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EDITORIAL

This new edition of Critical Commentary has been a long time coming. It is a special edition drawing on work of students in our Graduate School. It is also the work of a student – staff partnership project bringing together the staff Editor and Deputy Editor to work with student Editors, Sophie Allen and Zoe Chadwick. Without the hard work of our student editors it is highly unlikely we would have had this edition to share with you. Critical Commentary continues to showcase the engaging and important research being undertaken by Newman University students across a range of subjects.

In our first article, Joseph Clark explores the complex distinctions between public and private religion in the ancient world. Analysing examples from the Roman Imperial period, Clark seeks to establish definitions and exemplars of public and private religious practice.

Keeping the edition on track, Katrina Jan surveys media reaction to women travellers on the Victorian railways. While rail travel extended the promise of cheap, easy independent travel for women - and with it the chance to escape the constraints of the private sphere - so media moral panic over the safety of vulnerable, lone-female travellers sought to frighten women back into the home and to maintain the patriarchal order. Sticking in the nineteenth century, Patricia Osbourne reveals the sometimes gruesome treatments of 'female insanity' meted-out by male doctors and the intersectional impact of class, gender and mental health judgements on women's lives and bodies.

Nina Michelle Worthington examines the possible impact of Arts Council England's diversity strategy and initiatives on theatre directors and disabled actors. Worthington argues that though the promise to publish disability data and 'expose' those who fail to meet the participation indicators may drive change, the complexities of culture change in the theatre workplace clearly require greater qualitative study of the lived-experiences of key players.

Comparing and contrasting Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song* with J. G. Ballard's *Concrete*

Island, Philip Sutcliffe-Mott riffs on the difficulties of distinguishing and defining [post]modernism.

King Stephen gets a reassessment, and full character references, in two articles from Serish Baseel and Stephen Thompson. Baseel critiques negative historiographic treatments of Stephen's character while Thompson re-evaluates his early rule to suggest he was not in fact a 'bad king'.

I would like to thank all our student authors, our excellent co-editors Sophie Allen and Zoe Chadwick and Deputy Editor Claire Monk for all their hard work and patience in assembling this edition. I hope you will agree that they have delivered a thought-provoking taste of the range of post graduate research being undertaken at Newman University.

Professor John Peters
Editor
July 2019

To what extent was there a clear division between public and private religion in the ancient world?

Joseph Clark

ABSTRACT

It is highly important to be able to distinguish between what constituted as public and private religion in the ancient world. It has long been debated amongst scholars, and it will no doubt be debated for many years to come as it helps scholars to understand how people worshipped in the ancient world. This essay will focus on Early Imperial Rome as it allows for a focussed assessment of public and private worship. A key question regarding this debate is how big the division between public and private religion was. This article will argue that there was a clear and large division between public and private religion. Public religion was an act of worship where something could be gained in terms of a reward from the Roman state, and private religion was worship that took place in an area that was not open to all Romans, and where Romans could worship individually or as part of a cult. These definitions will be established in the light of other scholarly definitions of public and private religion, drawing on examples from the Roman period.

KEYWORDS

Religion, ancient world, Roman, imperial cult, Mithras.

Introduction

Scholars have long debated the extent of the division between public and private religion in the ancient world. This essay argues that there was a very clear division between public and private religion, particularly in the Roman imperial period. This essay will limit itself to the Roman imperial period because a study on the entirety of the ancient world would require far more scope than this essay can provide. This essay will establish that the distinction between public and private religion is best defined as follows. Public religion was an act of worship where something could be gained from the state as gratitude such as rewards for the area which the subjects were worshipping from. Whereas private religion was worship that took place in an area not open to all

Romans, and where the Romans were worshipping individually or in a small group or cult. These definitions emphasise that there was a divide between public and private religion in the Roman Imperial Period.

Scholars have long debated the definitions of public and private religion. As historians, we must be careful not to confuse modern day meanings for words – with Roman interpretations of public and private religion. For Festus, public rites were those which were performed at public expense on behalf of the people, in contrast to private rites which were performed on behalf of individual persons, households, or family lineages (Festus, *Publica Sacra*, 284L). Henry Fairfield Burton (1912: 84) argues that the worship of the emperor and worship that came at a cost, thanks to sacrifices the Romans made in honour of the Gods was public religion, and that private religion was worship on the part of families or individuals. Ittai Gradel (2002: 9) however, writing 90 years after Burton suggests that historians' notions of public and private are notoriously ill-suited and difficult to apply to the Graeco-Roman world. Furthermore, he states that in the field of Roman religion, the terms are too often employed in the sense so vague as to be practically meaningless. Kim Bowes (2008: 21) agrees with Burton however, that private religion was any ritual, structure or group which was not funded by the public treasury, nor directed towards any well-being of a politically constituted unit. This shows that over almost 100 years, Gradel's argument has been rejected by some historians in favour of the original argument that public worship came at a cost and private worship was worship on the part of families or individuals.

For John Scheid (2016: 40), the term public must in no case be confused with the term 'in public' as they are two different things. He gives the example that a public act of religion could be celebrated by representatives of the civic body and groups of citizens. He further believes that a private act of religion was pertained only to private individuals and concluded for their benefit, therefore agreeing with Festus. Scheid argues that private rituals and worship could take place in a public space. The definition of what public and private religion is now or was during the period of the Roman Empire will not stop being the topic of debate for historians, but this essay will continue with the definitions that were outlined in the introduction, therefore this essay will disagree with Festus and Scheid's arguments. This will help to maintain this essay's argument that there was a clear distinction between public and private worship in Imperial Rome.

The imperial cult was an example of a public method of worship with a political motive in which citizens of the Roman Empire used religion to show loyalty to both the living

and the dead Roman Emperors. Temples and shrines were built and dedicated to Roman emperors in a show of loyalty towards the Roman Emperor, and this was done by areas of the Roman Empire that knew they could benefit from that display. The initiator of the cult, who could advertise their homage, and the individual who funded the temples, were the most likely to benefit (Kershaw, 2013: 144). Duncan Fishwick (1993: 42) describes the worship of a deified ruler as a key element that played a vital role in shaping both the political and religious climate of the Roman Empire. Barbara Levick (1999: 150) argues that under Vespasian's rule, the developments of the imperial cult came from below in the social order, and this helped them to show political loyalty. Larry Kreitzer (1990: 86) argues that the imperial cult's system of worship had reached unparalleled heights during the entire imperial period. The political motive that was the driving force for the imperial cult emphasises that this was a public form of religion.

However, according to Beard, North and Price (1998: 348), there was no such thing as an imperial cult, this was because it came in so many forms that each differed from the next. As there were so many forms of imperial cult, it promotes the idea that the worship of the emperor was a public form of religion because anyone could take part, and it was not in secret. Cassius Dio stated that the practice of imperial cult which began under Emperor Augustus, was continued under the following emperors by not only the people of Greece, but across the Roman Empire (*Roman History*, 51.20.7). The idea that there was reward from the Roman state suggests that the imperial cult was therefore public and not private religion.

Though worship of the Roman Emperor through the imperial cult was clearly a form of public worship, emperor worship occurred privately too. Within the Roman household was the genius of the living Roman Emperor. The genius is best understood to be a personal guardian spirit of each human being (Herz, 2011: 310). From the introduction of the imperial cult during the reign of Augustus, each Roman throughout Rome worshipped the genius of the Pater Patriae as well as worshipping at the shrines of Augustus' *Lares* (Harrison: forthcoming). Worshipping the genius became a traditional method for the Romans to worship in their own home from the reign of Augustus (Goodman, 1997: 299). An example of the worship of the genius was when Augustus introduced the worship of the *Lares Augusti*. Worship of the *Lares Augusti* was essentially worship to the emperor but in a private environment. Beard, North and Price (1998: 49) argue that the *Lares* was at the heart of private religion in the household. To worship the genius, small offerings of food and drink in connection to the

household gods were given (Burton, 1912: 84), this was because the living rulers could not receive sacrifices directly as gods (North, 2000: 61). According to Burton (1912: 80), the fundamental source of emperor worship was to be found in one of the primitive tendencies of Romans, through the worship of the genius.

There is debate surrounding whether the worship of the emperor's genius was public or private however, Bickerman (1973: 3) suggests that the lack of archaeological evidence of a genius being found in Roman houses suggests that the imperial cult was confined to the public sphere, hence arguing that it could not be a private form of religion. However, Gradel (2002: 199) disagrees with Bickerman, stating that the evidence Bickerman puts forward does not actually confirm the absence of the genius and that it was used for private emperor worship. Though it has been argued that the worship of the Roman Emperor through the imperial cult was a public form of religion, it was also done privately through the worship of the emperor's genius in the private area of a Roman's household. This was private because only select people were allowed in. Whereas temples that were built and dedicated to the *divus* were public areas in which people could go to worship.

At the opposite end of the spectrum to the public religion of the imperial cult, were the mystery cults. According to Walter Burkert (1989: 7), the word mystery is mainly used by scholars in the sense of something being a secret, and that secrecy was a necessary attitude of ancient mysteries. Ferguson (1970: 99) agrees as he argued that a mystery is in derivation of something to keep quiet about, with the secrets only being revealed to initiates of the mystery cults. He further states that most mystery cults in the Roman world were diverse but showed three common features. 1) A ritual of purification to be initiated. 2) Involve communion with one of the gods. 3) Promising the purified and faithful a life of bliss beyond the grave (Ferguson, 1970: 99). Ferguson indicates that Roman people wanted to join mystery cults to communicate with the Gods on a private level, with the aim of having a life of bliss during the afterlife. The necessity of the initiation of members emphasises that the mystery cults were a form of private religion.

Mystery cults were a private form of religion, as members required an initiation to become a fully-fledged member. An example is provided by the Cult of Isis. Beard, North and Price (1998) argue that though the Cult of Isis had relatively public rituals, their rituals were predominantly private. Individual initiations became increasingly important from the first century A.D onwards, and to complete these initiations, members met in private groups in main sanctuaries, for example at the house on the Aventine Hill (Beard, North

and Price, 1998: 287). The earliest evidence of the Cult of Isis in Imperial Rome is the poem – *To Messalla*, by Tibullus. He asked Delia about the cult and the powers that the cult had to heal others (Tibullus, *Delia*: 1.3.27-34).

Perhaps the best insight historians have into the Cult of Isis is from the passage by Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses*. It is the only first-person account of someone who experienced the Cult of Isis and its initiation process. Following an incident with magic, Lucius, the main character, turned himself into a donkey, and on his journey to find a way to turn himself back into a human, he met the Goddess of Isis. She turned him from a donkey into a human again and from there, Lucius became initiated into the cult (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*: 11.14). Lucius did not have to go through one but three initiation ceremonies (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*: 11). Should this evidence be trustworthy, Apuleius gives an indication as to how private the mystery Cult of Isis was. As Walter Burkert (1989: 39-40) argues, the main problem regarding the mysteries of Isis is how and where the initiations occurred. The small amount of evidence available highlights how private the Cult of Isis was. Though it did have a certain degree of public ritual, the initiation ceremonies will forever mostly remain a mystery. Compared to the imperial cult, this lack of evidence shows how private the Cult of Isis was as a religion.

The Cult of Mithras is another example of how different a private religion was from public religion in Imperial Rome. The Cult of Mithras is known for its secrecy as well as its close association with the Roman legions (Burkert, 1989: 7). The privacy of the Cult of Mithras contained a lot more initiation ceremonies than the Cult of Isis, an initiation was required to gain access to the most private areas of the cult. According to Beard, North and Price (1998: 290), the traditional aspects of the Cult of Mithras are more striking than other cults as there were seven grades to ascend through. In terms of the number of initiates that were allowed into the Cult of Mithras, historians can refer to a bronze tablet found at a Mithraic temple in Virunum (modern Austria) which was drawn up in A.D 183. It lists 34 names of those who were a part of the cult and who paid for the restoration of the temple following the damage it had taken (Price, 2012: 9). The average number of initiates in the Cult of Mithras has been found to be between 10 and 36 members per sanctuary (Beard, North and Price, 1998: 288). Burkert (1989: 42) argues that the secrecy of the Cult of Mithras was nearly absolute and concludes that Rome was the centre from which the Cult of Mithras spread across the provinces. The extremes to which the Cult of Mithras went to preserve their secrecy shows how private it was as a cult. Thus, the Cult of Mithras stands as a key example of private religion in contrast to the public religion of the imperial cult.

Cults were not the only form of worship that occurred in Imperial Rome. Festivals were both a public and private form of religion in this period. The festival of Parentalia, which took place in the month of February, was a nine-day festival in which Romans honoured their dead ancestors (Le Glay, Le Bohec, Cheery and Voisin, 2000: 34). According to Salzman (2011, 115), the festival was a private form of religion as the Romans were honouring their own ancestors in a private environment. However, Versnel (1992: 146) argues that it had a public aspect, this was because a Vestal Virgin performed rituals for the dead on the first day. According to Ovid (*Fasti*, 2.533-43, the Parentalia focussed on honouring the manes of the ancestors with rituals that took place in their tombs. Ovid shows that the festival transitioned from a public to private form of religion because only select people were allowed into the tombs of deceased ancestors. Though the domestic festival focussed on the family ancestors within the Roman household, it was still considered partially public by Beard, North and Price (1998: 50) thanks to the role that Vestal Virgins had played at the beginning. The traditional worship of the deceased ancestors included rituals that honoured and commemorated the dead, including making offerings to them. Furthermore, there was an annual feasting during the festival of Parentalia in the tombs of the relatives and ancestors (Beard, North and Price, 1998: 289). This shows another level of privacy as the honouring of the ancestors was by their family. This was something that only the families could take part in and therefore supports this essay's argument that private religion was something that Romans had to be either invited to or initiated into. The festival of Parentalia was another example which illustrates the argument that there was a clear divide between public and private religion, even if some scholars believe this festival can transition from being public to a private form of religion.

The Cult of Bacchus worshipped the God Dionysus, and this is what indicates to historians that the Villa of Mysteries was used by the Cult of Bacchus. The Villa of Mysteries was where the Cult of Bacchus met in Pompeii before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79 which destroyed the city (Figure 1). Inside, there was a giant frieze in one of the rooms which depicted the initiation of a woman who wanted to be a part of the Cult of Bacchus (Burkert, 1987: 70). One of the friezes depicts a scene where the female initiate is being whipped (Gordon, 2011: 393). Not all scholars can agree on what the frieze represents but what they do argue is that the Villa of Mysteries was used by the Cult of Bacchus because the landowner was an initiator and minister of this cult, the fact that the initiator was the landowner was not linked (De Franciscis, 1972: 58). The initiation sequence depicted on the walls of the Villa of Mysteries showing the

initiation process also helps historians understand how private the cult was. As the room is the best evidence historians can use for how the initiation ceremonies worked, it shows how private the Cult of Bacchus was because there are no literary texts that have survived which give an account of how the initiation worked. The fact there are plenty of literary texts, based on forms of public religion such as the imperial cult, emphasise the gap that there was between public and private religion.

The worship of Emperor Hadrian's 'favourite', Antinous, was a concept that involved both public and private worship, as the cult involved elements of both imperial and mystery cults. Therefore, this shows it was a public and/or a private form of religion. According to Cassius Dio, Antinous drowned in the River Nile in Egypt, so Hadrian built a city in the area he died, as well as having statues and sacred images of him placed there too. Hadrian then saw a star, which he believed was Antinous, as a representation that he was a higher being (Roman History: 69.11.2-4). Though he was not deified, there is historiographical debate surrounding whether worship in the Cult of Antinous was public or private religion. However, what historians such as Kershaw (2013: 196) have argued, is that there were some forms of cult dedicated to Antinous following his death. Beard, North and Price (1998: 272) believe that the Cult of Antinous was elective and open for an individual to choose to join if they so wished. However, Caroline Vout (2007: 119) believes that the Cult of Antinous could also have been a form of imperial cult, whereby the worshippers honoured Antinous as they did any other emperor previously.

Private worship of Antinous included the associates who were part of his cult, and they dined together six times per year. Once on Antinous' birthday, once on Diana's birthday, and on the birthdays of the 4 highest ranking officials within the cult (Beard, North and Price, 1998: 272). There was also evidence of public worship of Antinous, as there were games held as late as the fourth century which were held in his honour (Vout, 2005: 93). Those two forms of worship were opposite to one another as the games were a public form of worship, whereas the private worship was only for members of the Cult of Antinous itself. This shows how big a divide there was again between public and private religion. However, the Cult of Antinous also shows that the same deity could be worshipped in both a public and private manner.

This essay has argued that there was a clear division between public and private religion in the ancient world, particularly the Roman imperial period. Throughout the chosen

period, the rules applied for whether a method of religion was either public or private have been relatively consistent. Private forms of worship were held within the confines of a Roman's household or a form of individual worship. The mystery cults that were dotted around Rome and the Roman Empire have been argued as being private forms of religion as it was required that the members went through the initiation process or received an invitation, to be a part of that cult. The same applies for public religion in terms of definitions. Public worship was held within public spaces with the aim of gaining rewards in return for the loyalty that the worshippers were showing to the reigning emperor and the Roman state. As explored, the imperial cult was used by worshippers as a form of gaining reward from the Emperor or the Roman state and was therefore a public form of worship. There were exceptions though in the form of the Cult of Antinous and the festival of Parentalia, where there were aspects of both public and private religion in both. Overall, by using the examples stated in this essay, it can be concluded that there was indeed a clear division between public and private religion in the ancient world.

APPENDIX

Figure 1 – Frieze depicting an initiation ceremony for the Cult of Bacchus in the Villa of Mysteries.



Picture is author's own. Taken 07/06/2018.

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The Victorian Railway: A sexual danger for women or a threat to patriarchal control?

Katrina Jan

ABSTRACT

Offering fast and inexpensive transport, the Victorian railway enabled women to be independent and to travel by themselves. Women did not need to take up overnight accommodation, nor did they require chaperonage. Journeys were much quicker, and thought to be considerably safer in the confined compartment of the railway carriage. However, as independent female travellers became more commonplace, there was a rise in sexual attacks on the railways, which created a moral panic and threatened women's newfound freedom. This paper will examine the Victorian railway in relation to female travellers and the way in which women were victimised within patriarchal society. I will argue that the media's exaggerated news reports and the sexual offences themselves were attributable to male-controlled expectations of vulnerable femininity, which attempted to frighten women back into the gendered, feminised place of the Victorian home.

KEYWORDS

Sexual danger, women, travel, railways, chaperonage.

Introduction

This article will explore the contested patriarchal forces that played a part in restricting the everyday travel of women on the railways during the Victorian period. Through examining the media, it is clear these control mechanisms were reinforced by sensationalised journalism. Sensationalism was often referred to in the press as 'the more lurid, gruesome, bloody, or violent crimes [that] resulted in publication of "sickening details"' (Breslin, 2017: 115). Language was often hyperbolic to reflect the contemporary desire to read about crimes which were vulgar and diverged from Victorian codes of conduct. As Kim Stevenson notes, these sexual attacks were carried out on women in public spaces (2005: 232). Stevenson comments that 'rape and indecent assault were regularly reported in the Victorian press, often accompanied

with dramatic headlines' (2005: 232). Thus, this article will examine the reporting of sexual crime on railways and how this fuelled moral panic within Victorian society and impacted female travellers.

Before the invention of the railway, transportation for women was very different. As William Thackeray suggests, 'stagecoaches...riding horses, pack-horses...all these belong to the old period' (cited in Flanders, 2013: 101). These modes of transport provided a costly and restrictive method for women as they would have had to travel accompanied by a male relative or by a female servant. If not, they would have been considered a 'fallen woman', sinful and impure.

The railway enabled Victorian women to travel by themselves as their journey was much shorter and they did not need to take up overnight accommodation. It was also initially seen as a safer mode of transport for women, which meant male companionship was unnecessary. For example, H.W. Tyler, a government railway inspector who was sceptical of this mode of transport, later confirmed in 1862, that 'railway travelling is safer than any other mode of travelling' (Pope, 2001: 439). This is significant because it provides evidence that the railway was considered to be comparatively harmless and was to be celebrated rather than feared. As Robin J. Barrow notes, 'railway travel tempted women to enter public spaces in greater numbers' because traditional forms of transport, such as rides in horse carriages, 'were quite expensive' (2015: 342). Thus, before the railways, lower-class women who were unable to afford a servant or obtain male chaperonage when travelling by coach would not have been able to travel long-distances without attracting excessive patriarchal censure.

Financial restraint steered women towards using the railways. By 1855, a first class trip to London in a few hours would have cost just nine shillings, whereas a similar stagecoach journey, which would on average take half a day, would have cost one pound five shillings. Barrow highlights how this was 'a great reduction in time and money' (Barrow, 2015: 342). Therefore, the railway provided affordable options for women which enabled them to be more independent.

However, when considering women's restricted travel at the time, it is important to understand the influence of the media, its role in applying Victorian values to female independence, and how this was portrayed. Victorian society was very aware of the sexual danger the train posed. For example, Peter Bailey highlights how 'the train itself was frequently represented in gendered and sexualised terms' (2004: 7). Victorian

women would have had 'separate spheres' and Simon Gunn outlines how men were able to enter public spaces alone and 'therefore had a different relationship to space from that of women' (2007: 151). Gunn also outlines how women had to be careful where they went; they had to stay within their social boundaries as, at the time, there was a rise in prostitution. According to Donald Thomas, the '1852 census identified that there were ... 6849 prostitutes in London [alone]' (1998: 3). Reformers believed that in just the Whitechapel area, there were 63 brothels and 1200 prostitutes (Thomas, 1998: 3-5). Such high numbers began to lead to the 'false arrests of respectable women' (Walkowitz, 1992: 24) as a lady seen on her own, may be mistaken for a lady of the night.

At the same time, the industrialisation of the Victorian period saw the rise of the press, which focused on the sensational stories of crime in order to sell its daily newspapers. L.P. Curtis states that, 'few Victorians questioned the truth of the articles they read' and many accepted the newspaper stories as factual evidence (2001: 63). This also applied to sexual crime related incidents on railways, as the press saw this as an opportunity to profit from these stories and to exaggerate accounts in order to sell more. As Ana Despotopoulou states, 'the media also printed numerous stories of false accusation, emphasising the unexpected dangers of the railway not only for women but also for men' (2015: 66). There was a shift of victim in the press, in order to appeal to both genders; men were also depicted as a target by women for sexual blame. This was to give the impression that neither gender was safe from one another. Men could be accused of sexual falsehoods for extortion and women could be sexually attacked.



Fig. 1. The Savage Assault in a Railway Carriage, *The Illustrated Police News*, 1887, p.1

As ridiculed in the *London Evening Standard* in 1887, 'if the ladies require protection against the men, the men require it quite as much against the ladies, and more especially the babies' (1887: 3). However, from portrayals in fiction and art, it was the women who were often depicted as vulnerable on the railway and not men. In 1887, *The Illustrated Police News* visually touched on the pressing vulnerabilities of women travelling on their own. The image (Fig.1) reflects the incident of a school teacher who was knocked about 'from one side of the carriage to the other, and grasped...by the throat; her clothing was torn and her hair pulled down. At last Miss Scraggs got her hand out of the open window and unfastened with some difficulty the door' (*The Illustrated Police News*, 1887: 2). Although, it is implied that Miss Scraggs was raped, from torn clothing and pulled hair, the article does not explicitly state this. Stevenson (2009, p.191) argues:

The precise nature of sexual assaults during the Victorian period is difficult to ascertain as substantial sexual offences, such as rape or sexual assault, were not clearly classified in legal terms and in the public discourse were suffused by ambiguous language such as 'crimes of moral outrage' or 'abominable outrages'.

This could be indicated by the title of the article which is called 'The Savage Assault in a Railway Carriage' and suggests the attack may have been more than physical blows, especially as the victim was said to be still lying quite unwell in a critical, exhausting condition (*The Illustrated Police News*, 1887: 2). The language used in Victorian newspapers was subtle when describing sexual assault and it was often not mentioned at all, as sex was still considered taboo. In *The Bedfordshire Mercury*, a man is described as outlining his intention of 'violating her person' and having 'conducted himself in a most brutal manner, hurting her so much that she was ill for a week' (1865: 7). The ambiguity over the nature of the assault leaves reason to believe that part of the attack was rape. Stevenson supports this, as she states that this was likely a forced form of vaginal penetration (2009: 191). Whilst it was unclear as to whether Miss Scragg's injuries as reported in *The Illustrated Police News* were as a result of the violence or of rape, the story was widely reported across England and sensationalised in various other newspapers (2009: 191). Though the incident occurred on the railway line between Stafford and Shrewsbury, the news emerged in *The Worcester Chronicle* and was described as 'an outrage of a disgraceful character...a young lady in an excited state, and literally covered in blood about the face, neck and hand...there was blood on the door, windows, and cushions', highlighting the degree and severity of the attack (1887: 6).

As *The Worcester Chronicle* decided to focus on the bloody scene, The Grantham Journal reported that ‘a young woman was...dreadfully mutilated about the face and neck, apparently with a knife. It appears...screams were heard and soon afterwards a man was seen to jump out of the train while it was running at full speed’ (1887: 7). The narrative is dramatic and the articles are more concerned with entertaining and frightening than they are with the facts of the incident. Andrew Maunder supports this as he acknowledges how ‘newspapers, vied with each other over the fullness and immediacy of the details of their crime stories, stories that, like sensation fiction, were expected to awaken both terror and pathos’ (2017: 79). It is no wonder that such sensationalised accounts caused a stir amongst Victorians, eventually leading to moral panic about railway travel, and female accusations of sexual assault (Barrow, 2015: 343).

The moral panic regarding railway travel and accusations of assault, and in turn the safety of train travel, had both its disadvantages and advantages in relation to women on the railway that correlated with the effects of women’s newfound independence. The drawback presented in the media hindered women from wanting to take part in this new form of social freedom, they would have been reluctant to travel by rail as they feared for their reputation, their dignity and virtue. Men did experience some hesitation due to false accusations; however, the railway would have provided no sexual threat to them. Men were often seen to be celebrating the railway and using it much more frequently than women. An example of this can be seen by Charles Dickens who ‘thoroughly enjoyed travelling by train and made good use of the railways’ (Tomalin, 2013: 196). This is also outlined by Mary Braddon, in *Wyllard’s Weird* as all of the male characters are described as using the railway freely, whereas the women only use it if accompanied, if circumstances have driven them to it, or if they are rebelling against Victorian mores. This sheds light on the reality that some women felt they could not enjoy this new technological invention in the same way men could, as they were subject to prey from the opposite sex and therefore risked going against Victorian morals and values. As Drew D. Gray acknowledges, ‘historians have characterised the press as an agent of social control in the nineteenth-century, inculcating accepted norms of behaviour and standardizing opinions’ (2010: 97). It was this patriarchal media control which attempted to prevent women travelling by rail as its increased stories of female sexual danger sparked fear and anxiety. While there is ambiguity over whether female numbers decreased on the railway as a result, the sensationalised reporting certainly attempted to keep women restricted to their place within the home. In 1881, even the Queen issued the following warning in *The Western Daily Press* (1881: 5):

As a matter of ordinary precaution...it is desirable that women travelling singly should not select a carriage with but a single occupant. On most of the larger railways a compartment can always be secured in which ladies alone are permitted to enter, and common prudence would suggest that they should avail themselves of the advantage.

Women were therefore often held accountable for their sexual railway attacks; if they willingly entered a compartment on their own without a chaperone or if they did not make use of the ladies’ only compartments, they were seen as instigating the sexual assaults. However, this was not always an option because not all trains had separate compartments for women. According to, *Cornubian and Redruth Times*, ‘the Great Eastern Railway Company are willing to provide special compartments, but state that the ladies, for some reason, are unwilling to travel in compartments set aside wholly for them’ (1888: 6). This was the argument often portrayed in many articles, which led to most companies withdrawing them entirely. The reason behind the lack of use of female-only compartments is unclear: either women did not want to be crowded amongst other nurses and babies, as this was suggested in most newspapers, or the railway companies simply did not want to put money into attaching ladies-only compartments to every train, as this would have proven quite costly.

Thus, there is cause to believe that women’s safety was not a priority for railway companies and it was down to women to protect themselves and make sure they were chaperoned when travelling alone. The media, however, pointed blame at the women for not making use of the provisions that had been put in place for them; this was also the view taken by railway companies and even the courts of justice. As Stevenson highlights, ‘to confirm their respectability it was imperative that female victims reported any violations immediately and made every effort to extricate themselves from compromising situations’ (2009: 190-191). If not, they would be considered as falsely accusing the perpetrator.

With issues of ladies’ railway compartments and increased numbers of travellers, the incidence of sexual assaults had also multiplied as narrated in the media. The *Dublin Evening Mail* stressed ‘it was quite time that offences of that kind which were increasing, should be put a stop to’ (1864: 1). However, with the media fuelling society’s anxieties, they had no intention of putting a stop to their widely circulated sexual assault stories. Instead, they aimed to promote them, heighten them and even contort the truth of events. This then depicted a reality in which people were afraid of this rising tide of sexual assaults on trains. Barrow mentions ‘a 30-year media panic’ which is accurate

from newspaper reports which started to show sexual railway crime frequently in the late 1850s, which then massively increased in the 1860s and carried on towards the late 1890s (2015: 351).

However, Stanley Cohen asserts that the advantage of moral panic is that the 'media might leave behind a diffuse feeling of anxiety about the situation: "something should be done about it", "where will it end?" or "this sort of thing can't go on for ever"' (Cohen, 2011: 10). This suggests that change could be obtained from such continuous news coverage, eventually leading to social reform. Consequently, there was also a campaign for change by the public, which then too started to become popular with media. In 1896, *The Wrexham Advertiser* printed a letter which was written by a member of the public, advocating a transformation to the design of rail carriages. This would allow a corridor to be put in place so passengers could communicate with one another, as well as the guard and driver if they needed to. Thus, 'any female then travelling in the train would be under the protection of the general public; and...blackmailing solitary male travellers would also be averted' (*The Wrexham Advertiser*, 1896: 5). The change in the media's approach came with the heavy criticism and annoyance made by frequent travellers who were fed up of the current railway issues.

After the Col. Baker case in 1875, which caused a scandal due to the status of the accused, people made frequent suggestions to prevent further incidents. One letter posted in the *Paisley Herald* and *Renfrewshire Advertiser* stated, 'the charge made by Miss Dickinson against Col Valentine Baker would never have been heard of were first class carriages constructed as they are in other countries – that is open from one end to another' (1875: 5). Blame was then shifted from women and men, to that of the railway companies. However, from examining the voices in the newspaper articles, there appears to be a lack of women writing to express their thoughts on rail travel. This seems to be filtered through a male audience, who wrote on behalf of women relatives or women they knew, conveying the need for adjustments on trains. This supports the view that the media was patriarchal and would therefore not voice the views of women even in matters that concerned their wellbeing.

As the moral panic spread amongst Victorian society, measures were eventually put in place to make the railways safer for women and people in general. This, however, was not until 1889, as Turner argues: 'the railway and government had procrastinated over railway safety. The railways resisted installing known safety devices for cost reasons, while governments dithered because many members of Parliament were railway

directors' (2013: 38). Hard fought improvements included the installation of panic alarms aboard trains. The Regulation of *Railway Act 1868* stated that 'every Company shall provide...such efficient Means of Communication between the Passengers and the Servants of the Company in charge of the Train as the Board of Trade may approve.' Yet, despite this, not all trains had alarms and the ones that did, were not always working. As Barrow acknowledges, 'these were imperfectly maintained, as is evident in the case of Dickinson and Baker ... Better communication was not established until the Regulation Act of 1889 ... most lines then adopted devices that passengers could activate in emergencies' (2015: 345). It could be argued that had it not been for the nineteenth-century media, which sensationalised railway sexual attacks and eventually led to moral panic, then we would not have the modern, safe measures of train transport today.

The aim of this study has been to explore the perceived dangers of sexual crime on the railway in journalistic narratives. It is clear that the media sensationalised sexual attacks for profit, and the reporting of such attacks generated the belief that the invention of the railway, had led to the increase in sexual behaviour towards women. From wider reading, it is apparent that certain aspects of the organisation of rail travel were problematic, but the railways as a whole were not a threat, they provided women with a newfound freedom. This was to the dislike of the patriarchal society, as women were no longer staying within the confines of the home. The railways were a man's world, and one that did not want to invite the opposite sex to participate on equal terms in the enjoyment of rail travel. This is also seen by the *laissez-faire* attitude the railway companies had in regards to investing in women-only carriages and safety measures for them in general. In investigating the reactions to the sexual assaults women faced at the time, it seems that there were real dangers which the media exaggerated, and this eventually caused moral panic in Victorian society.

As a result of this panic, the media instilled fear into women who wanted to explore this new possibility of travelling independently, and many would have been reluctant to travel by rail because of this. Nonetheless, Barrow concludes that, 'railways did not increase the likelihood of sexual assault... [however]...at particular moments the media presented such cases as widespread' (2015: 255). Barrow refers to the sensationalised journalism of the Victorian era, where newspaper articles were dramatically replicated across the country and were therefore often mistaken for fact. This also would have blurred the 'realities' of sexual danger towards female travellers along with the 'perceived' threats, as descriptions varied according to the newspaper reporting. Thus,

it proved difficult to determine the truth as these accounts could not be considered to be reliable (2015: 255).

The railways presented an opportunity for sexual violence. The closed off space in which men had access to women allowed the latter to be trapped and harassed as the design of the carriages prevented access to other people within the train. There was also a territorial aspect to the way men tried to control the space and keep women out. However, Barrow does close with the interesting notion that ‘panics about sexual assault performed the ideological function of cautioning women about the necessity of male protection at all times, a practice at odds with women’s increasing freedom in an industrial world’ (2015: 355). This point supports the idea that Victorian patriarchal society felt it was losing control over women with the rise of technological advances such as the railway, which meant that women were no longer reliant on men. There was a need to rein women back into what was considered their appropriate place in society, the home. It is evident this was done through various means, but most prolifically by the media.

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Debating the lived-experiences of theatre practice and disability among professional directors and disabled actors

Nina Michelle Worthington

ABSTRACT

This article overviews Arts Council England's current diversity strategy and initiatives, and pinpoints how this may impact professional directors and disabled actors' experiences of working in theatre. The call to increase the participation of disabled actors in theatre is widening. Long-standing public debate surrounding casting choices and accessibility has been bolstered by external pressure from funding bodies. Arts Council England has shifted its strategy, now publishing annual disability data for all its funded theatres and exposing those that fail to adequately represent disabled people in the workforce. At ground-level directors and disabled actors working in producing house theatres must consider their response to this. For some this may require exploration of new territory. Impactful shifts in strategy require a shift in individuals, so complex intersections between theatre, disability studies and phenomenology fast become integral to understanding theatre as a workplace. The article therefore establishes the need for further rich and detailed study of the personal, lived-experiences of theatre practice and disability among directors and disabled actors in theatres funded by Arts Council England under this developing strategy.

KEYWORDS

Disability, theatre, phenomenology, directors, actors.

Introduction

Over 13 million people in the UK report as disabled, that is 1 in 5 people self-defining as having physical, cognitive, or mental health impairments (Department of Work and Pensions, 2017). Yet, it is still rare to see an actor with a visible, physical impairment playing a role on-stage in any major theatre. Arts Council England's (ACE) current

diversity strategy has brought a new dynamic to the long-running debate surrounding this issue. It has potential to significantly influence the experiences of disabled actors and directors working within ACE funded theatres. Historically, work with disabled actors has remained predominantly the domain of a few specialist companies, such as Graeae Theatre Company, an ‘authority in accessible aesthetics’, ‘a world class theatre company ... artistically led by disabled people’ (Graeae Theatre Company, no date). Most theatres have not shared the responsibility for increasing diversity in the arts in relation to disability (Bazalgette, 2014: 7). As ACE’s chief executive, Darren Henley, relays, ‘Talent is everywhere: opportunity is not. Not yet’ (Brown, 2015).

This article argues that insight into the lived-experiences of directors and disabled actors is crucial in gaining an informed understanding of today’s theatre industry. It overviews ACE’s current diversity strategy and initiatives, and pinpoints ways this may impact professional directors and disabled actors’ experiences of working in theatre. It establishes the need to investigate personal experiences of theatre practice and disability among professional directors and disabled actors working in theatres funded by Arts Council England (ACE) between 2015 and 2018. The work crosses the boundaries of theatre, disability studies and phenomenology. Debate within these fields is passionate, yet intersections seem plagued by historical assumptions, politics, and entrenched research approaches. Connections and tensions within these bodies of knowledge are relevant to shifts in current theatre practice and must be negotiated as the call to increase the participation of disabled people in theatre widens.

There is much debate and scholarship surrounding the representation of disabled people in the arts, with common agreement in media and scholarly discussions that change is needed. Theatre and disability scholars have analysed portrayals of disability in dramatic scripts pointing out theatre’s almost entirely clichéd, negative portrayals of disability and its role in misinforming society’s perceptions of disabled people. Such scholars urge theatre-makers to resist stereotypical casting choices (Kuppers, 2001; 2003; Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Sandahl and Auslander, 2005; Sandahl, 2008; Conroy, 2009). Activists and actors have campaigned against the limitations imposed in casting (Snow, 2016; Startin, 2014) and theatre critics are increasingly diligent in drawing attention to exclusive or insensitive directorial decisions (Birkett, 2015; Snow, 2017). Issues surrounding the participation of disabled actors in theatre are extensive, yet, a common call for transformation in approaches to casting has been long-made clear in both theory and practice. Furthermore, ‘a creative case for change is based not only

on workplace equality and an accurate reflection of disability but on the contribution of creative talent disabled actors can bring to British theatre’ (Fox and MacPearson, 2015: 7).

I consider my work distinct from disability-focused theatre or applied theatre research; my study is not concerned with theatre purposed to challenge, transform, or inform participants or spectators about disability issues. Instead, it centres on theatre as an employer of disabled professionals engaged in the day-to-day work of theatre-making. As described by Michele Taylor, Agent for Change, for Ramps on the Moon (ROTM), ‘I’m not talking here about “disability product”, vital though that is to a rich inclusive arts infrastructure. I’m talking specifically about an ordinary expectation that [disabled people] will be in theatre spaces as performers’ (2017).

Shifts in Strategy

Arts Council England’s action plan for National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) sets out diversity as ‘recognising, respecting and valuing people’s differences to contribute and to realise their full potential by promoting an inclusive culture for all’ (2017: 4). The creative case for diversity is its ten-year framework, highlighting five strategic goals aimed at ‘achieving great art for everyone’ (ACE, 2010). ACE considers this the driving force behind progress towards increasing the representation of minority groups in the arts (2016: 36). However, in recognising that the responsibility for diversity was not shared equally across its NPOs, in 2015 ACE announced a ‘fundamental shift’ in its strategy (Bazalgette, 2014: 1); its decision to ‘publish annual data on the composition (disability, ethnicity, gender) of the workforce’ of all its funded organisations (ACE, 2015). Henley explains, ‘we ask funded organisations to provide correct and comprehensive data ... going forward, we will have to look at the funding conditions of those that do not comply’ (2016: 4). For the first time, it seems that major theatres are being held accountable for the position disabled people have in their workforce.

Theatre critic Lyn Gardner described this shift in strategy as ‘one of the most encouraging signs ... to encourage diversity ... a long way from the kind of box-ticking we’ve seen in the past. ... Diversity, of every kind, has to be core to any theatre organisation and what it does’ (2015). Nevertheless, in theatre, ACE’s methods of gathering data were condemned for broadly categorising staff as ‘artistic’, ‘specialist’ or ‘other’, and neglecting an opportunity to provide specific detail monitoring on-stage representation

(Snow, 2016; Equity, 2016). Despite this perceived failing, this new approach has, for the first time, presented disability data publicly and in isolation from that of other minority groups. Thus adding specific dialogue to the wider diversity debate regarding the need to increase the visibility of disabled people in the theatre workplace including on-stage representation.

In January 2016 ACE published its second annual workforce data report, providing a baseline for monitoring representation in the arts. This revealed that across all its NPO's the disabled workforce stood at 4% against a working age population average of 19% (ACE, 2016; Annual Population Survey, 2016). ACE's findings remain largely unchanged in 2017, with some major theatres with more than fifty employees having no disabled people in their workforce at all (ACE, 2016; 2018). In contrast to disability, there has been progress in increasing the visibility of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) artists; BAME representation in NPO's is 17%, 2% higher than average among the working age population (ACE, 2016; ACE, 2015b; Annual Population Survey, 2016). Progress is clear in this area of diversity; it seems that the principles underpinning the practice of colour-blind casting, which 'ignores the appearance of an actor ... anchored in the belief that talented actors can play any role', are increasingly acknowledged by individual directors (Young, 2013: 56). Yet, similar principles are rarely applied, or are perhaps thought to be insufficient, in casting disabled actors (Rogers and Thorpe, 2014: 428). The findings of ACE's reports (2016; 2018), make certain what is already widely acknowledged in the theatre industry, media and literature, that there are specific, complex, and 'on-going issues around disabled people' (ACE, 2016: 3).

Shifts in Theatre Practice

In the year prior to ACE's shift in strategy disabled actor, Simon Startin, perceived that directors had already increased their 'appetite to engage' with disabled actors; yet, whether this could be perceived as 'sea change' is debatable (Startin, 2014). Nevertheless, professional performance opportunities for disabled actors are developing, outside of theatre created by experts such as Graeae, with signs that approaches to casting are shifting. Open audition days for disabled actors have been held at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), the National, Manchester Royal Exchange and Birmingham Rep. Actor, Nadia Albina, who describes herself as having a physical disability (Gardner, 2014), performed her debut season with the RSC; she

was cast as Cassandra in *Hercuba*, the Duke of Venice in *Othello*, and Nerissa in *Merchant of Venice*. Artistic Director of the National Theatre, Rufus Norris, has worked with Kiruna Stameil and Jamie Beddard; these are all professional actors who self-define as disabled people, who were cast in roles that do not specify a disabled character. Theatre history was made by Mat Fraser, said to be the first disabled actor to play Richard III, at Hull Truck Theatre in June 2017 (Tripney, 2017); also, Karina Jones, the first visually impaired actress to play the heroine, Susy, a blind character in a national tour of *Wait Until Dark* (Vale, 2017). These notable casting choices support Startin's (2014) observation. Yet, most of these directorial decisions were still deemed newsworthy, rather than routine, even when a disabled actor was simply cast as a disabled character. It seems there are still many organisations and individuals who do not consider work with disabled actors as part of routine theatre practice.

ACE's effort to promote the work of disabled artists in the funding period, 2015-2018, following its shift in strategy, may be viewed as plentiful. Significant and strategic funding has sustained projects such as *Unlimited*, which supports and commissions work by disabled artists (*Unlimited*, no date), and *Ramps on the Moon* (ROTM; 2018). ROTM raises the profile of talented actors, yet, the art is not about disability. The focus is not on promoting independent disabled performers and companies but on collaboration between disabled actors and practitioners within producing house theatres (ROTM; 2018). It is described as, 'a critical movement striving for a step change in the inclusion and integration of Deaf and disabled individuals in the UK theatre sector' (ROTM, 2018). The project involves six regional NPO theatres and Graeae, each committed to 'a programme of organisational change' (ROTM, 2018). Over six years each theatre leads on a large-scale touring production involving a 'roughly equal mix of Deaf and disabled and non-disabled performers' (ROTM, 2018). The prerequisite for an initiative such as this, being given ACE's largest ever strategic touring grant, infers acknowledgment that relationships between directors in producing house theatres and disabled actors are powerful in realising the creative case for diversity.

To date ROTM has produced: *The Government Inspector*, directed by Roxana Silbert, in 2016; *The Who's Tommy*, directed by Kerry Michael, in 2017; and *Our Country's Good*, directed by Fiona Buffini, in 2018 (ROTM, 2018). The extent to which these directors had previously experienced working with disabled actors varies. However, in relation to meeting ACE's demands, they seem to have a privileged position; being given the chance to direct a professional cast including disabled actors in their home theatre with

access to the expertise of Graeae. Participants are exposed to ‘a casting process that allows all theatres in the consortium to input into and learn from ... toolkits developed for participation programmes ... sharing of best practice between consortium partners and across the industry’ (ROTM, 2018). It is unlikely that directors and disabled actors working in non-participating theatres have access to such a comprehensive opportunity to explore working together. For this majority, still required to meet the demands of ACE’s diversity strategy, experiences of theatre practice and disability may be decidedly different.

Lived-Experience: Directors and Disabled Actors

Drama and performance writer, Kenneth Pickering believes that ‘drama, the most public of all the arts, always involves people ... therefore any aspect of the human condition may become the business of the dramatists, [or] the performer’ (2005: 225). It seems that ACE’s shift in strategy has now made disability the business of all its funded theatres, and as disabled actors become more prominent in theatre, disability is fast becoming the day-to-day business of all individuals engaged in theatre practice. As Gardner makes clear, ‘no artistic director planning a programme or casting a show can hide any longer behind lack of knowledge ... people will be on your case’ (2016).

Actor Mat Fraser describes Ramps on the Moon’s approach to casting disabled actors in non-disabled roles as, ‘a no brainer, modern-day necessity ... a great opportunity to reimagine roles’ (2017). Yet, as directors and actors’ approaches to theatre are grounded on a vast range of theories and experiences, ‘reimagining’ roles may not necessarily be straightforward, particularly for those with little lived-experience of disability. British theatre director Peter Brook summed up the work of a director in two words; how and why, both are vast concepts. He describes ‘how’ as small, practical aspects of crafting work, and ‘why’ as a director’s vision, motivation, and purpose in creating theatre (1999: ix). Increased participation of disabled actors in routine theatre practice has potential to destabilize both. The day-to-day business of theatre, casting, rehearsal and performance practices may need ‘reimagining,’ while personal beliefs and understandings of theatre and of disability itself are revised (Fraser, 2017).

As an expert in accessible theatre, Artistic Director of Graeae, Jenny Sealey, views inclusive approaches to casting and performance as ‘simple’ (2017). Taylor, also, insists it is a myth that specific skills or experience are needed to work with Deaf or disabled

actors (2017). However, integral aspects of partner’s commitments to ROTM suggest that directors based in producing house theatres benefit from a level of expert guidance; including the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge when considering disabled actors in their own practice. Processes of recruitment and casting, and accessible rehearsal and performance methods, are highlighted as key areas where learning needs to take place (ROTM, 2018). Accordingly, in contrast to Sealey, theatre practitioners Galloway, Nudd and Sandhal assert that ‘commitment to include everyone is not easy, especially when extraordinary financial and logistical efforts are involved’ (2007: 232). In addition, it is recognised by those starting out as students in disability studies that initial consideration of disability perspectives can create personal moments of disruption and disorientation (Parrey, 2018). Resistance, anxiety and blurring of professional identity can occur when pre-existing assumptions of disability are opened-up to alternative ways of thinking (Fook and Askeland, 2007; Burch 2017). ACE’s shift in strategy and ROTM initiative may provoke genuine reassessment of common practice methods and accessibility in theatre; however, due attention must also be given to psychological shifts in understandings of disability and theatre that directors and disabled actors are navigating in the workplace. If these are not considered, even though opportunities for disabled actors may increase, it is possible that the environments, structures, and attitudes experienced in current theatre practice will be neither helpful nor appropriate.

Concerned with these complexities, the initial three-year funding period following ACE’s shift in strategy, 2015 and 2018, provides a unique focus for further study which allows for lived-experiences to be examined in the context of shifting external strategy. As former chair of ACE, Peter Bazalgette, stated one year on from announcing ACE’s shift in strategy, ‘it’s all about changing minds, not a quick fix’ (2015). So, considering ACE’s vision for ‘achieving great art for everyone’ it seems crucial to examine, at ground level, where practice and personal perceptions are shifting to and from (ACE, 2010). Without a clear understanding of the personal experiences of directors and disabled actors currently working in theatre it seems impossible to assess where a change is still needed, and so a qualitative approach needs to be taken. Although addressing social science researchers Braud and Andersons’ thoughts on gaining insight into practice seem relevant in this; they state that ‘we need an imaginative, even outlandish, science to envision the potential of human experience, not just more tidy reports’ (1998: xxvii). Similarly, disability scholar, Tom Shakespeare cautioned that the field of disability studies has neglected lived-experience; there is little examination of the complexity of disability as phenomenon from the viewpoint of disabled and non-

disabled people (Shakespeare, 2005). The phenomenon of directors and disabled actors working together in routine theatre practice has already necessitated a shift from the outside-in in strategy, but insight into shifts from the inside-out, in personal perceptions, understandings and behaviours, demand a qualitative dimension.

Further research will need to draw on the rich history of disability studies, classic work in disability representation and aesthetics that is matter of course for disability scholars (Barnes, 1992; Garland-Thomson, 1997; Mitchell and Snyder, 2000). It must recognise that these understandings may be unfamiliar to many working in NPO theatres, despite being relevant in negotiating a history of stereotype so that appropriate and informed decisions in casting, rehearsal and performance can be made (Fox and MacPherson, 2015: 2). Yet, in a slowly changing society and theatre climate, where disabled people are more visible, revisions of traditional concepts of disability and theatre are also timely and necessary. Emerging insights in disability and theatre studies no longer take for granted that disabled actors are stared-upon or that talent is valued differently to others (Johnston, 2016; Koppers, 2017). In parallel, it has become important to contrast the absolutes of early disability scholars, with the complex nature of human experience in which perceptions and perspectives constantly change.

Crucially, further research will need to voice the perspectives of professionals working in producing house theatres, and to create a clearer picture of specific practical and psychological barriers to participation in theatre that still exist. Through semi-structured interviews it could question how theatrical preferences and understandings of disability among theatre directors and disabled actors influence approaches to working together, and what each perceive as challenges and opportunities in this. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), most commonly used in the qualitative psychological field, can be deployed to examine how individuals make sense of their experiences (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Such research would add detail to debate surrounding disabled actors in theatre; to reveal understanding, not from statistics, but by 'asking how [a] person's world is lived and experienced' (Finlay, 2011: 3). Theatre research has often been approached from a phenomenological perspective in relation to audiences, how performances are encountered, or from the perspective of the actor's experience of transformation into character (Johnston, 2017; Bleeker, Foley Sherman and Nedelkopoulou, 2015). However, I hope to gain an understanding of directors and disabled actors' thoughts, commitments and feelings, through talking about their experiences of theatre as a workplace, in their own words, in as much detail as possible (Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005: 21).

Brook believes that:

Directors, by the nature of their craft, have become more and more isolated from one another, we must seize every opportunity that offers the possibility of understanding and respecting each other's work, and enjoy the possibility of being influenced and changed (1999: xii).

In view of this, further qualitative research will reveal what is being experienced in theatres right now and will enhance dialogue between directors and disabled actors. Also, the findings of such study will give a clear sense of where change is happening, bring genuine successes to the fore, and highlight where future strategies may be best targeted in future.

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Attitudes to female insanity in the Nineteenth Century

Patricia Osborne

ABSTRACT

This article will explore nineteenth century perceptions of female insanity and how mental illness was portrayed to the public. It considers the treatments which a patriarchal, class society believed to be 'cures' of female insanity; depending upon the female's social status they received varying treatments. Many women were diagnosed with dementia, puerperal insanity, melancholia, mania with hysteria being the most common diagnosis throughout the mid-Victorian era. In particular I will discuss two cures that women had to endure. The first is the clitoridectomy and the other was the rest cure. During this time female insanity was referred to as 'a female malady' and male Doctors believed it was due to female's hormones, concluding that madness was in the maternal line. By combining gender, medical and social history I argue that female insanity revolved around male domination which labelled any female who did not behave according to the ideology of femininity as insane. I argue that dehumanising females enabled doctors to openly explore and debate all aspects of the female body and its function.

KEYWORDS

Nineteenth century, madness, female, hysteria, insanity.

Introduction

This article explores nineteenth century female insanity, its treatment and how mental illness was portrayed to society. It uses gender, medical and social history to argue that female insanity was defined and policed by a male dominated society to enforce its authority and control females. Victorians became fascinated with human biology and evolutionary fears that insanity was inherited and that it was especially prevalent amongst females (Crompton, 2016: 37). In this climate women were a cause of concern as orthodox medical opinion viewed female insanity as being passed down the maternal line. For those women who challenged social norms and the patriarchal ideology, the diagnosis of mental illness provided a reason for their disrespectful behaviour.

Depending upon the female's social status they received varying treatments. The middle and upper-classes treatment was invasive surgery and restricted treatments was in opposition to treatment that the poor received in asylums. The regime of moral management in asylums believed that rest, exercise and a nourishing diet was key to treating insanity. Showalter (2014) argues that insanity would appear in women when they 'compete[d] against men instead of serving them' (Showalter, 2014: 123). Showalter further advanced her argument that female insanity, particularly hysteria, was a way in which women could reject patriarchal values which shaped perceptions of 'normal' behaviour in the nineteenth-century (Showalter, 2014: 8-24, 52). Thus, hysteria was an unconscious expression of feminism and a challenge to the existing structure of gender relations.

Hysteria was one form of female insanity, Doctors characterised hysteria as nervous, eccentric and erratic behaviour. During diagnosis hysteria was based on the patriarchal ideology of female behaviour. Marland (2004) considered that doctors provided a suitable, if not manipulated diagnosis, to validate the medical integrity of psychiatry (Marland, 2004:16-22). In *Juice of the Grape* (1724), Shaw considered that both men and women could be diagnosed with hysteria but as the Greek Physician Hippocrates described hysteria as the 'displacement of the womb' Doctors were unable to diagnose the condition in men (Walker, 1968: 46). Male hysteria cases have been largely ignored, marginalised or misdiagnosed as hysterical males would have been dismissed as effeminate and in contravention of the Victorian ideology of male behaviour. Male hysteria and the treatment prescribed is worthy of further research. The association of hysteria and other female disorders with reproduction encouraged a link to sexuality, it was widely considered that females due to their hormones, were capable of morphing from the metaphorical angel into a voracious, sexualised monster (Ussher, 1991: 73).

Thus, if females did not conform to the expectations of femininity they were deemed 'insane'. However, some feminist historians, such as Showalter, also considered that wealthy Victorian women commonly suffered from depression, hysteria and stress caused by their struggle to cope with a static existence due to the tight control of strict gender ideals of an unyielding patriarchy. For example, Florence Nightingale, in her novel *Cassandra: Angry Outcry against the Forced Idleness of Victorian Women* (1852 published in 1859) wrote about her own mental illness, which she linked to her inactive lifestyle, and expressed her anxiety about her lack of occupation. Nightingale's essay depicted Victorian womanhood and femininity, exploring the confinement of upper

and middle-class females to the home. Monros-Gaspar (2008) believed that by writing Cassandra Florence Nightingale ensured her audience could 'hear her wailing not only as a mad prophetess but also as [a] victim' (Monros-Gaspar, 2008: 71).

Through the patriarchal obsession during the mid to late Victorian era, women's bodies and minds came under scrutiny from the medical profession. Doctors, such as Dr Isaac Baker Brown, convinced their peers and parts of society that the reason for female insanity was due to their reproductive organs (Cossins, 2015: 85) and those women who did not menstruate regularly would eventually become insane. In 1851 Dr Tilt produced a medical treatise entitled *On the Preservation of the Health of Women at the Critical Periods of Life* (1851) in which he discussed his ovarian theory. Tilt stated that the first menstruation should be 'retard[ed] as much as possible' and encouraged parents to delay their daughters first menstruation. Tilt encouraged parents to keep their daughters in the nursery as long as possible. He advised the 'absence of sofas to lounge on, absence of novels fraught with harrowing interest; [and] the absence of laborious gaiety, of theatres, and of operas' (Tilt, 1851: 31). He believed that by avoiding these temptations the first menstruation would be delayed. I believe that this is another form of doctors policing women's bodies in terms of both the absence and occurrence of menstruation.

The Psychiatrist and Physician, John Conolly, believed that the best treatment for insane women was the moral management ideology, which saw the removal of the patient from their home to be cared for in asylums. He appealed to patriarchal norms, arguing that keeping an insane female at home would render it 'awful by the presence of a deranged creature ... her sudden and violent efforts to destroy things or persons' (Conolly, 1856: 149-150). John Conolly thus manipulated society's view of female insanity; basing his 'scientific' theories on fictional representations for the public to understand the seriousness of female madness. By using fictional characters from literature, such as Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), he encouraged and supported the 'moral panic' that female insanity was very much real and needed medical intervention.

The treatments at private medical practices were vastly different to being removed to the asylum. Treatments were marketed as one treatment that could cure all forms of insanity and were marketed towards the wealthy levels of society. The most disturbing treatment was that of 'clitoridectomy', the surgical removal, reduction or partial removal of the clitoris. The consensus was that by curing the body by removing the afflicted

organ the mind would be restored. According to the FGM National Clinical website the practise of FGM (female genital mutilation) can be traced back at least 2000 years. Although FGM is rooted in culture and, as some believe, in religious practices, the FGM National Clinical organisation argued that the practise of FGM in the western world was used to reduce sexual desires in women and to cure women of 'female weakness' (FGM National Clinical website). FGM is a violent expression of patriarchal society enforcing its authority over society in order to control female sexuality.

The leading specialist of this treatment, Dr Isaac Baker Brown, believed that attacks of insanity started at puberty and lasted until the menopause. Baker Brown believed that by 'removing the cause of excitement, [the] women's clitoris' (Baker Brown, 1866: 23) his patients were returned to their husbands in an 'obedient and docile manner' (Baker Brown, 1866: 10). He went on to claim that married women who suffered from insanity has a distaste for marital intercourse and when they became pregnant they would 'abort in the early months' (Baker Brown, 1866: 16).

When Baker Brown published *On the Curability of Certain Forms of Insanity, Epilepsy, Catalepsy and Hysteria in Females* in 1866 the true horrors of his views and work were revealed. In the treatise, he stated those patients whom he deemed 'suitable' were immediately operated upon and that he had a 70% success rate with this form of treatment. In case II (Baker Brown, 1866: 22) the patient was admitted to Baker Brown's private London clinic on 2nd January 1861 and the whole of her clitoris was removed, she was discharged as 'cured' on 31st January 1861. Another patient, case IX (Baker Brown, 1866: 26), was admitted in 1862 with 'distaste for the society of her husband' (Baker Brown, 1866: 26), he conducted his operation and she 'rapidly lost all the hysterical symptoms which had previously existed' (Baker Brown, 1866: 27). He boasted that a year after surgery she visited him believing she had a tumour, but he diagnosed her being 6 months pregnant. Baker Brown recorded the illness of case IX as 'sterility'; by using this wording he appears to be saying that not only can he cure insanity but fertility problems as well.

After the publication of Baker Brown's 1866 treatise parts of the medical profession started to openly question Baker Brown's techniques and success rate. Showalter (2014) noted that a Dr. T Hawkes Tanner had performed clitoridectomies on three women and had been 'disappointed' with the results. The leading physicians, Maudsley and Forbes Winslow, testified that Baker Brown's treatment did not relieve insanity (Showalter, 2014: 77). On the 6th April 1867, the Obstetrics Society met to discuss

Baker Brown's conduct. A Mr Seymour Hadden opened the meeting by stating that men were 'guardians of women and had become custodians of their honour. We are, in fact, the stronger and they the weaker' (Obstetrics Society, 1867: 396). The Society debated Baker Brown's conduct and his 'highly inflated' success rate, with one member describing clitoridectomies as a form of 'quackery' (Obstetrics Society, 1867: 396). A member of the Obstetrics Society took the committee through the operation from when the patient arrived at Baker Brown's offices. A gentleman takes his:

Poor weak wife or a daughter to the Home and place her under the promoter [Baker Brown] of this scheme... the patient is put under chloroform, the operation is very trifling, it is a mere nothing... the husband remains downstairs. The patient is taken up and put under chloroform and her clitoris cut out before she has recovered from the anaesthetic. Down comes the promoter of the scheme to the expectant victim below; invited him to write a cheque for 100 or 200 guineas or whatever it may be, before he leaves the house (Obstetrics Society, 1867: 396).

Even though the female has undergone an invasive surgery, the above passage suggests that the committee considered that the male as the 'victim' in this procedure for being overcharged for the procedure. Dr Oldham goes on to state that when one of Baker Brown's patients was questioned, she said that she did not know 'what had been done to her, that the nature of the operation had never been explained to her, nor had she been asked if she would consent to the operation' (Obstetrics Society, 1867: 408). After much discussion regarding consent, fees and the inflated success rate of the operations that Baker Brown had performed the members voted, out of 237 members who voted, all were male, 194 members voted for Baker Brown to be removed from the Obstetrics Society. After this meeting, the number of clitoridectomy operations declined.

During the 1860s and 1870s Neurologist Silas Weir Mitchell developed the 'rest cure' and was marketed as an alternative to invasive surgery. In 1877 Mitchell published his findings in *Fat and Blood* (1877), he argued that the insane female should be removed from the home and placed in to the care of medical professionals. Like with Baker Brown's surgery, Mitchell also claimed the rest cure was successful in treating all forms of insanity. However, Scull (2011) described the 'rest cure' as complex as it required its patients 'to be sequestered away from their families, lest well-meaning relatives interfered with what followed' (Scull, 2011: 101).

During the treatment the patient was allowed 'to sit up in bed, then to feed herself, and next to sit up out of bed a few minutes at bedtime. In a week, she is desired to sit up fifteen minutes twice a day, and this is gradually increased until, at the end of twelve weeks, she rests on the bed only three to five hours daily. Even after she moves about and goes out, I insist for two months on absolute repose at least two or three hours daily' (Mitchell, 1877: 49-50). During the treatment the patient was fed a fatty, milk-based diet, due to this the patient gained weight. Weir Mitchell described some patients as becoming fat during the treatment, he stated 'where the patient lies abed from belief that she is unable to move about, she is apt in time to become enormously stout' (Mitchell, 1877: 17) Mitchell concluded that the 'long rest, the hysterical constitution, and the accompanying resort to morphia made up a group of factors highly favourable to increase of fat (Mitchell, 1877: 17-18).

In 1887 Charlotte Perkins Gilman was diagnosed with depression; her doctor (Silas Weir Mitchell) prescribed the rest cure. Mitchell removed Gilman from the family home and was looked after by a housekeeper with minimal contact with her husband. In 1892, she published a semiautobiographical short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) which described her treatment and her descent into insanity, during her confinement Gilman became fixated with the yellow wallpaper in her bedroom. In 1913 *The Lancet* published an essay by a doctor who said that after reading Gilman's novel he considered that she had not truly experienced insanity and that her fictional writing 'was enough to drive anyone mad' (Gilman, 1913: 1). In response Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote an essay *Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper* (1913) she claimed after reading her novel her doctor, Silas Weir Mitchell, stopped prescribing the rest cure (Gilman, 1913: 1). However, Gilman does not give any evidence to support her claims.

The Yellow Wallpaper (1892) provides a harrowing insight into how women were treated by the patriarchal society. However, it is unclear how much of her semi autobiography is true as in *Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper* (1913) Gilman acknowledged that she had embellished the story as she never had 'hallucinations or objections to my mural decorations' (Gilman, 1913: 1). The rest cure appeared in another novel. In 1905 Elizabeth Robbins published *A Dark Lantern* (1905), where the female character was diagnosed with neurasthenia and prescribed the rest cure. But instead of a downward spiral into insanity the rest cure saved the female character. Unlike Gilman's novel *A Dark Lantern* showed the reader the positive effects of the rest cure. However, Showalter (2014) described this novel as lurid and sentimental as she believed it sexualised females as the character married her doctor (Showalter, 2014: 143).

Scull (2011) described the treatments of female insanity as an 'efficient, if brutal, form of re-programming' (Scull, 2011: 78-79). As discussed in this article the types of treatment were a male society enforcing its 'will' over women. The rest cure and clitoridectomy are two very different cures, which both used torture but in different guises. Prevailing medical opinion believed that women's minds needed to be kept calm; it was even believed that reading the popular gothic literature caused females to become hysteric. The rest cure isolated the female from her family and enforced bed rest; women were not allowed to do anything, no reading, needlepoint or other activity.

The profound impact of gender relations on diagnosis and treatment of female insanity is clear. Victorian physicians, it should be noted that the medical profession of the nineteenth century was an exclusively male preserve, were in a position in which they could exercise power over their female patients through the way in which they categorised women's behaviour as either normal, neurotic or insane and made decisions about the form of treatment required. The application of observed behaviour patterns reflected a rather crude reductionist approach which failed to acknowledge other factors in women's lives, for example social and economic, which might have helped to explain why a woman behaved in a particular way (Theriot, 1989: 71). Oppenheim (1991) argued that the use of force was the characteristic feature of the relationship between male doctors and female patients. She concluded that women's fear and resentment of the power over their bodies invested in the medical profession, manifested in intrusive surgery and other controlling techniques, was an underlying cause of the rise of feminism in the Victorian era (Oppenheim, 1991: 230).

This article has shown that dehumanising females, and turning females into specimens, enabled doctors to openly explore and debate all aspects of the female body and its function. The treatises, cases and treatments discussed provides evidence of the horrors visited on those considered to be insane. This article has incorporated gender, medical and social history to argue that although the patriarchal society considered males as 'guardians' of women it was willing to use brutal forms of re-programming and invasive surgeries to control their women.

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Modernism & Postmodernism: A Distinction by Case Study

Phillip K. Mott

ABSTRACT

Theorists such as Raymond Williams have long thought about how modernism and postmodernism relate to one another. That there is no simple definition for differentiation that can be easily agreed upon means there is no model for exactly what constitutes "post-ness. This article hopes to contribute by analysing the modernist and postmodernist tropes in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song* and J.G. Ballard's *Concrete Island* and then comparing the two. This approach differs from other such forays into the subject by avoiding the trap of blindly beginning from the top. Rather than picking differences and then seeing if they crop up in a comparative reading, this article will test that method by coming from the opposite direction. It will analyze texts and then cross-reference to see if those generic concepts hold up. This will test the differences between specific modernisms and postmodernisms yet show how general forms of the same are irreducible.

KEYWORDS

Modernism, postmodernism, philosophy, linguistic, geographical.

Introduction

In the following article, I will use Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song* (1932) and J.G. Ballard's *Concrete Island* (1974) to test the distinctions between modernism and postmodernism that are present in current literary critical discourse.

I do not claim to present an exhaustive study of twentieth century literature. Instead, this article takes a bottom-up approach to defining modernism and postmodernism and comparing two texts that are often presented as examples of each.

Note also that I inelegantly place modernism from the fin-de-siècle to end of WWII and postmodernism from there on afterwards. I do not claim there is a clear division between the two. Rather, this seem to be an accepted wisdom amalgamated from all the texts I cite throughout.

There are two issues with the approach I propose.

The first is that it is armchair work at its most glacial and a *priori*. The greater validity of case study work comes at the price of limited generalizability, so any statement formed from this approach about a genre would have to be supported by dozens if not hundreds of covalent studies. As I will show, however, this can be a strength.

The second is that it risks being circular. I am advocating the definition of genres via the comparison of generic exemplars, but I have selected texts according to generic definitions already in place. Out of context, this seems like saying the sky is blue because it is the colour of blue skies. However, my approach does not exist out of context. Rather, it is intended to be read alongside the top-down studies that begin with definitions and move to texts. An analogue: proving two plus two is four by showing that four minus two is two. This study will in fact jump from generalizations to the specifically textual, only to then flip and test the inverse.

So, I begin.

Any attempt to find a difference between modernism and postmodernism begins with the semantic implications of the prefix 'post-'. Postmodernism in this sense is what follows modernism. What remains to be seen is whether the prefix in question signifies a formal continuum, some metaphysical shift in art, or the simple failure of critical discourse to describe post-modern culture according to its own merit.

This kind of differentiation is difficult, because it demands we make subjective judgements about where the borderlands lie. Often, critics write with a wry sense of the emperor updating their wardrobe, as Raymond Williams did when he observed in his critique of postmodernism that it is a movement that doesn't see how it, like all art, is 'situated in the tradition' of that which preceded it (Williams, 1996: 32). Literature may be historically constant, but it is problematic when viewed as specific periods.

Only one thing can therefore be taken for granted before the case studies begin. Modernism, postmodernism, and any comparison of the two must be concerned with the passage of time. It is important to question modernity and whatever follows, and also to interrogate how and if we can even perceive it. The perception of time is a crucial index of the distinction this article attempts to find.

It should also be stated that not all texts from these periods are necessarily modernist or postmodernist, and this is why this article proposes a text-by-text approach. Orwell's

plain prose social commentary dates in the modernist period, but his work features neither the verbal concerns of high modernism or the fabulating play of postmodernism. This seems to indicate a broader truth: that literary politics are rarely all-encompassing.

In his lecture and book *The Two Cultures* (1959), the scholar and social realist writer C.P. Snow entirely rejected the monolithic premise of modernism and, indeed, the idea that a literary politics can explain culture. He claimed that:

Literary intellectuals represent, vocalize, and to some extent shape and predict the mood of the non-scientific culture: they do not make the decisions, but their words seep into the minds of those who do.

(Snow, 1959: 60-61)

In other words, literary criticism is a part of culture that describes and sometimes influences it, but it is not the grand narrative of that culture. It cannot be said, therefore, that these cultural periods are modernist and postmodernist. Rather, to express a necessary pedantry, that modernism and postmodernism are genres in the periods. And, like all genres, they are best deployed as rough descriptions and doomed to fall short as comprehensive definitions.

I will, however, begin with the critical generalization that modernist texts invoke myth and metaphor to amplify the resonance of a particular image or theme, if only demonstrate that this article has not pulled its textual choice from nowhere (Bell, 2011: 14). These texts also, somewhat paradoxically, are known to showcase a concern for autonomous yet self-obliterating form over content while expounding hyper-political formal manifestos that compete with one another (Giddens, 1981: 15-18).

This is true of *Sunset Song* by Lewis Grassie Gibbon. In the 1932 novel, Chris Guthrie is left by the suicide of her mother and fragmentation of her family to handle the family farm in Kinraddie. The narrative covers years of Chris' life, but it is all filtered through the conflict in her mind between her love of her rural home and her desire to train as a teacher in Aberdeen. Between ancestral home and metropolitan possibility. The novel opens with a sequence detailing her ancestor Cospatric.

Gibbon narrates Cospatric's lineage with the literary-Scots hybrid voice that he does Chris's, which implies two things: Cospatric's story is told by voices contemporary to the narrative, and that manner of its telling has not changed since its conception. This reveals a culture that preserves myth via preservation of the ideological or linguistic

conditions under which it first developed. Isolating the end of the narrative that these conditions come from is hard, as they are as responsible for the existence of the myth as much as any source events may have been. Modernity may have generated or preserved this story, and Chris Guthrie, as the heir of Cospatrick's history and geography, carries with her this interplay between story and storytelling. As a consequence, she cannot help but perpetuate the mythology of Kinraddie as she too bears witness to invasion and post-war memento mori: 'the old circle' (Gibbon, 2007: 258) of the 'Meikle Stane' (Gibbon, 2007: 9).

Gibbon himself claimed that his hybrid prose was an attempt 'to mould the English language into the rhythms and cadences of Scots spoken speech, and to inject into the English vocabulary such minimum number of words from Braid Scots as that remodeling requires' (Gibbon, 2001: 135). He implies that English is fundamentally lacking as a function of its own culture, and so, for Gibbon, form is the prime mover of his linguistic politics.

Gibbon's novel may be highly stylized, but to say that such verbal forms are self-obliterating or prioritized over content is to do a disservice to how gorgeously Gibbon synthesizes form and content. The use of sociolinguistic history to depict the mythic tapestries at play within Chris Guthrie's character, for example, is plenty proof of this. I have already demonstrated how nuanced and elegant this device is.

Thus, there does seem to be some aptness to critical opinions of what modernism is, but the formal ramifications don't bear this out in this instance. Content is not subservient to form in the case of *Sunset Song*. It operates through it. But what about postmodernism and *Concrete Island*?

This novella begins with a crash. Literally. Robert Maitland careers off the road, through a barrier, and into an ominously indeterminate space surrounded and closed off by busy highways. It follows his attempt to survive in and escape a cement hinterland inhabited by, as the reader discovers, Proctor and Jane, two equally dangerous yet very different antagonists.

Ballard's is a dystopia of spaces and boundaries, the opening of which deploys spatial and temporal information – times, dates, prepositions, relative positions, and geographies – without surcease. It moves along with such fastidious violence that it seems unlike its nine self-contained statements of action, each generating or ending with harsh consonants of finality (Ballard, 2008: 7).

This paradox is exacerbated by the novella's opening line, which launches from nothing more certain than a moment 'soon after' the one given, and so the reader is never given a crux upon which to clearly perceive the events that follow; rather, they are thrown into indeterminacy (Ballard, 2008: 7). This contradiction – the paradox of continuum and discretely – is linguistic and, as we shall see, inherent in the very way in which Maitland experiences the world into which he is thrown, and it is this paradox that predicates so much of what we consider to be 'post-modernist'.

Concrete Island evades clarity and conclusion as much as undisputed post-modernist texts like Auster's *New York Trilogy* do. Teasing connections are suggested but never resolved: Why was there an over-turned taxi and a temporary crash barrier? As an architect working in that recently constructed region, had Maitland in some sense 'deliberately created this situation, as if preparing the ground for his crash'? This refusal to offer or conclude things neatly reveals what Francois Lyotard called 'incommensurability', or literature's 'ludicrous failure' to convey the enormity and complexity of reality (Connor, 2010: 75).

This is linguistically evident in Maitland's attempt 'to identify himself' (Ballard: 64). He shouts aloud his name, there is ellipsis, and the action carries on unaffected. Maitland's written message for help is 'obliterated' at the end of this chapter, as though to explicitly recognize Maitland's linguistic impotence (Ballard: 66). Proctor, however, demonstrates the flipside of incommensurability with indirect conversation, signing, and using a hand 'to cover the letters he had written' (Ballard: 153). He communicates the least out of the three characters. He describes the island least but gains the most out of it. Between them, Maitland and Proctor show off the post-modern precariousness of language.

In this sense, *Concrete Island* demonstrates what postmodernism is deemed to be. Both of these texts align at least partially with descriptions in critical discourse of the great epochal genres in question: modernism and postmodernism.

Michael Bell argues that the transition from modernism to what followed is 'not a difference in metaphysics so much as a different stage in the digestion of the same metaphysics'. In doing so, he attempts to circumnavigate the reductionism that so often imperils efforts to distinguish modernism from post-modernism (Bell: 9). His premise that modernism defines post-modernism seems promising, but, rather than coming to an absolute distinction between them, his argument becomes a two-way meta-criticism of the theoretical backdrop and critical responses to the two periods that never quite meets in the middle.

Raymond Williams, meanwhile, sees postmodernism as a cultural form founded from recursive echoes of an already problematic modernism. The 'post-' of postmodernism is 'a pose' that, perhaps without being deliberate, feints the progression of imaginary spaces beyond the modernist era (Brennan, *The Politics of Modernism* (review): 126). This former period burgeoned unaware of its literary-political interdependence with the very bourgeois forms it claimed to contest (Brennan, 1991: 125-126). Use of the term 'period' is here sardonic, but it also echoes Fred Inglis' editorial foreword to the edition of *The Politics of Modernism* already cited.

By attempting to depart from this, this latter poser period merely compounded the problem of backwardly ironic artistic manifestos: 'Postmodernism was for [Williams] a strictly ideological compound from an enemy formation, and long in need of this authoritative rebuttal' (Williams, 1996: 32). However, Brennan notes the over-simplicity of the metropolis-periphery dynamic via which Williams believes cultural forms operate: 'a point of view that is paternalistic and, in the purest sense, simply ignorant' (Brennan, 1991: 127).

I believe Brian McHale has been the critic to approach the matter from the most pleasing perspective. Instead of analyzing and then comparing modernism and post-modernism, McHale investigates the gamut of twentieth century literature as shifting about philosophical changes that are reflected in both content and form. In doing so, he treats the ideas of modernism and post-modernism as being after the fact and pre-empt the issue Snow takes with treating culture as something that critics invented. Steven Connor summarizes this succinctly: 'where modernist fiction is epistemological – that is, concerned with problems of knowledge and understanding, postmodernist fiction is ontological – that is, concerned with the creation and interrelation of worlds of being' (Connor, 2010: 66-67).

Comparing this to what I established about *Sunset Song*, there is a correlation between the linguistic politics of myth and the epistemological concerns of modernism. This is perhaps why Hugh McDiarmid, in an essay on Scots letters, 'specifically links the case for an avant-garde expression of states of modern-consciousness to the wealth of ... idioms and folk beliefs' that is responsible for and caused by mythopoeia of Cospatric's culture (Watson, 1995: 144). For Chris Guthrie, myth and all the historical and geographical inheritance it confers are as much a way of experiencing the world and acquiring knowledge as 'learning in books' (Gibbon: 56).

This dichotomy of perception is at the heart of both Chris Guthrie's and the novel's central conflict; even up to the narrative's conclusion, there is ambiguity regarding the southern 'magic land' from which Chris feels the most pull: England, or the metropoli in Scotland's South? This is made more binary yet by the duality of 'you' in idiomatic communal usage and as the pronoun that mediates Chris Guthrie's inner dialectic – the battle between formal and pastoral educations (Gibbon: 40). This demonstrates how the modern world encroaches on myth on a cultural level and how these fragments create conflict within how that world is experienced.

Language in *Concrete Island* possesses an imperative quality, where naming something masters it and allows for the perception of its boundaries. The chapter in which Maitland's attempts to escape via the linguistic puppet of Proctor has a striking header that shows this: 'The naming of the island'" (Ballard: 151). The 'obscene words' are abandoned, however, leaving only the 'straggling fragments of Maitland's name' (Ballard: 153), thus solidifying his incarceration within the island and himself. 'Delirium' follows (Ballard: 155).

Indeed, there is something fragmentary and delirious about Robert Maitland's solipsistic imprisonment that makes it alarmingly difficult to imagine the urban wasteland. It is a 'small traffic island, some two hundred yards long and triangular in shape', and that is all the reader it told of its layout (Ballard: 11). The remainder of Ballard's description explains each element of this microcosm individually and relative to a London that lies beyond our view of his milieu. Anything else we might infer is from the semi-conscious wanderings of Maitland, who experiences the island never as one 'concrete' experience, but as an untenable bricolage of disjointed landmarks and uncertain realities.

Both titles evoke some attempt to comprehend the world, either by song or simple description. A syntactical examination of each reveals the philosophical shift we are questioning.

Sunset Song is, ostensibly, either a musically emphasized explicit description of the passage of time or the explicit admission of experiencing a natural phenomenon. Either way, the headlast nature of English language syntactical hierarchies (bookSHELF; farmHOUSE) gives semantic dominance to the latter word, 'Song'. It is primarily concerned with a modus operandi of understanding and knowledge, thus it suggests an epistemological metaphysic.

If we apply the same test to *Concrete Island*, we find that it is first an ontological premise;

the milieu is a fixed space that is isolated, which makes boundaries the key issue. It is concerned with the (im)permeability of the farthest reaches of a given space, the fixed nature of which is emphasized by the second phrase of the title's hierarchy. *Concrete Island* suggests a concern about what can exist.

The transition from modernism to post-modernism is not marked by some immediate formal change. Instead, the evidence suggests that there was a philosophical change that occurred either towards the end or just after the dusk of modernism. There is no working difference between the machineries of modernism and post-modernism; they are simply both the literary processing of different philosophical and cultural inputs. Post-modernism is therefore a response to the ontological shift we have herein examined; in as much as modernism was a response to the philosophical concerns of fin-de-siècle modernity and romanticism was a response to intellectual enlightenments.

In this article, *Sunset Song* and *Concrete Island* were examined with the intention of testing how modernism became postmodernism from the textual level up. In the process of doing so, several issues with the existing critical definitions of were addressed. Indeed, it was the purpose of this article to problematize the very act of making any statement about a cultural genre or period without at least considering the inverse view.

Some of these existing conceptions withstood pressure, and it seems that modernism and postmodernism could be responses to different phases of the same cultural and philosophical evolutionary process. The epistemological becoming ontological. Any difference found between them could be merely symptomatic of the cultural, political, technological, and economic stimuli that sparked them. For postmodernism, this includes the preceding stuff of modernism.

This conclusion stands in as much of an amorphous and endlessly contextualizing corpus as the two novels it analyzed, and it too may only find significance in response. A question of many texts requires a solution from many readers.

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Assessing historical interpretations of Stephen of Blois' personality

Serish Baseel

ABSTRACT

The conflict for the throne, between cousins Matilda and Stephen became a battle of not only wits, pride and identities, but also the unrelenting yet simultaneous continuation and challenging of socio-political norms of the Anglo-Norman world. Although both cousins ended the Anarchy on favourable terms, neither explicitly benefited. However, what the Anarchy highlighted for contemporary chroniclers and historians studying the period ever since is the behaviour of the two individuals, and the way in which the two were able to draw upon their behavioural traits to both benefit and hinder their efforts for the crown. Focusing on Stephen and his various interactions with Matilda, his court, his army and the general populace under his command, this essay will challenge some of the conclusions and assumptions made about Stephen by contemporary chroniclers and historians. It will conclude that historians conclusions of Stephen have been consistently formed in relation to Matilda, and independent of his cousin, Stephen could be viewed in a much more positive light.

KEYWORDS

Stephen, Anarchy, Matilda, personality.

Introduction

The fight for the crown between cousins Stephen of Blois and Empress Matilda after the death of Matilda's father Henry I in 1135, led to a nine-year civil war. The civil war has been categorised by historians such as Lehman (2011: 67) as a period of Anarchy, though this term has increasingly come under criticism for its misleading connotations. Both Stephen and Matilda's personalities have been extensively analysed and compared by contemporary historians such as Peers (2018) and Creighton and Wright (2017). Stephen's personality was assessed by chroniclers and historians ever since, in terms of his role in the period of the Anarchy and his competence as an effective king, primarily

in warfare and the running of his government. The traditional consensus is that Stephen 'was a man of energy but lacking in judgement, active in war, of extraordinary spirit in undertaking difficult tasks, lenient to his enemies and easily appeased, courteous to all' (WM: 29). This consensus is framed by the conclusions of William of Malmesbury, an English monk who lived in the time of Stephen's reign. However, revisionist historians such as Bruce O'Brien (2008) and Graeme White (2008) challenge this predominantly critical view. Although there is no clear definition of the term 'personality', it can be broadly defined as 'those characteristics of individuals that describe and account for consistent patterns of feeling, cognition, and behaving' (John, Robins and Pervin: 330). I will be discussing some of the ways in which historians have interpreted key factors that they consider to be significant to Stephen's personality, such as his dependency on others and whether or not he was gullible in nature, which in turn allowed individuals both within and outside his court to take advantage of him.

Stephen had a sound understanding of and capability in military affairs. This is exemplified by chroniclers firstly in his description as a fine soldier. *The Gesta Stephani* uses the Siege of Lincoln to exemplify Stephen's abilities as a soldier, as he 'refused to sully his fame by disgrace of flight, and arraying his columns with care and in good order, as a soldier should, boldly went out to meet them [the enemy] outside the town' (GS: 113). *The Gesta Stephani* (Deeds of King Stephen) is comprised of two books on English history from the first twelve years of Stephens reign to the accession of Henry II. Although the author of the text is unknown, R.H.C. Davis suggests that it was Robert of Lewes, the Bishop of Bath (1962: 210). Nevertheless, according to Kealey, being a strong soldier was an assumed quality of kings in the medieval period, therefore as the general tone of the *Gesta Stephani* is very much in favour of Stephen and his right to the throne, it would make sense for it to emphasise and possibly exaggerate the extent to which Stephen possessed the qualities it refers to (1972: 155).

Kealey's argument is undermined by other chroniclers such as Henry of Huntingdon, who depicts Stephen's bravery similarly to the *Gesta Stephani*, acknowledging Stephen's 'courageous and daring' nature (HH: 256). Henry of Huntingdon's text, the *Historia Anglorum*, is a history of England from as far as he could go back, to the accession of Henry II. However, Henry of Huntingdon 'was a severe critic of Stephen' (Wickson, 2015: 76). Therefore, his admission of Stephen's bravery counteracts Kealey's assessment of exaggeration in the *Gesta Stephani*. Green considers this courage to be the product of Stephen's desire to redeem his father's disgraced

reputation as a coward (2008: 13). This theory corresponds with the account of *Gesta Stephani* quoted above, as Stephen 'refused to sully his fame by disgrace of flight' (GS: 113), the exact thing his father was accused of doing (Green, 2008: 8). The fact that Green has chosen to highlight this shows that she considers this to be key in shaping Stephen's personality. This is linked to Davis' theory that Stephen's upbringing was predominantly what shaped his personality (1990, p. 8). However, Davis was writing at a time when the works of Sigmund Freud are influential, who speaks of the importance of the role of parents and childhood in shaping an individual (King and Lawley, 2016: 278). Thus, this way of thinking has influenced the way in which Stephen's personality is assessed. Developments in research into the effect of upbringing in the construction of personality have corresponded with Freud's suggestions on the importance of various factors such as culture and childhood relations (Schultz and Schultz, 2017: 9). Nevertheless, Stephen is depicted both by contemporary chroniclers and historians as being a highly courageous and able soldier.

However, apart from being a fine soldier, Stephen is criticised in terms of his military tactics. Although Thomas recognises that Stephen was reacting 'rationally, albeit ruthlessly to the conditions of a prolonged civil war' (2008: 55), he still portrays him in a negative light. For example, Stephen's plundering of lands is judged short-sighted as although he was momentarily financing his army, he did not consider the wider implications of the increased suffering it created. Thomas also claims that the plundering encouraged more violence against Stephen (2008: 49), however this is too simplistic a theory as there is no further evidence for this correlation and it is unlikely that there is a single reason for increased violence. Furthermore, it is disputed amongst historians whether there was increased violence in the reign of Stephen at all (Hollister, 1974: 239). Nevertheless, Thomas does also recognise that Stephen was always tactical, as he understood the importance of creating fear in others, and he did this through the wasting of lands by burning, kidnapping and torture, or the threat of it (2008: 52-54). However, Thomas tends to attribute Stephen's actions such as plundering and kidnapping, whether they were good tactics or not, to his personality, ignoring the fact that they were standard practices of European powers in the medieval period (Bradbury, 1990: 16). King, referencing Henry of Huntingdon, portrays Stephen in a negative manner, as he was soft spoken and could not speak to his troops, leading to Baldwin Fitz Gilbert having to speak to them instead (2012: 150). However, this does not necessarily have to be interpreted as a bad thing, as it can be interpreted as Stephen being aware of his weaknesses, and possessing the capability to delegate the

job to someone who was more befitting of such a role. Therefore, the assessment that Stephen was capable of handling military affairs and all that it involved is too simplistic, as although he was a competent soldier, his approach to warfare as a leader was weak and lacking consistency.

Honour and chivalry were Stephen's primary, unchanging characteristic, regardless of whether this was detrimental to his cause. For example, Stephen granted Matilda safe passage when she entered England in 1139, when he could have had her arrested and potentially ended any opposition towards him. This could be a part of the general Anglo-Norman etiquettes regarding warfare, that women were not to be targeted (Gillingham, 1994: 41). Stephen is also quoted by William of Malmesbury as having repeatedly asked 'When they have chosen me as king, why do they abandon me?' (HN: 41). This implies that Stephen regarded honour and loyalty to be the most important features of an individual. The *Gesta Stephani* also recognises Stephen's chivalrous nature, but assesses it as a positive feature, rather than a negative one as he was so respectful 'that he commonly forgot a king's exalted rank in many affairs, saw himself not superior to his men, but in every way their equal, sometimes actually their inferior' (GS: 22). However, this same quote allows Clanchy to conclude that Stephen's chivalrous nature allowed him to be taken advantage of, as whilst his supporters took advantage of his kindness, his enemies took advantage of his honour (2014: 111). However, Stephen's personality was not consistent, as he could be stubborn and vain, refusing to submit to his brother's high-handed suggestions (Kealey, 1972: 198), as in the case in the arrest of the bishops. Kealey does not come to a clear conclusion regarding Stephen's personality, as in this specific example, he has interpreted Stephen's dishonesty as a negative thing, whereas at other times, when Stephen is merciful and moral in his decisions, he is still criticised (1972: 202). Overall, historians have concluded that Stephen was generally an honourable man, regardless of the negative effect this may have had on him; however, there are also sporadic moments when his personality shifts to being sly and manipulative.

Stephen's weak decision-making skills allowed him to be taken advantage of, both within and outside of his court. A prime example that chroniclers and historians have used is the arrest of the bishops. Even the *Gesta Stephani*, although very much pro-Stephen, recognises the grave error in judgement Stephen made in allowing the arrest of the bishops (GS: 5). Furthermore, Stephen is further attributed with being weak at making decisions about his approach to foreign affairs, as he underestimated the importance of

Normandy in preserving his power (King, 2012: 140). Stephen also caused difficulties for himself by exchanging lands for patronage (Green, 2008: 26). Although a common tactic employed by leaders, Spencer suggests that 'such manipulation could be very dangerous if mishandled' (2014: 91). Henry of Huntingdon, who places emphasis on the assessment of character throughout his works, highlights how it was this exchange that led to so much opposition against Stephen (HH: 44), epitomised in the siege of Lincoln. The exchange of land for patronage was problematic as it implied factional favouritism as the barons in England believed that Stephen was giving his old Flemish friends priority at court (Crouch, 2009: 49). As a monk, William of Malmesbury felt very strongly about the affairs of the church, thus he considered acts that Stephen carried out against the church, such as the arrest of the bishops, the plundering of churches and churches belonging to clerks being sold to strangers, a grave sin (HN: 35-37), which explains why he speaks of Stephen in a negative manner. Although he acknowledges that Stephen's counsellors were the ones carrying out these acts, he still blames Stephen for them as he expects Stephen to be able to control his subjects and not be so easily influenced (VM: 37). Furthermore, William of Malmesbury considers Stephen's leniency and lack of judgement, as well as his 'spendrift' nature (HN: 33) to highlight how Stephen was weak at making the right decision. William of Malmesbury considers these errors in judgement to be 'unbefitting of a king' (HN: 45). Although William of Malmesbury claimed to be neutral, and to 'make no concession to favour ... without and colouring of falsehood' (HN: 113), his work was probably commissioned by Robert of Gloucester (HN: 44), a key opponent of Stephen, providing another explanation for his hostility towards Stephen.

However, although John of Worcester largely speaks of Stephen negatively, he still acknowledges Stephen's capabilities in decision making as he swiftly and effectively handled the Siege of Hereford in 1138 (JW: 243), showing that he was effective in decision making and executing the right decisions. Green agrees with this argument, and claims that Stephen's swift ascension to the throne showed that he had either been planning to claim the throne before Henry's death, or had made the split-second decision as soon as he had died (2008: 24). Both potential situations portray Stephen as being decisive in affairs that benefit him. King suggests that Stephen was reactive in nature, as he swiftly dealt with any physical or economic damage that was done, rather than stopping them from occurring in the first place (2002: 22), yet he ultimately managed administrative continuity despite political and military upheaval (White, 2008: 43). Regarding foreign affairs, Crouch recognises that although Stephen made the

wrong decision in 1137 to leave Normandy, as it allowed Matilda to bring the war to him, he made the right decision in not going back after 1141, as that would have been more detrimental for him (2008: 53). Using the marriage alliance of Stephen's twelve-year-old son to Louis VII's sister, Constance, Crouch argues that Stephen was aware of other European powers (2008: 49), as he would not have arranged something when his son was so young, if it was not necessary. McCarthy challenges this, arguing that marriage alliances of children were commonplace in medieval Europe, although he does acknowledge that they were almost always to ensure ties with other powers (2004: 88). However, this awareness of European powers does not necessarily mean Stephen made the right decisions. Thus, Crouch and Kealey conclude that Stephen could not be a good king as he simply did not possess the right characteristics for the role, such as authority and assertion and confidence (Kealey, 1972: 169). Furthermore, whilst Thomas identifies that there were serious problems with Stephen's royal government (2008: 56), what he does not acknowledge is that Stephen ultimately kept the government running, and at the start of his reign, the economy even prospered (Kealey, 1972: 210). Therefore, Stephen must have made some correct decisions for this to happen. Furthermore, although Thomas blames the problems of the royal government on Stephen, historians such as Stringer claim Stephen's decisions, whether good or bad, had nothing to do with the Anglo-Norman state (1993: 13). This is because the pipe rolls that contained the annual records of accounts showed that the state was already falling apart; Stephen was facing a losing battle.

Stephen was dependent on individuals who surrounded him to consolidate his power and rule the empire. Historians such as Davis and Appleby are keen to attribute Stephen's dependency on others to his upbringing. This is because Stephen's mother Adela was a highly assertive figure and using her position as Countess of Blois and the daughter of William the Conqueror, controlled and influenced all that her children, including Stephen, did. Adela sent Stephen to Henry I's court in 1111, where he spent his time being told what to do by his uncle (Davis, 1990: 4). Appleby therefore uses these examples to show that because Stephen was dependent on others throughout his childhood, similarly, he remained dependent on others throughout his reign (1969: 18). This argument also provides the premise for Stephen's dependency on his wife. Because of his upbringing, Stephen learnt to allow dominant women such as his mother and later in his life, his wife to take the reins. King highlights that Matilda of Boulogne, Stephen's wife, was the focus of the king's party for a long time (2012: 172) and Stephen himself, according to Johns had confidence in his wife's abilities

to support his political strategy (2003: 19). This is shown in the primary role Matilda of Boulogne played in the negotiations of Stephen's release in September after the siege of Lincoln in February 1141 (JW: 261). Apart from women, Stephen was also reliant on the support of his brother and barons in ensuring his kingship (Clanchy, 2014: 5). William of Malmesbury highlights how 'all his efforts would have been in vain had not his brother Henry ... eased his path' (HN: 29). However, it was the norm in medieval society for a ruler to rely on his subjects to act on his behalf (Horrox, 1995: 7). Therefore, Stephen is being criticised for something that was normal and expected in the medieval period.

Stephen's dependency on others is portrayed by historians such as Clanchy as a negative characteristic (2014: 66), when it does not have to be, as highlighted in the matter regarding Stephen choosing Baldwin Fitz Gilbert to speak to his troops. Similarly, Stephen being around strong women could be interpreted as a good thing as it would have made him aware of the capabilities of women, therefore he would have not underestimated Matilda's capabilities. Chroniclers are less critical of this characteristic as it was normal for kings to leave most of the work to members of their court (Davis, 1990: 45). For example, the *Gesta Stephani* talks of Henry of Blois' involvement as a mediator between Duke Henry and Stephen in 1153 (GS: 240). There are also examples of Stephen's dependency, primarily, in his ascension to the throne, as he had only a few people with him (Bradbury, 1990: 18), yet still went for the throne. Clanchy agrees with this argument, highlighting that it was determination that won Stephen the throne (2014: 110). Whilst Stephen is seen to be dependent on individuals such as his wife and brother, historians such as Clanchy have chosen to interpret this in a negative manner. Yet Stephen showed that he retained independence in some of his decisions.

Overall, despite the recognitions of certain favourable characteristics, by chroniclers and historians ever since, Stephen is largely seen as possessing a weak personality, especially not that befitting a king. This is the result of English historians' preference for strong kings (Tyerman, 1996: 120), thus interpreting and depicting Stephen in a negative way. Chroniclers' assessments are also problematic as they are inherently shaped by their political stance (Thomas, 2008: 141). Their motives vary, resulting in the varied accounts and depictions of Stephen. Bradbury also highlights that chroniclers only report the bad news (1990: 86), which is why Stephen is primarily seen in a negative manner. This is because negative events were against the norm, thus worthy of being recorded. Furthermore, as historians since the contemporary chroniclers have tended

to use the chroniclers uncritically as their sources for assessing Stephen's personality, this has resulted largely in a repeat of their prejudices and distortions without filter (O'Brien, 2008: 182). Historians such as Clanchy and Crouch have also looked solely at Stephen's personality to justify his failings, whereas more importance could reasonably be placed on wider historical changes in terms of Europe, empire and papacy. The key problem with interpretation of Stephen's personality is that he has been given one, definitive label about his ability as a king. This is too simplistic as his weakness and strengths have been highlighted in the different circumstances he faced. For example, Kealey highlights how Stephen showed prowess in battle, but in less material matters, he was heavily reliant on his advisors, 'susceptible to flattery and manipulative' (1972: 159).

Historians have reached varying conclusions regarding Stephen's personality. However, the analysis of his personality has been affected by the developments in psychology and the varying understandings of the definition of personality. Therefore, it is unclear as to whether the conclusions of various historians such as Kealey and Davis still apply based on these variations and developments. Although lacking sound judgement at times, such as in the arrest of the bishops in 1139, Stephen largely behaved in a manner that was expected of a medieval king. However, because of the nature of his competition, a powerful woman, Stephen has been treated with exceptional criticism. The constant comparisons between the two, and the apparent weakness shown by Stephen to a woman, made him more susceptible to criticism. More appreciation of Stephen, independent of Matilda would alleviate such expectations of superiority that are placed on him. Similarly, the role and influence of a powerful woman should not automatically result in her male counterpart receiving harsher assessment by both chroniclers and historians.

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A Reassessment of Stephen I's Reign

Stephen Thompson

ABSTRACT

Stephen, the last of the Norman kings, has been labelled as a weak and ineffective king by historians. That the dynastic tussle that saw England plunged into over a decade of civil war was avoidable, if only England had a stronger king. However, such criticisms are both unjust and inaccurate. While historians have begun to reassess Stephen's reign, the image that prevails is still one dominated by the assertions and arguments made by earlier historians. This article will challenge the long-held assessment of Stephen's by examining the formative years of his reign. It is within these formative years that Stephen not only establishes control over his new kingdom but achieves a decisive victory over Scotland while gaining recognition from France over the dukedom of Normandy. It is within these formative years, and without the blinding glare that the civil war creates, that the author argues the ability of Stephen can truly be judged. Furthermore, this article will further argue that Stephen acted within a manner expected of medieval kings of this period, and followed the precedents set by his predecessors.

KEYWORDS

Anarchy, policy, rebellion, allegiance, peace.

Introduction

The death of Henry I in 1135 exposed the potential fragility of inheritance within England. Henry died without a legitimate male heir, leading to the question of who would succeed him. The rules of inheritance were ambiguous at best, there was no legal reason for his daughter, Matilda, not to succeed her father, furthermore, primogeniture was not yet fixed within medieval society. However, a male heir was always preferable. Stephen seized the throne, with the support of the English barony. Although, the nagging question that was Matilda never ceased to plague Stephen's reign, and his position as king was undermined by his own oath to her. This dynastic tussle between Stephen, the king's favoured nephew, and Matilda, the daughter of Henry I, took centre stage in a reign that saw England plunged into what later historians such as Edmund King and

Charles Warren Hollister describe as the 'Anarchy'. Although the terminology has its roots in Victorian historiography and was coined by John Round (Crouch, 2011).

The traditional view of the 'anarchy' has seen historians label Stephen as weak and ineffective king. That he lacked the gifts of statesmanship, as well as the ruthlessness of a twelfth-century ruler (Barrow, 1956: 122; Poole, 1966: 132). This view is furthered by Charles Cronne, who argued that Stephen was a 'neither strategist nor tactician' and that his reign was 'calamitous sin of failure' (1970: 80). However, over recent years historians have begun to reassess the image of Stephen. Donald Matthew argues that while Stephen had his faults, his alleged failure as king 'is largely an historical illusion', and any assessment of Stephen's abilities are based on dubious assumptions (2001: 191). However, the image that prevails is still one dominated by the assertions and arguments made by earlier historians.

This article will challenge this long-held assessment of Stephen's reign and argue that historians have undervalued Stephen's abilities as king, who ultimately kept the crown until his death in 1154. However, this article knowingly excludes the events that took place during the period known as 'The Anarchy', 1139-1154. This is not an attempt to only show the highlights of a supposed troubled reign, but to demonstrate that Stephen's abilities as king were equal to medieval kings of this period. Furthermore that, for the unique circumstance that Matilda's invasion presented after 1139, Stephen was in nearly total control over England. This then leads to the question, can Stephen's reign and ability as king be fairly judged when the events of 'The Anarchy' are so heavily weighted in his assessment. Instead, this article will focus on the earlier moments of his reign and argue that Stephen's early military and diplomatic policies secured a fragile claim to the throne and established his regime. Furthermore, that largely speaking, his abilities as king were equal to other medieval kings of the day and followed the precedents set by his predecessors such as Henry I or William I.

A fundamental strategy to establish control in England was the creation of a significant number of new earldoms across England. Stephen, who was well established within Henry I's court, saw the importance of having good military minds in strategic positions as well as loyal men committed to his cause. The policy of promoting new men to higher roles followed historic precedents established by his predecessors, William Rufus (1087-1100) and Henry I (1100-1135). William Rufus, after the rebellion by Odo of Bayeux in 1088, gave significant royal lands to William de Warenne and created the earldom of Surrey as a reward for his loyalty (Clanchy, 2014: 54). While Henry I's policy

of creating 'new men' became, as the chronicler Orderic Vitalis recorded, famous, as not only did he lift 'from the dust men of common stock', he filled his government and royal court with them (*OV*, 11: 2). The scale of this policy is clearly demonstrated by comparing the number of earldoms prior to his succession in 1135, numbered at just six, and the number established by 1141, twenty-one (Matthew, 2001: 177). Furthermore, most, if not all, of these new appointments came within territory to which the king's influence was at its weakest, and at a time when his power was at its newest (Bradbury, 1996: 62). The intention was to not only create new earls that owed their status to their new king, but also to strengthen Stephen's authority within areas where it was under the most threat.

It was through the continuation of William and Henry's policy of promoting and creating 'new men' that helped Stephen to establish near total control over England (Crouch, 2000: 102). Furthermore, as Edmund King has argued, compared to Henry I's formative years, Stephen had made a 'credible start' (2002: 78). The aim of Stephen, along with William and Henry before him, was to create a new tier of support that owed their new-found position to their new king. By giving an earldom away as a response to a loyal subject's actions, not only were they demonstrating their wealth, but also demonstrating to their subjects that if they too were equally loyal, then they might find themselves with a new position within the royal court.

Stephen's policy of promoting and establishing 'new men' followed established royal tradition seen under Henry I. Yet the narrative presented by historians hardly supports the evidence. Cronne's assessment that he was 'neither a tactician nor a strategist' fails to truly resonate when one considers just this policy alone. Stephen placed his new earls strategically where his power and influence was weakest. He saw the tactical approach to appointments made by his successor, Henry, and followed a similar course. Furthermore, until the attempted invasion in 1139 by Matilda, Stephen was in total control over his new kingdom, a fact often overlooked by historians.

While I have argued that Stephen's policy of establishing new earls helped him gain near total control over his new kingdom, there were occasional disturbances and minor rebellions. One rebellion in particular has seen Stephen face significant criticism by both contemporary writers and later historians. The rebellion of Baldwin de Redvers' in 1136 was sparked when Baldwin refused to attend court in Oxford in protest to Stephen's refusal to grant him the castellanship of Exeter Castle. Stephen took the

refusal as a slight against him and his royal authority and he chose to make an example of him (King, 2012: 66). The rebellion was short, Stephen suppressed the revolt quickly, yet the manner of his victory has seen him receive substantial unfair criticism.

The criticism largely stems from the siege at Exeter Castle, where he was, unfairly, accused of being weak. The siege lasted nearly three months, yet the defenders, as the *Gesta Stephani* records, withstood the 'vigorously and energetically' advances of the king (GS: 34-5). However, the castle's two wells and provision ran out, forcing the defenders, and Baldwin's wife, to sue for peace (JW: 219; GS: 39). Initially, on the advice of his brother, Henry, Bishop of Winchester, Stephen refused their pleas and instead continued the siege (GS: 41). However, his barons argued that he had already won a 'complete victory', and therefore it was more 'consonant with his lofty position and more befitting royal clemency to grant life to suppliant prisoners' than passing the death penalty to those that had 'little life' left (GS: 43). Stephen was swayed by his barons, the garrison were allowed to leave on honourable terms, while Baldwin, who was not present at the siege, went into exile (JW: 219; GS: 43). The act of apparent mercy, at a moment in which victory was close, was seen in a negative light by contemporary writers such as the *gesta Stephani*.

The action taken at Exeter became, as contemporary chroniclers argued, the foundation of dissent in England. That, as Henry of Huntington, a monastic writer, records, Stephen 'took the very worst advice' (HH: 709). Henry of Huntington further argues that if Stephen had exercised justice against 'those who had betrayed him... there would not have been so many castles held against him later' (HH: 709). While John of Worcester stated that 'when all should be at peace through fear of the king, who should be as a roaring lion, there is in many places ... depopulation and devastation' (JW: 216-7). However, the assessment by Henry of Huntington was made with the benefit of hindsight. Henry of Huntington's *Historia Novella*, while first published in 1129, the sections containing details about Stephen's reign were not published until 1154. *The Chronicle of John of Worcester* ends five years into Stephen's reign in 1140 upon his death, missing out the majority of the period known as the 'Anarchy'. Stephen's leadership at Exeter was effective, he suppressed a rebellion with speed and without major loss of life. Furthermore, as Jim Bradbury argues Stephen not only acted 'promptly, effectively and successfully', he also acted in the same manner of Henry I in many of his smaller rebellions (1996: 28). Therefore, the manner in which contemporary chroniclers condemn Stephen falls short of reality.

Not only was Stephen's victory at Exeter swift, as already stated, it fitted within well-established medieval siege warfare tactics. Both his predecessors engaged in making terms with leaders of rebellions. William II faced a similar rebellion within the first year of his reign. The rebellion led by his uncle, Odo of Bayeux, much like the siege of Exeter Castle, lasted a significant amount of time and ran out of provisions, leading to those defending to make terms (OV, 8: 129). Again, much like Stephen, William initially denied them any terms, but was 'convinced' by his barons to allow the defenders to leave (OV, 8: 133). The critical difference between the rebellion of Baldwin de Redvers and that led by Odo of Bayeux was scale. As Robert Bartlett has noted, the rebellion by Baldwin was a 'personal one' that encompassed nothing more than his own men, while Odo was assisted by a number of barons and eventually led to the major revolt in favour of William's brother Robert (2000: 52). Henry on a number of occasions made terms with those who rebelled against his rule, in 1101 Orderic Vitalis records that Henry I deposed William de Warenne of his earldom after a rebellion, only to reinstate him around 1102-03 (OV, 6: 14). Furthermore, Stephen's successor, Henry II, was famed for the clemency he granted against his enemies (Bartlett, 2000: 59).

Another key omission by the chroniclers is the rebellion of Robert of Gloucester.

Robert, the half-brother of Matilda, renounced his allegiance to Stephen in 1138. Stephen aimed to deal with the rebellion with the same speed and effectiveness as at Exeter and laid siege to Shrewsbury Castle. However, while the siege was short, the garrison inside refused to make terms and instead pushed for a total victory or defeat. After Stephen had successfully taken the castle, having been angered by the reaction to his apparent weakness in other sieges, ordered the execution of 'about ninety-three of the men who had defied him' (OV, 6: 520-1). Why Stephen chose to execute these men and not those at Exeter is unknown, but the stakes were significantly higher, and the garrison refused to surrender or make terms. With that, the likely reason was to instil fear into those who rebelled and those who refused to deal. However, long term victory over Robert would take more than a single siege.

From these examples it can be argued that Stephen only acted in a manner that was expected or typical of a king at this time. Jim Bradbury notes, the execution of opponents was not common practice during this period, instead banishment or reconciliation was preferred (1996: 30). However, when execution was needed, as it was during Robert's rebellion, he was not afraid to use it. Furthermore, it can also be argued that Stephen, like William II, took the advice of his barons to curry favour amongst them, an argument

the *Gesta Stephani* explicitly makes by stating Stephen accepted the barons pleas so 'that he might win their closer attachment and have them more devoted to his service' (GS: 43). Crucially, Stephen crushed Baldwin's rebellion swiftly, without major loss of life and secured the kingdom in a manner befitting the expectations of a chivalric king of the twelfth century.

The arrest of the bishops has often been framed as the 'fatal blunder' by Stephen. Since William Stubbs in 1892, the arrest of the bishops has been framed by historians as the 'fatal blunder' by Stephen (Yoshitake, 1988: 97). That arresting his chief Justiciar, Roger of Salisbury, he lost the support of the church and his key administrative mind behind his realm (Poole, 1966: 136). However, Kenji Yoshitake argues that on closer scrutiny of the evidence the traditional assessment can no longer be upheld (1988: 97). Financially and militarily, the arrests were a success. Prior to the arrests both William of Malmesbury and the *Gesta Stephani* comment that Stephen had exhausted his treasury on the defense of his crown (HN: 75; GS: 81). However, with the arrest of the bishops the royal treasury was replenished (Poole, 1966: 137), with the *Gesta Stephani* stating that he 'came to enjoy the fruit of others' toil' (GS: 81). Not only did Stephen replenish his finances, there is an argument that he potentially stopped his Matilda from gaining a key foothold within England.

Prior to the arrests many of Stephen's courtiers, not unreasonably, distrusted Roger and his nephews, Alexander and Nigel, and they alleged that they were planning to turn their castles over to Matilda (Kealey, 1972: 175; Poole, 1966: 137). This suspicion seems justified based on the account by the chronicler, John of Worcester, who states that 'the castle of Devizes was being held against' Stephen (JS: 245/7). With the accusations of potential treason, and through the advice of his council, Stephen arrested the bishops and seized their property. Whether the arrests were born from a genuine fear or not, is unclear, and as Edward Kealey argues, 'there is no decisive evidence one way or another' (1972: 178). However, within months Matilda, along with Robert, invaded England, leading to Edward King arguing that Stephen had acted just in time (2012: 114). Furthermore, with the advice from his barons suggesting treason, and the castle at Devizes being apparently being held against him, Stephen was left with a choice, believe his chief Justiciar, Roger, or pre-emptively strike and remove any chance of his treason. However, Stephen's actions justified or not, gave a much-needed boost to his financial and military resources. A boost that had helped enabled him to fund an expensive campaign against both Matilda and Robert.

An area which is often overlooked by both contemporary historians and modern historians is Stephen's approach to diplomacy with traditional rivals. Not only does Stephen show a clear strategic and dedicated path towards his diplomatic dealings with both the Scottish and French crowns, he maintains them throughout his reign. Stephen took a passive stance towards Scotland, preferring peace with David of Scotland (1124-1153) over war. This policy is perfectly demonstrated shortly after Stephen seized the throne and David invaded the north of England and seized both Newcastle and Carlisle. Stephen looked to secure his fragile throne by using diplomacy with Scotland rather than wasting crucial resources and man power on a war with them. He looked to establish a meaningful peace that would last long enough for him to establish his throne and crucially his northern most boarder.

The decision to seek diplomatic peace was, as William of Malmesbury noted, made easier for Stephen. David 'from the mildness of character' and his advancing age was unwilling to offer a pitched battle, preferring instead 'to pass into tranquility' (HN: 31). It was in these conditions that William of Malmesbury further argued that Stephen 'had no difficulty in obtaining from' David what he desired 'whether it were of a genuine or a pretended peace' (HN: 31). The truce, whether genuine or pretend, secured his northern border allowing Stephen to concentrate his resources within his newly acquired kingdom. Furthermore, by gaining a truce between Scotland and England, David had accepted the legitimacy of Stephen's claim to the throne, a prize that far outweighed the cost of losing Carlisle in the negotiations.

However, in 1138 David reneged on the peace agreement with Stephen and invaded the north of England. Both the *Gesta Stephani* and Orderic Vitalis believed David's decision was heavily influenced by Empress Matilda, with the rebellion by Robert of Gloucester renouncing his allegiance to Stephen in favour of his half-sister Matilda creating the perfect moment for David to exploit (GS: 25; OV, 6: 518-9). After a number of skirmishes and encounters, the war with David culminated in the Battle of the Standard on the 22 August 1138. Not only did the battle become one of the greatest set-piece battles of the period, it was also a resounding victory for Stephen that saw at least 10,000 Scots killed while English casualties were minimal (Matthew, 2002: 79; King, 2012: 93). Stephen's reaction to David's invasion was recorded by Henry of Huntington, who stated that Stephen waged war to such an extent that David 'was forced to make peace with him' (HH: 719). Stephen, like before, wished to establish peace with Scotland and peace with his wife's own uncle.

However, the peace agreed by Stephen has gained mixed reaction with later historians. Stephen gave away valuable concessions in order to gain a significant and lasting truce with Scotland, significantly, the terms look more favourable to Scotland than the last set (Matthew: 81; King, 2012: 93). However, as Donald Matthew's argues Stephen may not have seen the concessions 'as shameful surrender of national territory' but the attempt to restore 'good relations' with a dangerous enemy (2001: 70). Furthermore, the Battle of the Standard and Scotland's defeat helped to cement the northern barons' commitment to Stephen, a commitment that remained crucial throughout the civil war with Matilda, and one that lasted until his death in 1154 (Bradbury, 1996: 37). While Stephen made on two occasions significant concessions to Scotland, he received recognition of his status as king from the Scottish crown. A prize highly sought after, considering David was the uncle to Stephen's main rival to the English throne. The peace agreed, both in 1136 and in 1138, allowed Stephen to concentrate his resources on rebellions within England and on Matilda's claim to the crown. Furthermore, the manner of the victory at The Battle of the Standard, improved his relations with his northern barons, which played a critical role in the civil war with Matilda.

Throughout his reign, Stephen displayed both strategic and tactical ability within his military and diplomatic ventures. At the sieges of Exeter, Shrewsbury and Bristol, Stephen not only displayed his tactical ability to win, but also displayed the qualities expected of a medieval king of the time, mercy, brutality and marital ability being key. Furthermore, relations with both his domestic and continental counterparts, secured significant and lasting peace with two nations that, until that point were bitter and constant military rivals, a position which returned after Stephen. While the first peace treaty with Scotland ended with renewed hostilities, the second, for the most part, held. The policy of peace that Stephen followed with Scotland enabled him to concentrate his resources his domestic issues and the dynastic war that was unfolding.

The biggest label of failure attributed to Stephen were his actions during the arrest of the bishops. Here, Stephen was accused of weakness and self-sabotage. Yet, the facts fail to truly deliver the verdict. The three bishops - Roger of Salisbury, Alexander bishop of Lincoln and Nigel bishop of Ely - whether rightly or wrongly, were accused of serious treasonous crimes, which if true gave the king no other course but to act. While it can be argued that Stephen was fed misinformation surrounding his key administrator, the accusations were too serious for the king not to act in some form. Furthermore, if the bishops were guilty of conspiracy, not only did Stephen secure valuable resources and

wealth, he also removed a potential key supporting of his rival.

Diplomatically, Stephen can be accused of attempting to appease David; however he cannot be accused of having no strategic plan or being successful in his endeavors. Peace with Scotland secured the northern border and allowed Stephen to concentrate his military resources on securing England. Furthermore, the manner of victory over Scotland in 1138 cemented the northern barons, an area traditionally rebellious towards their king, loyalty towards Stephen.

Overall, Stephen's reign has been condemned as a poor king that failed to control his kingdom. However, while there are examples of failure on his part, overall Stephen acted within the expectations of a king, and, for the most part, successfully. As Donald Matthew's perfectly sums up, if Stephen was that tactically or strategically inept, then why was Stephen 'not overthrown and replaced by his allegedly superior rivals' (2001: 191).

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