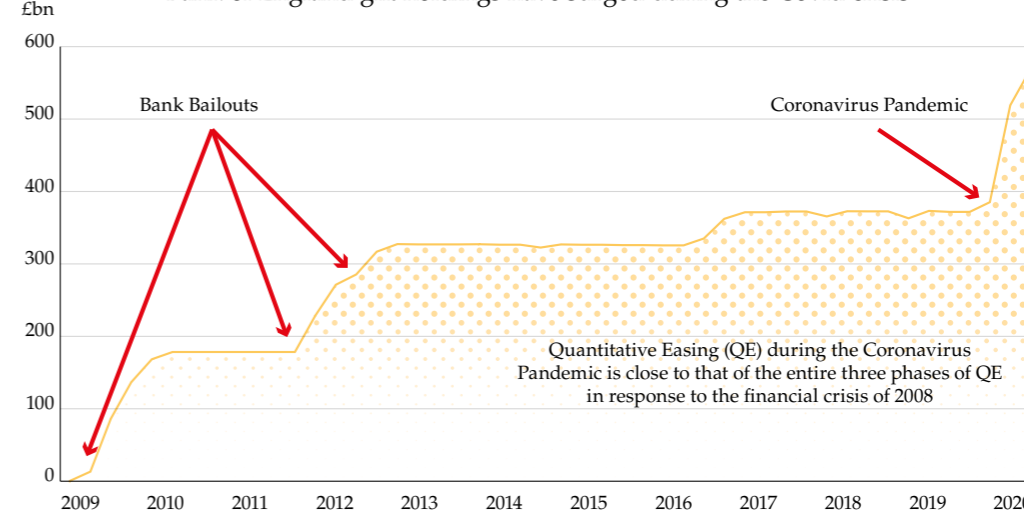
Bitcoin price March 2020 - March 2021



While this fundamental demand represents a shift in people’s attitudes to Bitcoin as a medium of exchange, it also reflects a growing unease with the perceived lack of prudence being applied to government intervention to support the economy. In the United States, lawmakers have enacted six major bills so far, costing about \$5.3 trillion in total – around 25% of GDP. In the UK, the total cost for the 2020-2021 budget year is £355bn – almost 17% of GDP. Our national debt stands above 100% of GDP, a level not

seen since the 1960s. This means the UK is facing the possibility of negative interest rates for the first time in its history. In February 2021 the Bank of England instructed all UK banks to prepare for the possibility of negative interest rates within 6 months. By March 2021 the Bank of England gilt holdings stood at almost £600bn. The amount of Quantitative Easing (QE) during the coronavirus pandemic is close to that of the entire three phases of QE in response to the financial crisis of 2008.

Bank of England gilt holdings have surged during the Covid crisis





### The Origins of Bitcoin

In October 2008 a person (or more likely persons) using the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto published a whitepaper entitled: *Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System* that described a proposal for a decentralised digital currency which would be independent of any central bank clearing system for transactions. It was a revolutionary concept, though one with which technology enthusiasts could identify instantly, since the nature of the decentralised network on which it was based, (using peer-to-peer relationships), echoes the core foundation structure of the world-wide-web itself.

Bitcoin introduced the world to the concept of the *blockchain*, a type of distributed digital ledger in which data is recorded sequentially and permanently in digital packages called blocks. Blocks are linked together in a sequential series in the chain, with each block linked to the immediately preceding block via an encrypted digital signature. The ledger is shared and accessed by multiple users, thereby preventing any entry from being altered and ensuring total security of the data. Transactions can be processed and recorded in the ledger without the need for any third-party intervention. Data validation is automatic as the chain builds.

On 3rd January 2009 the first Bitcoin block was mined. This is referred to as *Block 0* in technical terms and *The Genesis Block* in philosophical terms. The creators of Bitcoin evidently saw themselves as starting something of existential importance. Crucially, and cryptically, Satoshi Nakamoto embedded the following quote from the Times Newspaper in the first Bitcoin block: *The Times 03/Jan/2009 Chancellor on the brink of second bailout for banks.*

It is therefore clear that from the outset Bitcoin was conceived with the intention of wresting control of parts of the monetary system out of the hands of government, which it perceived as taking reckless actions in support of the failed banking system. At that time the global economy had experienced a catastrophic collapse caused by ineffective regulation and control of the banking system.

Using a quotation from a UK newspaper, when there were similar government actions taking place all around the world, suggests Bitcoin's origins might be close to home even though its growth and proliferation has been largely in the United States and Asia. Within a week, details of the full Bitcoin software and protocols were made available publicly; a day later Block 1 was mined, heralding the advent of Bitcoin mining as a global phenomenon.

### Why did Satoshi feel the world needed Bitcoin?

Taking the Genesis Block at its word, Satoshi wanted to neutralise the effect on the economy of government bailouts and was specifically against the government bailouts of banks. The main economic arguments against bail-outs are that they increase government borrowing and the national debt, leading to higher interest rates and

higher taxes; using government funds to bail out banks mean there is less money available for socially useful projects. There is also a strong moral hazard argument – if the banks know they will be bailed out there is less incentive for them to avoid risky and reckless behaviour. There is a powerful economic case to allow loss-making banks to fail. This is the primary self-regulatory mechanism of capitalism.

Bailouts can only happen when governments have control over both the money supply and the banking system. So by enabling the general population to step out, Bitcoin (in theory) removes the power of the government to harm the economy through bad monetary decisions involving the banking system. In a Bitcoin world the government is still free to harm (or benefit) the economy in a multitude of other ways, including by monetary policy tools, but it cannot use the banking system to do so.

### Why do governments mistrust Bitcoin?

Bitcoin represents three distinct threats to governments. Firstly, Bitcoin threatens the role of the national currency over which the government has control, for example in setting exchange rates with other currencies or exchange controls in money transfers to other countries. Secondly, the anonymity of Bitcoin as a payment mechanism lends itself perfectly to laundering money from illegal activities. Thirdly, the government has total control over the banking system and can freeze bank accounts or transactions at will. Banks need government licensing to operate and must comply with any directive. Bitcoin does not. Economic activity involving Bitcoin is unregulated.

### Tax Treatment

Interestingly, tax authorities around the world treat investment in Bitcoin just as any legitimate (regulated) investment, except without the qualifying tax breaks. Any gains made from buying and selling Bitcoin are taxed in the same way as any other investment. However, because no government recognises Bitcoin as a legitimate investment asset, it cannot be owned in any tax-efficient investment vehicle, such as a pension fund.

This is in contrast to the market for CFDs (contracts for difference) and spread betting. CFDs are actual investment contracts where investors receive the difference between the current price and a future price, whether that is a gain or a loss. Spread betting is a simple bet on the difference between the two prices. The underlying event and outcome are the same but the former is a recognised investment and taxable, whereas the latter is a straight gamble and not taxable. The former qualifies for tax incentives and can be included in pension funds, the latter cannot. Bitcoin is treated as an investment for tax purposes, yet it is not recognised as a legitimate investment asset. Proponents argue (credibly) that Bitcoin should be treated as one or the other – either recognise Bitcoin as a legitimate investment

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**Bitcoin introduced the world to the concept of the blockchain**

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**Bitcoin offers a degree of anonymity similar to cash**

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asset or treat it as gambling and make it free from capital gains tax.

The handling of Bitcoin in a government's fiscal policy reinforces the common view that governments are anti-Bitcoin and are acting to protect a perceived threat to their control over monetary policy. It serves to lend credence to Satoshi's thesis that governments cannot be trusted to act fairly with regard to people's money.

### The move away from cash

One aspect of central bank policy that has encouraged interest in Bitcoin is the universal move away from cash. Cash is anonymous, it is universally recognised and accepted as means of payment. It can be easily stored, transferred, and exchanged for other currencies. Most importantly it is legal tender that is underwritten by the government. But while cash is convenient for many, cash transactions are favoured by those engaged in illegal activities. Thus, governments around the world are driving the banking system to monitor closely, reduce and ultimately eliminate cash transactions.

Bitcoin offers a degree of anonymity similar to cash, though it is not total. The single major obstacle in using Bitcoin is its interface with the banking system where it is converted to and from a fiat currency.

Central banks have been quick to recognise and exploit this weakness. Around the world, they are collaborating on a Central Bank Digital Currency. This is intended to provide many of the benefits of an independent cryptocurrency but without the anonymity or dislocation from the banking system. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Bank of International Settlements (BIS) are working on the project.

The speed and security of processing enjoyed by cryptocurrencies would offer many of the advantages of cash to customers, while preventing money laundering activities.

Whilst this seems a sensible route for central banks to take, it appears to be too little too late. The plans are not well advanced, nor do they address the principal attraction and aim of Bitcoin – that it is outside of the banking system.

### What drives Bitcoin Valuation?

Bitcoin valuation is driven by two main factors. The first is simple supply and demand driven by the marginal cost of producing additional bitcoins from mining activities. As more and more bitcoins are mined and added to the blockchain, the cost of mining the subsequent bitcoin increases in terms of energy used. More complex algorithms are also required. When the cost of mining the next bitcoin exceeds that of the current market value then there is no incentive to mine further. This leads to a state of equilibrium in the price of Bitcoin. If bitcoins are used only for transactional purposes, i.e. to buy and

sell goods by reference to a fiat currency then there is no reason the price should change. However, Bitcoin is subject to additional supply and demand factors based on its other characteristics. Chief among these is that it stands outside the banking system so the value of bitcoin is not influenced by movements in exchange rates between fiat currencies. The value of Bitcoin is not influenced by any monetary policy or bailout decisions. In times of crisis, when governments can be expected to engage in monetary stimulus activity, Bitcoin can be seen as an attractive store of value. It is precisely this mechanism that has driven the value of Bitcoin to its record highs following the Coronavirus pandemic.

### What did the Coronavirus Pandemic change for Bitcoin?

When Elon Musk bought \$1.5bn of Bitcoin for Tesla Corporation in February 2021 he showed the world his faith in Bitcoin not just as a store of value but as a medium of exchange. This illustrated his confidence that the volatility of Bitcoin would begin to diminish, making it more useful as a transactional currency. He simultaneously announced that Tesla would now take bitcoin as payment for vehicles. In October 2020 PayPal announced it would allow its account holders to use Bitcoin in any online transactions.

In February 2021 Mastercard declared it would accept Bitcoin transactions on its network for the first time. This was a hugely significant move, as Mastercard does not allow Bitcoin to be stored in an account. All accounts are denominated in fiat currencies. Therefore, the use of Bitcoin is entirely as a unit of account and as a medium of exchange, never as a store of value. This will serve to greatly reduce volatility in the price of Bitcoin as well as consolidate its position in the world of mainstream currency transactions.

Bitcoin's unpredictable nature has prevented it from being used as a medium of exchange. The current influx of corporate industrial and institutional users is reducing this instability. As Bitcoin comes to be used more widely and more often in the kind of transactions it was intended to facilitate, the turnover of buyers and sellers will reduce, and the volatility caused by speculative investing will decline.

Bitcoin is unlikely to ever be fully embraced by governments and central banks and will therefore never become an integrated part of the banking system. However, it has now been endorsed by some of the most influential industrialists and investors in the world and is firmly on the path to being actively used as a medium of exchange. None of that would have happened if it were not for the Coronavirus pandemic.

# German Political Pragmatism

**Niklas Vainio** examines the history and successes of the German political system, and compares it to the system in the UK.

Despite its short 30-year existence, it has been difficult to ignore the relative political success of modern unified Germany. Its formation following the collapse of the Berlin Wall speaks to a great deal of maturity - the unification of East and West Germany, two ideologically opposed nations divided for over 40 years, took place with little to no conflict in barely a year. Not only that, but over €2 trillion of *Solidaritätssteuern* (solidarity taxes) were invested to help economic recovery in the East. Although the political situation today is far from perfect, such an achievement would surely be difficult to imagine in any other country. More recent examples of German political success come to mind: during the 2015 European migrant crisis, while the UK, France and much of western Europe acted with hesitancy and reluctance, Germany took decisive action, declaring that it would accept an astonishing 1.1 million refugees, in the face of heavy criticism at the time.

Much of modern Germany's political history has been underpinned by the highly stable leadership of Angela Merkel, who has been very much instrumental in defining Germany's political image. In many ways, British politics in the last half decade or so has been the polar opposite of this. Having been defined largely by Brexit chaos, fast-changing leadership and a U-turn-filled COVID response, Germany's stability is for many a concrete example of what the UK can and should be striving towards. Germany's political system is of course not without its problems. In the last several years in particular the emergence of the far-right AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*) has challenged its stability and liberalism. However, the system's overall merits have led many (including John Kampfner whose 2020 book *Why the Germans do it Better* is heavy inspiration for this article) to question why the German political system has been so successful and what, if anything, the British system could seek to learn from it.

No discussion of the German political system would be complete without first examining its origins. Although the German state in its current form has only existed since 1990, its constitution dates back to 1949, when it was authored by the Allies during West Germany's occupation. The constitution, or *Grundgesetz* (fundamental law) in German, formalised democracy in West Germany, which was later extended to the East after reunification. The first line of the *Grundgesetz* already reveals a lot about it: it reads in German '*Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar*' (Human dignity is sacrosanct), clearly showing its authors' political maturity and resolve to distance themselves as much as possible from their Nazi predecessors. Given the country's troubled history, the *Grundgesetz* is one of the

only concrete sources of patriotism in Germany, which means that for many Germans, national pride revolves around respect for the liberal, democratic values of their country. However the *Grundgesetz* has a more important role than this, as it ensures that German national politics is conducted in a (suitably German) codified and regimented way. This stands in stark contrast to the UK, which, despite having contributed large parts of the German constitution, has no formal constitution of its own. This has often led to disputes being won by whichever side most successfully manipulates and infringes upon the supposed 'rules', seen for example in Boris Johnson's prorogation of Parliament in October 2019, which was later found to be illegal as it obstructed parliamentary duty. Although these

constitutional problems have to some extent been remedied by the introduction of the Supreme Court in 2009, British democracy is still largely founded upon a patchwork of parliamentary acts and informal rules. The advantage of the German system is that parliamentary debate revolves

Much of modern Germany's political history has been underpinned by the highly stable leadership of Angela Merkel

Establishment parties have largely been pushed towards the centre for most of German history



government only leads to unnecessary bureaucracy and confusion.

The more prominent way in which German politics succeeds is through its cleverly-designed voting system. The *Bundestag* (parliament) has 598 seats - half are allocated by a first-past-the-post voting system similar to that in the UK, and the other half by a proportional system as is used in many other European countries. In an election, each voter fills out 2 ballots, one for their local *Bundestagsabgeordneter* (MP) and another which determines the nationwide allocation of the proportional seats. In addition to this, parties must obtain at least 5% of the vote in order to sit in the *Bundestag*, which prevents the emergence of extremist fringe parties and has generally pushed establishment parties towards the centre. This system has many advantages compared to the British pure first-past-the-post system. Most importantly, it discourages tactical voting as proportional representation allows all votes to be of equal importance regardless of whether they are cast for an influential establishment party.

The incorporation of first-past-the-post to some extent avoids the problem plaguing many proportional systems, where all parties gain a small share of the votes, leading to an ineffective and divided parliament. This is seen for example in Belgium, where as of February 2021 no party possesses more than 20% of the votes, preventing the country from forming a majority government. Germany's voting system also gives voters more freedom, as they can pick their preferred local representative regardless of their party, with the knowledge that they can still have their say in which party ultimately gains power with their second vote. It also enables a more diverse spectrum of opinions, as opposed to the British system which heavily skews towards maintaining a two-party system. The result of all of this is a parliament which is able to achieve change, while also reasonably fairly representing the opinions of the electorate. Germany's ability to pursue a compromise, seeking the best aspects of two very different systems, speaks to its pursuit of pragmatism above all else in its political process. Unlike in the UK, where the proposition of switching to the much more representative alternative vote was crushed by Conservative campaigns in 2011, Germany has been able to effectively prioritise the health of its democracy.

Another great asset of the German political system is that it nearly always results in a coalition between a few leading parties. For example, the historic *Groko* (great coalition), between the centre-right CDU/CSU, centre-left SPD, and others, has been in power since 2010. Parties must almost always govern in coalitions, which means that policy must be designed to appeal to all, and that the parties themselves must seek compromise and cooperation in order to achieve their goals. The mere fact that a coalition between the two main opposing parties (CDU/CSU and SPD), which in British politics would seem completely ludicrous, has managed to govern speaks

East Germans are allowed to travel to West Germany, 1989, and are welcomed by citizens of the Bundesrepublik.

to the successes of the German system in ensuring a balanced government that seeks compromise without sacrificing its efficacy.

Germany's history, in particular the atrocities of the 1930s and 40s, also places it in a unique political position, one which demands high levels of maturity and respect in order to navigate such a troubled past. *Erinnerungskultur* (culture of remembrance) is deeply ingrained in German politics, and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (overcoming the past) is still today seen as the responsibility of every German leader, and to a large extent every citizen. This has been crystallised in several famous events, most notably Willy Brandt's *Kniefall* in 1970, where on a state visit to Poland he dropped to his knees before a monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as a gesture of repentance, and more recently Angela Merkel's visit to Auschwitz in 2019, where she stated boldly, "Remembering the crimes... belongs inseparably to our country". In addition to ensuring that its leaders act with appropriate sensibility, Germany's attitude towards its past also plays a significant role in maintaining the liberalism and stability of its political system. Determined to learn from its history, German politics has very little tolerance for far or extreme right views. Until the recent emergence of the AfD, positions further right of the CDU/CSU (comparable to the Conservative party in the UK) had largely been considered untenable. This, combined with

other features of the system such as the aforementioned "5% rule", mean that extremism is strongly discouraged. As a result, establishment parties have largely been pushed towards the centre for most of German history. This allows political proceedings to focus on consensus and bipartisanship, which greatly facilitates rational, pragmatic decision making. Germany's condemnable history also means that appeals to patriotic nostalgia such as Trump's *Make America Great Again* ideology are almost impossible, which further steers political discourse away from emotion and towards policy and progress.

By contrast, British history serves perhaps the opposite purpose in political discussion. Although most of today's generation never truly experienced it, the Second World War has been deeply influential in defining British national pride. A sense of patriotic heroism and an undying worship for Winston Churchill live on today in the popularity of films such as *Dunkirk* and *The Darkest Hour*, which captivate a British audience's sense of admiration for years gone by. Nostalgia for wartime



The Bundestag, or Federal Parliament, by Steffen Prösdorf

got through the blitz we can get through this' has been used to reassure citizens throughout Brexit crises and more recently during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even the rhetoric of Boris Johnson is influenced by memories of the Second World War; his admiration for Churchill is reflected in his biography of the man in 2014. Unlike in Germany, patriotism in the UK plays a defining role in politics, arguably for the worse, diverting attention away from pertinent issues and towards emotions and rhetoric. Germany's focus on progress and contemporary issues,

as well as a national pride in democracy and liberalism are certainly ideals that other countries should aim to emulate.

Finally, no analysis of modern German politics would be complete without mentioning the instrumental role played by *Bundeskanzlerin* Angela Merkel in moving the country forward. A famously steadfast and resolute Chancellor, who has outlasted almost all other European leaders during her 20-year-long term, Merkel is in many ways a symbol of the stability and rationalism associated with contemporary German politics. One could argue that the UK's leadership has been the polar opposite

of this, having undergone three general elections since 2015, and with Boris Johnson's initially delayed COVID response representing anything but stability and decisiveness. Having trained as a physicist and received a doctorate in quantum chemistry from the German Academy of Sciences, Merkel's background explains a great deal about her rational and pensive image. She has garnered a reputation for spending a great deal of time thinking over important decisions, often remaining on the fence and seeking compromises wherever possible. Some would criticise this style as ineffective, such as the *Langenscheidt*, dictionary which selected the newly-coined '*merkeln*', meaning to be unable to take a decision, as the *Jugendwort* or young people's word of the year in 2015. Many, however, would argue that this careful approach allows decisive action only when truly necessary - during the 2015 European migrant crisis, for example, Germany was perhaps the most proactive country in Europe, with the outcome largely to the benefit Germany and Europe as a whole.



Der Kniefall Willy Brandt's gesture of humility and penance towards the victims of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, in Warsaw 1970. the 50th anniversary of Brandt's visit commemorated on a stamp.

and post-war Britain goes beyond media however, working its way into political rhetoric. Ahead of the Brexit vote, many older voters were promised a different world, one with a strong, independent Britain much like in the post-war years. The phrase 'If we



Holocaust Memorial, by K. Weisser

As one of the few East Germans in a high-ranking political position, Merkel's background also greatly helped unify the country during the early 2000s, a period when disparities between former East and West were still very much felt. Even today, fewer than 5% of board members in Germany's 30 largest companies have East German origins. Merkel has been a symbol of the successes they can hope to achieve. She has also been known for constantly seeking consensus and deals with other ministers. In fact, she has so frequently been seen texting with political officials during parliamentary sessions, that she has earned the colloquial nickname *Handykanzlerin* (mobile phone chancellor). She has in many ways acted as a matriarchal figure for Germany and the rest of Europe (she is often referred to as *Mutti* or Mum in German), a persona embodied by her famous line: "I seek cooperation rather than confrontation". Merkel has played a defining role in the successes of modern Germany, and her qualities of pragmatism and willingness to compromise are exactly those which have allowed the German political system to truly flourish.

### Merkel has been known for constantly seeking consensus and deals with other ministers



Angela Merkel, by Raimond Spekking

I hope this article has at least to some extent demonstrated the many triumphs of the German political system, even though it is not free from problems in reality. The past half-decade or so has arguably presented the system with its greatest challenges yet, with the extreme-right AfD's rapid ascent to becoming the third largest party (with 13% of *Bundestag* seats) going directly in the face of Germany's political balance and moderation. In February 2020, the formation of a coalition between the CDU and AfD in the state of *Thüringen* shook the system to its core, prompting the resignation of Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Merkel's former designated successor. This clearly shows how deeply the AfD has impacted the establishment parties, and combined with Merkel's upcoming resignation and another general election later this year, Germany's political future is less predictable than usual. However, at least when compared to the UK, the rest of Europe, and even countries such as the US, Germany's political system has truly enabled a unique brand of stability and forward-looking pragmatism.

# How Should We Interpret the US Constitution?

Fired up by the use and attempted abuse of the Supreme Court by the Trump administration, **Alexandre Guilloteau** examines the legal framework of the Constitution, the difficulties of historicism and the way to uphold the ideals of the founding fathers.



Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States by Howard Chandler Christy, courtesy of The Indian Reporter

The preamble to the United States Constitution declares 'We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution'. It expresses the fundamental law which the Framers intended to govern their new idealist nation. It broadly sets out the 'structure' of government, which regulates how the government must operate – most notably the separation of powers. The Bill of Rights protects individual rights which all Americans possess against government. No law, in theory, can be passed which abridge these. The reasoning behind this curtailment of government power is that there are certain rights which must exist independent of popular support; that since the 'tyranny of majorities'

**Alexis de Tocqueville 1835: 'there is hardly any political question in the United States that sooner or later does not turn into a judicial question'**

these rights has long meant the courts, particularly the United States Supreme Court, have been at the heart of political debate, prompting Alexis de Tocqueville as far back as 1835<sup>1</sup> famously to observe that 'there is hardly any political question in the United States that sooner or later does not turn into a judicial question'. The interpretation of this document is therefore of the utmost importance. I wish to explore two aspects of its interpretation to explain why it requires subtle adjudication, and not doctrinaire or

<sup>1</sup> *Democracy in America*, 1835

inflexible standards.

Should the Court aggressively protect individual freedoms? Or for the most part should it defer to popular will? How can judges avoid adjudicating based on their personal preferences? These age-old questions are all the more difficult since some of the phrases in the Constitution are so broad: 'deny liberty', 'due process' crop up so often. Even 'freedom of speech' can sometimes be hard to interpret. In light of the overarching importance of constitutional interpretation, the unelected nature of many judges and a desire for simplicity and legitimacy, it is understandable that people should want a straightforward and wholesale theory of interpretation. Perhaps the most influential of these is 'originalism', espoused by the newest member of the Supreme Court, Justice Barrett. Originalists believe that the only legitimate way to interpret the Constitution is to go by what its original understanding was – how a judge might have ruled in 1791. This might initially appear attractive and seem to confer credibility on the Court, but I believe it is a wrong-headed and harmful idea.

Although originalism is a theory applicable to the entirety of the Constitution, it is particularly noteworthy when applied to clauses the ordinary meaning of which clearly changes. The best way of illustrating originalist thought is with reference to the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on 'cruel and unusual punishments'. The meaning of such a phrase is highly subjective, and what is considered 'cruel' certainly changes over time. Non-originalists believe it must be read in light of 'the evolving standards of decency which mark a maturing society'<sup>2</sup>, but originalists would freeze its meaning in time. For them, only what was considered cruel in 1791 can fall afoul of this clause. It is argued that to invest in judges the power to 'change' the Constitution is undemocratic, and that any test of cruelty is inherently subjective. This necessarily means that originalists believe executing seven-year-olds is not 'cruel' under the Constitution.

Originalists, granted, would accept that various methods of torture, such as disembowelment or hanging, drawing and quartering; the sorts of punishments for which the clause was designed, are unconstitutional. But their approach seems to me quite flawed. Those are not the Eighth Amendment issues which confront America today - prison overcrowding, excessive sentencing, or capital punishment. The threat of hanging, drawing and quartering returning to the books in a free society is virtually nil; the protection of the Eighth Amendment is hardly necessary, today, against burning at the stake. What punishments are today in practice that will be viewed as abhorrent in three centuries? I venture to say there are many. But for an originalist interpreting the Constitution, there can be none.

Of all the cases I have read, I have not come across a

<sup>2</sup> *Trop v. Dulles* (1958)

single Eighth Amendment claim which an originalist has upheld.<sup>3</sup> This, for me, sums up why I cannot accept the originalist doctrine: it would read out of existence the protections of the Bill of Rights which require adaptation<sup>4</sup>. By being adheringly too rigidly to, by being, as it were, too faithful to the standards of 1791, we risk being unfaithful to the spirit of this national charter. The Bill of Rights was the revolutionary product of a revolution<sup>5</sup>; and it stands to reason that its enumerated rights must be applicable, even radical, in 1791, in our day and for ages to come. Judges must, indeed, interpret it to establish 'a more perfect Union'. Justice McKenna in 1910 most eloquently explained, "time works changes, brings into existence new conditions and purposes. Therefore a principle to be vital must be capable of wider application than the mischief which gave it birth. This is peculiarly true of Constitutions. They are not ephemeral enactments, designed to meet passing occasions. They are, to use the words of Chief Justice Marshall, 'designed to approach immortality as nearly as human institutions can approach it.'"<sup>6</sup> While it might have been acceptable to execute persons for trivial offences back in 1791; while maltreatment, even purposeful maltreatment, of criminals

**The Bill of Rights was the revolutionary product of a revolution**

might have been acceptable, we today can see the conflict between such behaviour and the ideals of human dignity the Eighth Amendment stands for, and we today must be able to find them unconstitutional.

Contrary to what some may claim, those who reject originalism need not 'change' the Constitution at whim. They must base their decisions on objective factors. For the Eighth Amendment, these are primarily: condemnation of the practice – how many states have such a punishment on the books, what do international bodies such as the United Nations say; and, above all, whether they serve legitimate and proportional penological ends such as deterrence, as backed up by statistical evidence.

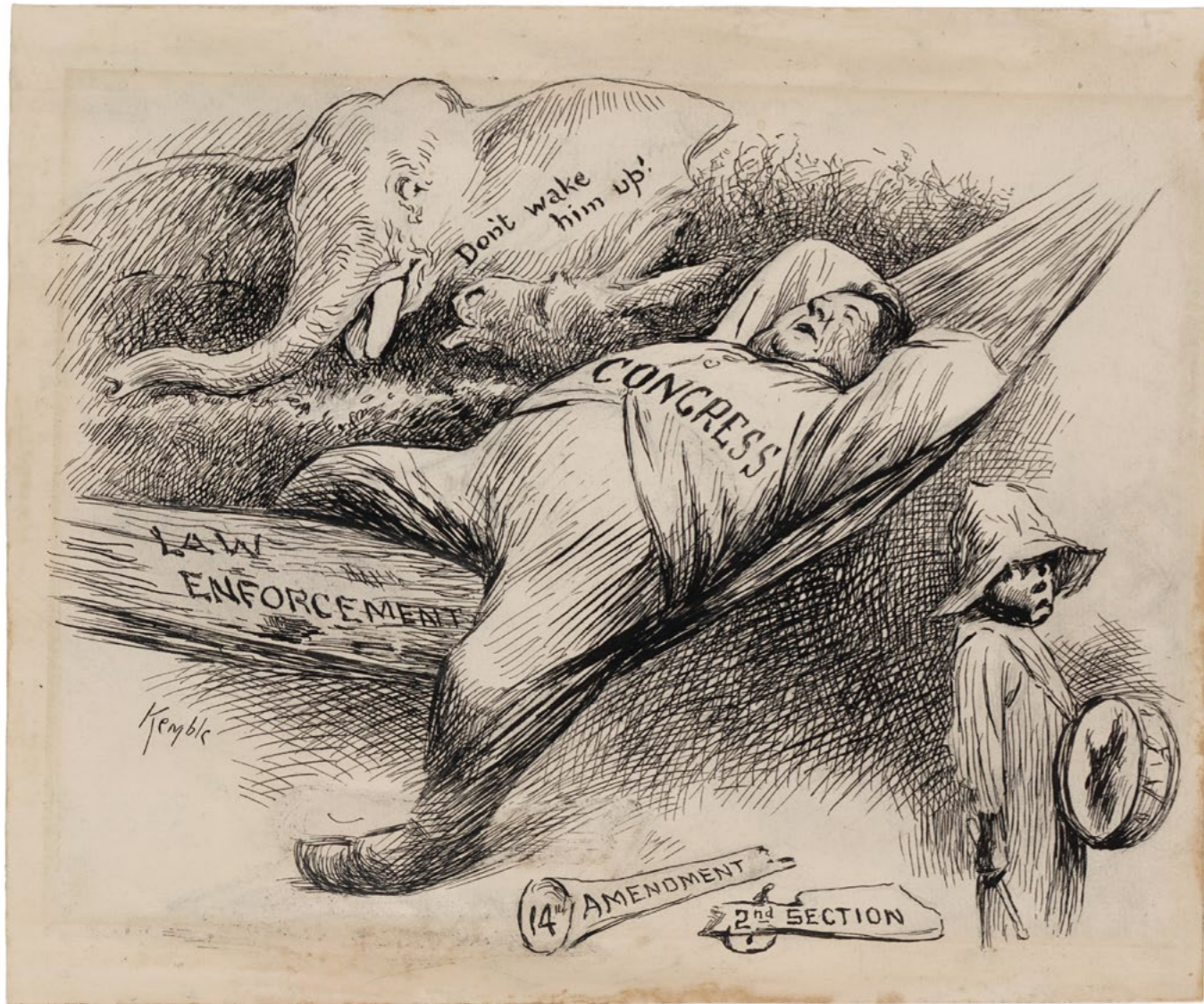
The influence of originalism is not restricted, however, to the Eighth Amendment. A good illustration of my trouble with originalism is in interpreting the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, forbidding an 'establishment of religion'. The Court held in *Marsh v. Chambers* that using taxpayers' money to hire a chaplain for legislative prayer does not constitute an 'establishment of religion'. A major justification for this decision was that, three days before the ratification of the First Amendment, Congress elected a chaplain to oversee its prayers. Thus, it was argued, the ratifiers could never have intended it to prohibit legislative prayer. Whatever else might

<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that there has been no such instance, only that I have not come across one. The possible exception is Justice Black in *Robinson v. California* (1963).

<sup>4</sup> Amendments V, VIII and XIV are particularly relevant. An originalist interpretation of free speech, for example, admittedly does not have such dire consequences

<sup>5</sup> The American Bill of Rights drew inspiration from ours of 1689, the product of the Glorious Revolution, and, while coming a decade after the American Revolution, it is hardly out of its keeping.

<sup>6</sup> *Weems v. United States* (1910)



Congress - 14th Amendment 2nd section, by E.W. Kemble (1902).

The cartoon shows Congress as a fat man asleep in a hammock labelled "Law Enforcement." A broken blunderbuss, "14th Amendment, 2nd Section," lies at his feet. A small Afro-American boy walks by holding a drum, but an elephant cautions, "Don't wake him up!" The second section of the 14th Amendment provided for reducing a state's apportionment in Congress if the state prevented any male from voting for any reason other than participation in a rebellion or other crime. There was agitation by various Afro-American groups in the early years of the 20th Century to enforce it, but no serious attempts by the Republican-led Congress were made. (Library of Congress).

be said of the custom, it seems to me mistaken to judge constitutionality on original practice. For it is surely one of the prime lessons of history that, however noble or enlightened we may be, we shall fail to live up to what we so eloquently profess. Such may not seem the case when we pronounce the words, but the passage of time, the wisest counsellor of all, makes us conclude so. Most famously, when Thomas Jefferson wrote it is 'self-evident that all men are created equal, he owned several hundred slaves<sup>7</sup>. Much of what the most virtuous of us does now will be considered wrong in two centuries' time, just as so much of what men

<sup>7</sup> It seems that he was personally an abolitionist, but his attempts to abolish slavery were not terribly zealous, and do not detract from his ownership of slaves.

did in two centuries ago is now considered wrong.

Finally, I think originalism is wrong-headed because, paradoxically, it goes against the intent of the Framers.

Jefferson, in explaining the need to amend the Constitution, said 'laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners

and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times'. This was written about amending the Constitution, which originalists believe is the only legitimate way for it to adapt. But restricting adaptation to amendment, it would seem, is flawed too: it has been calculated that

**When Thomas Jefferson wrote 'it is self-evident that all men are created equal', he owned several hundred slaves**

an amendment could be vetoed by as little as 2% of the population<sup>8</sup>, making passage extremely difficult, especially since the Court must make unpopular decisions; anyhow, it is hardly practical to have a constitutional amendment for every little case the Court decides.

Phrases like 'cruel and unusual', 'deprive...of liberty' and 'due process', which all appear in the Constitution, are vague generalities into which judges must breathe life if the Constitution is to count for anything – and necessarily with reference to Jefferson's 'change of circumstances'. This vagueness, however, is in contrast with other provisions of the Constitution: the President must have 'attained to the age of thirty-five years', rather than, say, 'sufficient maturity'; Senators are elected 'for six years', rather than 'regularly'; the right to a jury trial in a suit exceeding 'twenty dollars' shall be preserved, and so on. The inescapable conclusion of this appears to be that such provisions as the cruel and unusual punishment clause were purposefully left open-ended, to be delineated by judges.

This conclusion is corroborated by history of the Eighth Amendment's ratification. The First Congress ratified it over the objection of a Mr Livermore, who claimed 'it is sometimes necessary to hang a man, villains often deserve whipping, and perhaps having their ears cut off; but are we in future to be prevented from inflicting these punishments because they are cruel?' He later alludes to judicial review in criticising the prohibition on 'excessive fines', found in the same amendment, asking 'what is understood by excessive fines? It lies with the court to determine<sup>9</sup>'. It is therefore clear that the clause was adopted in full knowledge that, someday in the future, certain punishments then thought acceptable might be prohibited, at the discretion of the Court.

We should reject originalism because it fails to keep abreast of current needs to which the Constitution must cater, because it relies on the unerring wisdom of the wise men of the eighteenth century, and because it deprives the judiciary of the power to interpret the phrases which were left vague so that they might acquire meaning. But how should we interpret the document then? There is one other area I shall focus on.

Tocqueville's wise observation is nowhere more applicable than the Fourteenth Amendment. In particular, its clause commanding that no State 'shall deprive any person of...liberty without due process of law' – and one interpretation of it, 'substantive' due process – has been the root of the fiercest debate over the proper role of the Court: whether it should read unenumerated rights into the Constitution, and to what extent it should strike down legislation. This clause is also the root of the cases which receive the most public attention; those in the early twentieth century which enshrined 'freedom of contract' and struck down minimum wage and child

<sup>8</sup> [www.law.com/nationallawjournal/almID/1202651605161/?&slreturn=20201126092813](http://www.law.com/nationallawjournal/almID/1202651605161/?&slreturn=20201126092813)

<sup>9</sup> See *Furman v. Georgia* (1972), Brennan, J., concurring

labour laws; and some cases nowadays, notably whether access to abortion is a right implicit in the word 'liberty' which the Fourteenth Amendment protects. These cases are noteworthy because the Court breathes substantive meaning into the word 'liberty', and so creates rights not enumerated in the Constitution.

Some assert that 'liberty... without due process of law' only requires procedural fairness, such as an impartial judge. However, it has long been held to protect against 'arbitrary impositions and purposeless restraints', or to protect rights 'implicit in the concept of ordered liberty'; in essence, it has a substantive as well as procedural component, and I shan't get into that debate. So judges can strike down laws that unfairly restrict 'liberty'. But is this not wholly undemocratic, an invitation to 'roam at large in the constitutional field'?

As I have intimated, the judicial review implicit in the Constitution can, and must, override the judgment of those elected by the people. The only way to protect minorities from majorities, citizens from overbearing government, is for the judiciary to assert what the legislature or executive may not do: in the foundational words 'it is emphatically the province and duty of the Judicial Department to

say what the law is<sup>10</sup>. The Court may not shrink from this role, and if a law is unconstitutional, it must be invalidated. To protest solely that this is undemocratic is fundamentally to misunderstand the Constitution.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that important democratic principles are at stake in overriding

senators, representatives and governors, and that concern for the democratic functioning of society must be shown. This is because it is the democratic political process that can best resolve the conflicting interests and values of citizens, and it is the political process that fosters a tolerant and functioning society. The basis for any free society is mutual respect and the rule of law, and the Framers were not unaware of this. People only abide by the law, other than from fear of punishment, because of a common acceptance of the process by which the law is created. That process is government (indirectly) by the people – the sentiment that, even though one may disagree with a law, it has been reached by a fair method and deserves respect; because one may some day prevail in another matter and would wish others who disagreed to follow the law too. Elected legislative bodies and political parties answer questions facing society, producing outcomes that might not have been anyone's first choice, but the greatest number can live with – because they must appeal to the broadest electorate possible. Maligned as they may be, politics, properly functioning, serve to unite and provide solutions to all manner of issues. The Court can not serve this vital function because the law is concrete, when compromise is often required; because they do not have the democratic legitimacy to command the support of dissenting citizens; because they quite rightly are

<sup>10</sup> *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), which made explicit judicial review.

unanswerable to the public, and because they stymie debate.

As Justice Jackson once said, ‘this Court is forever adding new stories to the temples of constitutional law, and the temples have a way of collapsing when one story too many is added’<sup>11</sup>. In taking too expansive a view of its own power, the Court risks harming its own legitimacy and even the very idea of judicial review. If rulings seem to be no more than the raw exercise of judicial power, the Court and the Constitution will not occupy the high place in the people’s minds they deserve; and nor will their rulings be followed. It took fifteen years to desegregate the South because white southerners did not accept the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. That that ruling was right only serves to highlight the dangers of judicial excess.

None of this detracts, however, from the need for judicial review in the American system. It serves instead to highlight the inescapable tension between rights and democracy which the Constitution embodies. The Bill of Rights solves that tension in favour of rights. But when unenumerated rights are involved, the Court is on shakier ground, for the Constitution does not ostensibly speak of them, and the Court’s legitimacy, in creating rights, is less certain. People, hopefully, can come to accept others’ rights when they are the product of democracy. Imposed and invented by judicial fiat, they seldom accrue the public support which they deserve, and which ultimately protects them. Abortion rights in many states rest more on *Roe v. Wade* than popular support. The reason so many in America remain opposed to abortion, but rather fewer here is, one suspects, in part due to the Supreme Court removing the issue from democratic debate. The result is that *Roe* hangs by a thread, and if it falls, abortion rights will be under much more attack than if the rights had been the fruit of political, rather than constitutional, debate.

The Court clearly must tread gently in this field of law. But it seems quite clear that ‘liberty’ entails certain rights, and the Constitution requires the protection of these. A perfectly sensible use of substantive due process was, for example, invalidating a city ordinance criminalising ‘persons wandering or strolling around from place to place without any lawful purpose or object’ and ‘persons able to work but habitually living upon the earnings of their wives’. This was a gross violation of basic liberty, and (outside of a pandemic) served no other purpose than to allow the police to arrest anyone they happened not to like.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Douglas v. City of Jeannette* (1943), Jackson, J., concurring

<sup>12</sup> The case is *Papachristou v. City of Jacksonville* (1972)

### The sack of the Capitol in January highlighted how fragile liberal democracy is



Ruth Bader Ginsburg, one of the best-known Supreme Court judges, who died last year.

The lot of the judge is therefore one of balancing: balancing the legitimacy of the Court and the supremacy of the Constitution; the democratic process and the rights of the individual.

The American courts are indispensable in preserving America’s form of democracy. Yet they have been losing respect from people on both ends of the political spectrum. The sack of the Capitol in January highlighted how fragile liberal democracy is, even in a country like America. The possibility that the Supreme Court could be subject to such vandalism after a decision unfavourable to one group is, I fear, not too attenuated. In order for the Court to maintain its high status in the American system and public opinion – there is talk, after all, of packing it – the Court must strike the balance of using its teeth to enforce the Constitution and rein in even those who command public support, and exercise reasoned restraint lest it be viewed as another, unaccountable policy-making authority whose judgments reflect only the predilections of its personnel and are consequently to be ignored.

We should reject originalism and read the Constitution in light of evolving standards which truly embody the essence of that great charter’s ideals. But there is no comprehensive way to interpret the Constitution. Unthinking disregard of democracy risks the legitimacy of the Court; unthinking restraint forgets the purpose of the Court. Some of a more absolutist bent may prefer steady rules and simple solutions to adjudication. I, at least, cannot accept them, for dogmatic creeds like originalism or outright opposition to substantive due process ignore the subtlety inherent in the process of adjudication and the fallibility of the Framers. No human document is perfect, and nor does the Constitution pretend to be. Judges must do what they have always done best, what gave rise to the common law; they must think, they must adapt, they must be self-critical, and they must be public servants. In short, they must remember Justice Holmes’ admonition that ‘certainty generally is an illusion, and repose is not our destiny’. It befalls him who has to interpret the Constitution to perform the eternal balancing act that fidelity to the American tradition requires.

### Sources:

The main sources have been the lectures/conversations of judges themselves, which are readily available on YouTube or C-SPAN; as well as their opinions in the US Reports, available on websites such as Justia. Also of use have been the 2019 BBC Reith Lectures, delivered by Lord Sumption.

# Turkey Under Erdoğan

**Benjamin Heyes analyses the changes brought about by one man, responsible for pushing islamisation in civil society, flexing the power of the state beyond its borders, and becoming a key player in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern geopolitics.**

Turkey is a nation of two parts. Not only does it straddle two continents, but it seems permanently torn between two national identities. One the one side of the Bosphorus lies the aspirant European Turkey, the secular, democratic republic with a modern economy and an enlightened constitution brimming with civil liberties. There is another Turkey though, a fiercely bellicose regional power, eager to recapture the halcyon days of the Ottoman Empire. Since the country’s creation by Atatürk in the aftermath of the First World War, these sides have always been in a state of tension, however the influence of the current president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has decisively tipped the balance towards the reactionary, illiberal Turkey. Still though, his regime occupies a middle-ground, a grey-area between the poles of liberal democracy and one-party authoritarianism. Likewise, Turkey is torn between its traditional post-war role as a Western ally and budding apprentice of the European project and the alluring prospect as an influential kingmaker in the Middle East.

The creation of the Turkish nation is very much to the credit of one man, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (his adopted surname meaning ‘Father of the Turks’). The traumatic defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 dealt the final blow to an ailing multinational empire which had been seeing its power fade for the at least the past century. Attempts by the Young Turks to modernise and democratise were in vain, cut short by a disastrous performance in the war. For Atatürk, whose military skill had seen him rise rapidly through the ranks during the war, the humiliating splintering of his nation at the Treaty of Sèvres drove him to establish a new nationalist government at Ankara, to rival the supplicant Ottoman government at Constantinople, a city now under Allied military



Erdoğan addresses a conference, with the usual background picture of Atatürk, suggesting tradition and continuity.

occupation. In the ensuing Turkish War of Independence, the nationalists drove out of Anatolia a (mainly Greek) Allied army, abolished the Ottoman sultanate and secured, at the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, recognition for the new Turkish republic. Until his death in 1938, this republic was shaped by the vision of Atatürk, who sought to safeguard his country’s independence by modernisation and secularisation. In order to glue together the Turkish remnants of the Ottoman Empire, Atatürk knew that it was necessary to create a distinct, Turkish identity, one which had to be free both from European political interference and from the influence of Islam’s clerics, both of which had diluted the power of the Ottoman Empire. Despite his hostility to Western influence in his own country (particularly that of Britain), Atatürk was keen to move the new Turkish nation towards the European nation state model, and so too towards Western practices: he encouraged the wearing of European clothing and industrialised the economy

along European lines. Secularisation – much of which was influenced by French notions of *laïcité* – came in the form of restricting sharia to religious matters and establishing a secular civil and criminal code, both of which radically improved the rights of women. The sum of these reforms did indeed create what Atatürk sought: a national identity upon which a modern nation could be built and protected. No country has been built by one man alone, but Atatürk’s influence on the Turkish nation, both in war and peacetime, has been immense.

President Erdoğan appears as a curious inversion of Atatürk. No single person since Atatürk has had such personal influence on Turkey. Erdoğan too is keen to mark Turkey’s economic advances with a succession of shiny infrastructure projects and has built around himself a cult of personality. However, Erdoğan, unlike Atatürk, is a conservative to the bone. Following an Islamic education, he joined the Welfare Party, a hard-line Islamist party later banned by the Constitutional Court for violating secularism. After a brief spell in parliament, he was elected mayor of Istanbul as the Welfare Party candidate in 1994. His mayoralty was truncated by a four-month prison sentence for inciting violence and religious hatred in 1998. Following his release in 1999, he and other former Welfare Party members founded the Virtue Party, which itself was banned for violating secularism in 2001. Realising that an avowedly Islamist political party would struggle succeed, Erdoğan and others founded the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the vehicle with he would launch a successful bid for the premiership in 2002, a post

he held until his election to the presidency in 2014. Against a backdrop of widespread support from his Muslim, conservative base, Erdoğan has severely restricted freedom of the press and turned Turkey from a parliamentary to a presidential republic, granting the president far greater executive powers. As part of reprisals for a failed coup in 2016, Turkey has been racked by continual purges against journalists and civil servants. Protests have been met with violent crackdowns. The free press is becoming a memory, and secular laws are being repealed at a rate of knots in what is called 'Islamisation'. The targets of civil service purges are more often than not the dwindling numbers of non-Muslims: hardly a coincidence given Erdoğan's call to "devout generation". As is clear from the circumstances of the AKP's foundation, the party is intent on rolling back what they see as the anathema of secularism. The constitutional framework laid down by Atatürk is disintegrating. There is no greater symbol of this regression than a ruling of a Turkish court in the summer of 2020 that Atatürk's conversion of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul into a museum in 1934 was illegal. Built by Justinian the Great in the first century as the patriarchal cathedral of Constantinople, the building was converted into a mosque following the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 by Mehmed the Great. Its conversion back into a mosque has generated obloquy from Christians of all stripes and is a flagrant repudiation of secularism. The symbolism will not only curry favour with his domestic base, which has been flagging since a currency crisis hit Turkey in 2018, but serves to send a powerful message to Turkey's neighbours: the prospect of being the lynchpin of the Muslim world is far more alluring than being a junior European. Renewed tensions with Turkey's long-time foe Greece in the Mediterranean, stalled plans for entry into the EU and a willingness to use Syrian refugees for the purposes of blackmail demonstrate Erdoğan's increasing disillusion with erstwhile allies in the West. The wider consequences of this for European and American foreign policy are grave.

Already, Erdoğan is getting to grips with his newfound regional might. The president exploited the withdrawal of US troops from Syria in 2019 (one sign of President Trump's broader abdication of responsibility in the Middle East) by launching an offensive into Syria against the Kurds, one of Washington's more dependable allies in the Syrian Civil War. This has killed two birds with one stone; Turkey is now a far more important power broker in the war as it occupies substantial portions of Syria and they have been able to inflict damage on the Kurds, a long-time thorn in the Anatolian side. Further afield, the past year has seen Turkey's entry into the long-running Libyan Civil War on the side of the UN and NATO-backed, Tripoli-based Government of National Accord, providing Syrian mercenaries and air support. Their involvement, unlike a clumsy and ineffective European response, decisively halted the advance of Khalifa Haftar's Tobruk-aligned army on Tripoli, to the chagrin of Tobruk's Emirati

supporters. Although a member of NATO, Turkey has pursued its foreign policy interests independently, and to great effect. Thirdly, in the autumn of 2020, Erdoğan intervened in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Likely in an effort to spite its perennial adversary, Armenia, Turkey provided decisive aerial support to Baku in its effort to retake control of an Azerbaijani but ethnically Armenian mountainous territory occupied by a breakaway Armenian government. The failure of Russia, a usual ally

of Armenia and bulwark against Turkish aggression in the region, to come to the aid of Yerevan opened the way for Azerbaijan and Turkey to secure significant gains in territory as a result of the conflict. In the proxy rivalry between Ankara and Moscow, the modest victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict will have been greeted by President Erdoğan with satisfaction. Of course, it is in Western interests for Turkey to be acting against the interests of Russia, but the increasing separation of Turkey's foreign policy and that of the rest of NATO can only spell trouble in the future. Indeed, there are the odd signs of rapprochement between Putin and Erdoğan, with the latter starting to realise the utility of a more flexible realpolitik.

Moreover, there is a more fundamental change taking place in how Turkey is perceived. Although NATO commitments and the use of Incirlik Airbase by the U.S. Air Force providing support to Western interests make it a

very important ally, there is an increasing use by Erdoğan of Turkey's renewed credentials as an avowedly Muslim country to further Turkish influence. Most recently, in the aftermath of the beheading of teacher Samuel Paty by an Islamist terrorist in a Paris suburb and President Macron's ensuing crackdown on Islamism, Erdoğan has led the conservative Muslim world in criticism of the French president, saying that he "needs treatment on a mental level" and calling for a boycott on French goods. Erdoğan went on to compare the status of Muslims in Europe to that of Jews prior to the Second World War. Macron has repeatedly emphasised his wholehearted support for moderate Islam and Muslims within the context of a secular society, but Erdoğan's wilful misinterpretation of his words serve to paint himself as a defender of Muslims not only in Turkey but across the world. Given Islam's inherent lack of official clerical leadership, the path is open for Erdoğan to frame himself as the protector of Islam across the Middle East and throughout the world, a position of immense influence. He has calculated that a souring of relations with the Elysée Palace is a price worth paying for gaining the ears of Muslims throughout the world. This pattern of self-advertisement is repeated in his friendship with Hamas (which has gone as far as funding schools, hospitals and economic projects in Gaza and the West Bank) and the funding of a lavish \$110m Islamic centre in Maryland. It is thought that following his failure to comprehensively reshape the Middle Eastern sphere politically during the 2011 Arab Spring (his

### The constitutional framework laid down by Atatürk is disintegrating



Five million people gathered at the Democracy and Martyrs Rally in Yenikapi, following the coup attempt to oust Erdoğan.

government has been a longstanding backer of the Muslim Brotherhood), he has turned his attention to garnering support from the umma (the global Islamic community). The results of a 2020 poll speak for themselves: Erdoğan is the most popular Muslim leader in the world. Three-quarters of Palestinians and Jordanians are fans, and the Pakistani Prime Minister, Imran Khan, jested that President Erdoğan could sail to victory if he stood in upcoming elections in Pakistan. Such a following amongst a religion counting almost a quarter of world in its ranks is not insignificant.

There are however obstacles still lying in Mr Erdoğan's way. Despite his best efforts, domestic support has waned in the past three years, especially since a humiliating defeat in the Istanbul mayoral elections in 2019, the same contest in which Erdoğan himself cut his electoral teeth: the first poll, which the AKP narrowly lost, was dubiously annulled by the courts, however the decision provoked such outrage the rerun proved an even bigger for the AKP. Elsewhere, continual tensions with Greece in the Aegean Sea over drilling rights do no favours for Ankara's reputation in Europe. Turkey's attempts to join the European Union, once a promising prospect, lie in tatters. The President's refusal to recognise the Armenian Genocide, in which the Ottoman systematically deported and killed well over a million ethnic Armenians, does no favours for his international reputation. The economy was only salvaged from the 2018 currency crisis by a \$3.6bn loan from the Chinese, who have also been busily buying up transport infrastructure – such reliance on Chinese finance marks a notable departure from Atatürk's strenuous efforts towards economic independence. After all, it was the crippling influence of European creditors in the later stages of the nineteenth century that proved to be one of the final nails in the Ottoman coffin.

It seems though that his reversal of secularisation has just as much chance of becoming permanent as the illiberal reforms about which so much is being made. The democratic flame, although in jeopardy, is still just about alight in Turkey. The gradual erosion over the last couple of years of the AKP's popularity is an encouraging sign. However, the great legacy of a secular Muslim state – a unfortunately rare thing – looks to be in serious danger.

### Erdoğan is the most popular Muslim leader in the world

Just as fundamentalist Islam shows no signs of ebbing away, the rolling back of the secular state in Turkey seems to be a trend which will take great effort to reverse. Turkey is an example of the hybrid that is becoming common: the illiberal democracy, a label proudly borne by its creator and notable practitioner, Viktor Orbán. This is a body politic governed by elections, but not by the checks, balances and freedoms that allow a free civil society to function properly. They rest on the charisma of individuals, or the cult of personality – it's very difficult tell one from the other in a society lacking the medium of free discourse through which reality can

be seen clearly. Atatürk too used his own personality to shape Turkey according his designs. Indeed, he may have even laid down the precedent of strongman leadership in Turkey that has allowed Erdoğan to overcome the theoretical constitutional limitations on the power of his government. But Atatürk would likely not be pleased with the direction of modern Turkey – he would say that it is being borne back into the past by what are in essence the politics of conservatism and reactionism. The Ottoman Empire met its end because it too failed to adapt to a changing world. But only in a domestic sense is Mr Erdoğan's behaviour conservative. His foreign policy is far from it; he has transformed Turkey from a stable NATO ally of the West into a flexible regional power willing to invest money and resources in order to grow its influence. Erdoğan's personal position as a global Muslim leader is a far cry from his politically secular predecessors and stands to both strengthen his personal influence and that of his country. It is unlikely that this influence will be used to pursue noble ends, or even ends consistent with the objectives of Britain and its allies. It will take the other half of Turkey, that of Atatürk, secularism and an aspiration towards liberal democracy – a very unpopular aspiration these days – to wake up if this backslide is to be reversed. For now, though, the allure of the strongman remains. Few would blame the Turks for not exploiting their enviable position, as the éminence grise of Middle Eastern politics, operating in the shadows to great effect. And so, Mr Erdoğan will continue to probe the limits of his power, at home and abroad, to the detriment of all those who fail to take notice.



Confucius handing over Gautama Buddha to Laozi. In Chinese philosophy, the phrase three teachings (Chinese: 三教; sānjiao), refers to Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism when considered as a harmonious aggregate.

# Chinese Philosophy Through a Western Prism

Liberty Osborne contrasts the role of language to discuss metaphysics in Chinese philosophy to the problems raised by the post-enlightenment Western tradition.

In the first chapter of the *Tao Te Ching*, a book central to Chinese philosophy, Laozi writes that the “the unnamable is the eternally real”<sup>1</sup>. Over two millennia later, in a similarly momentous quote, Ludwig Wittgenstein declares “whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must remain silent.”<sup>2</sup> Whilst these two conclusions are starkly different, both declarations stemmed from the same fundamental failures of language when it comes to translating intangible metaphysical ideas into a philosophical text. In the West, Wittgenstein identified that these problems had been ignored and that the unreliability of language infiltrated the fundamental validity of most canonical texts seeking logical proof; Laozi, writing in the 4thc BCE, instead embraced such problems from the very beginning. At its core, this essay will examine the role of language in translating metaphysical ideas into discussion and understanding, and, if language is doomed to fail in some capacity, how it is best to overcome these problems; rely on the artificial structures of language, as Russell suggests, reject much of metaphysical discussion like the Logical Positivists, or embrace the untranslatable as in the Chinese tradition?

For much of philosophy from the Chinese tradition takes a completely different approach to discussions of the metaphysical compared the language-dependent search for the truth seen in much of the post-enlightenment Western tradition. Embracing the intangible side to metaphysics, through the use of allegory, allusion and metaphor, Chinese philosophy focuses on the extraction of meaning for individuals, rather than concrete logical proofs. This is also reflected in, and aided by, the very nature of the language; Classical Chinese is both logographic, allowing

for the encapsulation of some meaning within words that is not-contingent on verbal explanation, as well being elliptical, valuing omission and allusion where Indo-European languages frequently place more value on clarity. Notably, to create a severe dichotomy between the approaches of Western and Chinese philosophy would be misleading; for example, much of Christianity is conveyed through stories or allegory, whilst Mohism in the Chinese tradition does attempt to clarify language and investigate epistemology. As a result, this essay, when discussing Chinese philosophy, will mean mainly work in

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## Language is doomed to fail in some capacity

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Daoism or Confucianism compared to the noticeable focus in much of Western philosophy on the search for provable ‘truth’, differences that are frequently reflected in what is considered valuable academic work in both traditions.

Ultimately, this essay will argue that the further you get from

faulty and shallow linguistic games, solid and concrete translation of ideas between people fails but meaningful individual interpretation of metaphysical concepts improves, a sacrifice conveyed in the comparisons between aspects of the Chinese and Western traditions and, as will be explored, fully worth making. For in metaphysics, a failure of language in some form is inevitable and wholly existent, but, rather than being ignored or rejected altogether, should be embraced through different approaches to philosophy, as seen in the Chinese tradition, in order to generate a form of philosophy that is more centred on individual readers, accessible to more people and far more engaging and poignant.

First of all, it is essential to explore the problems with language that cause such discussions to arise. Much of metaphysical philosophy goes beyond what is empirically observable, pointing to a transcendent reality, be it a Judaeo-Christian conception of God, Kant’s articulation of the Noumenal sphere, or the idea of the Dao.

<sup>1</sup> Laozi and Stephen Mitchell, *Tao Te Ching*, 1988, Kyle Cathie edition, Kyle Books: 2011, ch.1

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein



## A logographic elliptical language like Classical Chinese would yield completely different answers about the true nature of the world

Consequently, when discussing such metaphysical concepts, there is no way to ensure collective understanding as to what a word describing an abstract or intangible concept actually means. The meaning of that word is insecure and frequently not translated into any significance for an individual; instead, metaphysical discussion operates in realm of language alone where things are deemed provable due to a play on words, without correlation to anything genuine meaning. In trying to articulate concepts in words, the concept itself is lost, whilst 'proving' its existence becomes meaningless. For example, Anselm's Ontological argument attempts to prove God's existence through a mere play on the definitions of words; whilst this may grammatically prove the word 'God' exists, the argument lacks any relevance to the real world, or indeed the lives of people who wish to be guided by philosophy. For, even if words are articulated logically on paper, that does not reflect the translation of meaning into readers' lives. As a result of these problems, Logical Positivists devised the 'verifiability principle'; that, unless something is empirically falsifiable or verifiable, it is meaningless. For them, all transcendent concepts are untranslatable to any language or personal significance; this untranslatability therefore proves the concepts to be non-existent. Looking at this in terms of God, Ayer declared "If 'god' is a metaphysical term, then it cannot be even probable that a god exists. For to say that 'God exists' is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. And by the same criterion, no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance."<sup>3</sup>

Conversely, the opposing dominant response was that of Logical Atomism; that, essentially, by deconstructing sentences down to their most fundamental clear claims, one can reveal the true meaning of that sentence, with the structure of language ultimately reflecting the structure of reality. However, Logical Atomism encounters two

<sup>3</sup> Ayer



Scene from the Song Dynasty: Illustration of Filial Piety (Source: Wikimedia)

problems; first, it unclear why this solves the problem of translating a transcendent concept into language and understanding. When discussing metaphysical concepts, whilst you may be able to identify some empirical or fundamental claims in each sentence, there is still necessarily a jump between the intangible idea and a tangible word. Second, different languages vary hugely in their base structures; analysing a logographic elliptical language like Classical Chinese would yield completely different answers about the true nature of the world compared to analysing the highly grammatical, phonographic Latin. Thus, it is clear that, when conveying a metaphysical idea to an individual's understanding of the idea using language, certainty or absolute clarity cannot exist.

Philosophy in the Chinese tradition answers this by acknowledging the problems with language identified by Wittgenstein but rejecting the idea that the lack of definitive language means no meaningful discussion can be had surrounding metaphysics. This is done in

## "In China, truth and falsity in the Greek sense have rarely been important considerations"

thing, but rather allude to the intangible. The Daoists' answer to the failures of language is, rather than trying to make language work or rejecting any existence of the indescribable, to instead prioritise obtaining some inspired, but ultimately subjective, meaning for individuals, even if discussion between people is imperfect or even shunned. For, writing "Those who know don't talk, those who talk don't know."<sup>5</sup>; instead the *Tao Te Ching* affirms "How do I know this is true? I look inside myself and see"<sup>6</sup>.

This approach is not limited to Daoism, with the concept of the intangible Dao, as well as a lack of focus on provable truths, being integral to a variety of philosophies, including Confucianism. According to Munro, "In China, truth and falsity in the Greek sense have rarely been important considerations"<sup>7</sup> and this is reflected in the style of most Chinese philosophy. Rather than trying to logically prove either metaphysical claims or the value of logic itself, Chinese philosophy frequently instead discusses how you should live

the most extreme way in the work of Daoism, where many of the characteristics seen as central to valuable philosophy in the West are rejected, including logic, debate or even discussion. The philosophy is all about the Dao; an intangible way that encapsulates wholeness and ultimate meaning but, crucially cannot be clearly defined and operates beyond the realm of language and rational understanding. The focus is not on obtaining a clear definition or proving its existence, but rather on helping each individual personally discover the Dao. Some use of language is obviously still necessary; indeed, the *Tao Te Ching* is itself a collection of words. However, the use of language within Daoist philosophy is such that it still rejects trying to logically prove anything and, instead, embraces the failures of language to form what is seemingly nonsensical. Laozi's work is rife with paradox, such as "All things are born of being, being is born of non-being"<sup>4</sup>; it breaks the rules of logical language with blatant contradictions that do not convey a certain, clear, defined

<sup>4</sup> Laozi, ch.40

your life or how things work; Roel Stercx analogises this to the distinction between defining water as H<sub>2</sub>O and understanding water's abilities in the world to flow or hydrate. Any idea of proof is reliant more on individual exploration and internal belief. Western critics would deem this to be more akin to blind theological faith than something that is rigorously academic, yet, if language is so problematic and thus so-called proofs made using the language fundamentally faulty and operating in a realm detached from any real meaning, then a radical shift in how philosophy is conducted and valued may be important. Rather than vowing never to discuss much of metaphysics again because of linguistic restraints, as Wittgenstein does, the Chinese tradition instead roots its philosophy in personal experience to reach meaning. Even where concepts are untranslatable, they can still be alluded to and explored, for "By following one particular route,

<sup>5</sup> Laozi, ch.56

<sup>6</sup> Laozi, ch.21

<sup>7</sup> Chad Hansen, 1985, Chinese Language, Chinese Philosophy and "Truth", The Journal of Asian Studies 44, no.3, p.491



Quietly Listening to Wind in the Pines - Hanging Scroll 静听松风, Indian ink and colour on silk, by Ma Lin

we might get closer to finding out where we are heading, but even if we do not, we will have gained experience along the way and hopefully appreciated the quest for no answer.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, allusion is so entrenched in Chinese philosophy that the lines between poetry and philosophy are blurred,

the two often deemed as one. From the political power of Mao's revolutionary poetry to *The Analects*, a philosophical text told through story-like descriptions of encounters with Confucius and ripe with mysterious metaphorical sayings, philosophy in the Chinese tradition is far less mathematical and far more valuable as pieces of literature. This allows individuals to have internal and emotional reactions to the texts, as one does to poetry; comparatively, it is much easier for interaction with more mathematical philosophy to remain at the level of linguistic logic games, without any deep personal engagement. This represents the prioritisation of trying to translate an intangible metaphorical idea to individual meaning, at the cost of a precise articulation.

Even if the approach of Logical Atomism were correct, then the idea that the aspects of metaphysics is intangible is all the more proven because Classical Chinese is exemplary in having the aspects of Chinese philosophical tradition described, such as a focus on subjective interpretation and allegory, ingrained in the language. The first verse of Laozi writes "Darkness within darkness, the gateway to all understanding"<sup>9</sup>, emphasising the importance of mystery and absence of information. This is reflected in the style of Classical Chinese, a language that is "elliptical in nature"<sup>10</sup>, valuing the art of omission within its philosophical poetry. Sparse, concise philosophical poetry misses much out, alluding to ideas rather than analytically explaining them and, in the process, allowing for more individual interpretation. The elliptical style overcomes many of the problems identified with language by relying on as few words as possible and instead allowing for more poignant and engaging translation of metaphysical ideas to individual understanding. However, the reliance on subjective interpretation means there is less clarity in discussions between individuals, shown partially by the challenges of trying to translate such works into another language, which often yields truly nonsensical results, shown in the vast disparities between different English translations of Classical Chinese texts.

Furthermore, Chinese is rich in allegory, with metaphorical language infiltrating ordinary words. Many Chinese words consist of two characters, with each character possessing its own meaning, but them combining to create another word. Looking at the meanings of the distinct characters reveals a language laced with philosophical allusion; for example, the word 'weather', 天气, literally means the energies of heaven. Similarly, individual characters are usually made of multiple components or

radicals, each representing different base concepts. Whilst an understanding of each radical's meaning is necessary, these usually correlate to empirically observable entities, with no difficulties in common understanding. As a result, in Chinese, the translation of the abstract into language is aided by the ability of each individual to look at a character and understand the combination of radicals, evoking a sense of what the concept is that is less contingent on faulty verbal games. Whilst this arguably is also reflected in the etymological roots of Indo-European words, it is far more prevalent and obvious in Chinese, with an astounding number of words having philosophically powerful double meanings. This is aided by the development of written Classical Chinese as distinct from the spoken language; rather than being bound to the way in which speech evolves, the written language remains intimate to the essence and meaning of the word. With countless hidden visual and etymological associations within Chinese characters, the language is primed for a philosophy that embraces allusion and individual interpretation.

As a result, the comparison between the approaches of the Western and Chinese traditions to metaphysical philosophy can be diluted to a clear question; is it more important to prioritise clear, logical proof or meaning for individual readers? Whilst this essay has thus far highlighted the advantages of the latter, this is not to say that the Western tradition of 'truth' lacks any importance. As an intellectual discipline for sharpening the mind, the condensation of metaphysical concepts to tight logic is impressive and interesting. Moreover, arguably proof is essential in philosophy as individual interpretation is only valuable if founded in reality. However, that in itself is dependent on proof correlating to reality, yet, as long as proof is achieved through language, (of any form, including logical notation), there is a disparity between the 'proven' metaphysical concept and metaphysical reality. As a result, the Western notion of philosophical truth is meaningless.

Instead, the Chinese tradition allows the space for people to have more emotionally-driven, gut reactions to philosophical concepts. This is more beneficial for several reasons; first, people are simply able to gain more from philosophy. Rather than just being an intellectual, linguistic game, philosophy with space for individual interpretation means people truly engage with metaphysical theories and can be emotionally moved by them to act upon the concept or dwell further on their life or notion of self in relation to the concept. For example, an emotional reaction to a metaphorical tale in *The Analects* is much more relatable and powerful for individuals and more likely to generate action than a wordplay in an epistemological text. Second, as a result, Chinese philosophy is often less elitist and more accessible to a variety of individuals. Compared to the Western texts

which often dissolve into jargon and complex, convoluted sentences, the integration of poetry and storytelling into Chinese philosophy means those texts are much more part of ordinary people's lives; Confucian tales or a sense of the Dao pervade everyday culture. Allowing space for individuals to interpret texts not only makes them more readable, but also allows a wider variety of people to actually engage with metaphysical discussion. Furthermore, a text open for interpretation is more long-lasting and applicable across generations; Confucian quotes have been used by both Mao and the Emperors he overthrew. Whilst this might mean the texts hold less concrete ground, this both makes them more consistently relevant and use and is arguably more reflective of the changing nature of society. In the West, the text that looks most similar to Confucius or Laozi is the Bible, a book full of allegories, and probably the most consistently relevant and widely accessible metaphysical text; that approach is lacking in broader, secular and discursive Western philosophy. Finally, perhaps emotional response could be reflective of truth; given linguistic games are so faulty, embracing gut reaction and instinct beyond language may be the route to discovering what really 'exists', without

relying on the word 'exist'. Yet, regardless of proof, the space for the individual in Chinese philosophy broadens the metaphysical discussion across more members and eras of society in a way that is genuinely impactful on their lives.

In conclusion, in the realm of metaphysical discussion, the distinctions between the Western and Chinese traditions reveal totally

### The Chinese tradition allows the space for people to have more emotionally-driven, gut reactions to philosophical concepts

different responses to the problems of language and logic. Language is fundamentally distant from the transcendent concepts it attempts to grapple, with Western philosophy often operating in a realm of faulty linguistic proof that doesn't translate to individual meaning. However, that does not, as some have declared, render all metaphysical philosophy useless; looking to the Chinese tradition shows a form of philosophy less reliant on verbal logic that prioritises meaningful individual engagement with metaphysics at the cost of precise discussion. As Feng Youlan remarked, "The sayings and writings of the Chinese philosophers are so inarticulate that their suggestiveness is almost boundless"<sup>11</sup>, but that is not wholly problematic and can broaden philosophical perspectives. This is reflected in the very nature of the elliptical, logographic language that leans towards subjective interpretation, an aim that is both more accessible and relevant than logical proof, particularly in light of the inherent limitations of language when discussing the metaphysical. In metaphysical philosophy, language will always be inadequate, but that should be embraced, not rejected.

<sup>8</sup> Roel Stercx, *Chinese Thought: From Confucius to Cook Ding*, 2019, Pelican Books, Penguin Random House UK: 2020, p.72

<sup>9</sup> Laozi, ch.1

<sup>10</sup> Roel Stercx, p.55

<sup>11</sup> Roel Stercx, p.57

# Old Church Slavonic

Whilst the role of the Catholic Church in the propagation of Latin is widely acknowledged, the language, liturgy and cultural importance of the Orthodox Church are less well known in Britain. Walker Thompson traces the origins and development of Church Slavonic and demonstrates its continuing religious and political importance in Russia and Eastern Europe.

When one speaks of the sacred languages of medieval Europe, it is likely first and foremost Latin, and possibly Greek or Hebrew, that come to mind. Some would perhaps also recall Wulfila's translation of the Bible into Gothic or scattered surviving Old English and Old High German renderings of the Psalms and other Christian texts. Comparatively few, I reckon, would think of Church Slavonic, the dominant written language of the Orthodox Slavs from the 9th–18th centuries and the liturgical language of the Russian and, in part, Bulgarian and Serbian Orthodox churches to this day. As someone whose teaching and research interests are centered around Church Slavonic in its diverse aspects, I wanted to offer a brief overview of the rich history of this language, as well as some thoughts on the significance of the language today and why it remains deserving of study.

According to the common narrative, the origins of Church Slavonic proper as a written and liturgical language go back to two brothers surnamed the "Apostles of the Slavs": Cyril (known as Constantine the Philosopher until he took monastic vows) and Methodius (secular name Michael). They were born in Thessaloniki in the early 9th century and were bilingual in Greek and a South Slavic dialect presumably not dissimilar to Old Church Slavonic. The main sources for their lives are two very old Church Slavonic hagiographies, known to scholars by the Latin titles *Vita Constantini* and *Vita Methodii*. While they are preserved only in late medieval Russian and Serbian manuscripts dating from the 14th century onward, they are rich in specific historical detail and are presumed to have been composed by people who knew the brothers personally, possibly by the disciples of Methodius in Bulgaria. There is an ongoing debate among scholars as to whether the two lives were translated from Greek or originally written in Church Slavonic.

The historical background for the Byzantine mission to the Slavs was a struggle for influence in Moravia and Pannonia between Frankish and Byzantine missionaries belonging to the Churches of Rome and Constantinople, respectively. In 862, the brothers were summoned to Greater Moravia by Prince Rastislav after the latter had – unsuccessfully – courted the Pope of Rome with a request to establish a centre of Slavic Christian learning in his realm and then expelled the Frankish clergy after being turned down. Rastislav then appealed to Emperor Michael III, who selected Constantine (Cyril) as a man of learning capable of accomplishing this mission. At this point, Constantine was a scholar in Constantinople and previously had been a member of a Byzantine diplomatic and missionary delegation to the Khazars; Methodius was



The frontispiece and first page of Ivan Feodorov's *Apostol* (Epistle lectionary), considered the first Russian printed book  
Source: Wikimedia Commons and Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences

an abbot of a monastery on Mount Olympus in Bythina. After some initial hesitation about his aptitude for the mission, Constantine accepted and set out for Moravia in the company of his brother Methodius.

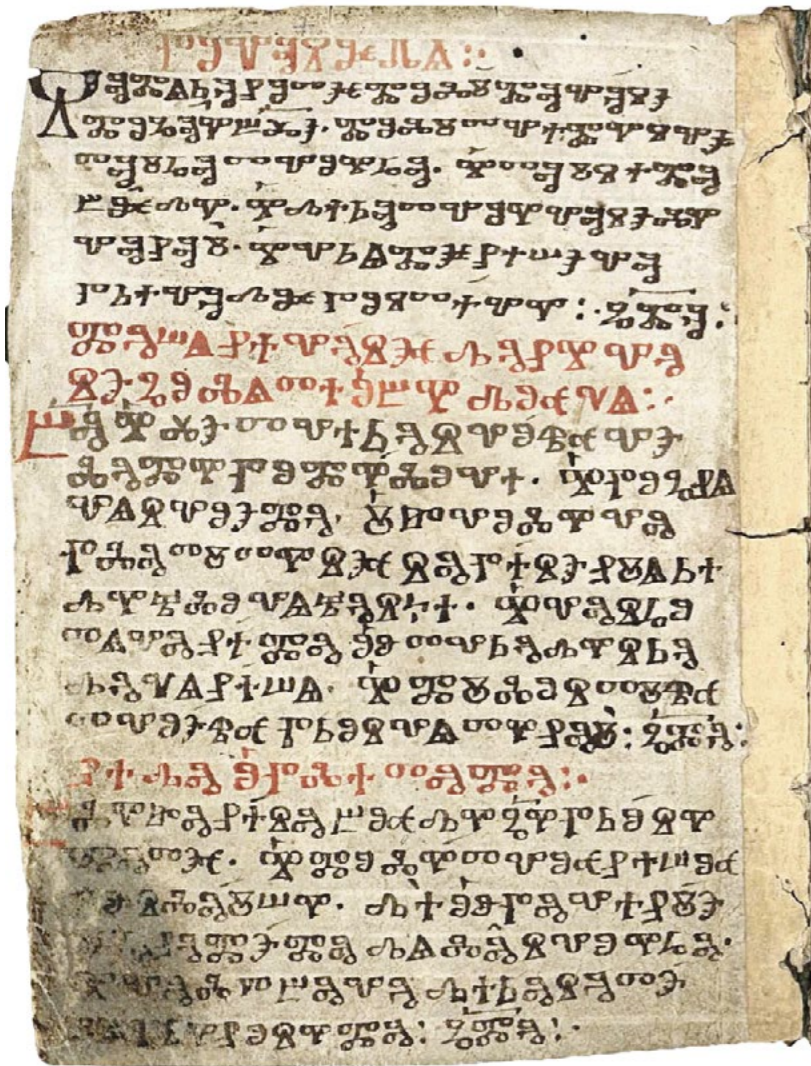
Constantine-Cyril's first task was to create a writing system suitable for a Slavic literary language. This was a monumental task, because there was no widespread Slavic literacy worth speaking of before Cyril's mission, though we do have scattered earlier attestations of Slavic toponyms, ethnonyms and personal names in Greek transliteration as well as Slavic texts in Latin script from the 9th or 10th century, such as the Freisinger manuscripts (*Freisinger Denkmäler*). There is no doubt today that the script devised by Cyril was Glagolitic, an invented alphabet very well suited to the sound structure of early Slavic, rather than what we now call Cyrillic. Not only are many of the most ancient manuscripts in Glagolitic, but a comparison of the two reveals that Cyrillic is, in essence, an adaption of the Greek alphabet supplemented with Glagolitic letters to represent sounds not found in Greek. Cyril's life mentions that he knew Hebrew and polemicized with the Jewish Khazars, and one finds probable confirmation of this in the letter *Sha* (ш) with its overt similarity to Hebrew *Shin* (ש).

## Cyril's first task was to create a writing system suitable for a Slavic literary language

Cyril and Methodius' mission in Moravia blossomed into a centre of translation into the new Slavic literary language they created, which we now know as Old Church Slavonic. Its legacy comprises Church Slavonic versions of a range of Biblical and liturgical texts, not least the Psalter, the Gospels (then in the form of a lectionary with readings for each day of the Church year, rather than as a continuous text), large portions of the rest of the New Testament, and the texts for the main daily services and sacraments of the church. The *Vita Methodii* also credits Methodius with a translation of the entire Old Testament save for the books of Maccabees, but this account is to be treated as highly apocryphal. In fact, the first complete Bible containing all the books of the Old Testament, the so-called Gennadius Bible, appeared in Russia at the end of the 15th century; large parts of it, including whole books, were translated from Latin and it contains many Russianisms that clearly differentiate it from Old Church Slavonic on a linguistic level.

As is perhaps unsurprising for anyone familiar with the history of Christendom, the appearance of a new sacred or liturgical language (apart from Hebrew, Greek, and Latin) engendered considerable controversy during the brothers' lifetime and subsequently. The ambitions of the Frankish clergy played no small part in this. As a result of accusations made against them, the brothers were forced to travel to Rome in 869 in order to defend the use of Church Slavonic in the liturgy. Early hymnography addressed to Cyril and Methodius, as well as the *Vita*

### The brothers were forced to travel to Rome in 869 in order to defend the use of Church Slavonic in the liturgy



A page from the Kiev Folia, the oldest known Glagolitic manuscript. Source: National Library of Ukraine and Sebastian Kempgen, University of Bamberg

Constantini, speaks of their defeat of the so-called “trilingual heresy”. Cyril died in Rome and is buried in the Basilica of Saint Clement. Methodius, for his part, was made Archbishop of Pannonia and allowed to continue his mission freely. However, he faced continued interference and opposition from the Swabian bishop Wiching, who had him imprisoned for two years in Reichenau Abbey and had Methodius’ disciples driven out of Moravia after the latter’s death in 885. They found refuge in the Kingdom of Bulgaria under Boris I, where new centres of Church Slavonic literacy sprung up, notably in Ochrid (in modern-day North Macedonia) and Preslav. The work of translation was continued there by Methodius’ disciples Clement, Gorazd, and Naum (now all canonized saints in the Orthodox Church). Another important figure of early Bulgarian Church Slavonic literary culture was John the Exarch, a prolific author and translator of mostly dogmatic literature.

Here it is worth saying a few brief words about the qualities of Old Church Slavonic as a language. As one might expect, it exhibits a heavy, albeit not exclusive, dependence on Greek in terms of both syntax and vocabulary. Constructions familiar to Classicists such as the accusative and infinitive occur frequently in translated texts; participles are also used with considerably greater frequency in Church Slavonic than in the modern vernacular Slavic languages. However, Church Slavonic also exhibits independent features without parallel in Greek, such as instrumental and locative cases, a dative

of possession, a dative absolute as a counterpart to the Greek genitive absolute (and Latin ablative absolute or Sanskrit locative absolute), possessive adjectives formed regularly from proper names (using, among others, the suffixes *-in* and *-ov* familiar from Russian surnames), and the so-called animate or genitive accusative, familiar to learners of modern Slavic languages such as Russian or Polish. Moreover, recent scholarship has increasingly drawn attention to a deep layer of vocabulary in Church Slavonic borrowed from Old High German and Latin predating the earliest direct contact with Greek. This has helped to complete a picture of very early (8th–9th century) Latin or Western Christian influence on Church Slavonic previously only partially provided by sources such as the Kiev Folia, a 10th century collection of texts for the Western-rite mass, and the *Euchologium Sinaiticum*, a Slavonic prayer book with texts translated mostly from

Greek yet also containing a Old High German confessional formula.

Thus far, the focus has been entirely on Old Church Slavonic, yet as was mentioned at the outset, the subsequent stages of the language are no less important. Before we proceed, a brief terminological clarification is necessary. “Old Church Slavonic” refers to the predominantly South Slavic written language (with an admixture of isolated West Slavic elements) that emerged from the missionary activity of Cyril and Methodius in Moravia and Pannonia and that of their disciples in Bulgaria and Macedonia. In older academic literature on the language (for example, August Leskien’s famous grammar and chrestomathy), it is alternatively called “Old Bulgarian” due to its distinct South Slavic characteristics, though the term is now regarded as dated. “Church Slavonic”, on the contrary, refers to a much longer continuum encompassing not only Old Church Slavonic, but also later Russian, Bulgarian/Macedonian, Serbian and Croatian varieties (sometimes called “recensions”). Among others, the German scholar Helmut Keipert and others of his school have convincingly advocated for preserving this distinction and not using “Church Slavonic” to refer to just Old Church Slavonic, which would considerably constrict its meaning. Apart from this, one occasionally finds “[Old] Church Slavic” as a primarily North American synonym of “[Old] Church Slavonic”. (If the terminological situation in English appears messy, one might take consolation from the fact that it is markedly worse in Russia, in so small part due to decades of Soviet bias that sought to eliminate any mention of the church from academic discourse on the language.)

### A major devastation to early Russian culture occurred with the Mongol invasion of Rus

The subsequent history of Church Slavonic is defined by deeply intertwined developments in several different cultural and religious centres across the Slavic world. One of these is Croatia, which developed its own version of the Glagolitic script. Croatian Church Slavonic is the most culturally isolated recension. Unlike the others, it was used by Roman Catholics rather than Orthodox – despite some interruptions, all the way up to the Second Vatican Council. The most common type of Croatian Church Slavonic texts are Western-rite liturgical books such as Missals. The other major centres are Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia, which were all in constant interaction with one another. The relationship between Serbian and Bulgarian Church Slavonic, on the one hand, and Russian Church Slavonic, on the other, is commonly described in terms of two “South Slavic Influences” on Russian Church Slavonic. The first of these occurred after the Baptism of Rus, conventionally considered to have taken place in 988, when Prince Vladimir of Kiev formally adopted Christianity. In order to instruct the newly converted East Slavs in the precepts of Christianity, Church Slavonic literature was imported wholesale from Bulgaria and Macedonia. By this point in the history of the Slavic languages, there was already a clear differentiation between the South Slavic (to which Church Slavonic belonged) and East

Slavic (including Old Russian) groups. An important consequence of this, which has been formative for the history of the Russian written language ever since, was the development of a distinction between the Old Russian (Old East Slavic) vernacular and the Old Church Slavonic (South Slavic) liturgical and literary language. Borrowing a concept from the sociolinguist Charles Ferguson, the Russian scholar Boris Uspensky famously described this situation as one of “diglossia”, in which the “high” variety of Church Slavonic was in continuous interaction with the “low” variety of the Russian vernacular. While in some ways a simplification, this scheme is nonetheless very helpful for understanding the historical relationship of Russian and Church Slavonic.

In the centuries that followed, both Bulgarian and Russian Church Slavonic continued to develop in parallel to each other, with large volumes of both original and translated literature being produced. A major devastation to early Russian culture occurred with the Mongol invasion of Rus in the early 13th century, which led to innumerable losses of manuscripts. However, the tables turned, so to speak, due to two events or, rather, processes beginning in the late 14th century: the liberation of Rus from the so-called “Mongol-Tatar Yoke” and the Turkish conquest of the Balkans (and eventually Constantinople). This meant, on the one hand, that Russian society and culture were once more able to develop freely (albeit this time centered around the northern

princedoms of Vladimir-Suzdal and Moscow in the North rather than Kiev in the South), and on the other hand, that prominent Bulgarian and Serbian Orthodox scholars and clerics fled to Russia to escape the advance of the Turks. Among the figures who influenced Russian Church Slavonic in this period were the Bulgarians Euthymius of Tarnovo and Cyprian Tsamblak and the Serb Pachomius Logothetes. Russia also brought forth notable men of letters in the late 14th and 15th century; one of the most famous was Epiphanius the Wise, whose style of writing shows a great debt to the school of Euthymius in particular. The influence of Bulgarian and Serbian Church Slavonic in Russia in this period was orthographical, since in both Bulgaria and Serbia, systems of archaizing spelling rules had been devised in order to compensate for sound changes in the language that had made older orthographies obsolete. The most famous of these were the so-called Euthymian and Resava spellings, and the former was adopted (and adapted) in Russia with particular enthusiasm.

In the Early Modern era, several key developments occurred that would profoundly shape the subsequent history of Church Slavonic. One of these was the appearance of Cyrillic printed books; the first was an Oktoechos (a liturgical book containing texts for the weekly cycle of church services) printed by Schweipolt Fiol in Krakow in 1491. Additional centres of Cyrillic printing soon popped up in Venice, Serbia, Vilnius, Lvov, Ostrog, Kiev, and Moscow. As should be clear from this

## Orthodox clergy barely understood the Church Slavonic books they used in services

list, Cyrillic printing thrived especially in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, thanks in part to such pioneers as Ivan Fedorov (considered the founder of Russian printing) and Francysk Skaryna (who printed the first Belarusian books). Ivan Fedorov's Ostrog Bible, later reprinted in Moscow, is a monumental work and one of the most important East Slavic Bibles. The orthographical norms laid down in the Church Slavonic printed books of this period would to a large extent define those of later Russian Church Slavonic.

The late 16th century witnessed a major drive to codify

Church Slavonic in dictionaries and grammars, due in part to pressure from Jesuit proselytizers, who engaged in aggressive polemics against the language, claiming that Orthodox clergy barely understood the Church Slavonic books they used in services, let alone the grammar of the language. This pressure only intensified after the Union of Brest in 1596, which opened the floodgates for defections of Orthodox clergy to Roman Catholicism. One of the most eminent converts to Catholicism was Meletius Smotritsky, the author of perhaps the most famous grammar of Church Slavonic, published in Vilnius

in 1619 and in a reworked edition in Moscow in 1649. This period also marked the beginning of a process of polyfunctionalization of Russian Church Slavonic, as the language came to be used for a wider range of academic and scientific purposes beyond the previously dominant genres of hymnography, hagiography, and theological (dogmatic, exegetical, polemical, etc.) literature.

The fact that the codification of Church Slavonic was undertaken mostly in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by native speakers of Ruthenian (the ancestor of modern Ukrainian and Belarusian) also inevitably left its mark on the grammar and phonology of the language. Moreover, close cultural contacts with Catholic Europe meant that translations of texts of Latin church services – for example, prayers for Candlemas in Metropolitan Peter Moghila's famous 1637 *Trebnik* or Great Euchologium – found their way into the corpus of Church Slavonic literature. Ruthenian scholars, such as the monks Epifany Slavinetsky and Simeon of Polotsk, also came to Moscow at the summons of the Tsar and worked there as translators and lexicographers. This brought Church Slavonic literacy in the Grand Duchy (later Tsardom) of Muscovy to a very high level by the end of the 17th century, while also leading to a mixing of the Moscow and Kiev/Ruthenian recensions of Church Slavonic (sometimes called the "Third South Slavonic Influence" or "Southwest Slavonic Influence" on Russian Church Slavonic).

From the late 17th century, Russian Church Slavonic has been the dominant variety in all Orthodox Slavic countries, including those such as Bulgaria and Serbia that previously had their own well-established Church Slavonic varieties. The reason for this is, again, the printing press. The Moscow Printing House (*Pechatny Dvor*) – later the Synodal Printing Office (*Synodalnaia Tipografia*) – produced an enormous volume of books far surpassing the output of presses in other Slavic countries. Many scholars even refer to the variety of Russian Church Slavonic in use since the 18th century as "Synodal" for this reason. During this period, highly educated monastic scholars such as Paisius Velichkovsky continued to translate from Greek into the dominant Russian variety as well as producing original writings in the language. However, this period also marked the beginning of a steep decline in the use of Church Slavonic in Russia in favour of the modern Russian literary language. Some of the first recorded liturgical sermons in Russian were uttered by Theophan Prokopovich during the reign of Peter the Great. The first modern Russian translation of the New Testament was published in 1820, and a full Russian translation of the Bible (the Synodal Bible) came out in 1876. Today, Russian Church Slavonic serves virtually only as a liturgical language in the Russian Orthodox Church and the only texts that are commonly read by non-scholars are the prayers and hymns prescribed by the daily, weekly, and yearly cycles of church services (aptly termed the *tserkovny krug* or "church cycle" by Helmut Keipert). Its status is analogous

to that of Latin in the Roman Church (at least up to the Second Vatican Council) or of languages such as Koine Greek, Old Georgian, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, and Gééz (Classical Ethiopic) in the respective Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches. In Bulgaria and Serbia, some Church Slavonic service texts have even been translated into the vernacular for use in urban parishes, while the Church Slavonic versions are used only in traditional monasteries.

Seeing as the functions of Church Slavonic have been so greatly restricted, one might ask: how is the language relevant today and why is it worthy of study? Beginning with the latter question: Old Church Slavonic especially is of considerable interest to linguists, as it is the closest documented stage to Proto-Slavic or Common Slavic (the common ancestor of modern Slavic languages) and thus essential for completing our understanding of the link between the Slavic family and Indo-European. This fact was recognized very early on by German scholars of Indo-European such as Franz Bopp and August Leskien, and new works on Church Slavonic continue to be published by scholars of Indo-European and comparative and historical linguistics to this day. From a literary-philological point of view, there are Church Slavonic

translations of Greek texts such as Old Testament apocrypha whose originals have been lost (though parallel translations are sometimes preserved in other languages of the Christian East, e.g. Syriac or Ethiopic). It is also impossible to describe the history of Russian or Bulgarian

vocabulary without taking into account the influence of Church Slavonic. For all of these reasons, Church Slavonic still continues to play a major role in scholarship, and as academia moves into the digital age, projects to digitize Church Slavonic manuscripts or to compile online dictionaries of Church Slavonic have been growing more common, both in the traditional Orthodox Slavic countries and in places such as Germany and Austria with an established tradition of research into Slavic languages. It also ought to be stressed again that Church Slavonic is by no means a 'dead' language, but a living language used in the daily church services of the Orthodox Churches of Russia, Bulgaria, and Serbia. Indeed, new hymnographical texts continue to be composed for recently canonized saints in the Russian Orthodox Church especially, and in this way the body of Church Slavonic literature will continue to expand for the foreseeable future.

Church Slavonic thus retains a considerable degree of relevance to this day and remains a fascinating and dynamic topic of study. There is so much more that could be said about it, and I am left with a painful awareness of all the things that I have not been able to say in this brief space. Nonetheless, it is hoped that this very short survey of the history of the language may have piqued the interest of some readers and will perhaps inspire them to investigate it further; if so, it will have more than fulfilled its purpose.

## Church Slavonic still continues to play a major role in scholarship



Saint Cyril's tomb in the Basilica San Clemente, Rome  
Source: Wikimedia Commons/User: Harke

# Japanese Occidentalism: the Foreign and the Familiar

**Thalia Roychowdhury** considers the reaction of Japanese writers to Western ideas and language. Far from a simplistic process of assimilation or rejection, attitudes to Western influence have been critical in exploring the interplay of modernity and tradition, of the foreign and familiar, within both society and the self.



Rongo Rongo, *Arises from Oblivion* (2008), by AYA TAKANO, acrylic on canvas

In May of 1899, a crew of Japanese actors arrived on the shores of San Francisco, ready to showcase Kabuki plays to the Western world for the first time<sup>1</sup>. They became an immediate success within both American and European society, the leading actress Sadayakko Kawakami capturing the imagination of audiences everywhere. Japanese culture became so popular that 'Sada Yacco' style kimonos were advertised to the Parisian people<sup>2</sup>. Clearly, such encounters with the foreign had a potent effect on the public imagination.

However it was not only the watchers in the audience who became entranced by the other, but the actors themselves. Sadayakko was thrown by the 'perfect wonder'<sup>3</sup> she felt in encountering foreign shores and differing, unfamiliar customs. The theatre company took 'the dramatic art and stagecraft'<sup>4</sup> learned abroad and reincorporated it into their own future work. Thus, it is clear to see that experiences of the foreign are reciprocal between cultures, forming an exchange. Yet, in the examination of the foreign in literature, the focus tends

1 (Tschudin, 2016)

2 (Anon., 1900s)

3 (Noguchi, 1906)

4 (Noguchi, 1906)



On May 13 1969, Yukio Mishima appeared onstage in front of a 1,000-strong audience at the University of Tokyo to debate with representatives of the All Campus Joint Struggle Committee (Zenkyoto). The event took place at the peak of the student protest movement, during the so-called "seiji no kisetsu" ("season of politics").

towards analysing exoticized Western representations of the Eastern world. Representations of the West in Eastern works are rarely given the same focus as Western Orientalist literature. We should examine more closely the use of Occidentalism in Japanese literature.

By doing so we can consider how the gap between the foreign and familiar is bridged within an alternative historical and cultural context, and to what extent this literary technique of Occidentalism diverges from Orientalism.

Within Japanese literature the foreign is often juxtaposed with the familiar in a dynamic contrast. Importantly, this literary technique of Occidentalism is not a straightforward equivalent to Orientalism. The latter is a device used by Western authors that transforms the foreign into an objectified fantasy, which is often interpreted within literary criticism as reductive. Orientalism can be defined as the portrayal of 'the Oriental as a(n)... exoticized object to be commodified by the West'<sup>5</sup>. Rather than a nuanced and complex combination of cultures and livelihoods, the so-called Eastern world is reduced to a confused amalgamation of 'antiquity, a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes'<sup>6</sup>. Thus, its people and culture lose their own agency, being defined only by their relation to the West. Occidentalism may be assumed to be the direct opposite, an alienation of the West in relation to Eastern (in this case

5 (Akita, 2006)

6 (Said, 1980)

## Occidentalism is not a straightforward equivalent to Orientalism

Japanese) culture.

However, upon closer inspection of representation of the West in Japanese Literature, this is not the case. We must make a distinction between the use of Western imagery in Japanese Literature and the

proliferation of exoticized 'Oriental' motifs in Western works, as Japanese Occidentalism creatively diverges into more distinct subcategories. This produces a gradient particular to Japanese literature, where the distance between the foreign and the familiar shifts. Upon closer inspection even apparently familiar tropes of Japanese Occidentalism diverge from Orientalist practises.

The West has been exoticized by some Japanese authors, but not for the same objectifying intent as Orientalism. Particularly, Yukio Mishima's depictions of the decadent West reveal its corrupting and enabling influence, throwing into crisis the supposedly respectable morality of the restrictive East. He uses images of the other to communicate his extremist Nationalist philosophy to powerful, visceral effect. Across the novel *Confessions of a Mask*, Mishima presents a closeted homosexual living in Imperial Japan who discusses his struggles to contain his illicit desires and conform to the titular 'Mask' of acceptability. It is no coincidence that the majority of these unconventional lusts are connected to Western media. Mishima chooses to describe the protagonist's obsession with 'Guido Reni's St. Sebastian' as his first true homosexual awakening. The eroticized eye, with which the painting's 'white and matchless nudity' is described, undermines the Saint's sanctity. He describes



All Right, Collage by Takahiro Kimura

the East in Western works, as a sensual and exotic landscape, defined by its difference to the Imperial Japanese setting. Yet Mishima diverges from the Orientalist pattern, focusing less on objectifying the other and instead on promoting his own ideals of Nationalist societal responsibility.

Mishima makes a key point in the construction of his narrative to emphasise this Nationalistic message. Despite the protagonist's awareness of his attraction to 'ephebic lips' he teaches himself to reject the individualistic conceit of supposedly Western homosexuality. The protagonist's rejection of his own sexuality, in favour of collective acceptance from society, results in 'a cleavage... between spirit and flesh'. His suppression of both 'love' and 'desire' is shown to create for him a 'reluctant masquerade' of normality. Kochan forms part of a greater whole, playing his 'role faithfully' in his nation, despite the pain it may cause him. Thus, Mishima posits that despite the exotic pull of the West, one must retain hold of their 'icy cold sense of duty'. Mishima was a staunch and extreme Nationalist, committed to the Bushido values which idealised mythical Samurai

chivalry. This Post-War author is clearly trying to define Japanese Nationalist identity in direct opposition to Western values. He uses Occidentalism to elevate the reality of Japanese duty above the West's individualistic conceits. Furthermore, by showing the protagonists disillusionment with this foreign fantasy, Mishima reflects the dilemmas of Japanese post-war society. This society was struggling to find its own National identity in the shadows of defeat and its prior celebration and adoption of Western technology and culture in the Meiji restoration. Particularly, many authors aimed to define *nihonjinron* (Japanese cultural uniqueness) in direct and stark opposition to the American occupation of the time. The occupation precipitated the erosion of Japan's imperial legacy, forcing the emperor to denounce his divine right to the throne. American popularisation of baseball in schools was designed to replace more traditional Japanese martial

### This desecration of the Christian sacred is intentional

the protagonist Kochan as trembling 'with some pagan joy' upon seeing the image, further subverting any religious significance. This desecration of the Christian sacred is

intentional as Mishima removes the image from its original context thus exoticizing it. Cultural references to 'praetorian' guards further emphasise the sheer distance between the ancient Rome of the painting and the novel's setting of imperial Japan. Readers are encouraged to focus on how divorced this fantasy of the saint is from the young boy's reality. By linking his sexual orientation to foreign concepts, the author shows how the boy's desires make him an outsider in Japanese society. He then takes this further, forming a monolithic image of the West as more open to homosexuality. Mishima inexorably links the protagonist's stigmatized sexuality to Western values, with constant reference to the studies of German sexologist 'Hirschfeld', the works of 'Oscar Wilde' and 'Proust', all of whom were homosexual. The West is framed as the origin or impetus for the protagonist's sexuality. Thus, it is ostensibly used by the author in a similar manner to

Face, (2017), by Takahiro Kimura



arts, linked closely to the pre-war regime. Thus, Mishima's brand of Occidentalism reveals itself to be about defining one's country in opposition to Western values, in a time when global political events had forced the East and West closer together. We can see then the difference between Occidentalism and Orientalism. Orientalism, when originally defined, was used to describe the inequalities of colonial relationships and how they were reinforced by literary representations. But Mishima's Occidentalism is much less about the repercussions of colonialism, instead focusing on creating a Nationalist ideal. *Confessions of a Mask* takes a binary approach to the East and the West divide, emphasising contrast. However Occidentalised images have been used by other authors to confront the complex, intertwined relationship between Japanese nationalism and the other.

As mentioned, Japan's relationship to the West is not as simple as an 'us and them' narrative. Over her history, Japan has intentionally taken a role in 'domesticating for the Japanese 'foreign things'' - reforming them and establishing them as closer to Japanese culture. This forms a strange paradox, where the line between the foreign and familiar is blurred.

Japanese Occidentalism- and references to the West can be seen as an extension of this adoption process. A key threshold through which foreign objects can be marked as Japanese is the *Depaato*, or Japanese department stores. These department stores 'have had the capacity to create consumer trends, fashion waves, even national traditions'<sup>8</sup> from exported goods. 'This process of recontextualization involves simultaneously making the exotic familiar, while keeping it exotic.'<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is no coincidence that authors have chosen to focus on such department stores, these liminal thresholds that are at once both exotic and mundane.

A clear example of an author contemplating the

<sup>7</sup> (Creighton, 1991)

<sup>8</sup> (Creighton, 1991)

<sup>9</sup> (Hendry, 2000)

### Mishima reflects the dilemmas of Japanese post-war society

the titular lemon and the department store Maruzen. Using these, he examines how the exotic and foreign can be turned into the mundane, reversing Occidentalism. Motojiro establishes the lemon as a foreign object, a source of individual freedom in the traditional manner of Occidentalism. Upon purchasing it, the protagonist is struck with 'an image of California, its likely origin'. The excitement of this exotic import seems to instantly and miraculously cure his downtrodden state. Motojiro describes this as such: 'when I filled my lungs with the fragrance, a warm wash of blood seemed to course through my body, awakening me to my own vitality'. Clearly, this foreign object is conflated with freedom, energy and 'vitality'. The 'blood' further emphasises the visceral power an object of such unknown origin holds, literally manipulating the protagonist's physical

difference between the foreign and its more domesticated counterparts within a department store setting is found in Kajii Motojiro's short story *Lemon*. Motojiro presents two key symbols in his short story,

form. It also brings with it a desire for individualism, with wanting to 'shout... from the rooftops' as a result of the intense joy this Californian produce brings. Thus, Motojiro links this Western import to impulsive desires, showing how it compromises the mundane order of its Japanese surroundings. What diverges from this Occidental approach is the lemon's contrast to the traditional, stifled department store establishment, also linked to foreign goods. Immediately, the 'musty air of Maruzen' characterises the shop environment as inactive and stagnant. Motojiro chooses to show these 'dull surroundings' as also linked to the foreign, with 'rows of perfume and tobacco' and 'art-books' leaving the protagonist 'cold'. In sharp contrast to the powerful physical impact of the lemon, these objects are passive and domesticated, being reduced to mere 'heavy tomes'. Rather than referring to the foreign goods sold there on similar exoticizing terms, even the 'gold-coloured collection of the work of Ingres' is shown to become mundane in this commercial setting, as it has been commodified. We can see clearly here a line defined by Motojiro between the truly foreign and that which has been appropriated and domesticated for consumption.

The short story culminates in these two versions of the foreign being placed in direct opposition to one another, thanks to the protagonist's individualistic impulse of leaving the lemon in the store.

As the lemon is placed, it is described as possessing 'a strange tension' at odds with the 'shelves of Maruzen'. In a powerful use of imagery, the author compares it to a 'glittering golden bomb'. The lemon is thus established as a force capable of destroying the commercialised landscape of the department store, challenging the repressive order with its individualistic existence. It is no coincidence that when the protagonist considers his rebellious 'idea', in Motojiro's original Japanese he chooses to use the foreign loan word アイディア (aidia) rather than the Japanese word 考え(kangae)<sup>10</sup>. Thus, Motojiro uses lexical choice to further link the protagonist's impulsive actions to foreign Western values. He proves that the foreign-linked to freedom, cannot be dismantled by the stifling conformism of its domesticated counterpart. Motojiro's linking of the foreign to freedom seems ostensibly to fall in line with an 'us and them' approach to Occidentalism. However, the protagonists desire to adopt this outside freedom and disrupt the status quo shows the melding of Western individualism with Japanese collectivism as values- as well as fruit, began to be exported overseas in the 1930s. This dynamic proves that the line between the West and the East is not so clear cut in Japanese literature as in Western Orientalist works. It is not so much a case of us and them but instead a gradient between foreign and familiar which shifts and adjusts over time. In the Taisho era when Motojiro was writing, the foreign had been brought far closer than before thanks to an increased focus on modernity and cultural exchange.

<sup>10</sup> (Motojiro, n.d.)

Given this gradient, there must be a point where the line between the foreign and the Japanese becomes so blurred it is no longer visible. The foreign is free to exist in a Japanese domestic space without it being perceived as exotic or unusual. Western symbols are stripped of their otherness. This can be seen in the novella *Kitchen* by Banana Yoshimoto.

Its title in the original Japanese is the English loanword-キッチン(kichin). This may seem to echo Motojiro's prior usage. However, consistently throughout the novella, Yoshimoto draws no line between these foreign exports and the everyday domestic comforts of the protagonist, Mikage. Kitchens across the narrative, despite the word's foreign origin, are deeply tied to Mikage's inner personal life. After the death of her grandmother, Mikage moves into a friend's apartment. In describing her arrival, Yoshimoto uses the apartment kitchen to reveal character, simultaneously domesticating foreign objects. Particular attention is paid to a 'Silverstone frying pan and a delightful German-made vegetable peeler- a peeler to make even the laziest grandmother enjoy slip, slipping those skins off.' In this sentence- Yoshimoto is seen to recontextualise the foreign peeler, tying it back to a sense

of Japanese family life with the relatable image of the 'laziest grandmother'. She does so to reflect Mikage's inner longing for family and fulfilment after the death of her own grandmother. The kitchen is

characterised as a welcoming and safe space and crucially its domesticity is not undermined by the presence of imported goods. Thus, Yoshimoto rejects the separation of West and East typical of Occidentalism, instead presenting the foreign within familiar intimate settings with the aim of revealing the inner life of her protagonist.

The attitude Yoshimoto takes towards the foreign is consistent with the tone of the novella, where strange dreams connecting two characters, whilst 'utterly amazing' are not made to seem 'so out of the ordinary'. The slight surrealness of the 'gratin dishes' in a Japanese kitchen pales in comparison with the emotional turmoil of the protagonist. Yoshimoto centres the narrative on Mikage's intense emotional shifts due to grief, from 'the darkest despair to feeling wonderful'. This grief results in the liminal boundary between dreams and reality being crossed often, with character's dreams predicting minute details of their future such as 'wanting ramen'. The author balances seemingly incongruous concepts, making events appear 'at once a miracle and the most natural thing in the world'. Within this context, the West is not a subversive other but instead forms part of the surreal patchwork fabric of the story. Yoshimoto's use of ostensibly foreign products as linked to home comforts confirms this. She creates a world where one can be both 'wrapped in a blanket like Linus' and wear 'padded winter kimonos'. Yoshimoto erases pre-existing cultural boundaries within the novella, in order to reflect the lack of boundaries and the warm domesticity within the titular 'Kitchen', a space shown to bring emotionally vulnerable characters together.

In examining the place of the West in Japanese

literature, we are presented with alternate approaches from Mishima, Motojiro and Yoshimoto. Mishima chooses to present the Western as a stark, Occidentalised other in order to demonstrate his Nationalist vision. Motojiro examines the process of international exchange via the department store, a commercial domesticator of the foreign. Yoshimoto forms a hybrid of the West and East, reinforcing the surreal tone of her novella and emphasising domesticity over national identity. The relationship between the familiar and the foreign is clearly an aspect of Japanese literature that can be creatively manipulated. We must remember however, that it is not a simple case of the foreign becoming more familiar over time. In chronological terms, Mishima's *Confessions of a Mask* was written in the post-war era whilst *Lemon* was written prior in the 1920s. Yet Motojiro's work melds the Western and the Japanese, whilst Mishima others the foreign. The Foreign/Familiar gradient is clearly influenced by literary attempts to mediate social and political upheaval- as well as the author's own ideology, rather than the simple passage of time.

More crucially, we must note the focus on the inner self in all three of these works. These representations of Occidentalism attempt to reflect on, and at times overcome, the relationship between the self and the other. Mishima, Motojiro and Yoshimoto's works are all indebted to the Japanese literary genre of *shi-shosetsu* (novels of the self). This early 20th century genre seeks to present the emotional and personal thoughts of a character on the page, reflecting their reality. This is prioritised over story structure or secondary characters, who instead become symbolic representations of the protagonist's own struggles. Thus, the greatest concern of this literature is the individual, and capturing their spiritual condition. Even ostensibly monumental ideas of the West and the East become macrocosms of personal conflict. Rather than individuals being used as symbols for Eastern or Western values, the foreign is instead used to shed light on the inner conflicts and dilemmas of the characters. Japanese Occidentalism ultimately forms part of a literary tradition by using images of the other to express difficult negotiations of the self and society.

Japanese literature, then, diverges from Said's interpretation of Orientalism and Occidentalism. When he coined the term Orientalism, Said analysed literary depictions of the Eastern as microcosms of colonial inequality. Fictional characters such as the 'Oriental women'<sup>11</sup> stood in for entire countries and cultures, perpetuating false and disparaging ideas about their inhabitants. Yet the Japanese literary approach seems to form an exact inverse of this dehumanising process. Western symbols stand in for the inner conflicts of characters, encouraging the reader to more deeply analyse their psyche. In examining these Japanese works, we can find an alternate literary approach to the other. In this modern literary canon, the West functions beyond a reductionist, Occidentalised fantasy. The foreign is instead humanised to add greater depth to familiar, intimate dilemmas.

<sup>11</sup> (Said, 1980)

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# Was Stalingrad the Turning Point of World War Two?

**Samvit Nagpal** analyses the importance of the famous battle within the context of the war.

The Battle of Stalingrad was not a battle in the traditional sense, as it was a protracted sub-conflict in its own right. There were no grand maneuvers, no immortal last stands, no sweeping strokes of military brilliance. It was a long and brutal slog for control of a city whose strategic value was limited, but whose symbolic significance grew to represent the struggle between the two great authoritarian leaders of the war. Some have claimed that Stalingrad, being the first major defeat

suffered by Germany in the war, marked a turning point. However, even the meaning of a 'turning point' appears somewhat vague. In the sense of the point beyond which Germany could no longer win the war, much points to the attack at Pearl Harbor in 1941. In the sense of this was the point after which the Allies were the ones with the initiative, then the battle of Kursk in 1943 marked this form of turning point better than Stalingrad. These will each be considered in turn.

The Wehrmacht were exhausted, demoralized, and simply incapable of launching further attacks

One might argue that Stalingrad was the point beyond which Germany could no longer win the war. After all, Operation Uranus (the massive Soviet encirclement of the city that trapped General Paulus and 90,000 Wehrmacht soldiers inside the *Kessel*, or cauldron, of Stalingrad), took almost 100,000 soldiers out of the equation, as well as a talented German general. Not just that, but the battle for Stalingrad had been a long, attritional struggle. The Wehrmacht had suffered many more casualties even before Uranus, and the futile battle had cost a lot of men, resources and aircraft. After this defeat, one might argue that the back of the German army in Russia had

been broken, and there was no longer anything at all to stop the Red Army from rolling all the way to Berlin. One might also point to the fact that German morale, both in Russia and at home, was shattered. The soldiers in Russia, having seen their comrades fall around them for two years, having nearly frozen to death due to lack of proper winter uniforms, having conquered seemingly

The 'Barmaley' Fountain depicts six children dancing round a crocodile. The original statue survived the war, but was damaged. A replica was installed in the 1950s. It stands in front of the Gergardt Mill, which has been preserved in its damaged form as a reminder of the intensity of the Battle of Stalingrad.



endless swathes of hostile territory and still facing wave after wave of Russian men and matériel, were low on morale at this point. Being constantly reminded that they were fighting Slavs, supposed to be inferior to them and yet constantly harassing them and inflicting casualties, and fighting on with a doggedness and resistance to hardship almost unrivalled amongst the soldiers of the war, certainly did not help. Up to Stalingrad, at least, the myth of German invincibility remained intact. The *Panzergruppen* (tank divisions) had overrun most of western Russia, and Germany had not yet lost a land battle. After Stalingrad, though, even this crutch was lost, and German morale, like their army, crumbled, to the point where victory was no longer feasible.

On the second type of turning point, one might say that after defeat at Stalingrad, the vast offensive of Barbarossa simply ran out of steam. The Wehrmacht were exhausted, demoralized, and simply incapable of launching further attacks on an enemy that simply refused to surrender. With so many men tied up in the East, Hitler was permanently short of men for operations on Western fronts, and in fact German armies in North Africa, and

later Italy, were always fighting against a significantly numerically superior enemy. One might therefore also make the case that after Stalingrad, the initiative was in the hands of the Allies.

However, the point at which the war became unwinnable came earlier – December 1941, Pearl Harbor.

In a later section, I will explain why I feel that even after Stalingrad, the Wehrmacht remained a formidable fighting force, and it was only after the battle of Kursk that the initiative passed to the Allies. After Pearl Harbor,

Germany also declared war on the USA. At this point, the war became unwinnable for the Axis. An invasion of America was simply impossible to achieve. The Atlantic Ocean was already far too wide and treacherous for an armada to cross all the way to the United States and land an army. Added to this were British dominance of the seas around Germany, and the enormous might of the United States Navy, which the Kriegsmarine simply could not hope to match in battle. And even if it could, shipping at least a million men across the Atlantic under heavy air fire the whole way, attempting to land them on American soil (witness how difficult the D-Day landings

### Once America entered, it became impossible for Germany to win the war fully

### The battle of Kursk fulfils these criteria better than Stalingrad

were, when troops ‘merely’ had to cross the Channel), and then conquer a country of over 10 million square kilometres, while unable to resupply troops or vehicles across the ocean, was utterly out of the realm of possibility. This meant Germany would never be able to bring the Allies to their knees, but would have to attempt to bleed America dry before they themselves ran out of resources, an endeavour that was doomed to fail. Finally, and most crucially, fighting the USA meant Germany was fighting the world’s greatest industrial powers simultaneously. With an economy ravaged by wartime, and simply numerically far less of everything, especially with the British blockades, there was no way Germany could ever match the industrial might of America, and so it would always be lacking in men and resources, trying to fight a war of attrition against a power with far more capability to manufacture, which it could not hope to invade. Not only this, but as the Lend-Lease program rapidly showed, America’s industrial might meant that Germany’s allies were constantly being reinforced, and their losses replaced (American Willys trucks, for example, became almost ubiquitous within the Red Army), while the same simply did not apply to Germany. It seems unlikely that the moment America entered the war, Germany was defeated. As indeed it turned out, a long, bloody and difficult struggle still lay ahead. However once America entered, it became impossible

for Germany to win the war fully – the best they could hope for would be a stalemate. One might suggest Germany could have attempted to wipe out Russia and then try and bleed America sufficiently dry as it landed on the European shores to force it to make peace, but this is simply not feasible. As D-Day later proved, although the Allies would take casualties landing against heavy coastal defences, Germany simply did not have enough men or defences to hold out for long enough, to say nothing of the fact that if Stalin was still not willing to surrender after Hitler had overrun almost the entire Western reaches of his empire, the likelihood that he would make a separate peace was extremely low.

On the second type of turning point – initiative – the battle of Kursk fulfils these criteria better than Stalingrad. Though the Wehrmacht was weakened after Stalingrad, it was far from finished. Despite losing 90,000 men in the *Kessel*, and suffering other casualties, the majority of the four million strong force that had entered Russia at the start of Operation Barbarossa (the codename for the invasion) remained intact. Russian military tactics remained somewhat backward, though they were rapidly improving, as evidenced at Kursk. The Germans were still deeply entrenched in Russia, and making further inroads. Indeed, the very fact that they were able to launch an assault of such magnitude at Kursk is surely proof that the Wehrmacht were far from obliterated after Stalingrad, and their attempt to do so demonstrates a determination, however misguided, in the German HQ to push the Russians back and end Barbarossa once and for all. However, after Kursk, not Stalingrad, the Wehrmacht

(at least in the east) was well and truly broken. The Battle of Kursk was a prolonged firefight over many days that involved a massive German assault on heavily fortified Russian positions at Kursk. Although the Germans dealt more casualties than they took, it was a Pyrrhic ‘victory’, as they lost so many men in the process that their army was simply incapable of mounting proper resistance. Russian manpower enabled them to replace the catastrophic losses they had suffered so far, but the Germans could not. Much like Napoleon after Borodino, Kursk was not a victory in the traditional sense of a rout of the enemy for the Russians, but rather in the sense that it left the Germans (or the Grande Armée in Napoleon’s case) incapable of fighting on. After Kursk, the Russian push to Berlin was almost entirely seamless – though the Wehrmacht put up stubborn resistance, the Red Army marched inexorably towards Germany, and Germany was never able to regain the initiative. Coming after Stalingrad and Operation Torch (the Allied invasion of North Africa that slowly but surely pushed back the Afrika Korps under the command of the “Desert Fox”, Erwin Rommel, whose talents were so in demand that he was later withdrawn from Africa to attempt to stem the tide in Russia), Kursk was Hitler’s

last gamble in the East, a desperate attempt to crush the Russians once and for all so he could turn his attention to the problems in the West that were growing increasingly difficult to handle. When

it failed, the initiative fell to the Allies, and indeed, barring the failed, despairing throw of the dice that was the Ardennes Offensive, Germany did not have a major offensive for the rest of the war, but was instead pushed back on all fronts.

Thus, we cannot say Stalingrad was the turning point of the Second World War. It was unquestionably an extremely important and pivotal moment, but not, in my opinion, the most crucial turning point. In terms of when Germany could no longer win the war, once she declared war on the two greatest industrial powers of the age simultaneously, victory became impossible. Victory was far from immediate or easy for the Allies, yet in the long run, it became inevitable that Germany would simply run out of manpower and resources, and could not win this war. In terms of the moment the initiative changed hands, surely this occurred at the battle of Kursk. After Stalingrad, the mood in the Russian camp was not one of triumphant victory, but a sense of pleasant surprise that Operation Uranus had succeeded so well, and one that Russia was finally making a mark on this war and giving as good as it got, rather than retreating deep into its heartland, taking appalling, even embarrassing, casualties as it did so. Only after Kursk was there the realization that the ball was now in their court, and, if done correctly, the way to Berlin now lay open, albeit a long way away. Only after the losses at Kursk were the Wehrmacht rendered so weakened as to be incapable of mounting another major offensive, and reduced to having to fight as best they could a rearguard action. All this evidence, then, points away from Stalingrad being the turning point of the war.

Mamayev Kurgan is the dominant height overlooking the city of Stalingrad (now Volgograd). There are a number of memorials commemorating the Battle of Stalingrad. The giant statue, named The Motherland Calls, was the largest free-standing sculpture in the world when built in 1967. The figure measures 52m (and 85m to the tip of the sword).





Painting: Cornelia Parker 'Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View' (1991)

## The Shed

I search the drawers; lift the scratchy scarf.  
 Look beneath it, only to find a soapy lip balm  
 and two shillings  
 spilling from an unzipped wallet.  
 I dip my hand in my pockets and find

They're silver and cold,

my keys.

like daggers.

I've never had a house of my own.  
 I've always wanted to have one with  
 a large bedroom, and a kitchen with a stove and a rice cooker,  
 and a living room with a proper Samsung TV and PlayStation set, and three  
 plugs in the wall where I could charge my phone, my earphones and my laptop.

I've also wanted a shed,  
 a place where I could store  
 my tools.

I'd have five kinds of scissors in the shed, and I'd use them every day.  
 I'd cut the stems of flowers and think of her picture  
 hanging on his bedroom wall.  
 She'd stand there, half-naked, posing  
 as she unravels silky robes:  
*I need you to tend to my weeds.*

And I'm there. They're wet.  
 I rip them from the base,  
 press them to my neck,  
 and let the water drip,

drip,  
 drip,

down my shirt.

Her bicycle stands outside the shed.  
 It's old and cranky, and its wheels are coming

off.

I painted it egg-yolk. I touch it and touch it until  
 my hands are yellow, and I touch the walls and the tools inside the shed  
 and then I go into the house and touch her photographs, covering her face with  
 yellow.

I take the scissors from the shed and weigh them in my hands  
 They feel cool, and they remind me of him.

Apparently, if someone's been married  
 for five years,  
 you need to give them  
 silverware.

I give them scissors.

**Sofia Margania**

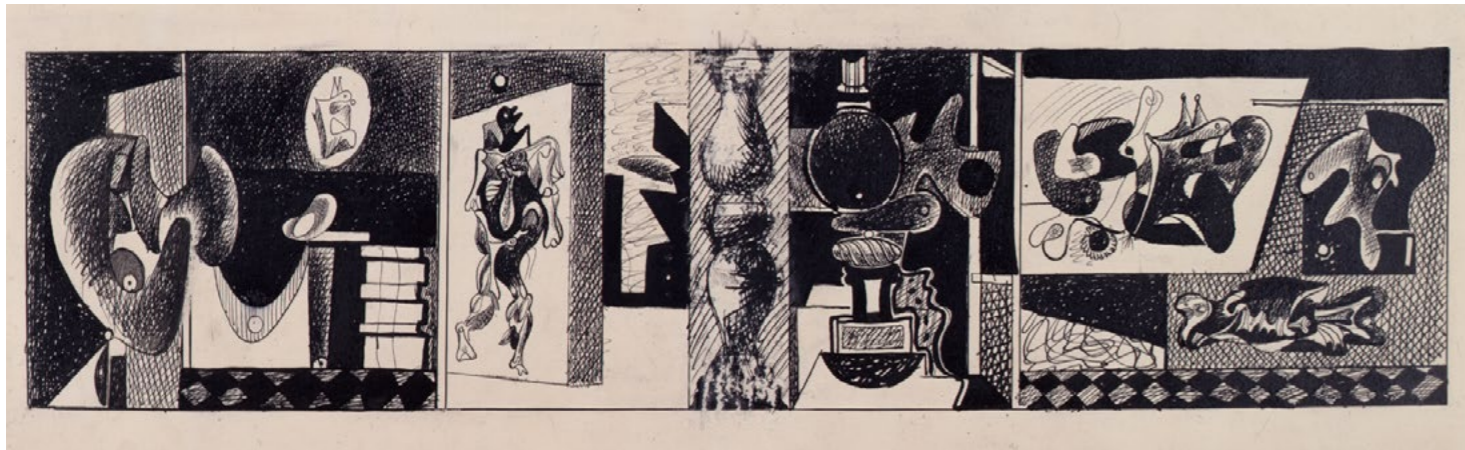


Fig 1. Gorky's study for the unexecuted Public Works of Art Project, 1931-32

# Arshile Gorky's *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia*

Cleopatra Coleman is proud to be a descendant of the Abstract Expressionist painter Arshile Gorky. She investigates his efforts, as an outsider, to navigate the European canon and the developing American art scene in an attempt to synchronise tradition and modernity. In this article, she rejects the tendency of some critics to cast Gorky as imitative or a *pasticheur*.

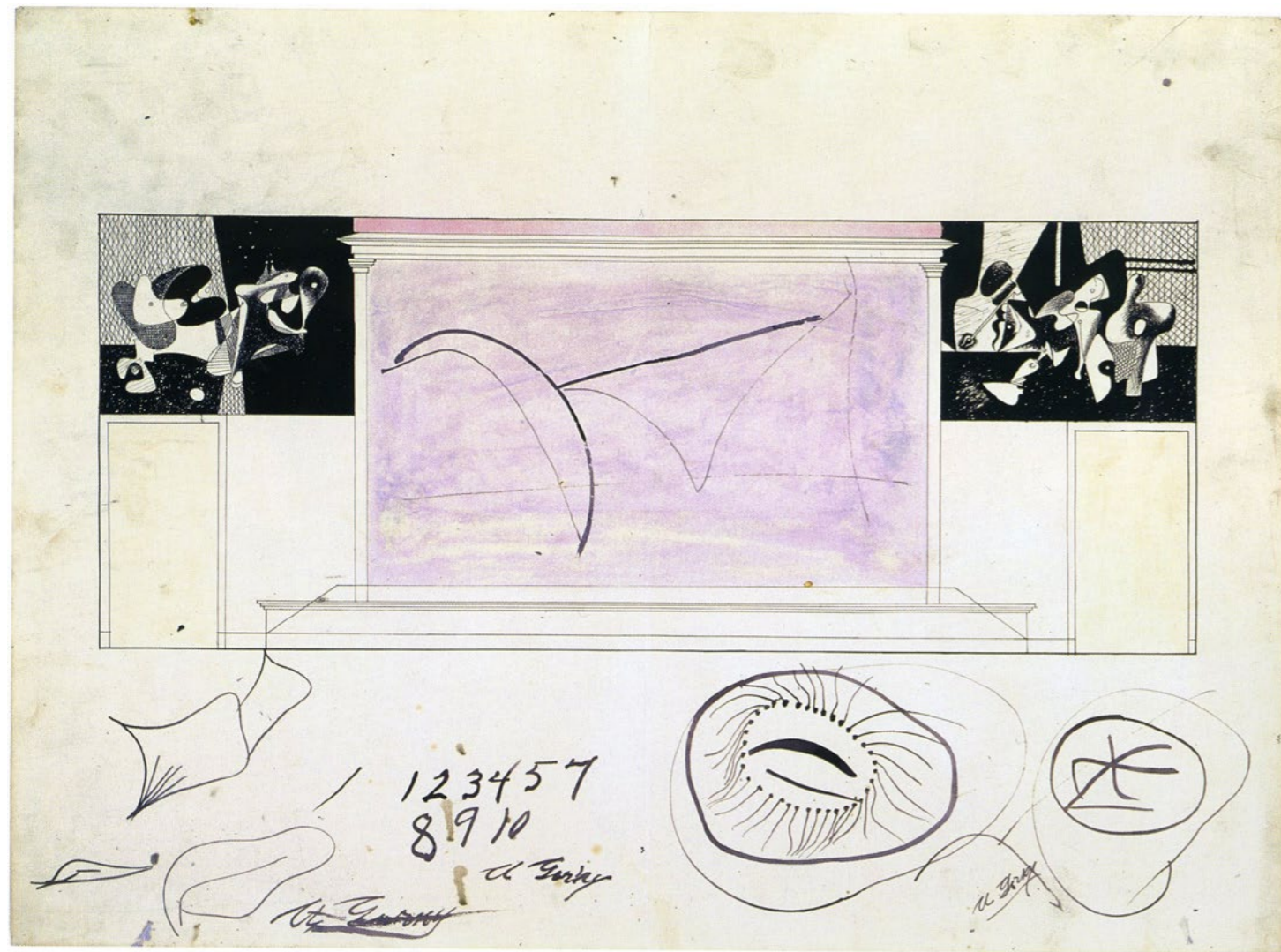


Fig 2. Study for Murals c. 1941-1942 (with later additions)

“How can I understand those men of another century, when I can't even understand the world today?” Gorky's question acknowledges that comprehending the past requires comprehension of the present, and that neither can be understood in isolation. *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* visualises this synergism through its rich associations with the classical imagery of older masters and modernist abstractions. Made up of more than sixty works executed between 1930 and 1935, mostly on paper in pen and ink or pencil, and two oils on canvas, the series was initially conceived as a mural scheme for a Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) which was never realised. It presents an exhaustive exploration of a set of recurrent motifs and ultimately signals Gorky's intention to place his own oeuvre within a tradition, stressing the continuity of inheritance and implication between generations of artists. The title, quoting three words from the titles of works by Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978), alludes to the contemporary popularisation of Surrealism in New York.

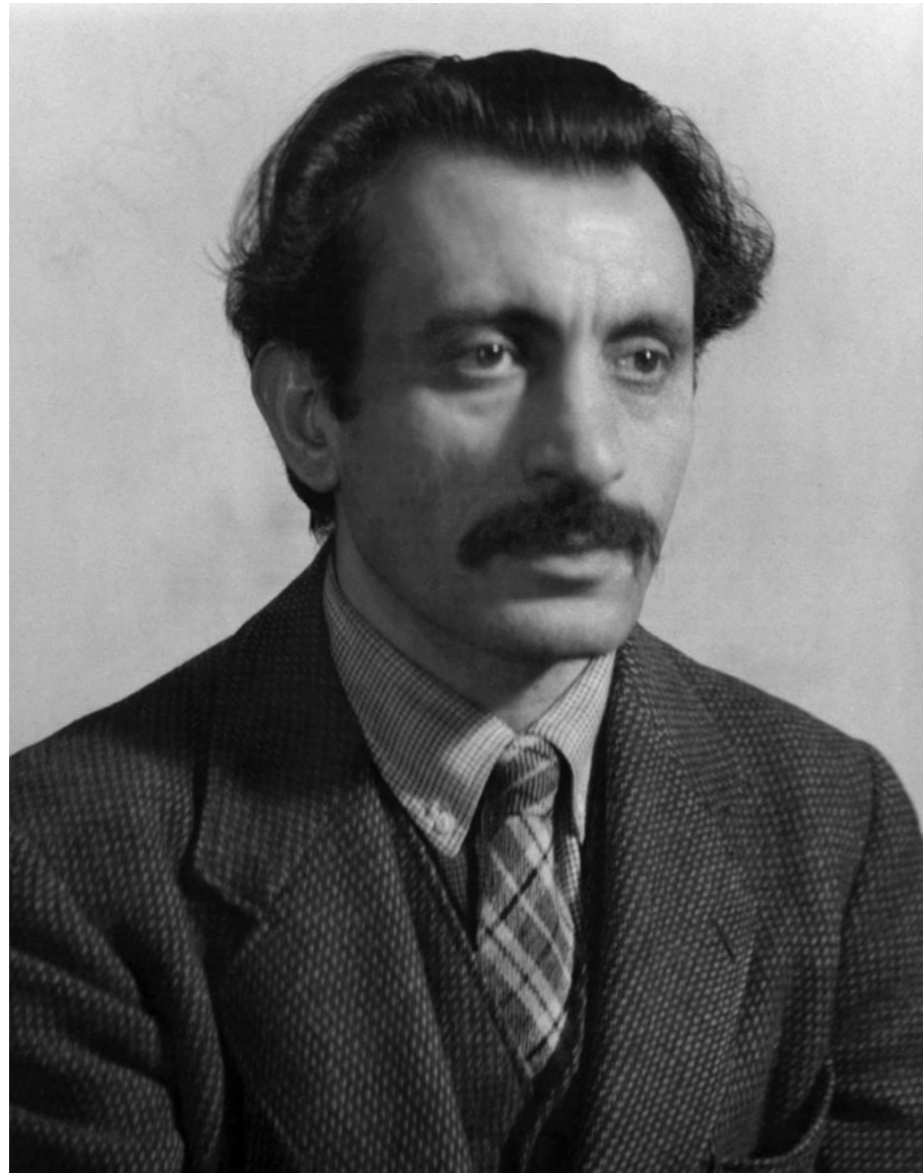
Born Vosdanig Adoian in 1902, an ethnic Armenian in the Ottoman province of Lake Van, Gorky witnessed the genocide of his people by Turkish Troops and the tragic early death of his mother from starvation before he was seventeen. Driven out of Van, he eventually emigrated to the United States with his sister in 1920. There he changed his name in honour of the Russian writer Maxim Gorky, breaking with familial and ethnic relations to invent a new life for himself in New York. Despite the feverish atmosphere of Depression-era New York, which

drew many of his contemporaries towards organised movements, Gorky rejected both artistic and political structures throughout his life. It has been argued that Gorky's rejection of hierarchical programmes may have derived from the trauma of his early circumstances, including his fierce desire for his art not to be impeded stylistically by adhering to particular modes of working. In his approach to training, Gorky was similarly resistant of formal authority, for example leaving one month after enrolment in the National Academy of Design. Even if autodidacticism between the two world wars arose mainly out of financial necessity, we can identify a link between Gorky's independence from artistic movements and the variety of his artistic sources cited and absorbed in *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia*.

Gorky's traditionalist belief that good painting was founded upon a consummate proficiency in drawing led him to unpack the style and techniques of forebears culled from a broad cross section of western art. Arguably the central figure in the pantheon of influences behind *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* was Paolo Uccello, whom Gorky upheld as being one of the most relevant artists to the modernism. Gorky felt Uccello, famed in the Renaissance for his attention to draughtsmanship, was important in 'bringing to us new aspects, new utility'.

Gorky's study for the PWAP (fig 1), a composition of three separate designs which formalised the beginning of the *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* series, shows an examination of Uccello's predella sequence, 'The Miracle of the Desecrated Host'. Gorky refers to its compositional structure: he retains the horizontal axis and adopts

## Gorky rejected both artistic and political structures throughout his life



Arshile Gorky, Photograph by Von Urban, New York 1936

the central balustrade dividing the narrative scenes in Uccello's sexpartite panel.

Gorky suggests the recession of space with the checkered pattern in the first and final third of his ink study, but goes no further in applying the rules of one-point linear perspective which Uccello utilises with deeply recessive orthogonals. Instead, Gorky prefers to combine flat and three-dimensional space, employing perspective in flexible terms. He understood Uccello's inquiry into perspective was instrumental in advancing the Early Renaissance's technical and artistic notions.

Thus, Gorky defines the balustrade's curve with energetic tonal modulation and angles the écorché figure toward the picture plane, while also layering flat abstract forms without corresponding shadows. The influence *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* which derives from Uccello

is selective, as opposed to imitative; Gorky recognizes that Uccello's obsessive pursuit of perspective, although to some extent so mathematical it compromises his painting's naturalism, lends itself to the modern artwork's investigation of space when unconstrained by perspectival precision.

Gorky's comments on his 'Subject Card' illuminate the interdependence at play between an old master and modernity in *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia*. Gorky promoted painting's pictorial autonomy, maintaining that 'mural painting should not become architecture' and that the moment this occurred the 'wall is lost and the painting loses its identity'. Indeed, the murals Gorky did paint at Newark Airport were on canvas. This stance was in line with French cubist painters who argued that painting was distinguishable from decoration so long as it had a

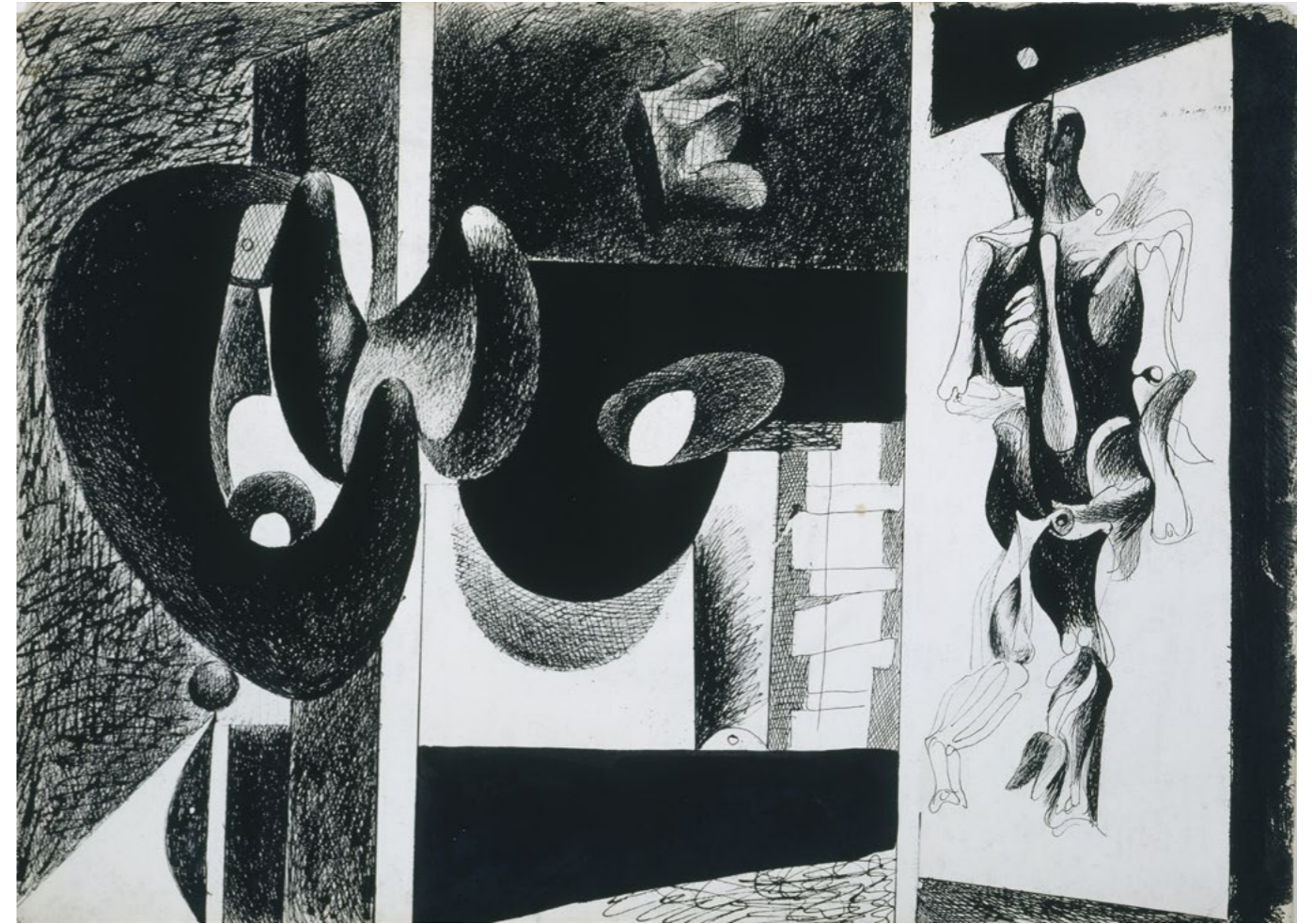


Fig 3 *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* c. 1931-32

self-contained *raison d'être* and rebuffed the devaluing of a mural as a decorative adjunct. As such, Gorky's importation of Uccello's presence in *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia*, is replenished by interest in

Cubism and highlights the modernist reconstruction of reality's obligation to Uccello's mathematical endeavours. Contemporary twentieth century ideas cannot be severed from the Renaissance's establishment of perspective thus modernist aesthetics owed its technical flexibility to an older era. *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* testifies to Gorky's active efforts at expressing this symbiosis and his transgression of a singular, linear engagement with the history of art.

**'mural painting should not become architecture'**

Gorky's adoption and refashioning of his artistic influences was notable at the time for its resistance to modernist dogma of autogenesis, which he reserved for his biography. However, as Petherbridge observes, Gorky's engagement with Pablo Picasso continued 'a long-established custom whereby artists would solicit a drawing from a famous figure to complete, usually in another medium'.

Gorky's refraction of his interlocutor's sources is most evident in the écorché drawings of *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* (fig 4), a motif Picasso's 'Crucifixion' derived from a 17th century drawing by Amé Bourdon. Gorky's rendition of the mutilated figure simultaneously



Fig 4 Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia c. 1931-32

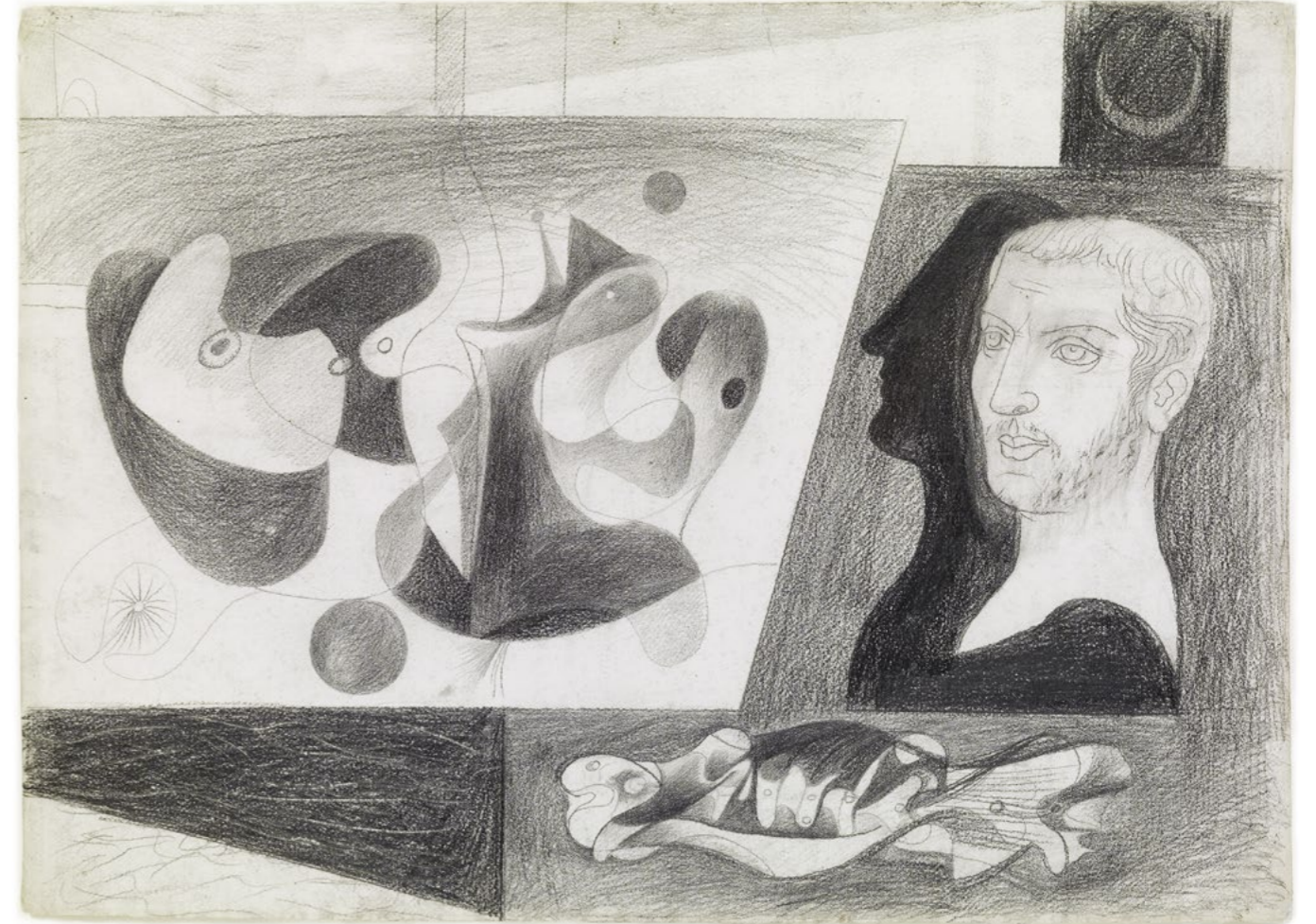


Fig 5 Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia c. 1931-32

conveys agony and passion and reiterates his study of musculature which absorbed him in the early 1930s (fig 4). While intended to be scientific, Bourdon's drawing transmits a poetic image of the human form, much in line with Gorky's idea of 'the modern miracle... the marvel of making the common – the uncommon'. Simultaneous to his revisiting Bourdon, Gorky emulates the elasticity of Picasso's treatment of oil by leaving some parts of the composition transparent while labouring over others with dense mark-making. In some areas Gorky applied ink with a paint brush, furthering the relationship between the act of drawing and

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**'the modern miracle...  
the marvel of making the  
common – the uncommon'**

---

the act of painting. A number of art historians have identified the descent of Gorky's series from the work of De Chirico, hailed as a precursor of the Surrealists. The earliest drawing among 'Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia' (fig 5) adopts the compartmentalised composition of 'The Fatal Temple', as well as the figurative motifs of the fish and the bust, and the theme of 'énigma' (calligraphed above the flayed fish in 'The Fatal Temple'). By openly echoing other De Chirico's titles, 'The Nostalgia of the Infinite' and 'The Enigma of Fatality', Gorky simultaneously admits the citation of his exemplum, while also wishing to obscure it in riddle.

Gorky's drawing methods, though flexible, were ultimately meticulous

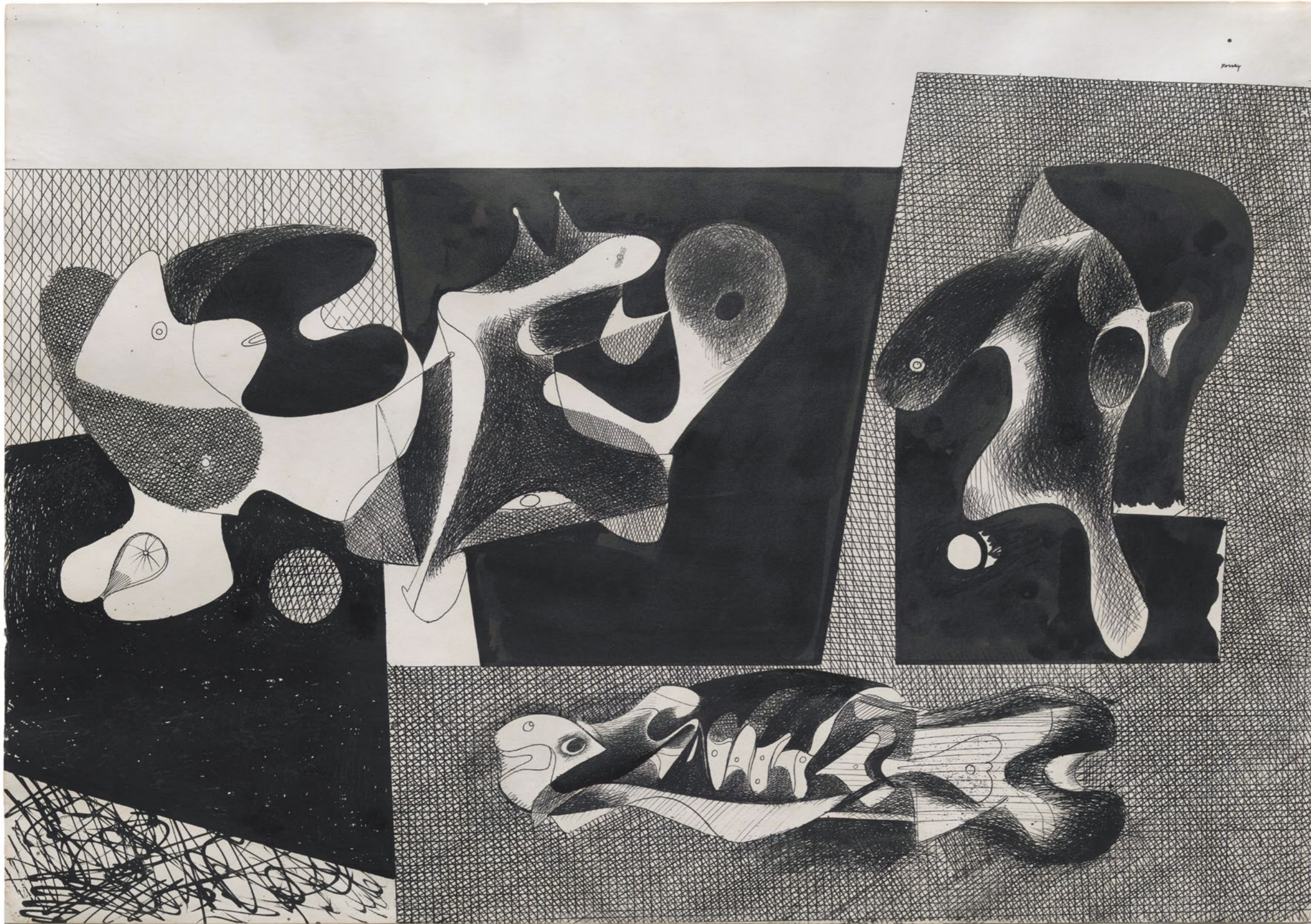


Fig 6 Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia c. 1931-32

'The genius of Asia celebrates his marriage to the spirit of Europe'

This paradox embodies Gorky's relationship with the environment of the New York art scene; highlighting his resistance to categorisation by playfully alluding to the forefathers of a certain movement, here Surrealism.

This surrealist association and the movement's enquiry into consciousness and subconsciousness offers a lens through which to consider how far Gorky intentionally evokes his private interlocutors. Arguably, *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* adheres to Surrealist ideals in its 'absence of any control exercised by reason'. For instance, the meandering configuration of cursive lines pithing the trapezoid recalls automatist technique. Gorky's drawing methods, though flexible, were ultimately meticulous and thus undercut the violence of automatism. He drew light pencil lines to guide even the seemingly most impulsive of serpentine lines; the vigilance of his cross-hatching and the replication of a motif over numerous studies further challenges 'psychic automatism in its pure state'. Similarly, Gorky's invocation of his interlocutors in *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia*, though neither forced nor strained, does not preclude the 'aesthetic or moral concern'. As Gilles Deleuze writes, 'the painter has many things in his head, or around him, or in his studio,' and in Gorky's case, his absorption of artistic influences was not random or incidental, but specific and curated.

The contemporary reception of *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* was frequently positive. The majority of criticism struggled with the persistent difficulty to place Gorky within a received narrative. Sceptical of formal groups, he preferred consciously to place himself in the category of the exceptional, and the other, often the European. This ambivalence illustrated the price of difference which arose from Gorky's émigré status and his stylistic break from Cubist and Surrealist dogma during a period in American art still often considered 'aesthetically provincial and isolationist'. As a result, while he was included in the seminal MoMA traveling show "The New American Painting" of 1958 (a full decade after his death), he also endured the excoriation of critics devoted to American Art first, and of those seeking a decisive break with European art later.

Gorky's adaptation of his artistic influences was nevertheless disputed and admired during his lifetime. Harold Rosenberg, one of his contemporaries, reverently wrote that the 'local colour' of his paintings derived 'from beginning to end, strictly from Gorky's aesthetic experience'. Rosenberg justly recognized that Gorky never veiled his interest in others' art. Nonetheless, the 'imitative intentions' he described threaten to dismiss the complexity of Gorky's 'allusions'. Rosenberg overlooked that while to 'parody' a style involves mastering it before upending it, and thus is a fully conscious exercise, Gorky's practice was more innate. Quick to incorporate the effects of his apprenticeships into his own visual practice, Gorky

## Gorky's style departed from classical and traditional forms



Fig 7 Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia' c. 1931-32

acquired his 'aesthetic experience' with full autonomy as well as spontaneity. The argument that Gorky was derivative, continued by Clement Greenberg who wrote of Gorky's 'trouble [to free] himself from influences and asserting his own personality', misinterpreted his efforts to identify his own position in the European and American art-historical framework, when he was unable to "belong" to either continent. The unsigned feature in the catalogue accompanying the 1934 exhibition of selected drawings from *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* at The Mellon Galleries reads, 'Gorky, spirit of Europe in body of the Caucasus, getting the feel of American soil... The genius of Asia celebrates his marriage to the spirit of Europe'. It marks out the contentious topic of Gorky's lenience to European influence, which drew both cynicism and celebration.

The question of belonging in Gorky's art remains a live issue. In the vacuum of scholarly enquiry post Rosenberg, and encouraged by a cache of fraudulent letters to Gorky's sister penned in fact by her Armenian nationalist son, Karlen Mooradian, Arshile Gorky became a symbol of the Armenian genocide, to the point that since the 1990s efforts continue by the Armenian Republic to "recover" his bones for "repatriation" from their grave in Connecticut. The list of artists contemporary and subsequent to Gorky who chose to "be with" him as he was "with" Uccello, Cezanne, Picasso, de Chirico and others, continues to grow, spanning from painters including Willem de Kooning (1904 - 1997), Cy Twombly (1928 - 2011) to Helen Frankenthaler (1928 - 2011), Eva Hesse (1936 - 1970) and Jack Whitten (1939 - 2018). When Whitten, who as an African American had moved from the South to be an artist in

New York, was moved to tears before Gorky's paintings, Spender argues he recognized 'in Gorky's fluent line... an artist's experience of loss and rejection "in his own land"... in Anatolia but also to some extent their shared experience as Americans in the United States'. While the Armenian republican cause and the 21st century artist's selection of Gorky as their tutor are contrasting reactions to his artwork and biography, they share the intention of establishing an identity, be it national or artistic, just as *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* pursues a private ideology formed from his curated surroundings.

*Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* is rich with the visual translation of knowledge from contemporary and past culture, a dichotomy Gorky did not necessarily distinguish. Studying Gorky's response to these stimuli reveals his process of laboriously investigating a subject, in part by approaching it through other artist's creations in order to ascertain his own vision. While this thematic reiteration may have posed the danger of falsifying what was natural or spontaneous, and be considered derivative, it is by this very process that *Nighttime, Enigma and Nostalgia* overcomes its own strictures and emerges as a concentrated yet multivalent artistic expression.

The series' engagement with Gorky's 'private interlocutors', specifically Uccello, Picasso, and de Chirico, surpasses what Renaissance scholars first identified as 'translatio, imitatio, aemulatio', and enters the 'competitive and eristic mode' that Petherbridge recognises as mastery. Through his use of a long-established modus operandi, Gorky's style departed from classical and traditional forms, while still retaining an open allusion to them, thus exposing the sensitivity of his approach and the subtlety of his derivations. While this series actively encourages comparison to its selected influences, and therefore invites the question of derivation, such comparison would be reductive if it did not acknowledge the innovation with which Gorky utilised these exempla and the intricacy of their affiliation.

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# J'ai Perdu Mon Corps

**Nandana Mahtani** reviews the French animated film which traces the emancipation of a young man from the misery dealt by fate.

*J'ai Perdu Mon Corps* begins with the buzz of a fly, and a severed hand lying in a pool of blood. The film takes us on a journey to find the cause of this dismemberment, of which the surprising protagonist, as the title would indicate, is the severed hand itself. The writers, Jeremy Clapin and Guillaume Laurant (author of the source novel, *Happy Hand*, from which the film has been adapted), depict the hand coming to life in a Parisian medical lab, and escaping to find and reunite with its body. The story drifts back to black and white images, the hand's memories of a former life, when it was still part of a body - grains of sand draining between fingers, the grip on bicycle handlebars, playing the piano, spinning a globe to contemplate the whole wide world. Eventually, these flashbacks bloom into a larger backstory. The hand's former owner is Naoufel, a young Moroccan immigrant in Paris, whose happy childhood was cut short by, we learn, the death of his parents, and in parallel, the story of his falling in love with Gabrielle, after speaking to her over an intercom, unfolds.

At its core, *J'ai Perdu Mon Corps* is a film about the human longing to become whole.

While a severed hand escapes from the refrigerator of a medical school and makes a daunting journey scuttling through Paris in an attempt to reunite with its body and former self; Naoufel, whose story unfolds simultaneously, tries to fill the void left in his life by the death of his parents by trying to get closer to Gabrielle, with whom he feels a certain affinity. Jeremy Clapin and Guillaume Laurant artfully weave the two different strands of the story together such that they complement and inform one another, eventually coming together to form one whole. Thus, strikingly, the framework of the narrative is reflective of the quest to become whole that it depicts, particularly since the audience also attempts to join the dots and piece together the elements of the two storylines in order to work out how and why the hand lost its body.

The filmmakers' greatest triumph lies in particular in the Hand's tale, as it navigates the predatory world of Paris' streets, subways and rooftops. The concept of the disembodied hand remains emblematic of the genre of fantastical horror, as seen in *Les Mains D'Orlac* by Maurice Renard, *The Beast with Five Fingers* by Robert Florey, and famously, *The Addams Family* by Chas Addams. However, Jeremy Clapin's Hand is not a sinister or frightening creature. Rather, the Hand is characterised as though it were an animal, learning how to move and survive, but instilled with human traits, such as memories and emotions of its own, as a result of which the audience is, remarkably, both able to empathise with it and invested in its survival. Indeed, characterising the Hand in this way strikes the right tone between the fantastical surrealism of the scenario and the more tragic, human parts of the story.

The rhythm of the narrative fluctuates between horrifying, frenzied, visceral sequences, such as the

Hand's accidental strangulation of a mother pigeon trying to protect her eggs, or an attack by a set of vicious rats in the depths of the metro, and moments of a quieter emotional tenderness, such as when the Hand grips the little fingers of a baby (who does not see the incongruity of a hand without a body). This moment is a touching illustration of the Hand's loneliness - paralleled in its owner, Naoufel. The tiny consistent mole on his hand is a constant link between the detached Hand and him. The trajectories of the two mirror one another, with the naturalistic cruelty of the predatory urban jungle the Hand navigates, reflected in the harsh realities of Naoufel's life. We see him go from being a hopeful child who harbours dreams of becoming both an astronaut and a pianist, to a disillusioned and aimless young man, as far removed from his dreams as could be, living with an indifferent uncle who mutes the volume on his television only so he can hear the clatter of Naoufel's rent money falling into the tin. It is interesting that after the scene where Gabrielle rejects Naoufel, having found out that he lied to her about who he was in order to get close to her, we cut to a scene where the Hand imagines an astronaut on a highway - a figment representative of Naoufel's dreams, and the idealistic, whole, young version of himself.

The Hand is necessarily silent, unlike in *Happy Hand*, the novel from which the film was adapted, in which the Hand is given a narrative voice. However, Clapin manages to convey huge amounts of emotional information through the simple movement of fingers, creating a tactile vocabulary of senses 'eloquently expressed through gesture and mime.'<sup>1</sup> The sound design reinforces the hand's point of view, enhancing and exaggerating everything that comes close - be it the thunderous roar of traffic, the shrieks of rats or the scuttling of ants.

The story depicts life through a prism of tiny sensations, as the sensuous has a crucial role to play - not only the sense of touch, but also the intricate use of sound, with the young Naoufel capturing the sounds of his childhood in Morocco on a tape-recorder; the rush of air outside a car, the sound of his mother playing the cello and the piano, his parents' laughter - and the accidental recording of the car accident that killed them. These moments captured by sound come to be symbols of his lost childhood and his longing to fill the vacuum in his life left by his parents. Notably, it is the disembodied voice of Gabrielle that Naoufel falls in love with, tying in with both themes of sound and dismemberment.

Guillaume Laurant takes inspiration from the magical realism of author Marcel Aymé, in terms of his approach to introducing fantastical elements (a severed hand trying to locate its body) to a harshly realistic setting (a grey and indifferent Paris), much like Aymé does in *Le Passe-*

*Muraille*, with a man who has the ability to walk through walls set in the context of Nazi-occupied France. The fantastical elements of both works do not hinder their realism; rather, as Jeremy Clapin says, 'You have to be outside reality to look at reality.'<sup>2</sup> Indeed, stepping outside reality allows us to observe reality from a different angle, allowing for the exploration of themes such as memory, loss, longing and dismemberment, both physical, emotional and temporal.

Most of all, destiny is integral to the storyline - the story of Naoufel and his liberation from the unkind life accorded him by destiny. The film begins with the buzzing of a fly, and a pool of dark red blood spreading across the screen, before cutting to a black and white flashback of Naoufel's childhood, with the buzzing of the fly serving as the transitional link. The first words in the film are a young Naoufel asking, 'Baba? Comment on fait pour attraper une mouche?' To which his father replies, 'Faut viser à coté. Si tu vises là où elle est, le temps d'y arriver, elle y sera plus. Faut viser là où elle s'y attend pas. Pas là où elle est, mais là où elle sera.'

The fly is present in almost every scene of the film, and certainly at every critical juncture; the car crash that killed Naoufel's parents; before Naoufel meets Gabrielle; in the workshop where Naoufel's hand is severed. The fly is a symbol of destiny, and Naoufel's father's anecdote about aiming to the side in order to catch the fly, later develops into a metaphor for Naoufel freeing himself from the clutches of destiny. This is exemplified when Naoufel and Gabrielle discuss their belief in fate atop

a roof, looking out at a skyline where a crane juts out, pondering whether or not we truly have the power to change anything in our lives, or to write our own destiny. Naoufel asserts that, "On croit qu'on peut, mais non - à moins de faire un truc complètement imprévisible et irrationnel. C'est le seul moyen de conjurer le sort, pour de bon. Comme... Là, tu marches tranquille... tu fais semblant d'aller là, tu fais une petite feinte, comme un dribble, un écart - et hop! Tu sautes sur la grue."

This analogy directly echoes that made by Naoufel's father, when he claims, 'Faut viser là où elle s'y attend pas,' to catch a fly. Naoufel then links this idea back to himself and his quest to get closer to Gabrielle, as he goes on, 'Un truc improvisé, que tu devrais pas faire, que t'aurais pas dû faire mais... mais que t'as bien fait de faire parce qu'au final ça t'a amené ailleurs... Et tu regrettes pas.' Unbeknownst to her, he is referencing the fact that he is lying to her about who he is, to provide a pretext for him to



Leonardo da Vinci, studio di mani

become a part of her life.

When, the Hand finally finds Naoufel's body again, as he lies with his bandaged and amputated arm outstretched, the Hand comes and rests gently in the place where it ought to have been, forming a whole once again. As Naoufel sleeps there, he dreams of when he was whole - we are transported to a flashback of Naoufel's childhood, with his parents laughing and playing music, and it dawns on the viewer that this, in fact, is the missing piece.

*J'ai Perdu Mon Corps* is a stirring meditation on the loss of childhood, the quest for one's own identity, and the dissolution of dreams. Guillaume Laurant illustrates this notion aptly when he describes how, 'Somehow, childhood is something that is still within all of us. We long for it, and we need to find a way to overcome it, realising that it is no longer with us. Just like people who've had a limb cut off often feel that they can still move their fingers, all of us can still feel that childhood is with us.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guardian review <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/nov/24/i-lost-my-body-review-french-animation-jeremy-clapin-severed-hand>

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Clapin Interview <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZO8WEEemiyk&t=1286s>

<sup>3</sup> Guillaume Laurant Interview <https://deadline.com/2019/12/i-lost-my-body-screenwriter-guillaume-laurant-jeremy-clapin-netflix-interview-news-1202812843/>

# Postman: Amusing Ourselves to Death

**Hamish Kennedy** analyses the arguments about the effects of new technologies on public discourse. In particular, how television has changed the relationship between words and reality and how language has lost ground to the image. But it is not all bad!

So wrote Neil Postman in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* on the influence of television in 20th century society and one of the most prophetic yet largely unappreciated visions detailing why, when and in what form the reckoning of the West might come. The axis around which Postman's argument revolves is simple: contrary to popular belief, George Orwell and Aldous Huxley, in their respective dystopias, did not prophesise the same thing. Postman takes issue with society's categorisation of the two books, asserting that both have been erroneously treated, for all intents and purposes, as the same: two sides of a coin depicting totalitarianism run wild and personal liberty curbed. And, for those of 'the West' in the first half of the 20th century fearing the authoritarian creep of anything that wasn't a liberal democracy, that metaphor was good enough. Not, however, for Postman. He was not one of those looking fearfully at the fringes of society expecting to see the next *Mein Kampf* appear as a sure sign that America's stint under dictatorship was yet to come. Instead, given the West's status as a 'free society', Postman believed such change, in America at least, would be more imperceptible, though no less insidious. He tackled the question of the West's possible collapse into dystopia by analysing how language, the media it travels in and the content of the information that is transported by it, has changed as it reflects shifts in society over time. What he found, and what he predicted based on his findings, is too complex to do justice to here. In a small article. This article will make the case for this book's excellence based solely on Postman's comparison between the way in which cultures present and transfer information, and the way in which the authoritarian regimes control their population.

One of the key principles introduced is the concept that the medium through which we communicate has a profound influence on how we communicate, and, indeed, what we define as true and false. An oral culture, such as was found in the earliest days of human civilisation, does not prioritise a 'truth' that can be easily verified and reproduced. Truth, falsehood and everything in between, is relayed in a way specific to the one communicating it. King Solomon epitomises this best: it is not the veracity of the information that counts as much as where that information fits in the broader spectrum of an individual's knowledge. In a similar vein is Walter Ong's description of a legal system, originating in West Africa, whose chief practitioners, when faced with a dispute, had to search through a "vast repertoire of proverbs and sayings to find one that suits the situation

and is equally satisfying to both complainants."<sup>1</sup> It is no surprise therefore that, in an oral culture, a man who can remember 3000 proverbs (allegedly) is king. It would also be unsurprising to notice an equivalent shift in societies which, having either mastered the written or printed word (that is to say, a typographic culture), can rely, therefore, on the permanence of words to modify their style of communication. It becomes possible for them both to cross-reference information between multiple sources and also to standardise aspects of society that had previously been the business of a 'Shamanic few', practising law, governance and religious teaching from the experience of their forefathers in combination with their own ruminations. The situational and anecdotal wisdom of King Solomon is replaced by an ability, not only to think, but to put those thoughts down on paper in a manner that could be replicated and understood by others.

However, we find ourselves in the grip of a third age of communication - a visual culture. Whether it be the prominence of advertising in our lives or the importance of 'optics' in 21st century politics, a shift towards pictorial information is undoubtedly occurring worldwide. This view comes with a few strong caveats. Firstly, the boundaries of 'oral' or 'pictorial' are not definite; they should be understood only as indexes for prominent shifts in society; nothing more. Secondly, by no means do I believe the typographic age is coming to an end. What is starting to happen, however, is what Postman prophesised: that the fusion of two informational archetypes (exemplified by TV and 'words on the printed page') has resulted in what Postman also terms the 'meta-medium'. Essentially, a medium through which is directed 'not only our knowledge of the world, but our knowledge of *ways of knowing* as well.' TV was this meta-medium: a technological advance which shifted the priorities of information in our society in accordance with our transition into the visual age. Replace the 'TV' in that statement with 'social media', and you have what psychologists like Jonathan Haidt have been doing for the past decade: presenting startling evidence that the amassing of all information in one incredibly accessible place has, despite its overwhelmingly positive contribution to society, had its negative aspects overlooked. The difference between TV and social media in this regard is worth noting, as is what Postman wrote, and what is being advised by health professionals today. Though the adverse side-effects of excessive time spent absorbing

<sup>1</sup> (1980), Literacy and the Future of Print. *Journal of Communication*, 30: 89-89.

information through a visual medium can be harmful, Postman's biggest fear is what will happen when our current culture becomes fully pictorial.<sup>2</sup> Once again, he warns of the significant effects a medium can have on the content of information that passes through it. It perhaps no coincidence to see the rise of existential fears about the nature of truth and morality within society so widely publicised at time where the economy of information dominates the internet (and because of that, the world).

Which leads us to consider the question of what this has to do with Huxley, Orwell or, indeed, a 'Ministry of Truth'. One of Postman's most interesting analyses of *Brave New World* and *1984* is that the most prophetic and enduring insights of both books come from their presentation, not of what our dystopia will look like, but instead the path we set ourselves on to get there. No one, not even Orwell and Huxley, can be totally correct in their predictions, but Postman is quick to point out the key similarity between the two, and the latter half of 20th century society. The organs of informational dispatch embodied by the World State and the Ministry of Truth blur the boundaries between fact and fiction to the extent that deviation from a 'party line', that encompasses both, is fruitless. It is important to note that this view is not mutually exclusive to Postman's comment that we (the West) were not 'visited by Orwellian nightmares': for many of those who lived through the rise of Fascism, the Great Purge and the chaos of post-WW2 Europe, a march towards a totalitarian future (orchestrated either in the style of McCarthyism or Beria's NKVD) seemed entirely possible. It just so happened that this was not to be; or at least not yet. Postman did theorise however that Orwell would be proved correct in at least one respect; that a 'Ministry of Truth' would come to pass, just not in the strictly ideological form seen in *1984*. Postman, having seen the agency an entirely visual culture might afford to everyone with access to it, instead believed that we would be the creators of our own Ministry: a prism through which our definition of truth loses all meaning and relevance when exposed to the greater need to be entertained. In the words of the Cold War journalist Walter Lippmann, 'there can be no liberty for a community which lacks the means by which to detect lies.'

While the typographic age's legacy in society was the idea that progress would be made through a culture that glorified an individual's contribution to the wider pool of knowledge, the defining characteristic of the pictorial age is a culture that instead celebrates the cult of the individual as the axis around which society must revolve. Postman illustrates this idea by quoting Henry David Thoreau on the development of the American telegraph system: 'We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate.' Following Marshall McLuhan's aphorism that 'the medium is the message', the

<sup>2</sup> The impact of blue light, content-organisation algorithms and digital echo-chambers on the mental health of social media users, of those aged between 14 and 18 in particular, are laid out in his book 'The Coddling of the American Mind'.

creation of media can in some cases produce an entirely new type of information to come with them. In this case, it would be the concept of the 'daily news'; nationwide human-interest stories that could, because of a rapidly developing system at whose centre stood television, outstrip demand for local, immediately relevant stories. The parallels between the economy of content that thrives in 2021 and the suburbia of 1950s America, in which every aspect of life (familial or otherwise) is dictated, to some extent, by television, are not insignificant in this respect. Although there is certainly a world of difference separating social media and television (the adverse effects of which are decried in the book), the key conceit linking the two remains relatively unchanged: the medium of choice for a culture is both an indicator of cultural values and a device with which to influence subsequent cultural movements and shifts. Language, the medium it is communicated in and the ideas communicated through it are not part of a linear process but instead a self-starting feedback loop.

I do not, however, share Postman's view that shifts in the communicational paradigm can be inherently positive or negative. There is an absence in the book of any recognition concerning the benefits of lightspeed communication, television and the 'cult of the individual', even if those benefits are largely recreational.<sup>3</sup> This absence is, in part, filled by accusations that TV shows like *Sesame Street* are inadvertently priming America's youth to receive important educational content as leisurely diversion: a shift that would undoubtedly cause those same individuals, now adults, to receive their news and politics in the same manner. Some might take this as evidence enough to say that Postman predicted the rise of 'fake news' or Trump or 'the influencer', and there is some truth to the accusation that the conglomeration of all information (regardless of importance) under one roof raises as many problems as it solves.

I would however like to think that my optimism in this face of Postman's claims does not entirely stem from the fact I grew up with the infinity of the internet. I cannot help but argue therefore that the limits and apparent demise of authenticity in our pictorial culture is not a fatal flaw in our digital age, but instead an unintended consequence of technological development, and one that will have to be overcome just as any other. Despite this I believe the right way to move forward is to err on the side of caution rather than complacency. I see no reason therefore not to end this thought once again paraphrasing Postman, in a quote equally chilling as it is ridiculous. For in the end, Huxley was trying to tell us that what afflicted the people in *Brave New World* was not a desire to laugh and at the expense of thinking, but instead an inability to distinguish between either.

<sup>3</sup> It is particularly important to note that Postman was writing before the creation of the internet as we know it, and thus his views on the intersection between technology and culture might seem unforgivably luddite in this respect.

# Public School Mutinies

Elizabeth Wells surveys how the ideals of the French Revolution ignited political and social unrest in public schools. The reports of the conflicts contained their fair share of sensationalism – and fake news.



The 1790s saw serious pupil rebellions across a wide range of public schools. At Westminster in 1791 boys resisted corporal punishment, absconded from lessons and sang a French revolutionary song. Two years later, at Winchester College, pupils barricaded themselves into the school buildings and donned Liberty caps. Boys from Merchant Taylors' School scrawled republican graffiti and flew the Tricolour from the nearby Tower of London on the Queen's birthday in 1796. In total there were at least ten significant disturbances across seven major schools during the decade.

John Campbell, a pupil at Westminster from 1788-1798, reflected on the disorder when he later returned to the school as an Usher:

*'It may seem ridiculous but the French Revolution and the rights of man, &c., caused this imitation. We always act second-hand scenes among men.'*

## Riots and insurgency in schools were not limited to the 1790s

Campbell's thesis is a compelling one, but it is not without problems. Riots and insurgency in schools were not limited to the 1790s, although they appear to have peaked at this time. Pupil rebellions are documented outside of this period; indeed there are records of such disturbances as early as the 16th century. In fact, the frequency and severity of the riots developed from the 1760s, before gradually subsiding in the early 19th century - representing a distinctive phenomenon - but one which began long before the storming of the Bastille.

Moreover, riotous behaviour was not restricted to naughty school boys and rebellious teenagers. The late 18th century saw a sudden upsurge in crowd movements with often quite disparate groups gathering together to protest about a range of political and socio-economic concerns. Boys did not have to look across the channel to see examples of popular insurgency. Westminster pupil Frederick Reynolds recalled in his memoirs observing the Gordon Riots, largescale, violent anti-Catholic

James Boswell was quick to deny the suggestion that fagging had been abolished



A cartoon of William Vincent, Head Master of Westminster School

demonstrations which took place over several days in the capital in June, 1780. Many would have been aware of, and perhaps even have witnessed, food riots at this time. To understand just how indebted the pupil rebellions of the 1790s were to the French Revolution, we must consider them in greater detail.

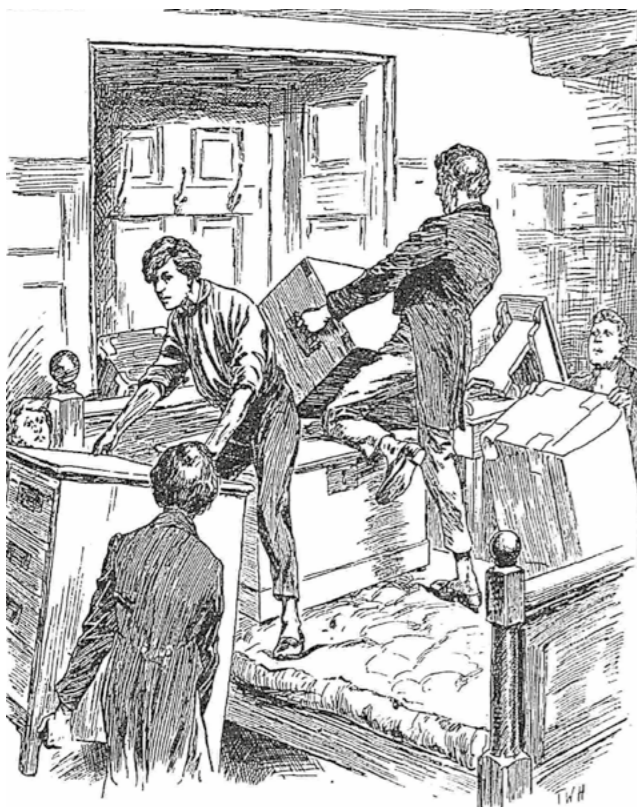
### Westminster

In November 1791 the London-based newspaper, the *Public Advertiser*, announced:

'A terrible fracas took place on Wednesday at Westminster School. Two of the boys having had a dispute, agreed to go to the Green in Dean's Yard, and fight it out. The two heroes were followed by the rest of the boys, and Dr. Vincent and the rest of the masters were the only scholars left in the school. Mr Smedley, the head usher, was dispatched with orders to summon the students to

their duty. The fight not being over, he returned without completing his mission. Dr. Wingfield, the second master, was dispatched, and returned also unsuccessful. Dr. Vincent then went himself, but no obedience could be obtained till the battle was decided; after which the scholars returned to the school-house; when sentence of flagellation was passed upon Mr. Doyley, the head boy for not having obeyed orders. The sentence was demurred to by the whole school; the consequence of which was, a general desertion.'

We are fortunate to also have an eye witness account from a pupil, James Boswell the younger, then aged 13, who corresponded with his elder brother Alexander, then at Eton. Alexander had seen it reported that 'the Upper boys of Westminster have been overcome by the Under ones and that fagging is abolished.' A similar theme is to be found in a letter sent from Westminster pupils to *The World* newspaper stating:



An artist's impression of Winchester pupils blocking up doorways with scobs, large wooden trunks/desks which they used in their schoolroom, during the 1793 rebellion.

*'The many abuses which had originated in that arbitrary mode of discipline formerly established... induced the senior boys of the present year to check the increasing evil, and voluntarily to remit the exercise of that despotic power, which custom and a Gothic system had placed in their hands'*<sup>1</sup>

James Boswell was quick to deny the suggestion that fagging had been abolished either by the choice of the seniors, or as a result of pressure from juniors, replying 'never was a greater Hyperbole told in all this World and with less foundation.' It would appear that whilst older pupils might have been keen to declare their support of the principles of *Fraternité* and *Egalité* in the press, they were less keen to apply them in practice by giving up their fagging rights.

Boswell did confirm that there had been a rebellion at the school, largely concurring with the *Public Advertiser*, but providing further detail regarding the stand-off between the Head Master and Doyle. It appears that in response to the pupils' outcry, Vincent amended his punishment and instead proposed to set an imposition from Sophocles.<sup>2</sup> When Doyle continued to refuse, Vincent left the school room. In his absence the pupils conferred

<sup>1</sup> 'News', *World* (1787), 5 December 1791. Fagging, a system in which younger boys performed chores for older pupils was common at this time.

<sup>2</sup> An imposition was additional work, generally taking the form of memorizing a Latin or Greek text.

and 'unanimously resolved' to present the following note to the Head Master:

*Reverend Sir*

*As we are convinced of Doyls Innocence All we request and require is that you will withdraw the Imposition you have set Doily and Entirely drop the affair we are*

*Reverend Sir*

*Your affectionate Scholars*

*&c<sup>3</sup>*

The note was signed by all boys in the top four forms and 'a great many in the fourth' and placed on the Head Master's desk in the school room. Upon reading it Vincent vowed to God that he would never withdraw the punishment. At this impasse the whole pupil body marched from the school room and 'When they were got into Deans Yard they all began a full chorus of Sira Sira the French Revolution ...when the schoolmasters passed the pupils they made a point of not removing their hat for the Head Master.'<sup>4</sup> Boswell is presumably referring to 'Ça ira' a song which became popular in 1790, but his inability to correctly spell its title suggests that the meaning of the French lyrics might have been lost on him.

The boys remained out of school on Thursday. However, many were visited by their parents and instructed to attend school on Friday. 39 pupils came but a number remained outside and disrupted proceedings by breaking the windows with potatoes and stones. That evening Vincent held a meeting with Doyle's father and several other noblemen and gentlemen eventually reaching a compromise. Doyle returned to school and read a note stating that whilst right in refusing the initial punishment, he was wrong to leave the school room and therefore agreed to accept any imposition set by Dr Vincent for 'Going out of School'.

### Winchester

In 1793 a military parade occurred in the centre of Winchester. The Warden informed the boys that they were forbidden to attend, but added that 'if one individual is pecans<sup>5</sup>, he shall be severely punished; but if numbers are seen, the whole school shall be punished, by being refused leave to dine with their friends.'<sup>6</sup> A single pupil, a prefect, was caught at the event and received a personal punishment (being forced to learn Sophocles' *Electra* by heart, fifty lines per day until completed). However, all pupils were forbidden from dining out that Easter Sunday.<sup>7</sup> For the boys this situation was clearly unfair – the Warden had not kept to his word. An assembly was held and the pupils voted unanimously to compose a letter, in Latin, to

<sup>3</sup> 'Copy of a Letter from James Boswell, the Younger, to Sir Alexander Boswell at Eton Describing the Westminster School Rebellion'.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Disobedient, from the latin 'pecc re' – to sin

<sup>6</sup> Collins, *The Public Schools: Winchester, Westminster, Shrewsbury, Harrow, Rugby - Notes of Their History and Traditions*, 70.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Frederick Kirby, *Annals of Winchester College from its Foundation in the year 1382 ... With an appendix containing the Charter of Foundation, Wykeham's Statutes of 1400 and other documents, etc.* (London: H. Frowde, 1892), 418.



Boxing was a popular past-time at Westminster in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as shown by this cartoon.

the Warden, requesting that in future he did not 'punish all for the sake of one.'

It is telling that Huntingford failed to provide a transcript of the pupils' letter to him, sent on Monday 1st April 1793, nor their second letter, sent days later when the first had received no response, in his official account of the rebellion to the school's governing body: New College, Oxford. Huntingford's response to the letters that:

*'If the Scholars are so forgetful of their Rank and of good Manners, as to insult their Warden by Letters of consummate Arrogance and extreme Petulance, the Warden can give no other Answer, than that he shall continue to refuse all Indulgences, till the Scholars behave more properly'*

is confirmed by all accounts.<sup>8</sup>

The pupils had already made a plan for this eventuality. In their assembly the forty-one senior scholars had taken their own form of 'Tennis Court Oath' and agreed:

*'That we should not proceed to violent measures till every lenient one was tried in vain...That if one or more boys be expelled, the rest shall resolutely demand them to be recalled, and not cease till they themselves are expelled;*

<sup>8</sup> 'Copy of the Account of the Rebellion of 1793, given to New College'.

### Their first act of open rebellion took place on 3rd April

- That the assembly shall subscribe their names to this paper, and keep their plighted faith, as they will answer for it at the tribunal of Almighty God.<sup>9</sup>

Their first act of open rebellion took place on 3rd April. The boys acquired the keys to some school buildings and sent a note to the second master, Mr Goddard, informing him that he was not required in the school room that day. Goddard nevertheless appeared and was hissed by the boys and had marbles thrown at him. The pupil's account notes that 'we had previously determined not to offer him any other indignity, but solely to hiss, but some of the lower boys could not restrain their hands.'<sup>10</sup>

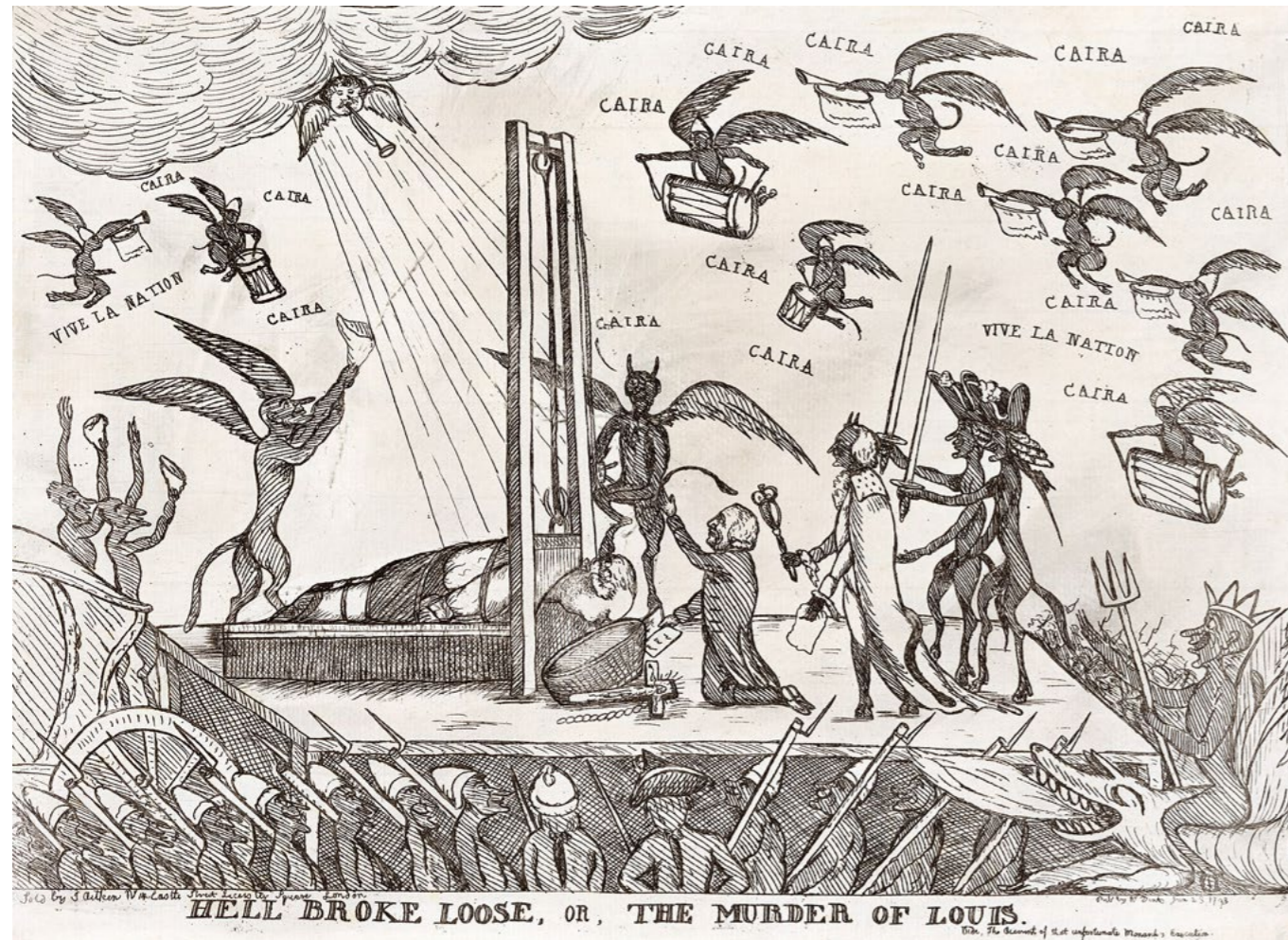
No other violence was inflicted by the pupils, but Huntingford and Goddard clearly feared personal attacks. Both of their lodgings were invaded by boys who now occupied the main school buildings, which conveniently formed a series of high-walled medieval quads, and barricaded themselves in. They secured provisions by breaking into stores and prepared for attacks on their position by digging up stones from the courtyard and taking them to the top of the gatehouse tower to serve as missiles.

The school eventually resorted to involving the civil

<sup>9</sup> Collins, 70–77.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

## “A king without an Head!”



Print by William Dent, 1793. Devils sing 'ça ira' at the execution of Louis XVI. Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira starts the refrain of a popular revolutionary song. One of the later verses casts light on the inclusion of devils: *Lesclave autrichien le suivra / Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira, / Ça ira et leur infernale clique / Au diable s'envolera.*

magistrates.<sup>11</sup> According to one account, 2,000 townspeople had gathered on the street outside the College to view proceedings.<sup>12</sup> There was concern that any attempt to dislodge the boys from their position using violence would result in the crowd rioting in sympathy with the pupils. The magistrates managed to successfully arbitrate using a combination of threats and promises. Eventually the College authorities agreed to offer an amnesty to the boys if arms and keys were surrendered.

Unfortunately, this conciliation was only temporary as it proved unsatisfactory for both parties. The incident which served to reignite the rebellion was the visit of Dr Budd, the father of one of the prefects, on 9th April. Budd was at the heart of the dispute, as he was the boy who had broken the Warden's original order by attending the

<sup>11</sup> It was convenient and perhaps not entirely coincidental that these individuals were gathered in town, along with 'many Principal Gentlemen of the County' in order to prepare an address to the King concerning events in France.

<sup>12</sup> Collins, 77.

military parade. The school insisted that the boy should resign, and Dr Budd compelled his son comply. This brought the pupils' oath into play and upon receiving a communication from their contemporary Budd they resigned their places en masse and left the school.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to note that neither the Warden's nor the pupil's accounts make reference to the boys adopting liberty caps or revolutionary slogans. This detail originates in a letter written by the father of one of the rebellion's ring leaders on 11th April. The boy's father appears to have been visited by Mrs Warton, the Head Master's wife who furnished him with 'a confused account of the most dreadful and formidable riot at the college ever known.' He thus notes in his letter that in consequence of the refusal to let the boys dine out on Easter Sunday "Liberty and Equality" became the cry; and the red cap was worn by all who could procure or contrive one.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 'Copy of the Account of the Rebellion of 1793, given to New College'.

<sup>14</sup> Collins, 77.

## Imbibing principles of disaffection to our established constitution

This latter detail is pertinent, as it would surely have been difficult for pupils whilst under siege to fabricate red caps in any significant quantity. That the only record of this detail should be from a third-hand account written days after the event suggests it might well have been a later embellishment, to add drama to proceedings.

### Merchant Taylors'

In 1796 the Court of the Merchant Taylors', which met monthly and, amongst other business, considered the governance of its school, received a letter signed by William Champneys, the Head Monitor. In the letter consternation was expressed regarding the conduct of two pupils, Richard Hayward and John Grose, who had for the previous two years been responsible for some republican graffiti. Statements such as "A king without an Head!" and "The Tree of English Liberty without its Top Branch!" had appeared on the walls approaching the school.<sup>15</sup>

Matters had come to a climax on Queen Charlotte's birthday, 18th January 1796, when 'a tri-coloured silk flag of considerable magnitude was seen flying for three hours on the north ramparts of the Tower of London.'<sup>16</sup> Upon investigation by the Commanding Officer at the Tower of London the flag was found hidden under the bed of John Grose, a scholar at Merchant Taylors' school and the son of the Assistant Chaplain of the Tower. Once discovered the flag was publicly burnt and Grose was questioned. He: 'confessed that he had erected the three coloured flag at seven o'clock that Morning...and that he had been instructed and advised to do so by Richard Hayward another scholar at Merchant Taylors School next to whom he usually sat...who declared his Principles to be for the French Constitution.'<sup>17</sup>

The appearance of the flag emboldened Hayward and, according to the Head Monitor's rather florid letter, he proceeded to make 'infamous insinuations with republican effrontery' to his fellow pupils, who 'hooted him out of the school.'<sup>18</sup> On the following Friday, Hayward returned with his father and a Mr Kidd to protest against his treatment by his school fellows. They spoke to the Head Master and subsequently addressed the court, in the hope that Hayward could return to the school 'without further molestation,' pleading that the boy had been at the school 'six years [and] was standing very forward for the Election of Saint John's [College, Oxford].'<sup>19</sup>

It appears that a number of the pupils, having witnessed the arrival of the Haywards and Mr Kidd prepared an attack.<sup>20</sup> According to the testimony of Mr Hayward they were 'insulted and treated with great violence in the School by the Boys and in their Retreat

<sup>15</sup> 'Minutes of the Court of the Merchant Taylors' (1796), 72–75, Guildhall Library.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid; and being aware that the two adults had been previously imprisoned for treason.

were pelted.<sup>21</sup> The Head Monitor, defending the pupils' actions, claimed the boys had been waiting fearful that the visitors meant to insult their masters. He added that they were agitated 'lest the loyalty, honour, and dignity, of our school, should be implicated in the criminality of those two boys.'<sup>22</sup>

In its deliberations the Court drew on several further witnesses. Three senior pupils attended and testified that Richard Hayward had been 'endeavouring to propagate Seditious Principles.'<sup>23</sup> One boy, Stanley Stokes, said that 'Richard Hayward one day told him he had just seen Thickscull and Spooney going to the Theatre and that by Thickscull he meant G.R. alluding to his Majesty.'<sup>24</sup> Masters from the school were invited to give oral testimony. The Court also received a second letter, signed by 21 fathers of pupils at the school, stating their anxiety 'for the welfare of our children... dreading the probability of their imbibing principles of disaffection to our established constitution.'<sup>25</sup> In the light of the evidence the Court resolved unanimously to expel both pupils, although John Grose had already been withdrawn by his father. They also decided that henceforth the 18th January should be kept as a holiday for the scholars in 'memory of the loyalty they had shown.'<sup>26</sup>

### Conclusion

Together these three rebellions suggest a more nuanced relationship between pupil insurgency and the French Revolution. At Winchester and Westminster pupils responded to unfair actions by authorities, who refused to adhere to established rules and precedents, by attempting to preserve the status quo. Only once peaceful means of letters and petition had been exhausted did they employ force. In doing so they did not seek to overthrow the government of their schools, but simply sought redress of wrongs.

Whilst some pupils had awareness of, and fluency in, the political language and symbols of the time, these were loosely employed. The connection between the boys' actions and the Revolution was more commonly made by the press, and other adult spectators. Only at Merchant Taylors' School did pupils truly espouse the ideals of the Jacobins. However, the outburst of insurgency here originated not with these two boys, but with the majority of their peers who stood against democratic and republican values.

All three events demonstrate the independence and agency of pupils in the late 18th century. Rather than mimicking the political principles of others, they carefully employed tactics which they would have encountered both at home and abroad, in the service of their own conservative aims.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

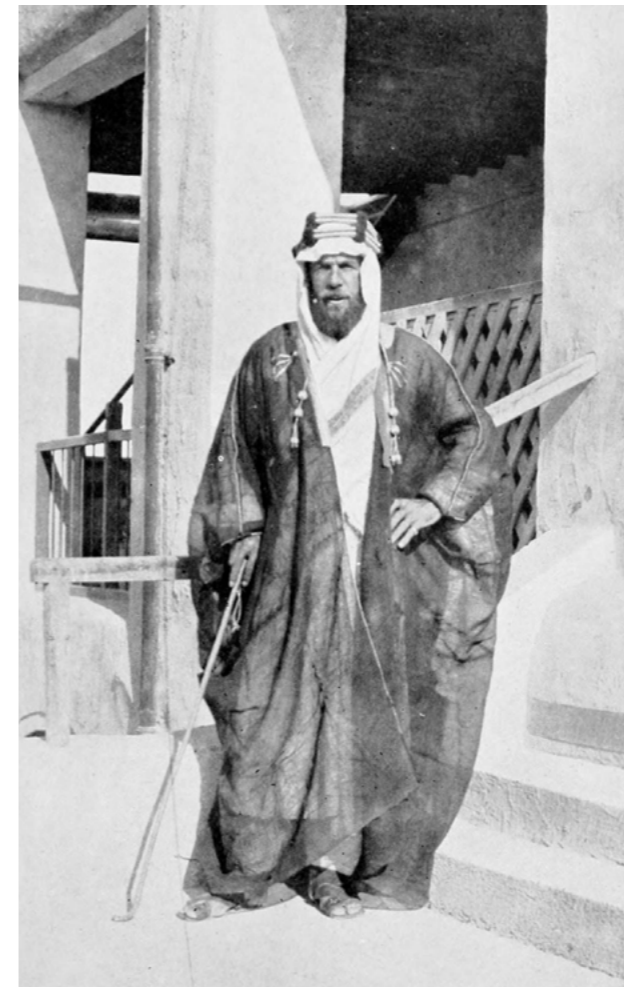
# First Arabic Teaching at Westminster

**Felicity Crowe** explores the reasons for the growth of the study of Arabic and how two eminent Westminster Arabists used their linguistic talents in adult life.



Arabic teaching flourished at Westminster under Dr Busby and Adam Littleton (Second Master, one of the 'three best Arabitans in London'). The Gospels in Arabic feature in the Busby Library.

## Busby taught Arabic to his most promising pupils



Harry St John Philby, British Arabist, adviser, explorer, writer and Colonial Office intelligence officer.

Erpenius grammar of 1614. This book, written by the Professor of Arabic at Leiden University, was the first Arabic grammar to use its Latin counterparts as a model, for example using the same noun declensions and verb conjugations. Students found this familiar model of learning easier than those used by previous textbooks, and Erpenius's work continued to be used by toiling undergraduates until the 19th century.

But why did these diligent boys learn Arabic?

One often-repeated reason for the study of Arabic was the hope of converting Arabic-speaking Muslims and Orthodox Christians. The flourishing of Arabic studies coincided with the Reformation, as the Catholic and Protestant churches competed in their missionary endeavours. Busby's collection reflects this competition, showing a balance between books printed in Rome and Milan and those printed in Protestant cities such as Leiden, Oxford and Rostock. One particularly gorgeous set of Gospels, pictured here with cabbage-leaf waves and crisply folded cloaks, was produced in Rome in 1591 and alternates lines of Arabic and Latin. A less luxurious but more thoroughly thumbled volume is the Anglican Liturgy, printed in Oxford in 1674 and translated into Arabic by Edward Pococke, the best-known Arabist of seventeenth-century England. Pococke had studied Arabic while a chaplain for the English merchants in Aleppo, which had been swollen by the silk trade, and he returned to become the first Professor of Arabic at Oxford.

Some scholars sought the medicinal, astronomical and mathematical knowledge that could be found in the pages of Arabic texts, which often contained remnants from lost Greek texts. *Elementa Linguae Persicae*, by John Greaves, Arabic scholar and Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, contains an astronomical vocabulary that demonstrates the overlapping subject matter. Other scholars wished to use Arabic to establish the text of the Scriptures, given further impetus by the religious turmoil and controversy over their interpretation. Yet others hunted the moral value of Arabic fables. An appendix to an Arabic grammar contains animal fables, many of which feature a hapless lion whose tricks fail to fool more sensible species.

Simple curiosity provided another reason, although this was not always sufficient defence against suspicion. The preface of the 'newly Englished' *Alcoran of Mahomet*, printed in 1649, claimed it was offered 'no otherwise than some monster brought out of Africa for people to gaze not to dote on,' and that proper Christians would be in no danger from reading the text. Even so, the text got into trouble when a disgruntled Parliamentarian cavalry officer petitioned Parliament that the publication of this blasphemous work be halted and the perpetrators punished. Fortunately for the authors, they were let off with a warning not to meddle further in such matters.

The study of Arabic in Britain and Europe gradually declined, as missionaries in Arabic-speaking countries proved to be largely unsuccessful and the scholars who had been involved in the study of Arabic gradually died, leaving few to replace them.

### Arabic Books

Deep in the belly of the Busby Library, several armfuls of books are filled with curving Arabic script that would have puzzled most of Richard Busby's contemporaries. Busby's reputation as a disciplinarian is well-established. But he was also a keen scholar who formed part of the loose network of Arabists in 17th century England. The collection he left to the school is a good representation of the development of Arabic studies in Europe during this period.

Busby taught Arabic to his most promising pupils. John Evelyn recorded being 'wonderfully astonished' by their ability in Arabic. Westminster is the only school that we know for certain had Arabic as part of its syllabus, although Eton and St Paul's employed Masters with a knowledge of Arabic that they may have shared with their pupils.

Busby may have taught his scholars using the Thomas

## Proper Christians would be in no danger from reading the text



Edward Wortley Montagu, OW, Arabic scholar, traveller and multiple bigamist.

### Edward Wortley Montagu

When reading the lives of historical figures, we are often tempted to try to understand the actors' motivation. This temptation hits a brick wall for one of Westminster's strangest former pupils, whose biography remains partially obscured by the torrent of untruths he spewed forth whenever there was an ear to listen.

Edward Wortley Montagu, Arabic scholar, traveller, eccentric, extortionist and multiple bigamist, was born in 1713. He was the son of Edward Wortley Montagu, a mediocre Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, writer and key figure in the eighteenth-century fashion for Orientalism. His childhood was singular. As a three-year-old he travelled with his parents to Constantinople, a journey that would leave an abiding impression on him. On this trip he also made medical history when, having observed the use of inoculation against smallpox in Turkish folk medicine, Lady Mary had her son treated too, becoming the first British citizen to undergo the treatment.

Montagu's time at Westminster was to be just as eventful. This troublesome child ran away four times and was found variously in Rotherhithe selling fish, studying Oriental languages at Leiden, which had remained a centre of Arabic scholarship since the days of Erpenius, working on vineyards near Oporto and clearing the chimneys of London in disguise.

Once he had finished his education, Montagu astonished Londoners with his diamond shoe buckles and ingenious wig of hair-like iron wires. To his parents' horror, he married a washerwoman named Sally, but this was soon hushed up. In London he racked up staggering debts, although he became a member of Parliament in 1747, which helpfully gave him immunity from creditors. Montagu joined the Divan Club, a society open to men who had travelled to the Ottoman Empire and whose members affected 'oriental' habits and posing in Ottoman dress.

After a disappointing legacy from his father, Montagu left England for good in 1761. He briefly resumed studying oriental languages under Dr Schultens at Leiden, before ricocheting around Europe collecting other men's wives, snuff boxes and yet more debts. Over the next few years he travelled further afield to Armenia, Turkey, Palestine and Egypt, visiting historic sites and collecting drawings. He eventually settled in Venice, presenting himself as a converted Muslim, wearing Armenian and Turkish costume and posing as the illegitimate son of the Ottoman sultan. On hearing of his first wife's death, Montagu began the journey back to England in order to find a new wife, but died before reaching his destination after swallowing a fish bone.

### The Heart of Arabia

In the archive can be found a page of neat, regular writing in which the writer exchanges shots with hostile Bedouin. This is a manuscript page from *The Heart of Arabia*, whose author was to journey from

Westminster to be present at the birth of Saudi Arabia. Harry St John Philby is now overshadowed by Kim Philby, his more slippery son. But during his life he was almost as much grit in the eye of the British Foreign Office.

A glance through *The Elizabethan* shows the elder Philby to be deeply engaged in school life at Westminster: a good sportsman, Captain of the School, editor of *The Elizabethan*, actor in the Latin Play, and keen member of the Debating Society. After studying Oriental Languages, including Arabic, at Trinity College, Cambridge, he joined the Indian Civil Service, where although his abilities were unquestioned, his irascible personality hampered hopes of promotion. On one occasion he was heard to say, 'I didn't hear what you said but I entirely disagree with you,' which seems a fair summary of his attitude towards others. In 1915, exasperated colleagues must have been relieved to hear that he was to be transferred to the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. There, his mission was to encourage Arab independence movements opposed to Turkish

influence in the Arabian Peninsula. He soon travelled to meet 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, the Emir of Najd, to persuade him to work with the British, and was immediately impressed by the charismatic ruler, saying 'I know of no man more worthy to be called great'. The appreciation was mutual:

**'I didn't hear what you said but I entirely disagree with you'**

in contrast to Philby's former colleagues, the ruler enjoyed his blunt opinions and appreciated his knowledge of the Western world. Philby was soon convinced that Ibn Sa'ud was the man to back in Arabia, contrary to the British policy that supported his rival for power, the Sharif Hussein, who was leading the Arab revolt against Turkey.

The *Heart of Arabia* documents Philby's first journey through the Arabian desert in 1922, and with it he established his reputation as an explorer of the Arabian peninsula. Aided by Ibn Sa'ud's influence, he travelled by camel for 44 days through desert regions that had previously been unexplored by Arabs, mapping the terrain and bottling and preserving plant and invertebrate specimens as he went. He wrote several papers, which gained him a medal from the Royal Geographical Society. His journey was not of interest only to the natural historian. It was also a statement of where power in Arabia lay: only with Ibn Sa'ud's assistance could travel and ventures in the area be successful.

Philby finally left the civil service in 1925 in order to find greater freedom. To the dismay of the British, he began to advise the ruler on his interests, in 1933 advising him to sell the rights to the huge oil reserves in the al-Hasa region to American rather than British companies. The friendship grew closer in 1930, when, as Philby wrote, 'the great peace of Islam slowly and surely descended upon me.' After his conversion he became known as Shaikh Philby Abdallah.

History confirmed Philby's judgement of Ibn Sa'ud's abilities. By 1932 the ruler had united most of the Arabian peninsula into the modern-day Saudi Arabia. Every Saudi King since his reign has been one of his 45 sons.

# Endpiece

**Titus Parker** gave this reflection on hope in the pandemic

A few weeks ago, I found myself napping more and more since the national lockdown was called. I dream a lot – every night in fact; my lunchtime naps had become a place to go, to wander, to create whole worlds and destroy them in an instant. More importantly, dreaming had become a way to experience *adventure* and *novelty*. Contrasting this with the banalities of lockdown life, it is easy to see why. Wake up at 8, cook breakfast at 8:30, school until lunchtime, cook lunch, school until 4:30 and so on and so on and so on, every day, without an end in sight. It's easy to see how this gets repetitive and boring – there seems to be nothing *new* on the horizon, no adventure, little excitement. Marxist cultural theorist Mark Fisher calls this feeling of sameness and containment due to nothing new 'the slow cancellation of the future', albeit in a cultural context.

Perhaps German philosopher Hegel might have something to say about this. Much of his writing is related to 'becoming', where humans interact with the outside world, encounter *difference*, and move past this difference to become more familiar with what seemed foreign, radically transforming themselves in the process. It seems Hegel, then, gives us justification for the importance of adventure, for the importance of novelty. To him, the human condition is ever changing, ever encountering the new, and learning from this, and it is crucial that humans continue to seek out this difference, appropriate it, and transform themselves in the process.

In the TV show *The Wire* drug kingpin Avon Birkdale has a line that follows something like 'There are only two days in prison – the day you go in and the day you come out'. This is wrong; instead of us going through the motions of every day in a trance-like zombie state, we should actively try and make each day significant through appropriating the new.

This doesn't mean starting an argument with your sister, or fabricating a crush on your classmate for 'something different'. Something as simple as a nice walk and noticing something new, or trying to learn how to cook a new dish every other day can go a long way – after all, the excitement of novelty is very powerful.

Miro, El Carnaval del Arlequín (1924)



# List of Contributors

**Sinan Aramaz** is in the Sixth Form. An avid student of the sciences and head of the school's Islamic Society, he is keen on exploring the perspectives and shaping factors that unite us.

**Cleopatra Coleman** has a place to read English and Italian at Oxford.

**Felicity Crowe** is the assistant Archivist at Westminster.

**Alexandre Guilloteau** is in the Upper Shell. He is interested in law, particularly public law, as well as American and British politics. Other pursuits include visiting churches, bookbinding, and the history and architecture of Westminster.

**Konstantinos Haidas** (US) has a broad interest in History, Art and English but also enjoys studying the sciences. Outside interests include reading, writing and photography.

**Benjamin Heyes** (US) is particularly interested in 19th and 20th century European history

**Hamish Kennedy** is a Remove student trying to square the time he spends watching Vice documentaries with his interest in Soviet history. "I was not proud of what I had learned, but I never doubted that it was worth knowing."

**Rafael Leon-Villapolos** (LS) is passionate about politics and the Model United Nations, but is also interested in Chemistry, History and Literature, especially the works of JRR Tolkien and Gabriel Garcia Marquez

**Toby Levy** is in 6th form and is studying Biology, Chemistry, Maths, and Spanish. Outside the classroom he enjoys playing guitar and beating friends at tennis.

**Nandana Mahtani** is in the Remove and has a place to study Classics and French at Oxford next year. She loves literature, untranslatable words, and people who pronounce her name right

**Sofia Margania** is in the Sixth Form

**Jasper McBride-Owusu** is in the Remove and has an offer to read PPE at Oxford.

**Samvit Nagpal** is in the Sixth Form, and has a particular interest in European history, especially the Napoleonic Wars and the Second World War. Although he is studying double maths and two sciences, he enjoys exploring how the actions of the past can shape, and sometimes even help predict, the actions of today, as well as how seemingly minor changes could have dramatically altered the course of history.

**Daniel O'Keefe** is in the Sixth Form, currently studying English, History, Latin and Maths. He has a keen interest in politics and current affairs. Outside school, he enjoys photography, cryptography and psychobiography.

**Liberty Osborne** is in the Remove with plans to study Chinese at university next year. In her spare time she enjoys reading, debating, and, in typical lockdown fashion, making banana bread.

**Titus Parker** is a sixth former keen on studying history and economics at university. He is interested in heterodox economics and post-colonial history, and is a jazz fanatic.

**Nicolas Rackow** is in the sixth form, currently studying English, History, Maths and Art. When he's not at debating, he's probably walking to Pret.

**Thalia Roychowdhury** is in the Remove and has a place to read Japanese at Oxford next year. She enjoys writing plays and reading novels from the 1960s

**Walker Thompson** (Purcell's, 2014) was first introduced to Russian as a Sixth Former at Westminster. After reading Russian and German as an undergraduate and completing a Master's in Syriac Studies at Oxford, he has been teaching and pursuing research in Slavic linguistics at the Slavic Institute of Heidelberg University.

**Niklas Vainio** considers himself primarily a scientist, but he is also a keen linguist, currently studying German for Pre-U and having studied French until this year. He is very interested in German affairs both past and present, and particularly enjoys books and films about Germany during the Cold War.

**Elizabeth Wells** is the Archivist at Westminster.



