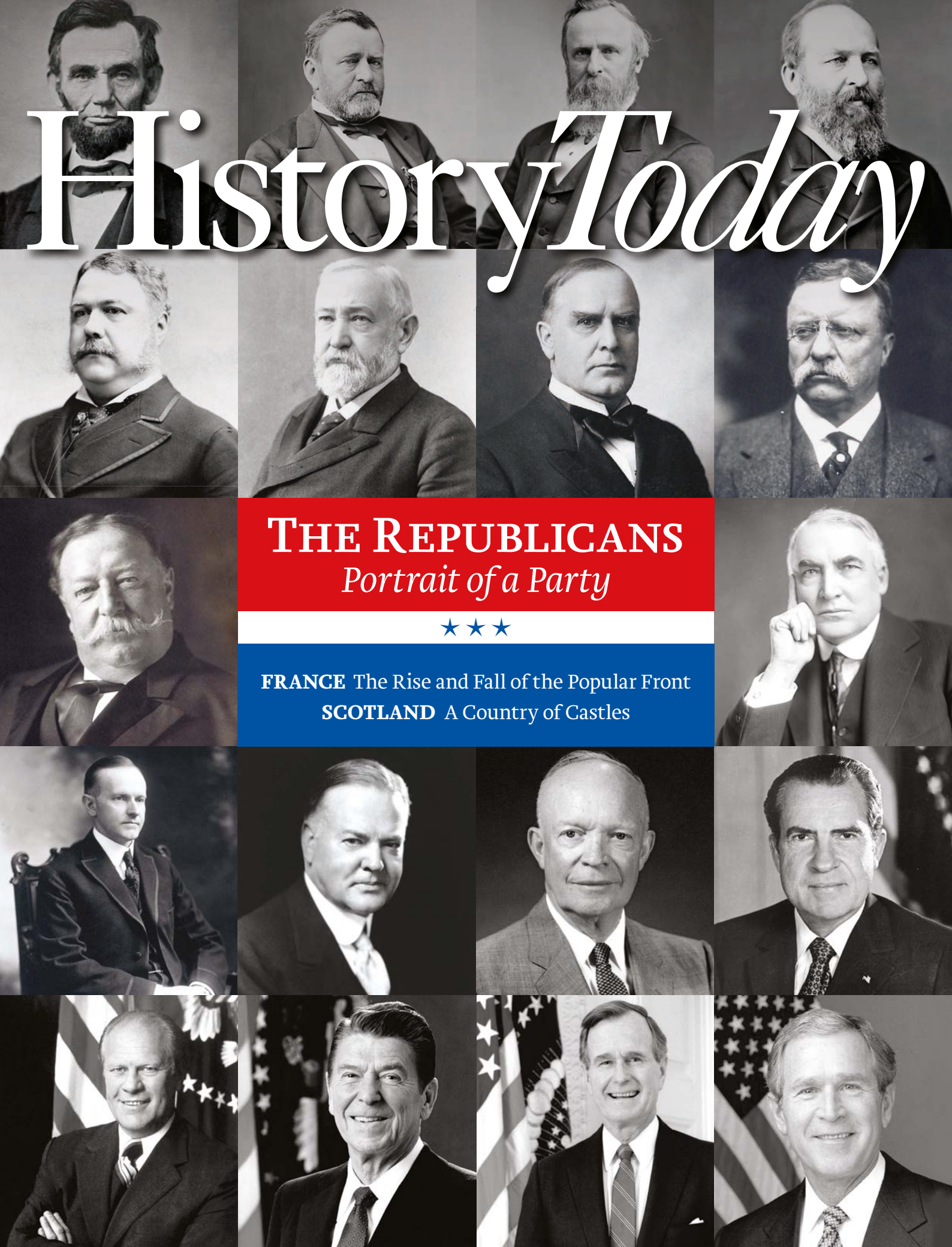# History*Today*

THE REPUBLICANS
Portrait of a Party

★ ★ ★

FRANCE The Rise and Fall of the Popular Front
SCOTLAND A Country of Castles

Graphic history: an extract from Caputo and Clarke's *Debating Truth*.

FROM THE EDITOR

'THIS IS BRILLIANT, er, this is terrible. I don't know', was the reaction from one social media commentator on seeing the cover of a striking new publishing venture. *Debating Truth: The Barcelona Disputation of 1263* is the work of Nina Caputo, Associate Professor of History at the University of Florida, and South African illustrator, Liz Clarke. A 'Graphic History', published by Oxford University Press, it deals with the debates held in the Catalan city during the summer of 1263 between Nahmanides (Rabbi Moses ben Nahman), a Jewish theologian from nearby Girona, and a Dominican friar, Paul. They had been invited to the court of King James I of Aragon to discuss, before a distinguished panel of jurors, the competing claims of Judaism and Christianity over the status of the Messiah. *The Beano* this isn't.

What makes this work so intriguing – and why those with a prejudice against the graphic novel should overcome it, at least this once – is that Caputo tells the story from the perspective of Nahmanides, whose heroic defence of Judaism and its traditions came up against the polemics of a churchman grounded in rabbinical literature; the reader identifies with the rabbi, cheers him on, but shares his doubts, too. That court scenes make for great drama is a well established tradition, and readers, drawn in by Clarke's illustrations and the high stakes of the argument, will find themselves swinging one way or another, as two brilliant minds clash. Even at a distance of 750 years, it is compelling.

Like *History Today*, *Debating Truth* aims to shed light on the workings of history, to reveal what historians *actually* do: it includes a comprehensive survey of primary source material; the context in which the debate took place; and the historiography, all ably marshalled by Caputo, as well as a thorough list of further reading for those who want to discover more about this period of history.

The question at the heart of *Debating Truth* is: how do competing religions, rival faiths, discuss their theological differences in a civilised forum? Could any question be more relevant to the modern world? That social media commentator was right to think that *Debating Truth* could have gone terribly wrong. That it does not is testament to the skill of Caputo and Clarke.

Paul Lay

History*Matters*

ISIS and Islam • Hamilton the Musical • Smithfield Joust • Abuse in Ireland

In Hock to Bad History

History is often skewed to support a chosen view, but, for ISIS, a past derived from questionable sources has proved a powerful weapon.

James Wakeley

ISIS IS AN ORGANISATION as fascinating as it is abhorrent. It is not too cavalier to characterise it as the world's bloodiest historical re-enactment society.

The chief conceit upon which ISIS bases its legitimacy is that it is practising Islam as lived by the prophet and his companions. Surrounded by enemies of Allah on all sides, it is its duty to wage jihad to give God's sovereignty physical form. As Muhammad fought the polytheists of Mecca after fleeing to Medina, so must ISIS attack those it sees as analogous to the prophet's foes: in effect, all who reject its version of Islam.

The group's online magazine, *Dabiq*, contains a regular feature entitled 'From the Pages of History'. Complete with pictures of its fighters in mock-medieval dress, ISIS presents examples of exemplary warrior behaviour from Islam's early history to exhort its sympathisers to Holy War. The closing paragraphs of a piece on 'The Expeditions, Battles and Victories of Ramadan' make this purpose explicit:

This is how as-Salaf as-Sālih (the Righteous Predecessors) were in it! Jihad, battles, and action ... do not allow another Ramadan after this one to pass you by except that you have marched forth to fight for Allah's cause.
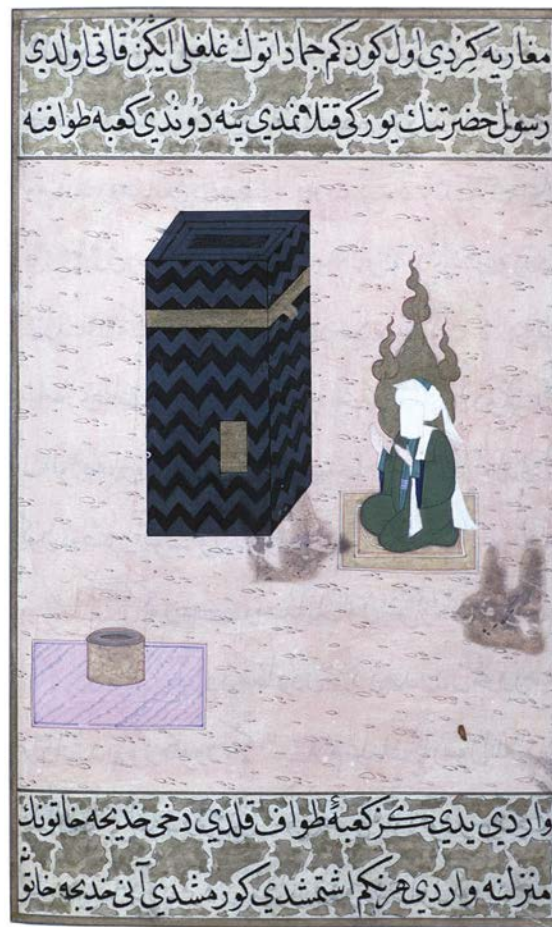
Blurred past: Muhammad praying before the Kaaba in Mecca, Turkish, 16th century.

ISIS is hardly innovative in looking to the past to build a purer Islamic present. Its insistence that the true faith only existed in the generation of Muhammad and his immediate successors is taken in large part from the writings of modern Islamist intellectuals, such as the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb. Originally a nationalist whose development of extreme Islamist doctrines led to his execution in 1966, Qutb argued that all societies that fail to abide by the totality of the sharia, even if they are ostensibly Muslim, are in the

same state of *jāhilīyya* (ignorance) that Islam came to correct. Allowing this situation to continue is unconscionable: it disrupts the natural order of God's law and enslaves man to authorities beyond the only true authority, Allah.

For Qutb, preaching correction was not enough. As he says in his influential tract, *Milestones*: 'Since the objective of the message of Islam is a decisive declaration of man's freedom ... in the actual conditions of life, it must employ jihad.'

Qutb delved into the annals of Islamic history to justify this verdict. He extracted telling episodes and choice quotes from the mouths of the

The chief conceit upon which ISIS bases its legitimacy is that it is practising Islam as lived by the prophet and his companions

men who fought in the armies of the seventh-century Arab conquests. One scene that he seems to have taken from the 10th-century historian and exegete Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, for example, has an Arab warrior declare to his Persian enemy that he is impelled by God to fight them until they either convert or until he is martyred. There can simply be no other way.

Qutb's philosophy became terrifyingly influential in Egypt and across the Middle East. Among the disciples who sought to enact the master's creed was Ayman al-Zawahiri, one of the founders of al-Qaeda.

Yet the use to which Qutb and ISIS put the texts of Islamic history begs an important, if not obvious, question. Is this legitimate scholarly use or lethally misleading abuse? ▶

Trying to reconstruct the early history of Islam from the texts of the tradition is a task fraught with difficulties. Cardinal tomes like the *History of the Prophets and Kings* by al-Tabari are not primary sources for the history of the faith. They were compiled about two centuries after the events they describe and were ultimately reliant on a mercurial oral tradition that forgot as much material as it remembered.

Moreover, these memories, as ever with oral tradition, were shaped to suit the assumptions and expectations of later ages, rather than to transmit accurate recollections from generations past. The Islamic histories often read more like historical romances than the

How is it possible to reach beyond the rhetoric better to understand the first century of Islam?

accurate record they pretend to be, containing stereotyped episodes like that of the Muslim warrior explaining the philosophy of jihad to a Persian general. It clearly suits a literary scheme, but the notion that it captures more than an echo of the chaotic events of the seventh-century conquests borders on the incredible.

How, then, is it possible to reach beyond the rhetoric better to understand the first century of Islam? This is a question that has dominated recent western work on the subject and a question that is impossible fully to answer. By widening the source base and stressing the importance of earlier texts outside the Islamic tradition, however, it is possible to try to get a more nuanced idea of the complex and dramatic events that shaped the career of Muhammad and propelled his followers to conquest.

Two interesting accounts preserved in the pages of the Byzantine chroniclers Theophanes the Confessor and the Patriarch Nicephorus, for instance, tell the story of the outbreak of the seventh-century conquests in a manner that directly challenges the assumptions of the Islamic tradition. These histories may admittedly be compilations made later than the seventh century, but there is good reason to believe that they rely on written evidence contemporary to the events they describe: a more stable

means for the transmission of information than an oral tradition.

They explain the outbreak of the supposedly Islamic invasions of the 630s in a manner that hardly resonates with the jihadist notion of Arabs moving out of the peninsula, driven solely by religious zeal. Rather, Theophanes and Nicephorus paint a picture of the breakdown of Rome's relationships with the Arab clients to whom it had entrusted the security of its desert frontier. This rupture had solely material causes. After a long war with Persia, the Empire's coffers were empty. Theophanes reveals that, when the Arab allies came to collect their wages, they were dismissed empty handed by an imperial official.

This decision had major strategic ramifications. An earlier raid on Palestine from the Hijaz had been repelled, but Theophanes records that the spurned Arab clients 'went over to their fellow tribesmen, and led them to the rich country of Gaza'. The collapse of Rome's eastern provinces, therefore, appears – as was the case with the fall of Rome in the West – to have come about, at least partially, when federate forces deprived of payment came to realise that biting the hand that feeds can lead to greater rewards.

Holy War, for some of the men remembered as the soldiers of Islam, did not enter into consideration. ISIS, therefore, is in hock not only to a novel Islamist ideology that rejects centuries of Islamic thought and practice. They are also in hock to bad history.

James Wakeley is studying for a DPhil in late Roman and early Islamic History at the University of Oxford.

Alternative Histories by Rob Murray

WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 1307

EDWARD LONGSHANKS

ROB MURRAY

'Legacy. What is a legacy?'

Hamilton is changing perceptions of America's past for the better.

Annette Gordon-Reed

DESPITE THE public's craving for books about the founding of the United States – works on the American Revolution and the Founding Fathers seem to roll off the presses on a daily basis – Americans have been less keen on theatrical or cinematic depictions of their origins. There is *1776*, a popular stage musical that appeared in 1969 and later became a movie, and, from 2008, HBO's acclaimed mini-series *John Adams*, adapted from David McCullough's blockbuster biography. However, compare these and other less memorable efforts with the number, variety and influence of portrayals of the American Civil War and its aftermath. Two of the most popular films of all time, D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* and David O. Selznick's *Gone With the Wind*, told the story of this period with such power that they helped shape (or perhaps warp), to this very day, attitudes about slavery and the meaning of the war that ended it. Whatever one thinks of their substance, both are examples of art as a potent cultural and political phenomenon.

Now it appears that, on a smaller scale, and in a decidedly more positive way, the American Revolution may finally have found its own powerful cultural and political phenomenon in the form of a Broadway musical about the life and times of America's first Secretary of the Treasury. *Hamilton* is the most widely acclaimed and discussed American musical, perhaps of all time. Since its Broadway debut a year ago, it has taken on a life of its own off stage, building a fan base almost cultish in its devotion. The original cast recording shot to the top of the charts immediately after its release. The play's very personable creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, has won numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize. As its crowning achievement, *Hamilton* garnered a record 16 Tony

Young, scrappy and hungry: Christopher Jackson, Lin-Manuel Miranda and Anthony Ramos in *Hamilton*, 2015.

nominations, ultimately winning 11, including the Best Musical of the Year.

Hamilton's appeal crosses generations; from schoolchildren who can recite all the lyrics to its score, to adults who have had to accustom themselves to the cadences of the rap songs that are interspersed with more traditional Broadway melodies. The President and First Lady of the United States are avid and vocal fans. In fact, it was at a White House event that Miranda declared his belief that a hip-hop version of Alexander Hamilton's life made sense, much to the apparent amusement of the audience. Few artists have ever had the occasion for a heartier and more deserved 'last laugh' than Miranda.

So what makes *Hamilton* so special? Why has it struck so deep a chord with such a wide audience? The aesthetic value is clear. Miranda is an enormously talented songwriter. His knowledge of both the Broadway musical canon and hip-hop have enabled him to create a piece of theatre that is at once accessible and edgy. But just as important as its artistic merits is *Hamilton*'s political sensibility. It is an unabashed celebration of the American Founding and the Founding Generation; not a thing one expects to see at a time when adopting a more critical stance about that era has become the order of the day. Certainly academic historians of the years that

Hamilton mainly covers – the 1770s up until Hamilton's death in 1804 – are keen to question the triumphant story of the birth of the American Union: the American Revolution was ultimately a good thing, but not for African-Americans or Native Americans; the so-called Founding Fathers were great men, but they believed in white supremacy and made their peace with slavery.

Miranda creates a Hamilton who is far more palatable to modern sensibilities than the real man would probably be

How, then, has *Hamilton* managed to bypass the more critical take on the Founding and still receive the well wishes of even the most sceptical historians, along with those of an adoring public? The answer lies in the casting. The actors portraying Hamilton, Washington, Jefferson and the other major characters are all people of colour. The only characters portrayed by white actors are George III and a British Loyalist. This cross-racial casting shapes the audience's response to the play. If one of the principal concerns about the leaders of the early American Republic is their ill treatment of people of colour, having people of colour portray these

men neutralises that concern in a way that casting a white actor could not. Consider George Washington. It would seem impossible not to fall under the spell of the actor Christopher Jackson. A black man, Jackson, inhabits the character of the white slave-owning Washington, giving the audience permission to think about something besides Washington's status as a slave-owner and focus on his other achievements. He led Americans to victory in war, managed the difficult first years of the Republic and voluntarily gave up power, thus allowing for the orderly transition from one leader to another. Whether this suspension of reality about race during this period is a benign thing will, undoubtedly, be one of the most debated features of the play for years to come.

And then there is Alexander Hamilton himself. As is his perfect right, Miranda creates a Hamilton who is far more palatable to modern sensibilities than the real man would probably be. The real Alexander was a champion of what we call today 'the one per cent', who had much less faith in 'the people' and democracy than his nemesis, Jefferson. He argued that the president of the United States should serve on good behaviour, in other words, for life, barring misdeeds. The play links Hamilton to America's uplifting 19th- and 20th-century immigration narrative, but he had no fondness for immigrants. Although to his great credit he was forward-thinking on racial matters, Hamilton was not the committed abolitionist the play makes him out to be. With all this said, *Hamilton* was never meant to be a documentary. As a creative work it seeks to tell its own truths in its own ways. Still, there is concern that Miranda's version of Alexander Hamilton will come to shape the public's view of the man and his times. If, as Miranda and others suggest, the play leads people to seek out the facts about the historical Hamilton – and there are more ways than ever to do that – the chances are that this will not happen.

Annette Gordon-Reed is Professor of History and Law at Harvard University. She is the author, with Peter S. Onuf, of *Most Blessed of the Patriarchs: Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of the Imagination* (Liveright, 2016).

Woodville versus the Bastard

The Smithfield Joust of 1467 was a triumph for Edward IV and his dynasty.

Emma Levitt

'*LAISSEZ ALLER*' cried a herald as Woodville and the Bastard charged courageously on horseback, carrying sharp spears, each ready to strike the other. But, alas, they missed. One charge without a tilt and with sharp spears was all that the tournament challenge had prescribed on this occasion. So for the Smithfield crowds the perilous joust was over, which must have made for a rather anticlimactic end. It was in the next contest, the tourney, a fight on horseback using swords, when an explosive incident occurred: a violent clash between the knights, which left the Bastard pinned under his horse. This had the potential to ruin Edward IV's diplomacy aims, a disastrous outcome given that the Smithfield tournament was not intended purely for entertainment. It had a real political value.

On June 11th and 12th, 1467 the most spectacular tournament of the age was held at Smithfield in London. Edward declared a public holiday and commoners, unable to enter the enclosure, climbed trees to obtain a glimpse of the combatants. The tournament was integral to the diplomatic relationship between England and Burgundy, which included negotiations for a marriage treaty between Duke Charles the Bold and Margaret of York, sister of Edward. In addition, it also proved that England could compete with the international glamour of the Burgundian court, which was known for its decadent displays of chivalry. Following the disastrous reign of Henry VI, Edward presented the practice of chivalry as the antidote to England's humiliation and to restore his dented masculinity. The tournament was a way of emphasising the validity of his rule by impressing the Burgundian visitors and the City of London with the authority and splendour of his court. Indeed, the propaganda of 1467 was so successful that the Smithfield tournament became a model for the great Tudor tournaments of Henry VIII.

Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales, was selected as the English challenger, standing in for the king, who had chosen not to compete but to preside over the fighting. Woodville's rapid rise at the Yorkist court was in part because his sister, Elizabeth Woodville, was Edward's queen. But the choice also owed something to his own athletic prowess, as he had a reputation for knightly feats of arms and literary accomplishments. It was important that Woodville embodied the chivalrous ideal, as he represented the masculinity of both Edward and England. It was not just Woodville's manhood that was at stake here but the manhood of England.

Medieval manhood on display: jousting knights, an illustration from an English manuscript, 15th century.

The person selected to be Woodville's opponent in this challenge was Antoine, the Bastard of Burgundy. He was publicly acknowledged as the natural son of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy and was one of the most renowned jousters in Europe.

On the first day of the Smithfield tournament, in the tourney Woodville spurred his horse into action and was seen to ride violently against the Bastard and crash into him, the shock of the collision knocking the Bastard down to the ground, where he lay with his horse on top of him. He was not seriously hurt but his horse was badly injured and died soon after. It was declared that the collision had been an accident but some of the surviving chronicles disagree. One eyewitness believed that there was a 'pyke of iron' on Woodville's horse armour, which struck the Bastard's horse. Any suggestion of dishonourable behaviour in the tourney reflected badly on Edward and the English court, both of whom Woodville represented. The Bastard was offered another horse but, unsurprisingly, he decided to call an end to the fighting and so concluded the first day.

On the following day, June 12th, in foot combat, Woodville and the Bastard struck with such force that they cut gashes in each other's armour and it seemed inevitable that the fight would end in the death of one or both. They had lost all control of themselves, fighting as though on the battlefield in a very real and aggressive display of miniature warfare; so much so that Edward was forced to intervene before it was clear who had won (or lost), bringing the combat to an abrupt ending by calling 'whoo!' By doing this, Edward's position at the apex of the chivalric hierarchy was reaffirmed, as only he could stop the fight. Both Woodville and the Bastard had fought valiantly in the Smithfield tournament and they ended as acknowledged equals, which was made explicit in their promise not to fight again.

The commitment of both Woodville and the Bastard to a distinct form of chivalrous manhood, reliant on strength and bravery, was unequivocal at the 1467 Smithfield tournament. Despite the obvious levels of danger, both were prepared to risk death and injury on behalf of their rulers as part of a wider display of Anglo-Burgundian relations.

As for Edward, he used the Smithfield tournament to promote his kingship and that of the Yorkist dynasty and as a challenge to those who might seek to deny his right to the throne. By regulating the fight between Woodville and the Bastard, his position within chivalric manly culture was assured.

Emma Levitt completed a PhD at the University of Huddersfield on jousting and masculinity in the reigns of Edward IV and Henry VIII.

In shadow: the Papal Cross in Phoenix Park, Dublin, Ireland.

'Whose idea was it?'

State policy, clerical abuse and the intellectually disabled in 1950s Ireland.

David Kilgannon

They took the liberty of doing things … an awful lot of evil things … I was only a young, innocent boy and I went through evil things that I didn't want to go through. I went through their devilish hands … I was only dirt

SO READS THE pseudonymous account of 'Graham' from the 2009 Report of the 'Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse' (The Ryan Commission). Graham was sexually abused as a child at a Catholic-run special-needs institution, Our Lady of Good Counsel in Glanmire, Co. Cork. Tragically, Graham's experience was far from exceptional. The publication of many recent reports all go to show the widespread abuse of vulnerable children in Catholic-run institutions in 20th-century Ireland and, in particular, the abuse of intellectually disabled children within institutions designed for their care. Concluding his testimony, Graham posed a question: 'Whose idea was it to grab children and fill their schools up … [without the authorities] knowing what was going on?'

Answering Graham's question is challenging and requires an examination of state policy towards intellectually disabled children in the 1950s. This was a pivotal period for disability care, in which Catholic-run institutions became the central component of Irish state

disability policy. Indeed, their capacity more than doubled through the 1950s.

A predominant force shaping state policy was that of 'subsidiarity'. This idea, which originated in Pope Pius XI's 1931 encyclical (a papal letter sent to all the bishops), *Quadragesimo Anno*, held that 'the task of the state … was to facilitate activity by other groups and persons within the community but not to supersede these if they were working with reasonable efficacy'. In the case of the intellectually disabled, this meant encouraging the development of voluntary sector efforts to care for this group. The state should not involve itself directly in the care of the disabled; such

The state should not involve itself directly in the care of the disabled; such an idea was 'a great evil and disturbance of right order'

an idea was 'a great evil and disturbance of right order'. The spread of subsidiarity was aided by a more general shift in governance from the late 1940s, as the state became 'more totally committed to Catholic concepts'.

A second probable reason lies in bureaucratic inertia within the Department of Health. Minutes from a department meeting in November 1953 show that there were three possible avenues 'for providing [further] accommodation for mental defectives': Catholic-run institutions, Catholic-managed institutions with lay staff, or institutions operated

by local councils. Yet the only one to be considered was Catholic-run institutions. At the same meeting, Dr Dolphin, a senior civil servant in the department, noted his plans, already in place, to visit a number of religious orders to 'enquire into their capacity for undertaking the care of Mental Defectives and the possible location of an institution which they might set up'.

This does not account for the lack of state scrutiny. Testimony to the Ryan Commission described an unremittingly harsh regime for resident children, which included a deficient diet, emotional neglect and physical and sexual abuse as part of daily life. Shockingly, this deficient form of 'care' was described by many witnesses who attended such institutions until the late 1980s. A key reason for the lack of oversight lies in the venerated position of Catholic religious orders in Irish life. In the Irish Parliament (Dáil Éireann), the work of religious orders was incessantly portrayed as beyond reproach, with members of Parliament (Teachta Dála) describing how it was 'a revelation to go into these institutions and see the spirit of devotion, self-sacrifice and loyalty' displayed by orders in the care of the intellectually disabled. Such veneration may account for why Graham's institution did not receive an official inspection from either the Department of Health or the Southern Health Board 'between the period 1939 and 1990'. The only indication of any kind of reform came from an attempt to recruit lay females to work in male-only institutions. When the religious orders objected to this, however, the idea was abandoned.

To even begin to answer Graham's question requires taking into account a diverse range of influences that shaped mid-20th-century Ireland. These forces determined the form of care for children with intellectual disabilities, which left the state as the funder for a network of privately run, uninspected institutions. Combined with the veneration of the authority and probity of the clergy, the Irish state produced a toxically insular system of disability provision, in which the deficient care and horrific abuse described by Graham would flourish.

David Kilgannon is a Wellcome Trust PhD researcher based in NUI Galway in Ireland.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.
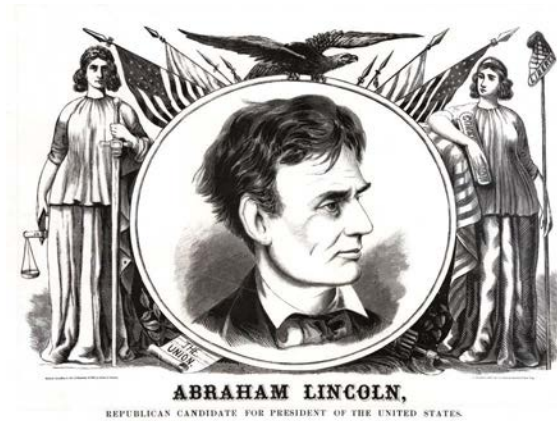
The contrast between Abraham Lincoln and presidential candidate Donald Trump could hardly be more striking. Yet both men can be placed within the continually evolving politics of the Republican Party, argues **Tim Stanley**.

IT WAS AN UNEXPECTED SIGHT. On September 3rd this year, Donald Trump addressed an African-American church in Detroit and told them that he wanted to help write the next chapter in civil rights history. Trump said: 'Becoming the nominee of the party of Abraham Lincoln – a lot of people don't realise that Abraham Lincoln, the great Abraham Lincoln, was a Republican – has been the greatest honour of my life. It is on his legacy that I hope to build the future of the party.'

While most people *do* know that Lincoln was a Republican, very few regard Trump as a fellow traveller of the president who 'freed the slaves'. One poll showed Trump getting just one per cent of the black vote in the coming presidential election.

How do we explain the Republican Party's journey from Lincoln to Trump? Some conservatives insist that it is not that great a distance, that Republicans have always been committed to equality before the law and individualism. But changes in voting patterns suggest profound evolution over time. From the mid-19th century to the early 1930s, the Grand Old Party (GOP) was a largely northern phenomenon, which could count on the significant support of African-Americans thanks to its association with Lincoln. It was a home to social reformers, notably Theodore Roosevelt, who used federal machinery in the early 1900s ▶

Donald Trump at Turnberry golf club, Scotland, June 2015. Above: a banner supporting Abraham Lincoln's candidature, 1860.

The changing face of the GOP

to regulate society along more progressive lives. As late as the 1970s, President Richard Nixon, a descendant of anti-slavery Quakers, introduced affirmative action into federal employment contracts and quietly desegregated the nation's schools.

Nixon in the 1970s and Ronald Reagan in the 1980s won landslides that swept the country. Yet the scope of their victories disguised the emergence of new regional biases. As the Democrats took a more leftward turn from the mid-20th century, so the Republicans shifted to the right and the electoral map flipped. The GOP is now a nearly all-white party with a political base in the South and West, while the Democrats have taken over the 19th-century Republican strongholds of the North.

There is a consensus that voting patterns have changed because the parties' ideologies have changed. It is hard to dispute this. The contemporary Republican Party is broadly opposed to big government and perceived as willing to court racist sentiment. Its criticism of civil rights reforms in the 1960s is a historical stain that many minority voters and liberals refuse to forgive.

There are, however, grounds upon which to challenge this smooth narrative arc from Lincoln's progressivism to Trump's reactionary conservatism. One is that the party has changed several times during its century and a half of existence, veering from left to right according to political necessity and the personalities in charge. In some ways, Trump is actually more concomitant with earlier forms of Republicanism than Reagan or George W. Bush were.

Second, even with all these policy revisions there is evidence of continuity. If you see political history as shaped entirely by intellectual argument, then the dots are hard to connect. If you see it as less a competition between ideas than as a competition between life experiences and interests, then it is possible to argue that the GOP represents a certain ethic, which is Protestant capitalism. Its ongoing mission is to expand the self-reliance of the individual.

THE REPUBLICANS GATHERED in Philadelphia in 1856 to nominate their first ever candidate for the White House. They settled on an eccentric celebrity explorer called John C. Frémont of California. Abraham Lincoln, a lawyer from Illinois, received a few votes for vice president, but the slot eventually went to William L. Dayton. The party's unifying issue was opposition to the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, which opened up the two new territories to slavery. The Republicans, while not abolitionists *per se*, saw this as an aggressive attempt to advance slave-holding and an affront to the principles of the Declaration of Independence. On the stump, Lincoln summed up his party's views: 'The Republicans inculcate … that the Negro is a man, that his bondage is cruelly wrong, and that the field of his oppression ought not to be enlarged.' Frémont and Dayton did rather well in the election, taking a third of the national vote. Four years later, Lincoln would win the presidency, triggering the South's secession from the Union and a terrible civil war.

The Republicans' 1856 platform did not only talk about slavery. It also dreamed of giving free land to farmers in the west – 'free soil' – and a larger role for banks and industry in the developing economy. The party made a curious connection between slavery and Mormon polygamy, calling them the 'twin relics of barbarism' in the US territories. The

Below: Theodore Roosevelt speaks from a hotel balcony, Allentown, Pennsylvania. Bottom: campaign poster supporting the McKinley/ Roosevelt ticket, 1901.

WE STAND FOR
The Gold Standard,
Protection and Prosperity,
Just Pension Laws,
And To Redeem All
REPUBLICAN PLEDGES
To The People.

FOR PRESIDENT
WILLIAM McKINLEY.

FOR VICE PRESIDENT
THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Republicanism defined itself by what it would choose not to do. It contained liberals, but they were constrained by dislike of excessive government

Barry Goldwater at a presidential election rally, Madison Square Garden, New York, October 1964.
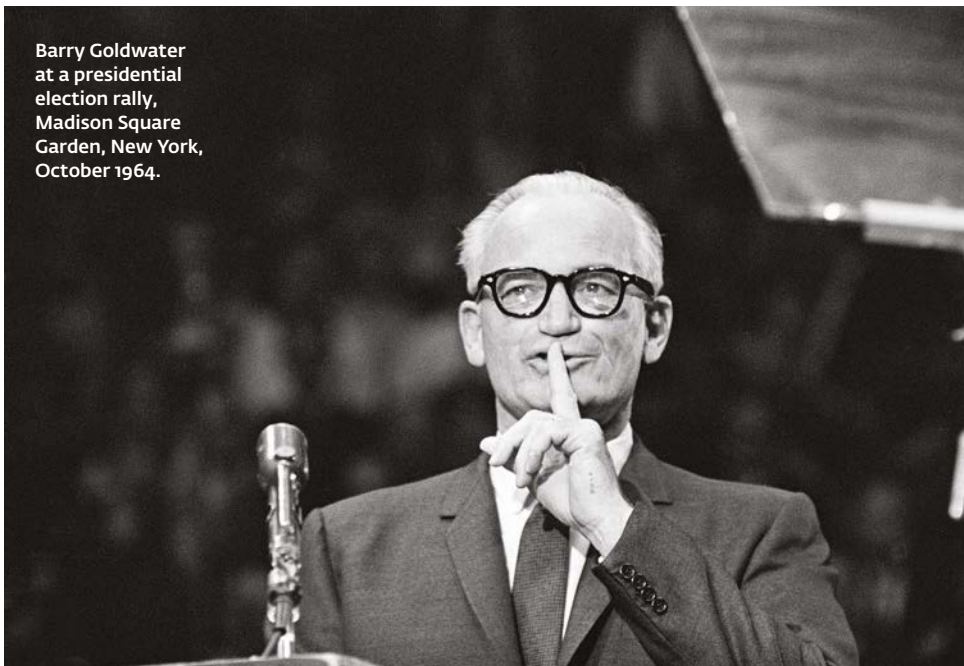
Republicans saw themselves as a force for modernity.

The new party tapped into an old debate about American identity. The revolutionary founders of the United States prized individual liberty and sought to maximise it: liberty from Britain, from banks, from the state. Liberty was broadly understood to be racialised. Black people were often regarded as incapable of freedom; a white man's freedom was both a birthright and proof of biological superiority. So a white people's government had to have a touch so light as to be non-existent. That was the view of the Democratic party, which won election after election pledging to keep the state small and the public unchained.

But how does a nation with no government defend itself and uphold the law and thus remain free? Some Americans concluded that it could not. While remaining committed to liberty and constitutionalism, a Whig coalition, often comprising upscale business interests in the industrial north east, argued that there was a limited role for government to play in finance and industry. They also addressed another contradiction that bothered highly religious Americans: how could they respect limited state interference while also maintaining public morality? If the republic was socially unregulated, they argued, then it would descend into decadence. Men and women would be enslaved to alcohol and sex, the republic would rot from within. For these Americans, the link between slavery and polygamy was obvious – both were sins that threatened everybody's freedom.

These people were largely pietists: European émigré

Protestants who believed the faithful should lead vigorously Christian lives. They hated booze, they hated Catholicism. What was the point of winning independence from Britain if it was to be replaced by rule from Rome? A new electoral dynamic emerged. Catholics and non-pietists gravitated towards the Democrats. Pietist Protestants favoured the Republicans – and the GOP remained fairly consistent in the years to come in its argument that private mores have to be open to state sanction, if liberty is going to escape the bondage of human desire.

Every coalition contains contradictions: Lincoln's faith was difficult to nail down and an ugly rumour said Frémont might have been a Catholic. The way that the Republicans evaded disagreement was to focus overwhelmingly on opposition to the spread of slavery, a message heavily coded with moralism. Visiting the South, William H. Seward, a prominent Republican, wrote that he discovered: 'An exhausted soil, old and decaying towns, wretchedly-neglected roads, and, in every respect, an absence of enterprise and improvement.' Slaves did not give their labour willingly, so it was of low quality. Slave masters did not have to physically work for a living, so they became lazy and sinful. The historian Eric Foner argues that the Republicans were Yankee cultural imperialists spreading an ideology of 'free soil, free labor, free men', the belief that capitalism, like the Holy Spirit, could liberate and redeem. Little did they know that terror of this philosophy among southerners would spark civil war.

FIGHTING BROKE OUT in 1861 and by the end of the Civil War in 1865 the role of the federal government had been transformed way beyond what the Republicans imagined or even desired. They found themselves in charge of something much closer to a unitary state. Lincoln's assassination deprived the GOP of leadership; in the fight to come, a radical bloc in Congress took control and effected a major reconstruction of Dixie. Railroads and schools were constructed; whites flooded south to serve as teachers, missionaries and investors. There was a serious attempt to impose a free labour economy by force of arms. This was perhaps the high water mark of Republican governmental activism. It was also a failure. Recession dried up the money; the North's will to reform the South receded in the wake of violence and corruption and the troops were withdrawn, allowing racists to retake control of the South and institute segregation.

As would so often be the case, Republicanism defined itself by what it would choose not to do when given power. Its ranks contained liberals, but they were constrained by dislike of excessive government and a preference for capitalism as a motor of change.

It is hard to read the early Republican party through the lens of today's ideological partisanship. At times it

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Jeannette Rankin (above), the first woman elected to the House of Representatives. Right: Ronald Reagan celebrates his victory as governor of California, 1966.

might appear reactionary, at others enlightened. Through-out most of the postwar period it favoured pro-business protectionism and was associated with the conspicuous consumption of the Gilded Age, with a degree of splendour that would put the gold-coloured Trump empire to shame. But in the early 1900s, the party embraced progressivism. Theodore Roosevelt, president from 1901 to 1909, tried to curb the power of big corporations through anti-trust suits, regulated the provision of clean food and drugs and was a keen conservationist. In 1916, Republicans elected the first woman to Congress (Jeanette Rankin), the first Jewish senator from outside the former Confederacy (Joseph Simon in 1898) and the first Hispanic senator (Octaviano Ambrosio Larrazolo in 1928). The Democrats, by contrast, were settled as the party of big cities in the North, small farmers out in the West and the South's racist white rulers.

Again, however, there was continuity between progressive and anti-slavery campaigns. Both were the manifestation of a Protestant middle class trying to square its understanding of America's founding ideals with sudden and alarming social change. For instance, in 1833 Chicago contained just 360 people. By 1900 its population was 1,698,575. That meant disease, poverty, disorder. It also meant the emergence of unions and big city political machines across the North dominated by immigrants that, in the view of many Republicans, threatened to put power in the hands of the mob.

In 1894 the American Railway Union in Illinois went on strike against the Pullman Company. George Pullman fancied himself as an enlightened Yankee: he built a model company town that offered healthy living free from smog and alcohol and even hired black workers. But during a downturn he was forced to lay people off and cut wages. Some 250,000 Pullman employees walked out in a strike so devastating to the region's economy that federal troops were sent in to crush it. Around 30 were killed in riots and sabotage.

It was clear that the GOP's strategy of growing domestic industry through a tariff on imports was no longer enough to avert revolution. Progressive social reform was thus an act of self-preservation. It also tapped into a deep well of lingering pietism. Theodore Roosevelt's America was a place heaving with Christian ambition, where John Harvey Kellogg, a Michigan doctor, invented corn flakes in the hope that a plain diet would somehow stop people masturbating and Carrie Nation, the temperance advocate, stormed into saloons with her hatchet crying 'Smash ladies, smash!'

Roosevelt, likewise, saw redemption for America in work, self-discipline and even violence. In 1899 he said:

When men fear work or fear righteous war, when women fear motherhood, they tremble on the brink of doom; and well it is that they should vanish from the earth, where they are fit subjects for the scorn of all men and women who are themselves strong and brave and high-minded.

Roosevelt's progressivism sought to shape a healthy, vigorous populace. The alternative was a new form of slavery: slavery to indolence and pacifism. It is thus impossible to separate the Republican campaign against poverty with its campaign against liquor, which culminated in the introduction of prohibition in 1920.

PROGRESSIVISM went too far for some Republican stalwarts. Roosevelt's successor, William Howard Taft, proved more conservative in tone and Roosevelt decided to challenge him for the party's nomination in 1912. The contest was decided at the convention, where black delegates from the South helped put Taft over the top. Roosevelt ran as a progressive independent in the general election and split the Republican vote, putting Democrat Woodrow Wilson in office. After the First World War, the party appeared to adopt a more ideologically conservative line. Government shrunk in size and not only domestic ambitions were affected. The Republican party of the 1920s favoured non-intervention in world affairs.

Yet even during this period, progressive instinct remained. Take Herbert Hoover, president from 1929 to 1933. He believed that poverty could be cured through cooperation between government and business, which he called volunteerism, but he rejected socialism as a solution to free market failure. When the Great Depression hit, his response pushed volunteerism to the limit of how much government a Republican could accept. He signed off on raised tariffs to protect industry and the forced repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Mexican migrants to free up jobs. He even turned on the money tap with the Emergency Relief and Construction Act, financing the variety of programmes that would later be associated with Franklin D. Roosevelt's Democratic New Deal. But Hoover ultimately could not break with the Republican instinct to favour free markets and individual effort as the solution to all ills. His refusal to go further probably contributed to his landslide defeat in the 1932 election.

The New Deal of the 1930s, like reconstruction and progressivism before it, transformed public expectations of federal government. Suddenly it took responsibility for public housing, unemployment insurance, even farm prices, and Republicans had to decide whether to accept these changes or try to roll them back. The debate was rancorous.

On one side stood moderate Republicans, pragmatists such as Dwight D. Eisenhower, who felt that the New Deal should be trimmed and made to work but not generally repealed. Eisenhower's presidency (1953-61) was dismissed as 'do nothing' but now looks surprisingly interventionist. He expanded social security and raised the minimum wage. Federal troops were sent in to desegregate a high school in Little Rock, Arkansas. A new Department of Health, Education and Welfare was created. The Interstate Highway Program transformed transport in the US at enormous cost to the public purse; Eisenhower said that it required enough concrete to build 'six sidewalks to the moon'. And cheering

Richard Nixon and his wife Patricia with Nelson Rockefeller, New York, 1967.

along these works were a group of northern politicians who were dubbed Rockefeller Republicans in honour of Nelson Rockefeller, the charismatic and vigorously progressive governor of New York from 1959 to 1973.

AS EISENHOWER'S SECOND TERM came to an end, his vice president, Richard Nixon, yearned to replace him and needed a united GOP to do so. In July 1960 he met Rockefeller at the latter's sumptuous Manhattan apartment to agree a statement on the direction of party policy. Rockefeller set terms. The resulting Treaty of Fifth Avenue called for federal aid to education and the elimination of 'the last vestiges of segregation or discrimination', presumably a form of comprehensive civil rights legislation.

Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona described the Treaty as 'the Munich of the Republican Party'. He represented a body of conservative opinion just beginning to evolve into a cohesive movement. It was diverse; there were religious conservatives who wanted to roll back the tide of moral liberalism; there were racial conservatives who wanted to defend southern segregation; and there were economic conservatives who believed government spending was inflationary and increasingly unconstitutional. Goldwater's western provenance was significant. Money and political power were now floating away from the big cities and towards the growing suburbs located in the South and West. A new, white collar middle class was emerging that resented paying high taxes to bankroll the poor. Often that grievance had a racial subtext. Far more whites than African-Americans received government dollars, but public perception was that welfare was a black thing.

Goldwater ran for the 1964 Republican nomination and opposed that year's critical civil rights bill. Rockefeller ▶

Reagan won the California governorship in 1966 with a little help from Goldwater's pal, the actor John Wayne

Reagan flanked by supporters from the world of entertainment, October 1970. From left: Bob Hope, John Wayne, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra.

fought him bitterly for the nomination in a battle that makes contemporary US politics seem tame. Goldwater was tarnished as a crank; Rockefeller was hurt by his divorce and remarriage to a much younger woman. Goldwater's triumph was hollow and he lost the general election in a landslide. Yet his opposition to the Civil Rights Act earned him the votes of the once-Democratic South, putting them on the road to entering the Republican fold for good. Did Goldwater consciously play the race card in 1964? The general consensus is that this was his strategy; after all he told an audience of Georgians that chasing black votes was a waste of resources and that the GOP should 'go hunting where the ducks are'.

On the other hand, Goldwater's biography contains little evidence of personal racism. He had opposed segregation back home in Arizona and had supported the 1957 and 1960 civil rights bills in the Senate. His opposition to the 1964 Act, he insisted, was based on its attempt to compel employers to serve and hire African-Americans, something he regarded as unconstitutional. This view was consistent with Republican criticism of civil rights activism throughout the 1960s. As with Hoover and state action to alleviate poverty, they supported racial progress in principle but said that they favoured volunteerism in approach. This, again, proved useless to those who needed federal support.

The Republicans struck another compromise. Nixon had a second go at the presidency in 1968 and won. His administration played a tough game with leftist radicals such as the Black Power movement but actively pursued desegregation in education and employment through federal agencies. Nixon got away with this double standard by doing what the Republicans had done in the 1850s: he exploited a unifying theme. Theirs had been anti-slavery. For the postwar Republican Party it was anti-communism.

Rockefeller, for instance, might have been soft on domestic policy, but on foreign policy he shared the conservative desire to contain, even confront, the Soviet Union. Hatred of communism bled into support for Vietnam and opposition to growing social disorder associated with the anti-war movement. In fact, anticommunism allowed Republicans to govern and talk in contrary ways. Ronald Reagan made his name as a national politician stumping for Goldwater in 1964 and won the California governorship in 1966 with a little help from Goldwater's pal, the actor John Wayne, an ideologue who helped endow conservatism with a cowboy mythology. Once elected, however, Reagan managed his state in Rockefeller style: he signed off a massive tax increase and took liberal positions on abortion and divorce. Conservative voters were kept happy by the Republicans throwing Reagan into confrontations with student protestors, but it was largely theatrical.

REAGAN WENT ON TO serve two hugely popular terms in the White House. By the time he stepped down, in 1989, the Rockefeller Republicans were largely out of office; the states that once supported them drifted towards the Democrats. But even as the GOP appeared to have been 'hijacked' by a new ideological conservative movement, old aspects of Republicanism remained.

Reagan's alliance with Christian conservatives who railed against pornography, abortion and homosexuality was exactly the same as the GOP's former courtship of pietists opposed to alcohol. His opposition to communism was framed as a second war against slavery, a term that he also applied to welfare dependency. Like the earlier 'free soil, free labor, free men' Republicans, Reagan regarded free markets as redemptive. Faith in democratic capitalism made the US exceptional, a world leader. 'Lincoln understood', said Reagan in a 1987 lecture to high school students, 'that the idea of human liberty is bound up in the very nature of our nation. He understood that America cannot be America without standing for the cause of freedom.'

What made invocations of Lincoln appear ridiculous in the 1980s was the GOP's by now total split from the black rights movement. Civil Rights activists had concluded that economic rights were inseparable from political rights and that the next stage in their historic battle was to demand government intervention in the economy. This was something Reagan could not accept. It is not entirely true that the GOP walked away from civil rights. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the two movements took different directions in which neither was willing to follow the other.

Reagan's association with white middle-class populism did his party long-term damage. It alienated non-whites, tying the GOP to a demographic that was large but, in fact, in slow decline. Since 1968, the Republican presidential nominee has won the white vote in every single election, but the white vote is diminishing and the GOP's failure to see that could turn it permanently into a minority party.

Reagan's cowboy image also popularised the idea that a successful Republican is one who stands his ground, even though he was often given to compromise. Worse, his electoral success as a conservative gave the impression that ideological conservatism and Republicanism are synonymous when, historically, that has not always been the
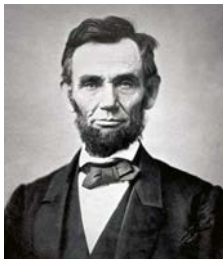
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ULYSSES S. GRANT

RUTHERFORD B. HAYES

JAMES A. GARFIELD

CHESTER A. ARTHUR

BENJAMIN HARRISON

WILLIAM McKINLEY

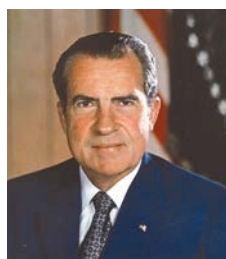THEODORE ROOSEVELT

WILLIAM H. TAFT

WARREN G. HARDING

CALVIN COOLIDGE

HERBERT HOOVER

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

RICHARD M. NIXON

GERALD R. FORD

RONALD REAGAN

GEORGE H.W. BUSH

GEORGE W. BUSH

Donald Trump attends a service at Great Faith Ministries, Detroit, September 2016.

case. Synchronicity between the conservative movement and the Republican party was unsustainable.

Unity was shattered by the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Reagan's successor, George H.W. Bush, served one term in the White House and then faced a significant primary challenge in 1992 from former Nixon speech-writer Pat Buchanan, who demanded that the Republican Party follow the logic of the end of the Cold War, with-draw from foreign entanglements and put America first by protecting jobs with new tariffs. The latter issue found a constituency among Reagan voters whose jobs were being shipped off to China. Buchanan won no primaries in 1992, but his candidacy weakened Bush and contributed to his defeat at the hands of Bill Clinton. The Trump rebellion in the GOP ranks has been brewing since the early Nineties.

ONE REASON WHY IT took until 2016 to fully materialise is because President George W. Bush skilfully held the Republicans together in the early 2000s. This time the Republicans were united by opposition to radical Islamism, which, yet again, was cast as a war on slavery; ridiculous comparisons were made between Bush and Lincoln as wartime leaders. But the disaster in Iraq discredited interventionism, while the credit crunch cast doubt on the wisdom of tax-cutting Reaganomics. Trump surged in 2016 in large part because policies the GOP establishment had backed had failed. His opponents in the primaries offered nothing new. They did, however, parrot conservative talking points that had been around for several decades and their complete, humiliating defeat proved that ideological conservatism is only one constituency of ideas within the Republican party.

As for Trump, he breaks so many rules that he seems like a repudiation of the grand Republican tradition. On the contrary, many of his themes are familiar. He is a Yankee, as Republicans overwhelmingly used to be. He promotes scepticism about foreign engagements, as the party did in the 1920s, and threatens to use mass deportations as an economic tool, just as Hoover did during the Great Depression. His support for limited protectionism is straight out

of the GOP's post-Civil War playbook. He sees the potential in infrastructure spending, as did Eisenhower.

Most importantly, Trump is a propagandist for Ameri-can capitalism. It is true that he has sometimes eschewed Republican pieties: in the early primaries he said only that he wanted to make people richer, not better, citizens. But his rhetoric has evolved. He has increasingly paid lip service to the idea that religion and cultural conservatism are essential to national well-being, while his desire to be seen singing and dancing in African-American churches gives his candidacy the air of being in the Lincoln tradition. In fact, even if Lincoln's practical approach to civil rights has not been consistent in Republican history, the desire of Repub-lican nominees to insist that it is generally has been.

Yes, Trump is different from George W. Bush. But the fact that Bush was different from Rockefeller who was different from Hoover who was different from Lincoln reminds us that Republicanism is flexible and responsive to social change. There runs through its history a thin thread of dedication to individualism and free markets. That history is a story of an ongoing negotiation between principle and pragmatism, a negotiation that pragmatism has generally won. What it is not is a story of ideological conservatism triumphant. Trump is not a conservative, but he very much is a Republican.

Tim Stanley is an associate fellow of the UCL Institute of the Americas and the author of *The Crusader: The Life and Tumultuous Times of Pat Buchanan* (Thomas Dunne, 2012).

FURTHER READING

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Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (Hill and Wang, 2002).

The COW-POCK — or — the Wonderful Effects of the New Inoculation! — Vide. the Publications of y Anti-Vaccine Society.

Caricature of Edward Jenner inoculating patients by James Gillray, 1802.

Since it was founded in 1948, the issue of how Britons have laughed with – or at – the NHS reveals much about changes in society, argues **Jenny Crane**.

Is Laughter the Best Medicine?

WHEN WE THINK OF the National Health Service (NHS), laughter may not be the first thing that comes to mind; it is perhaps associated more with hard times, losses, austerity and adversity. Yet the NHS has a close, if complex, relationship with humour. It has, at times, used 'laughter therapy', for example, which seeks to provide patients and families with comic moments. Public health videos, too, often use humour and slapstick to disseminate their messages: *Let's Play Things to Put Up Your Nose* (2014) suggests that the nasal flu vaccine is a better thing to put up one's nose than a crayon, penny, smartphone, goldfish or pirate ship. And, outside the NHS, campaign groups have used performance satire to challenge those who seek to reform the institution. The National Health Action Party has staged funerals for the NHS and Keep Our NHS Public has invited passers-by to pretend to operate on one another. Both challenge ideas about the 'big society' – which, in theory, gives power and responsibility to local communities and people – and question its appropriateness to medicine.

Such forms of humour have been used to understand, criticise and celebrate the NHS since it was 'born' on July 5th, 1948. From this 'Appointed Day', healthcare was free to all Britons at the point of access, replacing the previously disparate system in which care was provided for many working men through national insurance and, for others, patchily, through voluntary and local authority hospitals. Alongside the introduction of the NHS came several other welfare reforms, such as the raising of the school leaving age, making secondary school education free, providing

Aneurin Bevan with a group of nurses on the first day of the NHS, July 5th, 1948.

"I've seen eighteen doctors and seven psychiatrists. It seems I'm suffering from a deep-seated guilt complex about getting things free from the National Health Service."

Left: *The Company of Undertakers or a Consultation of Physicians*, William Hogarth, 1736. Above: Antonia Yeoman cartoon published in *Punch*, 1951.

extended benefits for families, unemployed and sick people and further provisions for children in need of care. The NHS thus built on existing systems of health and care, but was also part of a key and, to an extent, radical postwar shift in British society. Looking at moments of laughter and humour in NHS history can help us to understand the place of this unique institution among Britons and also to think about changes in culture and humour.

From the 1940s until the 1960s, jokes about the NHS, as seen in public information films and cartoons, tended to be gentle and good-humoured, reflecting the deep appreciation most Britons had for this new institution. From the 1960s until the 1990s a darker and more critical form of humour ruled. This broad shift was by no means universal but nonetheless reflected a changing culture and society, in particular the rise of the so-called 'permissive society' and the death of 'Victorian Britain'. Historians debate the extent of change heralded by the permissive society, but certainly there were broad shifts around this period. The liberalisation of laws around obscenity, for example, enabled more controversial and combative forms of humour to flourish publicly, as well as privately, which resulted in the popularisation of satire. This period also saw the emergence of protest politics and political and economic challenges to the postwar settlement. These changed the way in which the NHS operated and the kind of jokes that were made, internally and externally, about the institution. Perhaps ironically, we need to take humour seriously in order properly to understand the development and significance of the NHS.

MEDICINE AND ITS PRACTITIONERS have long been the butt of jokes. The Enlightenment is an important period in the history of comedy, thanks to the work of popular caricaturists, such as William Hogarth and James Gillray, who riffed on the futility of medicine against the ravages of death and disease. Hogarth's *The Company of Undertakers* (1736) depicts 15 doctors above the slogan *Et plurima mortis imago*, 'Everywhere the image of death'.

Other regular targets for caricaturists were the 'barber surgeons', 'quacks' and other medical practitioners, widely perceived as inadequate. In Hogarth's *Undertakers* we see, at the bottom of the image, a self-taught bone-setter from the period, Sarah Mapp, and Joshua Ward, who was best-known for selling pills of antimony, a metallic element, which was swallowed, passed and swallowed once more to 'refresh the bowels'. Gillray also mocked the practices of bloodletting, tooth extraction and pneumatics. Indeed, on the latter, he once drew a lecture room filled with well-dressed members of the public and profession, avidly watching as physicians pumped air through a patient's body and out of their bowels. Gillray also parodied the anxious response to Edward Jenner's smallpox inoculation. In *The Cow-Pock, or the Wonderful Effects of the New Inoculation* (1802), the recently vaccinated are sprouting various parts of the cow.

As well as challenging medical practice, Enlightenment caricaturists criticised the doctors themselves for greed and laziness. In 1803 the artist Temple West drew lavishly dressed doctors giving a humble 'Address of Thanks' to the 'Right Honourable Mr Influenzy', who had enabled them to line their pockets at the expense of sick patients.

Through these caricatures we can begin to see how medicine has changed over time. These cartoons assume that medicine must be paid for: well-heeled people spend their funds on a wide variety of medical practitioners. The caricatures accept the limitations of medicine, an acceptance that has perhaps declined as the rapid development in medical technologies and innovations in the 20th century have led us to expect cures for everything that ails us. These images also demonstrate that medical developments, which are retrospectively regarded as impressive, such as vaccinations, were at the time met with suspicion and fear.

IN THE IMMEDIATE postwar period, much humour about healthcare was gentle, particularly that produced by the state. In a series of four public health films produced between 1945 and 1949, the actor (and former clinician at the London Fever Hospital) Richard Massingham promoted awareness of personal hygiene by playing a charming buffoon. In *Coughs and Sneezes* (1945) he sneezes furiously in a cinema, a queue and a workplace. The narrator warns that this type of behaviour is 'a real danger', far more dangerous than people who balance buckets perilously atop doorways, trip people over or take people's chairs away before they can sit down. As punishment, Massingham is sat down firmly and a mysterious hand shakes pepper all over him. The narrator then repeats 'Handkerchief sneeze, sneeze handkerchief' until Massingham learns to associate them and to behave appropriately in public.

In *Handkerchief Drill* (1949) a woman asks the film's narrator how best to stop her husband – Massingham again – from coughing and sneezing without using a handkerchief. She is first counselled to try being kind and gives her husband a token pat on the head. When this does not work, she tries throwing water over him and then, as in *Coughs and Sneezes*, attempts sprinkling him with pepper, all of which fails. Furthermore, the wife exasperatedly tells us, when her husband has a cold he puts his handkerchief in the laundry basket, instead of letting her boil it. At this stage, the narrator concedes, in a deadpan tone, that: 'He's obviously dangerous. Get him locked up.' He is driven away in a police van to the sounds of cheering.

Postwar British cartoonists – like their Enlightenment counterparts – remained fascinated by payment, or the novel lack of payment in the NHS. Notably, in Anton Yeoman's *Punch* cartoon, the women are prim and proper: a distinctly 1950s reincarnation of the lavishly dressed women of Gillray and Hogarth. But now they are a symbol that free healthcare would not guarantee equality in its uptake nor in its successful treatments. This cartoon may also be poking fun at the mixed reactions to the NHS from those accustomed and able to pay for their own care, or at widespread anxieties that 'free' medicine would be abused and would breed dependency and hypochondria. When talking about the free nature of the service, a key point of comparison for British cartoonists was not healthcare in Britain's past but the contemporary US system. To give just one example, in 1964 the artist Ken Mahood published a cartoon in *Punch* in which a doctor leans over a patient and charmingly states that: 'If this were in America you couldn't afford to be as ill as you are.'

We need to take humour seriously in order to properly understand the development and significance of the NHS

EARLY CARTOONS in the left-wing press revealed much affection for Aneurin Bevan, the Welsh Minister for Health who introduced the NHS. Bevan was represented as a patient, as the NHS itself and, memorably if ahistorically, as a version of Florence Nightingale, the 'Laddie of the Lamp'. Inevitably, though, not all postwar figures received such kind treatment and even Bevan was represented as a bully, a socialist or communist villain and as a dangerous demagogue in some of the right-wing press. Postwar negotiations between the government and the British Medical Association (BMA), established in 1832 to represent the medical profession, also became the subject of biting satire. The BMA did not want doctors to be employed by the state because it feared a loss of independence and, some argued, a decline in income, if they were no longer paid per patient. The cartoonist David Low was especially ferocious on this matter, portraying Dr Charles Hill, the BMA Secretary, as suffering from an 'enlargement of the social conscience'. At this time, such aggressive and cutting humour was not commonly directed at medicine but was used to defend the principles and foundation of the NHS itself. The preference for more sympathetic rollicking humour, at least in print, reflected a relatively conservative generation – 'the last of the Victorians' – as well as the newness of the NHS and widespread appreciation for the expansion and ease of access to healthcare.

Bevan was represented as a patient, the NHS itself and, memorably, as a version of Florence Nightingale

Between 1960 and 1990, amid the development of 'counter culture' and the permissive society, satire flourished once more, spurred on by Peter Cook, Alan Bennett and Eleanor Bron, and David Frost's immensely popular television programme *That Was The Week That Was*. New protest movements emerged and flourished, including gay liberation groups and second-wave feminist collectives. The contexts in which the NHS operated changed, too, amid the growth of an ageing population, a less stable economy and the development of increasingly expensive medical technologies and drugs. In terms of medical developments, the UK's first kidney transplant, heart transplant and full hip replacement were all carried out in the 1960s. The contraceptive pill was made available on the NHS in 1961, although initially it was reserved for married women.

In response to these changing contexts, the NHS was subjected to round after round of reorganisation by various governments. Margaret Thatcher's Conservative governments introduced especially controversial and radical changes, creating an 'internal market' for health services. This meant that Health Authorities and General Practitioners (GPs) would purchase services from primary and secondary care providers, the latter of which would form corporatist groups called NHS Trusts. More broadly, Thatcher sought to reverse the postwar consensus, which included previous agreement between the Labour and the Conservative parties that the government should provide a welfare state. Instead, Thatcher and other New Right thinkers believed that the primary role of the state was to support the free market in the production and distribution of resources and to deregulate business and industry,

encouraging self-reliance. Many campaign groups and left-wing individuals were concerned that these beliefs, embedded in Thatcher's reforms, would lead to the erosion of the NHS as universal and free, through the introduction of private provision, market principles and charges for more services. Reflecting this, many jokes about the NHS became more critical and specific groups, such as London Health Emergency, founded in 1983, emerged to challenge reform.

The feminist magazine *Spare Rib* regularly discussed the NHS: offering women's experiences of health and care; considering alternatives to the NHS, such as community provision and self-help; and criticising the racist and sexist delivery of services. Some *Spare Rib* articles deployed humour to disseminate their points. In April 1973, the magazine published a strip by the cartoonist Posy Simmonds in which surgeons chop up a patient while discussing the new structure of the NHS: the government had introduced Regional Health Authorities, who would appoint Area Health Authorities, which would have to work with District Management Teams, Community Health Councils, GPs and teaching hospitals. Chopping and sewing away, one surgeon remarks to another that the government planned to 'consolidate the worst features of the NHS'. In the final frame of the cartoon, the shrouded patient is dead, 'NHS' scrawled on his sheet. The idea of the NHS' death was popular in satire and protest of this period: one of *Spare Rib*'s defining 'Images of 88' was a photo of two nurses holding an 'RIP NHS' sign, taken during a protest of 1,500 people in Gloucester against cuts to healthcare.

INDUSTRIAL UNREST came to the NHS in the 1960s and 70s. In 1975 consultants worked to rule, to insist on their right to continue treating private patients, and junior doctors, later in the same year, joined together in a strike to protest about their pay and conditions. Such events did not go unnoticed by cartoonists, satirists and campaign groups. In April 1969, the cartoonist Ronald 'Carl' Giles portrayed a nurse 'pinching' three peas from her patient in response to the cutting of nurses' food allowances. Giles even sent the cartoon directly to the East Suffolk Nurses League, signing it 'with deepest sympathy'. In the 1980s, cartoons featured overworked doctors fitting in just one more round of the wards in the final ten minutes of their 83-hour weeks. Numerous cartoons made jokes about the privatisation of services such as bed bathing, apparently contracted out to burly window cleaners; or expressed concerns about the result of staff cuts, showing patients on the operating table having to reach for their own scalpels. Some cartoonists observed these changes from a very different perspective. John Musgrave-Wood, drawing for the *Daily Mail* in 1968, portrayed a doctor with a dunce cap pouring 'Defence Cuts' down the mouth of the overweight and decadent NHS.

The campaign group London Health Emergency often used satire to demonstrate how illogical and even ludicrous they felt many of Thatcher's NHS reforms were. The group's newsletter, *Health Emergency*, expressed mock sympathy for the 'pin-striped paupers' in NHS management, particularly those in the new and non-elected Regional Health Authorities. Parodying new adverts from BUPA, a private healthcare company founded in 1947, *Health Emergency* showed advertisements for private healthcare provided by 'BURPA: It can cost you an arm and a leg!', as well as from ▶

Cockroaches angry at press reports

Leaders of the Confederation of British Contract Cockroaches have strongly defended the Government's plans for privatisation.

Following an angry mass meeting of cockroaches in the grounds of Barking Hospital, staged to protest at 'biased' press coverage of cockroach activity on the wards, a statement was given to reporters stressing the contribution which these increasingly large insects are making to the cleaning efforts of the main contractors, Crothalls.

'Under previous governments, the private enterprise of Contract Cockroaches faced constant harassment...

'Now at last we are being given the chance in Barking to show what we can do when the bureaucratic red tape is cut loose. This government has finally given the small insect his head.

'The CBCC has for years argued that cockroaches have a role to play in cleaning up the morsels of rotting food and debris left behind by private contract cleaners, and at no extra cost to the taxpayer.

'Now, in close liaison with the scab workforce of Crothalls, we are showing in Barking Hospital the kind of insect-human cooperation which should be a model for the NHS. We are not simply feeding off the NHS; we are making a real contribution.

'Our services are increasingly appreciated by the less squeamish patients, some doctors and most DHA members.'

Brushing aside recent newspaper reports of a terrified mother sheltering her baby against an infestation of cockroaches, the CBCC representative hit back angrily at 'sensationalist' coverage.

EXCLUSIVE!
By our own correspondent.

CBCC

Citing statements by consultant bacteriologist Dr Robertson, who sits on Redbridge DHA, the CBCC spokesinsect challenged reporters to 'name a single disease which our members could give a baby simply by crawling over it.'

Accusing critics and the mother in question of being 'politically motivated', the cockroach leader insisted:

'Our members were merely checking the baby and its bed for edible morsels of rotting food. This is routine procedure for our Barking night shift.'

He went on:

'Our members do a dirty and sometimes hazardous job: we are now the mainstays of the hospital cleaning operation.

'Those who ignorantly criticise our work are simply arguing for the return of the bad old days of in-house NHS cleaning, when our cockroaches were subjected to all manner of ill-treatment and denied a livelihood.'

Cockroach leaders have rejected claims that they are opposed to the privatisation of NHS catering services, with the resulting decline in standards of food provided.

'There is no denying that the lower quality of the scraps left around for our members will be a problem,' said a representative of the Confederation of British Contract Cockroaches. 'But against that we must set the fact that larger quantities of food with be discarded uneaten, and kitchen facilities will be less thoroughly cleaned. My members are prepared to exchange quantity for quality.

'The CBCC is still four-square behind privatisation and the contractors.'

'Cockroaches crawl on hospital babes'

"Never mind the rundown of the NHS, we are rich enough to look after ourselves," said the boss.

Of course we all agreed.

We quickly found a health care company that pays out lavishly to doctors and suppliers, but which we could set off against expenses.

A company which benefits from NHS facilities, trained personnel and technology without contributing anything. A company which benefits only the better-off and the anti-social.

As the NHS has been cut and the waiting lists have grown, this company has cashed in, building new hospitals (often close to NHS facilities), encroaching ever further into NHS hospitals, and drawing unemployed and low-paid NHS nurses into agency work.

Here was an organisation committed to self-interest and private profit. They even had a branch near us. Ideal.

It came as no surprise when we found that thousands of firms rely on this company as a "perk" for their top-paid, most complacent staff. Nor was its name a surprise: the Big Ugly Reactionaries and Profiteers Association, BURPA.

But it came as quite a surprise when the boss had an accident with his hedge-clippers in the garden. 999 eventually summoned the one surviving NHS ambulance. But NHS closures meant it was miles to a casualty unit. By the time he got there, his money wasn't much use.

As he recovered from his amputation, the boss called me in and gave orders to pull the firm out of BURPA. It had been the most painful mistake he had ever made.

Of course we all agreed.

BURPA
It can cost you an arm and a leg!

If you are against private practice, and want to join the fight to defend the NHS against profiteers, get in touch with London Health Emergency, 335 Grays Inn Rd, WC1. Or ring your local Health Emergency campaign.

Name.................

Union.................

Address................

Excerpts from *Health Emergency* July-August 1984 (above) and June 1984 (right). Below: Ken Mahood cartoon from *Punch*, 1964.

"Let me put it this way. If this were America you couldn't afford to be as ill as you are."

the 'Medical Excess clinic' for 'wealthy hypochondriacs who hang around the West End'.

Other features were written on behalf of the 'Confederation of British Contract Cockroaches', which defended the Thatcher government's plans to give cleaning contracts to private companies, arguing that 'cockroaches have a role to play in cleaning up the morsels of rotting food and debris left behind by private contract cleaners, and at no extra cost to the taxpayer'.

Satire about industrial unrest and NHS cuts also filtered into British cinema during this period. Perhaps some of the best remembered films about the NHS are the *Carry On*

Promotional poster for *Carry on Again Doctor*, 1969.

series, which offered light-hearted and slapstick representations of chaos within the hospital, featuring battleaxe matrons, doctors in love with their patients, magical sex-changing serums and leaking laughing gas. Less well-known films, however, were much darker comedies. In *The National Health* (1973), staff struggle to cope in an underfunded NHS hospital overwhelmed by administrators, set against a fantasy hospital, staffed by the same actors, whose patients are all cured with high-tech equipment. In *Britannia Hospital* (1982), activists surround the hospital to protest against its treatment of an African dictator, while kitchen staff campaign against the unnecessary demands of the hospital's private patients.

Light-hearted humour about the NHS continued, but the darker vein of jokes that emerged during the 1960s, burgeoned in the following two decades. Much of this humour was propagated by campaign groups in response to changes in health policy and funding and motivated by love and appreciation for the NHS.

DID PEOPLE ENJOY these cartoons, or not notice them among the other sections of their newspapers? Did protest satire encourage members of the public to reflect on NHS privatisation, or was it ignored? More generally, is there any way through which we can understand how the NHS was discussed, described and joked about in daily life, by the patients, families, friends and staff who worked and lived within its institutions? The numbers of people involved are massive: the NHS deals with over a million patients every 36 hours. The institution also has one of the five largest workforces in the world (alongside the US Department of Defence, McDonald's, Walmart and the Chinese People's Liberation Army).

While conducting archival work, we find some traces of

cases of everyday laughter and humour. In 1949 the journal *Public Employees* described 'loud laughter' at a conference of the National Union of Public Employees, when an ambulance driver described how a local fire brigade had recently turned up at a maternity case and the ambulance staff at a fire. Capturing a more private and intimate exchange, in 1984, reporting on hospice care, June Southworth's Daily *Mail* article, 'Dying With Dignity', described how a dying father was conscious that he lived in a 'cheerful little ward', surrounded by 'laughter and joy like any other day'. One of his daughters told the newspaper that the staff liked 'to hear people laugh' and another daughter added, wryly: 'We've all put our names down to come here.'

There are also some archival traces of moments in which jokes have flopped, causing offence or awkwardness. In 'No Such Thing as Pain', an article from *Spare Rib*, published in January 1982, Ruth Wheeler described her 'painful' and 'humiliating' experience of childbirth. She had initially bonded with a 'jovial young medic' after giving birth, who had complimented her sense of humour. However, as he sewed up her torn vagina, the new mother joked: 'Don't stop, please. Anything which could prevent a repeat performance of this must be good.' The doctor, she recalled, clearly felt that her 'blatant irreverence was too much' and that her jokes about 'this noble state of childbirth' had gone too far, crushing the sense of shared values and community between the pair, even acting as an 'insult to his maleness'. This is a rare but important case in which a moment of awkward humour has been documented, probably because of the radical, emotional and personal nature of this publication.

People have always used humour and laughter to bond with one another and to criticise medical professionals, practice and policy. It is hard to access these daily interactions, but it is likely that they have shifted over time and were shaped by, as well as reflected in the media. Particular styles of humour have faded in and out of fashion, evoked or neglected according to broader social and cultural trends. The subjects of humour have changed, too, responding to medical developments from the smallpox inoculation to nasal flu vaccines, and to various political developments and reforms. Laughter has been used therapeutically in hospitals and in public health videos. Thinking about these different types of laughter and jokes can help us to understand better how the NHS has changed the lives of Britons, and reflected and inflected conceptions of British national identity, as the institution approaches its 70th anniversary.

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Out of the Margins

Eleanor Parker reveals the scholarly network of knowledge that was at the heart of Anglo-Saxon England and the love these scholars had for the pleasures of the written word.

y insides are filled with holy words, and my entrails bear sacred books – yet I can learn nothing from them.

This is a riddle by the Anglo-Saxon poet Aldhelm, to which the solution (as you may have guessed) is 'book-chest'. It is one of a number of riddles from Anglo-Saxon England that play with the mechanics of books and writing, teasing the reader with ingenious descriptions of ink, vellum and decorated volumes.

Another celebrated example gives a riddling picture of a bookworm: 'a thieving guest, no whit the wiser though he swallowed words'. In Old English an object like Aldhelm's chest could be called a book-hoard (*boc-hord*) and, like a treasure-hoard, might be inhabited by a devouring *wyrm*. Neither book-chest nor bookworm learns anything from their encounter with books – so they are a sly warning to human readers to profit by the words they devour.

The bookworm riddle survives in a volume which was given to the library of Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric, c.1070, and is still there. I have been thinking about books and their givers recently, since receiving a generous benefaction from the library of a scholar of Anglo-Saxon literature, which prompted me to realise what an important aspect of the community of scholarship the giving of books still is. In a digital age the idea of passing on books to younger academics might seem like an old-fashioned form of almsgiving, but it is going on constantly. It is valuable not only in itself but in what it represents: as books are passed on, they accumulate traces of their readers, a visible sign of the transfer and growth of knowledge.

Praise for this particular form of generosity goes back a long way. Bede records his gratitude to Benedict Biscop, abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow and one of Anglo-Saxon England's most distinguished bibliophiles. Benedict collected books while travelling through Europe, establishing the monastic library where Bede was educated (see the article on the Codex Amiatinus, p.44). Even on his deathbed he was still concerned for the fate of his library. Bede must have thought of Benedict as he pored over his books; through him that act of benefaction had a lasting impact on English history and literature.

Stories about books and their givers are recorded throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. Books were prized highly, both as physical objects and for what they contained, and so they were high-status gifts and an important way of displaying piety and generosity.

At a time when literate people might possess few books of their own, readers could nonetheless become attached to individual books. According to his hagiographer, St Wulfstan of Worcester used to tell a story about his childhood, which involved his youth-

The word of God: St Matthew depicted in the Grimbald Gospels, Canterbury, c.1010.

Books were prized highly, both as physical objects and for what they contained, and so they were high-status gifts

ful fondness for two particular books. As a child in the early 1020s, Wulfstan was educated in the monastery at Peterborough and was taught by the monk Earnwig, who was an expert scribe. Earnwig gave young Wulfstan some books to look after, a sacramentary and psalter he had illuminated with gold, and the boy fell in love with the rich decorations.

Then Earnwig, to Wulfstan's disappointment – but with an eye to the advantages of royal patronage – presented the books to the king and queen, Cnut and Emma. They promptly sent the books as a diplomatic gift to the Holy Roman Emperor, leaving Wulfstan heartbroken and thinking he would never see them again. Fortunately, years later, the books were brought back to England and given to Wulfstan as a gift by someone who did not know of his connection to them.

The young bibliophile Wulfstan was just the kind of person who might have appreciated the bookworm riddle, or the rapturous description of book-love in the Old English poem *Solomon and Saturn*:

Books are glorious ... They gladden the heart of every man amid the pressing miseries of this life. Bold is he who tastes the skill of books; he will ever be the wiser who has command of them. They send victory to the true-hearted, the haven of salvation for those who love them.

This poem is characterised by an intense interest in learning and arcane knowledge, with an insatiable appetite for *boc-cræft*, the 'craft of books'. The value to be found in books and learning is hardly an uncommon theme in medieval literature, but the language here is appealing: it speaks of love and of the pleasure to be found in books amid the troubles of the world. What could be a more precious gift?

Eleanor Parker is a medievalist and writes a blog at aclerkofoxford.blogspot.co.uk.

Supporters celebrate the Popular Front's election victory, Paris, May 1936.

The Republic of Broken Dreams

Since the revolution, French history has been marked by moments that promise progress but end in bitter failure. The election of the Popular Front in 1936 was one such example, says **Jonathan Fenby**.

THE UPPER-CLASS holiday-makers of Deauville, Nice and other French resorts, which had previously been reserved for them, were horrified. Alighting from the cheap compartments of trains were crowds of workers on their first outing to the seaside. In some places, shops put up signs making clear that these new holiday-makers would not be welcome.

It was just one of many challenges to the established order that swept across France 80 years ago after an exceptionally turbulent period in the country's modern history, when France had its first full-blooded government of the left headed by its first Jewish prime minister and backed by a powerful Communist Party. Members of the Popular Front exulted that a new era had been ushered in at the general election of May 1936, at which the Socialists (SFIO), the Communists (PCF) and the (mainly moderate, despite their name) Radicals took 57 per cent of the vote (which was restricted to men). As a result, it held a total of 386 seats out of 608 in the Chamber of Deputies, giving them a strong mandate for change.

While Hitler was consolidating his power across the Rhine, the French electorate seemed to have cast a decisive blow for republican values, drawn from the original revolution. The new government was greeted with an explosion of rejoicing by workers and the progressive middle class. A vast march to the Place de la Nation in Paris on July 14th was ▶

headed by a tall, pale young woman in a red shirt, her black hair streaming behind her. Photographers and film-makers recorded the sense of liberation. After six and a half decades in which the Third Republic was governed from the right or the centre, the left finally had its chance of fulfilling the promise of 1789, of the rights of man and *liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité*, playing out France's self-appointed role as the beacon of progress for humanity.

There was no time to be lost; in the space of 73 days, the government enacted 133 laws. A big public works programme was launched. Nationalisation of railways and of arms and aviation factories began. Two million striking workers occupied factories; at the huge Renault plant on the edge of Paris, they slept on the seats of half-finished cars and hung red flags in the managing director's office.

There was militancy in parts of the countryside, too. A Grains Board was set up to ensure that farmers got a fair price for their wheat. Loans were extended to small and medium-sized enterprises. There were important social advances; the school leaving age was raised to 14, though the Senate, controlled by the opposition, prevented the granting of votes to women. Apart from the prime minister, Léon Blum, an outstanding if rare example of an intellectual who was also an effective politician, the government contained major figures, among them the tough interior minister Roger Salengro, Vincent Auriol, the future president of the Republic, at finance and the impressive Jean Zay as education minister.

The government sought to lift France out of recession by boosting demand through wage increases. A marathon negotiating session with unions and employers established collective bargaining rights, set the working week at 40 hours and granted a 10-12 per cent pay rise. Annual paid holidays of two weeks were guaranteed, giving workers a chance to visit those previously privileged seaside resorts; half a million cheap train tickets and hotel

Workers play cards with colleagues and family members during the national strike of June 1936.

rooms were provided by the government.

The central bank, the Banque de France, which had previously been run by 200 'regents', was made more accountable. Ministers promised to demolish the *mur d'argent* (wall of money), which, they claimed, protected an outmoded social and economic system. Measures were introduced to help farmers. In Indochina, 7,000 of 10,000 political prisoners held after a Communist-led rising were freed. '*Tout est possible!*' (Everything is possible), a prominent SFIO member declared.

It was all too good to be true; not for the first or last time in France's modern history. Again and again, the promise of progress from a swing to the left had ended in disappointment. The first revolution had degenerated into totalitarian terror, a corrupt, rent-seeking regime and then the dictatorship and military adventurism of Napoleon Bonaparte: the Bourbon monarchy returned a quarter of a century after it had been deposed. In 1830, the overthrow of the reactionary Charles X led to the installation of the 'Bourgeois Monarch', Louis Philippe, but his rule degenerated into corrupt conservatism, leading to the Third Revolution of 1848, and the foundation of the Second Republic, a euphoric outburst of revolutionary values.

Within a few months, the republican government sent in National Guards in a bloody suppression of the workers of Paris. France's defeat by Prussia in 1870 was followed by the Paris Commune, which was suppressed by the troops of the new Third Republic. Governments quickly became a series of revolving door administrations of the same cast of ministers who failed to introduce substantial social progress, kept women disenfranchised and were hemmed in by a thicket of vote-delivering interest groups.

THOUGH IT EMERGED among the victors, the First World War left France exhausted. The debts it had incurred to pay for the military effort in the absence of a proper tax system meant that the state was always struggling to make ends meet. The expectation that 'the Germans will pay' through reparations was dashed. The Great Depression, which hit France in 1931, was particularly tough for the working class, as the central bank stuck to an austerity policy and governments tried unavailingly to balance the budget despite rising unemployment. The military adopted a defensive strategy, which reflected the national mood. So the French watched helplessly as the Nazis militarised Germany and reoccupied the Rhineland two months before the Popular Front victory.

Hence the hopes of a new dawn placed by supporters on Blum and his colleagues, who promised expansive economic policies and the promotion of greater equality. Hence also the fear and loathing of conservatives and the even more extreme defenders of the old order, some of whom looked to Germany for inspiration. The antisemitism, which had erupted at end of the 19th century with the Dreyfus Affair, surfaced again in virulent attacks on Blum; before the election victory, far-right thugs had dragged him from his car and beaten him up. The reactionary philosopher Charles Maurras, founder of the Action Française movement, branded Blum 'a man to be shot; in the back'.

The climate was electric after years of battles between the left and militant right. Disrespect for politicians, together with rising unemployment and falling living standards, spurred increasingly strident protest movements.

On the night of February 6th, 1934 the crisis reached boiling point as a crowd of 40,000 from the militant right tried to storm the Chamber of Deputies by the Seine. They had gathered to protest at the dismissal by the Radical

prime minister, Edouard Daladier, of the Paris police chief, Jean Chiappe, who was known for his right-wing sympathies. (Daladier also banned performances of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* for its anti-democratic message.) Six hours of fighting with police took between 14 and 16 lives and injured more than a thousand.

An aged politician, Gaston Doumergue, came out of retirement at his southern estate at the age of 70 to form a 'government of public safety'. The hard right movements split, staging separate marches through Paris. The Socialist Party newspaper, *Le Populaire*, denounced 'fascist groups, which think only of a new war and aim for civil war'. After decades in which the minsters of the Third Republic had papered over the cracks in society and politics, the time for choice had arrived and France opted for the left.

That was the context in which the Popular Front was elected. But its victory was somewhat illusory. The extremist groups of the right had been held back. The Republic had been preserved. But the vote for non-Popular Front candidates was down by only 70,000 on the previous poll; the scale of the centre-left sweep was primarily the result of discipline in lining up voters behind the best-placed candidate while its opponents were disunited.

Blum and his colleagues had problems from the start in dealing with the way in which workers took action outside the channels of parliamentary democracy. There was a general strike to celebrate the election victory and continued factory occupations despite calls for production to resume. This militancy was not to the taste of those Radicals who represented rural constituencies, where voters were suspicious of urban militancy and vested interests were strong. The Communists, who had joined the Socialists as part of Stalin's policy of promoting alliances against fascism, did not commit themselves to ministries, preferring to sit on the sidelines, where they could take credit for change but remain free to criticise.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE Socialist Party soared, but economic realities soon made themselves felt. Inflation rose steeply and the franc was devalued. Civil servants and pensioners were alienated as the increase in their earnings lagged behind those of industrial workers and they were pinched by rising prices. The inflexible nature of the new labour system and reduction in the working week produced bottlenecks accentuated by a shortage of skilled staff. Output fell, capital fled France and a ban on private gold transactions halted the inflow of the precious metal.

The economic situation forced the government to declare a 'pause' in its reform programme. Spending on public works dropped and money was diverted to the military budget in light of Germany's reoccupation of the Rhineland. Blum's caution about aiding the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War alienated some supporters. The Communists urged intervention across the Pyrenees. But the Cabinet was divided and Blum feared that aiding the Republicans would lose the support of the moderate Radicals, widen the left-right chasm and provoke civil strife.

The right's attacks were unceasing, backed by funding from big business. The violently antisemitic deputy, Xavier Vallat, described the premier as 'a cunning talmudist', who was not favoured by most of the French. Some like-minded people adopted the motto, 'Better Hitler than Blum' and

'The Popular Front: one face but so many teeth', *Le Cri de Paris*, May 1936.

On the night of February 6th, 1934 the crisis reached boiling point as a crowd from the militant right tried to storm the Chamber of Deputies

Militant right-wingers besiege the Chamber of Deputies, Paris, February 6th, 1934.

depicted the walrus-moustached prime minister as a creature at Moscow's bidding.

The interior minister, Salengro, committed suicide after a mendacious campaign claiming he deserted to the Germans in the First World War. The military patriarch Philippe Pétain called for a revival of the family and the army. Pierre Laval, who had begun as a socialist lawyer before moving rightwards in two terms as prime minister, said the parliamentary regime could not continue and needed to draw on the prestige of the aged marshal.

Popular enthusiasm for the government ebbed. There were fresh right-left clashes in the streets. The Senate refused Blum's request to impose financial policy by decree. So the prime minister resigned in June 1937, a year after taking office, and Chautemps stepped in for nine months. Blum returned to office the following March, at the time of Hitler's Anschluss with Austria, but failed to put together a majority and resigned after three weeks.

 France moved back to the centre under Daladier, who joined his British counterpart, Neville Chamberlain, in signing the Munich Agreement, ceding the largely German Sudetenland to the Reich in September 1938. He feared hostile crowds on his return to Paris; instead he was welcomed with cheers, leading him to mutter 'Imbeciles! If they only knew what they are cheering.' France lived in 'a nightmare of fear', as the writer Julien Green put it.

The 40-hour working week was reversed. Policies were introduced to promote production. Taxes rose to reduce the deficit. The dreams of 1936 had been brought crashing to earth by economic realities, political opposition and the lack of a consensus for reform, which brought many problems in its wake. To make change possible would have required a more hard-nosed pragmatic approach, but that had not been the mindset during the summer of 1936.

Nearly half a century later, the first administration of the Fifth Republic to be headed by a leader of the Socialist Party, François Mitterrand, took office in 1981 amid similar euphoria. Again, a would-be transformative left was forced to change course once its policies proved unrealistic. In 2012, François Hollande became president promising a new start, only to find himself bogged down by the economy.

The Popular Front thus fits into a long trajectory of the difficulty France has in fulfilling its vision of itself. As the French saying goes: 'My heart is on the left but my wallet is on the right'. When the chips are down, the second takes precedence over the first, again and again.

Jonathan Fenby is author of *The History of Modern France: From the Revolution to the War on Terror* (Simon & Schuster, new edition 2016).

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The*Map*

Marshall Island Stick Charts

THE MARSHALL ISLANDS, spread across 29 coral atolls and five islands in the Pacific Ocean, have, inevitably, encouraged a highly sophisticated understanding of navigation and seafaring in their inhabitants, which has been aided by innovative and successful technologies. Stick charts show a complex and deep understanding of their makers' environment, in particular of how water reacts to land. They were intended to be used before a voyage, so sailors could learn and understand the patterns of the sea, rather than for navigation once they had set sail.

Each map is unique and was used and understood only by its maker. On this map, islands and atolls are represented with seashells; the straight sticks (made of coconut fibre) show currents and waves around them; and the curved sticks represent ocean swells. Stick charts were first introduced to western audiences in the 19th century and satellite technology has recently validated the accuracy of the Marshall Islanders' understanding of the sea. Efforts are currently being made to revive traditional navigation techniques in the Marshall Islands.

Kate Wiles
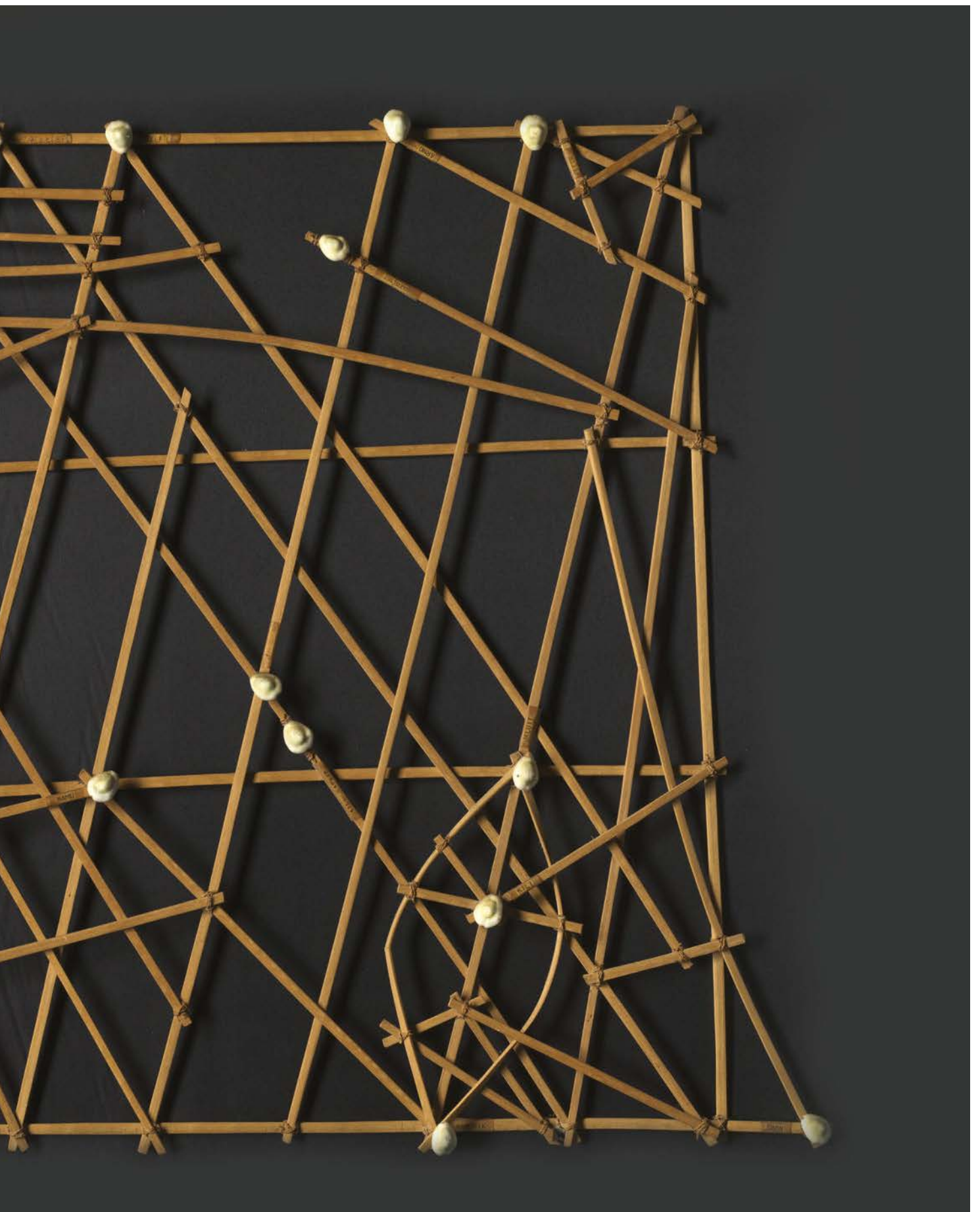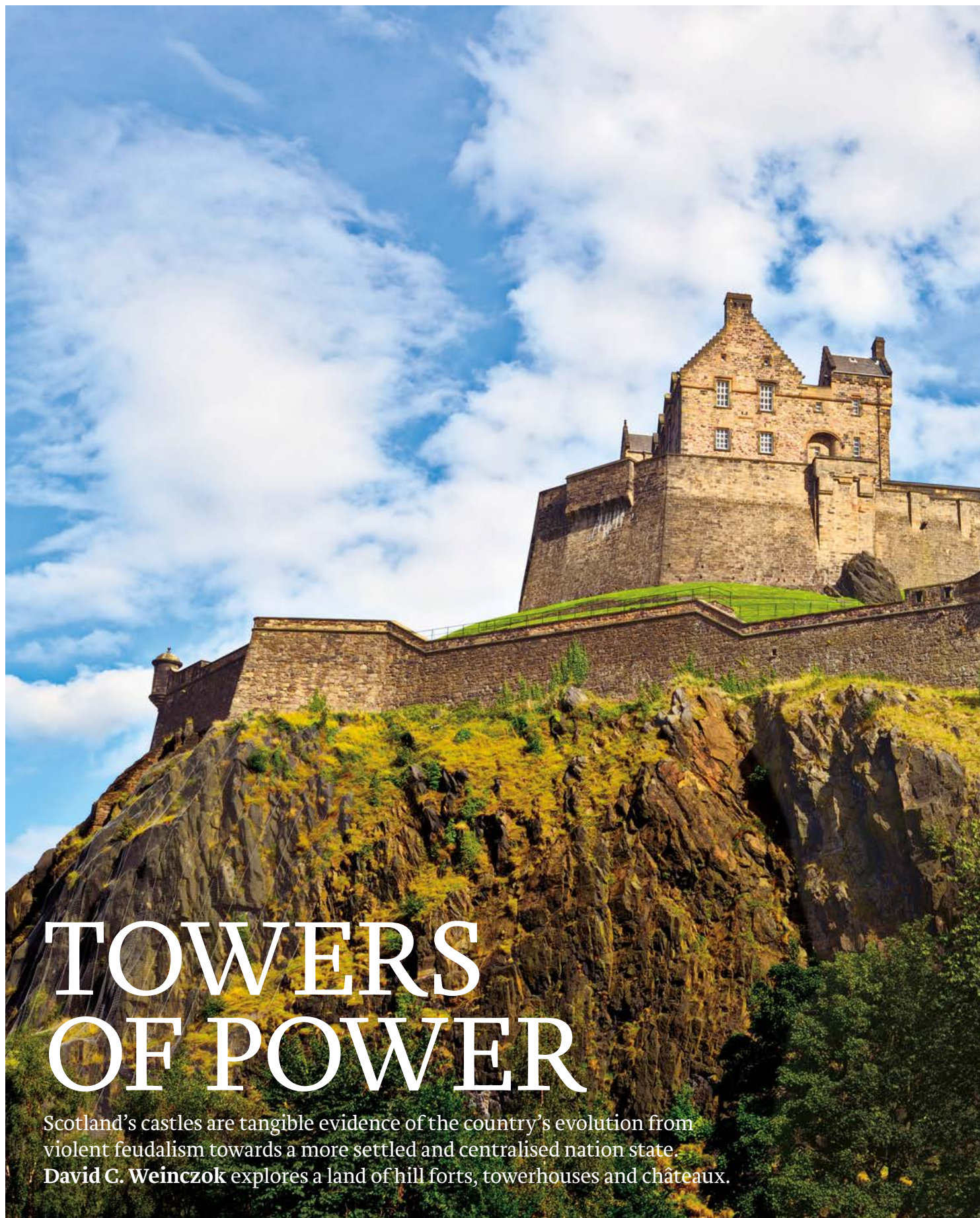
TOWERS OF POWER

Scotland's castles are tangible evidence of the country's evolution from violent feudalism towards a more settled and centralised nation state. **David C. Weinczok** explores a land of hill forts, towerhouses and châteaux.

NOT A SINGLE ASPECT of medieval society escaped the shadows cast by Scotland's castle walls and the schemes unfolding within them. Scotland is a land of castles, with more than 1,500 still standing. Ranging from mostly vanished mounds to fully restored keeps, a survey of these structures holds tremendous potential to reveal the formative forces behind Scottish, as well as British and European, history and politics.

A castle is a fortified dwelling that functions as both a domestic and martial structure to a satisfactory, if not exactly equal, measure and is therefore a product of the feudal world. If it bristles with guns but cannot work as a day-to-day residence for a lord and his household, then it is a fortress. Structures leaning too heavily towards the domestic side of the scales can be thought of as a bit like the wealthiest house on the modern block, sporting a gated entry and security alarm; it will deter and possibly prevent the mischief of a casual intruder, but it would barely inconvenience a SWAT team.

The lines are not always clear cut, but what matters is that, over a period of 900 years, the evolution of fortified dwellings in Scotland saw dramatic changes in the ability and requirements of balancing both of these functions. Such swings of the pendulum tell us more about power politics in Scotland than perhaps any other institutions of their time.

The peoples who inhabited Iron Age Scotland differed in many ways, in language, religion and temperament, but ▶

they all shared an affinity for the hill fort. Built advantageously on natural volcanic plugs and bluffs, entire communities could be enclosed within a formidable citadel complex of earth, timber and vitrified rock.

Among the most imposing of them was the capital of the Strathclyde Britons, Alt Clut, situated in the Clyde basin near modern Glasgow. It seems, when exploring Scotland's prehistoric landscape, that every bump on the horizon played host to a hill fort at some point and archaeology more often than not backs this up. For instance, both of Edinburgh's great geological features, Castle Rock and Holyrood Park, were capped by Iron Age forts from which the contemporary East Lothian capital of Traprain Law was easily visible.

Strongholds set upon natural heights and rocky crags were therefore well known to the peoples of early medieval Scotland. The conical mounds of earth capped by timber towers, which began sprouting up across the land in the early 1100s, were a radical social and psychological departure from the hill forts of old. Whereas their predecessors enclosed a large proportion of a community's population, castles marked a fundamental division between the rulers and the ruled, whose message of dominance and difference would have been unmistakable.

Hundreds of such structures existed throughout Scotland, with particularly fine examples surviving in part at Duffus Castle in Moray, the Bass of Inverurie in Aberdeenshire and the Motte of Urr in Dumfries and Galloway. It is estimated that an average motte and bailey castle (one with a wooden or stone keep, or bailey, situated on a raised earthwork, or motte) could be constructed in just over a month by 50 labourers working 10 hours per day, making it a relatively cost-effective way of establishing a regional power centre.

Before the first clods of earth were heaped onto the mounds of Scotland's earliest castles, the foundations of their hegemony were already laid. Scotland's political and religious institutions had long been undergoing a process of intensive Europeanisation and feudalisation. Queen Margaret, who ruled alongside Malcolm III from c.1069 until her death in 1093 and was canonised in 1250, is generally credited with lending this process its initial momentum. Margaret's dedication to continental institutions resulted in the founding of new religious and monastic houses in Scotland, the increasing entrenchment of the Roman Church over the distinct and sophisticated Celtic Church and the raising of European – especially French – aesthetics and courtly practices to the height of fashion.

Fortification technology was conspicuously slower on the uptake. It was not until the reign of Margaret's son David I (r.1124-53) that we get the first explicit mention of a programme of castle-building in Scotland. The 14th-century Scottish chronicler John of Fordun wrote of David I that 'He it is that has decked thee [Scotland] with castles and towns, and with lofty towers'. While David was not the first King of Scots to follow the basic structure of granting fiefs in return for military service, he was the one that decisively entrenched European feudalism into his kingdom.

What these new knights and their castles brought to the power table was the institutionalisation of a militant wing of the aristocracy, with a greater grasp of command

Distribution of Scottish castles. Previous page: Edinburgh Castle from the west.

structure and availability of modernised armaments than Scottish nobles and kings, by and large, had available to them previously. If feudalism was the future in 12th-century Scotland, then castles and their soldiers were its physical form.

It is in a reading of this period's geopolitics that the idea of an entirely peaceful settlement and feudalisation process in Scotland becomes blemished. Much is made of the fact that while the 11th- and 12th-century kingdoms of England and Ireland fell to the Norman onslaught, that of the Scots was able to weather the initial storm until the conquerors could be made into guests. Surely, kings such as David I or William I would have taken pride knowing that a baying lion had been turned into a reliable household guard, for many of the incoming European knights took up arms in feudal service to them.

From the perspective of Gaelic Scotland and those in ▶

Whereas forts enclosed a large proportion of a community's population, castles marked a fundamental division between the rulers and the ruled

A 19th-century illustration of Bothwell Castle and its floor plan.
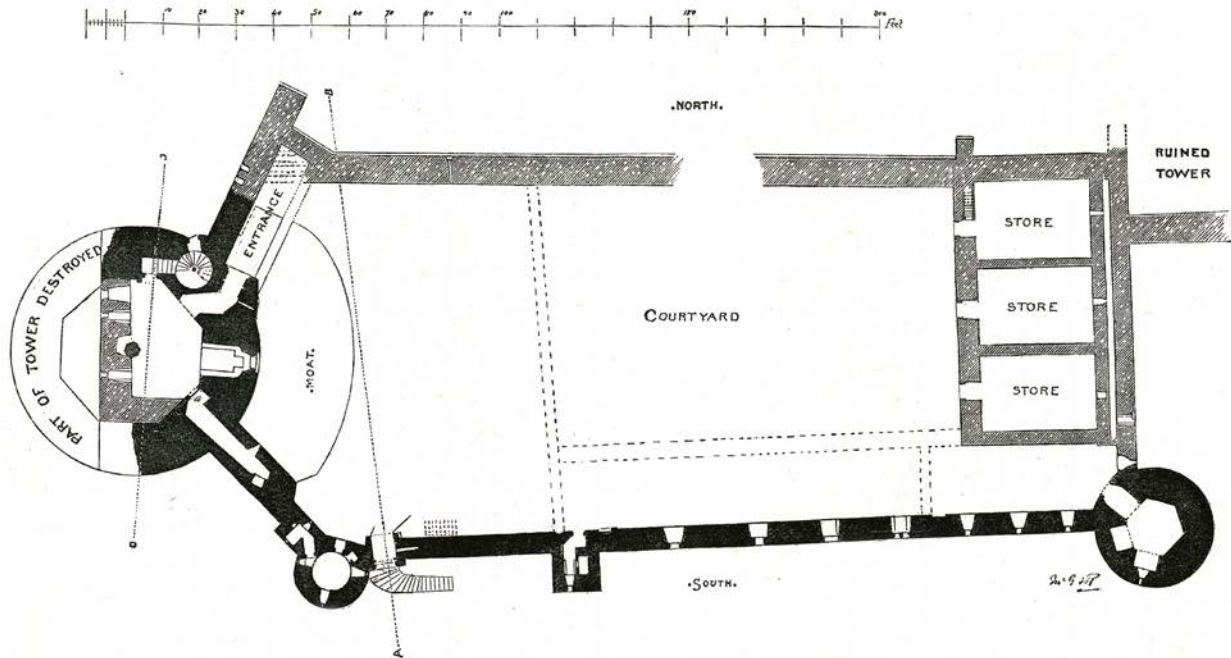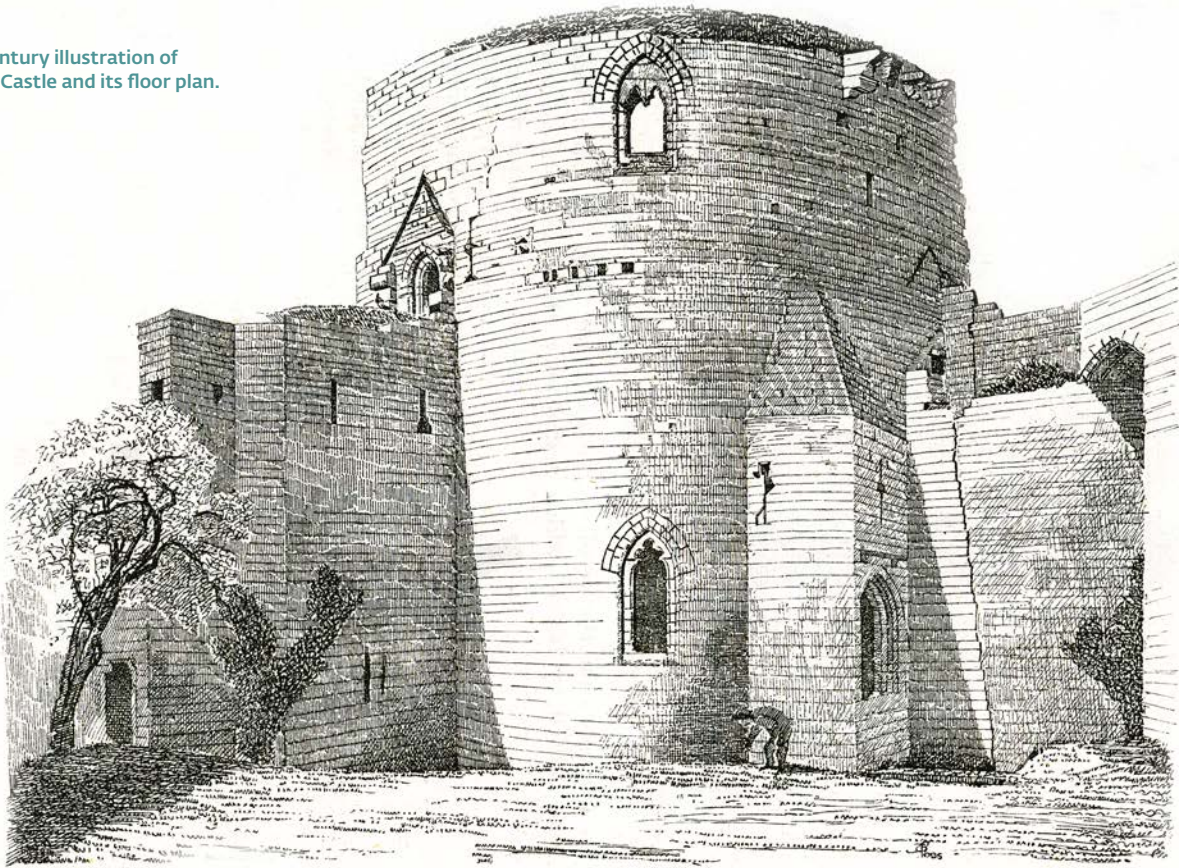
contested regions, this militarisation of the countryside by mailed knights on horseback riding out from their towers in service to a far-off crown was an act of territorial aggression. Almost as soon as they appeared the new castles became targets of attack, viewed by many not as beacons of progress or prosperity but as symbols of oppression and exclusion.

CASTLES' EXPANSIONIST role is vividly illustrated in maps featuring their locations across the country in the 12th and 13th centuries. A brief glimpse shows an overwhelming concentration of motte and bailey castles on the frontiers of the kingdom, with the Scottish power base in the lands between modern Stirling, Dunfermline and Aberdeen equipped only sparsely.

West is the direction to look for the most fascinating examples of castle architecture in 12th-century Scotland. There, among the bare rock and sandy bays of the intoxicating Hebrides and western seaboard, a distinctive Norse-Gaelic culture flourished. Using the abundant and high quality local stone, the heirs of Somerled – the 12th-century Gaelic warlord who controlled the Kingdom of the Isles – built enclosure castles, tremendously thick quadrangular walls enclosing a courtyard. Often these were built directly onto great outcrops of volcanic rock, where the waves of sea or loch could lash the foundations. Mighty Castle Sween in Argyll stands as perhaps the oldest, dating from as early as the 1150s. It is one node in a network of castles dotting vital points on the western seaboard, the power of the birlinn longship backed by the sturdiness of stone keeps.

Here, too, castles were epicentres of power, not for a feudal order but for a culture favouring the warrior bard, whose beliefs and political structures were more comfortable in the world of the Irish Sea than in mainland Britain. In both geographic and psychological terms, the castles of

12th-century Scotland marked a fault line between two increasingly distinctive power structures – that of ascendant Anglo-Norman feudalism and the older, kin-based Celtic order.

Back in the lands more firmly controlled by the King of Scots, the granting of fiefs and construction of castles on the frontier served to consolidate and extend royal power. In the long term, however, this process prepared the ground for the rise of those great dynasties – the Douglases, Stewarts, Bruces, Comyns and the like – whose conflicts with the crown chronically destabilised the nation from within. First, though, came something of a honeymoon phase.

The 13th century was, until its last decade, a peaceful and prosperous time in much of Scotland. Friendly relations with England, the consolidation of royal power into the north and west and the rule of competent kings meant that stone castles could be built in earnest. What followed is now considered to have been a 'golden age' in castle building. This may at first seem paradoxical. However, castles on the scale of those built in Scotland, indeed throughout Britain and Europe, in the 13th century required a tremendous investment of money, manpower and time – all three things most readily available in times of peace.

Bothwell Castle, 12 miles south of Glasgow, is one such place. Described as the grandest piece of secular architecture from medieval Scotland, it would have been the country's largest castle, but for the outbreak of the Wars of Independence in 1296. Built when Scotland's borders were being pushed towards their ultimate limits, Bothwell was a statement etched in stone that its lords were there to stay.

> *The new castles became targets of attack, viewed by a great many as symbols of oppression and exclusion*
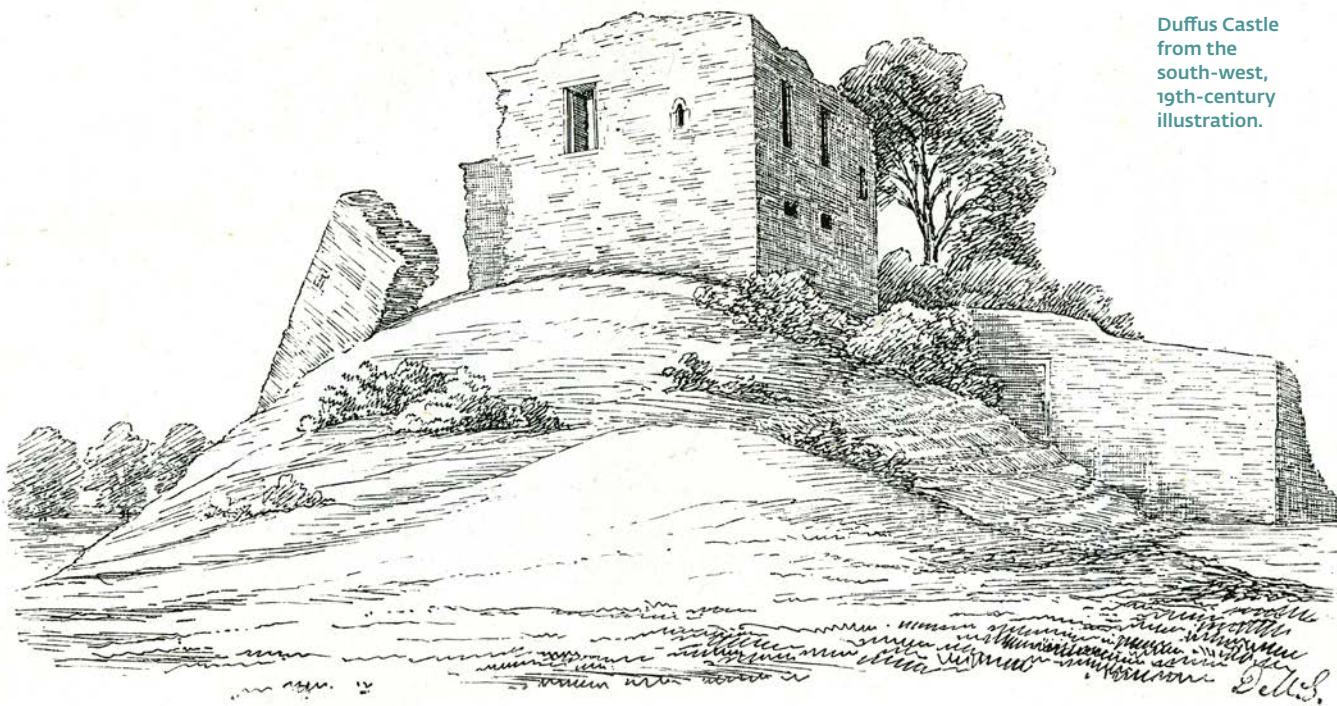
Duffus Castle from the south-west, 19th-century illustration.
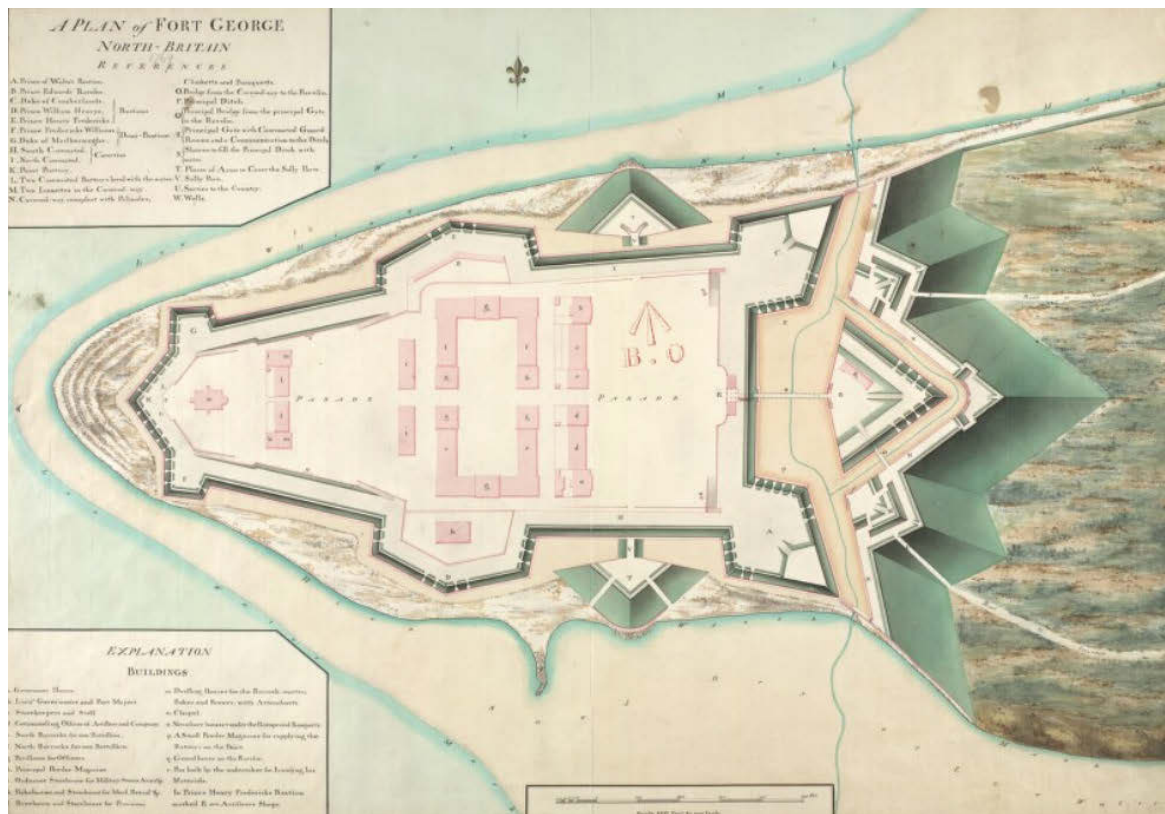
A plan of Fort George, by engineer William Skinner, 1769.

Caerlaverock Castle.

It is a testament to perhaps the most important political phenomenon of 13th- and early 14th-century Scotland, of which mighty castles such as Bothwell were a result: the establishment of national baronial dynasties equipped with vast resources and the capacity to exercise significant legal and martial sovereignty within their own demesnes. Things were certainly being shaken up – between 1200 and 1288 two new earldoms were created outright, while five earldoms passed to power-hungry new families. Robert Bruce (r.1306-29) contributed immensely to this trend by granting vast swathes of land, particularly in the Borders and north-east, to loyal lieutenants, such as his nephew Thomas

Randolph and the fearsome James 'the Black' Douglas.

It was this elite that built the grandest of Scotland's baronial castles to match the extent of their ambitions, while nobles of more middling rank populated the landscape with hundreds of more modestly fortified dwellings and towers. Cumulatively, they did so with such enthusiasm that, when Edward I campaigned from the Borders to Elgin and back in 1296, an overall distance of nearly 500 miles, on only one occasion was he forced to sleep under canvas rather than a castle roof. Their labours are now counted among the finest examples of castle architecture in northern Europe, including the triangular and moated Caerlaverock Castle, East Lothian's Dirleton Castle and the northern stronghold of Kildrummy. This, then, was a radical departure from the castle building of the previous century. No longer were a flurry of timber castles being raised upon the kingdom's fringe; greater beasts were now stirring, with stone keeps requiring 20 years or more to build, declaring in no uncertain terms the permanent intentions of an empowered baronial class.

For the next 150 years at least, castles would take centre stage in every military campaign in Scotland. The vast majority of confrontations in the medieval period were not large clashes in the open field, but protracted battles of attrition between besieging and defending forces. It is somewhat ironic that the two men most responsible for destroying Scotland's great baronial castles fought for mutually exclusive causes – Edward I, the 'Hammer of the Scots', and Robert Bruce, Scotland's hero king. Edward's endeavour to conquer Scotland from 1296 until his death in 1307 saw his forces lay siege, successfully, to almost every major castle in the land, most spectacularly at Caerlaverock in 1300 and Stirling in 1304, where he unleashed his

menacingly-named trebuchet, War Wolf. Bruce's guerrilla campaign of 1306-14 saw the systematic destruction of castles – even those ultimately belonging to Bruce and his lieutenants – so as to deny English garrisons and his Scottish rivals their use of them as staging points. Many were also damaged or destroyed entirely during the second outbreak of war from 1333-57, when England's Edward III came closer to total domination of Scotland than even his Machiavellian grandfather.

DESPITE ALL THEIR symbolic triumphalism there could be no denying that the keys to the kingdom had resoundingly failed their first sustained test, whether to English siege engines or Bruce's system of isolation and attrition. Adaptation once again became a matter of survival in a hostile world.

Internicine conflicts in 14th- to 16th-century Scotland, such as those with the Douglases and the MacDonald Lords of the Isles, edged increasingly in favour of the state. While the crown's eventual hegemony was never a foregone conclusion, the reality was that by the late 15th century the great curtained-walled keeps that the Scottish nobles so prided themselves on were going out of style as a means to keep secure. The Stewart kings were ceaseless in their desire to rein in the power of the earls and barons and they had an increasingly diverse and sophisticated tool kit with which to do so. By the time of his assassination in 1437, James I, for instance, had cut down the number of earldoms from 15 to eight, only four of which remained in the same familial hands as at the beginning of his reign. In light of this radical cull, which would not be the last, the motivations behind the king's murder in the sewers beneath a Perth monastery by recalcitrant nobles now seem self-evident.

Aiding the royal advance was its almost exclusive access to gunpowder artillery. Caution need be taken, however, not to overstate the practical influence of this development. Early cannons were clumsy things, as apt to miss wildly or simply explode – the cause of death for James II at the siege of Roxburgh in 1460 – as they were to deliver a decisive shot. No, the significance of gunpowder in the story of Scotland's castles is instead representative; they stand for the cumulative effect of the crown having more intensified contacts abroad, a broader revenue base and a greater capacity to adopt specialised fighting forces than individual nobles could hope to muster. In the absence of an effective baronial coalition against the crown, the kings of Scots were able, eventually and with several significant stumbles, to isolate and grind down their domestic rivals. The military function of the Scottish castle was, to paraphrase the historian and archaeologist W. Mackay Mackenzie, dying a natural death.

What replaced the baronial castles were two kinds of fortified residences. The first was the royal castle, such as Edinburgh situated in the political heart of the kingdom, which increasingly took on Renaissance styles and defences adapted to counter artillery. The second type

By the late 15th century, the great curtain-walled keeps that the nobles so prided themselves on were going out of style

Smailholm Tower.

was the nobles' compromise between status and function, the towerhouse, of which perhaps 2,000 stand in some form today. More modest than the great baronial castles, towerhouses proliferated especially in the late 1400s and in the decades following the catastrophic Scots defeat at Flodden in 1513. In 1535, for instance, legislation was passed in anticipation of an invasion by Henry VIII that every man dwelling in the Borders and Lowlands whose worth was valued at over £100 must build 'a sufficient Barmekin of stone and lime', with 'a tour [tower] in the samen for himsel'.

Towerhouses were never meant to endure full-scale sieges, but to provide a safe place to hole up until your attacker would hopefully decide that it was not worth the effort. Smailholm Tower, Sir Walter Scott's childhood muse, is an excellent example of such a site, though stronger than most. Their proliferation signalled something approaching a burgeoning middle class of landowners in Scotland; however, it also heralded a general trend in contemporary western Europe towards a less empowered aristocracy and a more centralised national regime.

Craigievar Castle.

THE DEATH KNELL of the Scottish castle as a major political institution occurred during and following the civil wars of the 1600s and the Jacobite Risings, which endured until 1746. A perfect storm brewed to deliver it. During the 17th century, revolutionary forces such as the Protestant Reformation elevated conflicts to an existential level; war became less and less about petty factionalism between neighbours or competitors and more about national and religious causes, such as the Covenanting Wars, that could brook no compromise. Fundamental ideas about god and country were battling themselves out at a horrific price across the British Isles and Europe and from this crucible emerged a more highly militarised state apparatus than had ever yet been seen.

Cromwell and General Thomas Monck's professional army of the 1640s and 1650s not only made short work of castle defences, they commenced a programme of constructing military installations of an entirely new character. Standing armies required a permanent infrastructure of war, a purpose to which medieval castles, in light of technological developments, were glaringly unsuited. Fortresses were raised in the Highlands as a means to subdue that notoriously ungovernable region, buildings which offered no comforts or domestic features at all; these forts were instruments of war-making through and through. Almost side by side, for instance, were old Inverlochy Castle, a remarkable and quintessential 13th-century Comyn castle and the new Fort William, a stockade upon a hill defended by high walls, a deep dry ditch and a magazine. By the 1650s, continental-style warfare had officially come to Scotland.

One consequence of this professionalisation of warfare was that a staggering number of Scots departed their native shores to fight as mercenaries in European wars. In two of countless possible examples, James Campbell, Earl of Irvine, established a 4,500-strong Scots force for personal service under the king of France in 1641, while the Thirty Years War in Bohemia saw 30,000 Scots fighting on behalf of Sweden by the conflict's end in 1648. With warfare becoming more remote from day to day life at home,

especially after the union of Scotland and England's crowns in 1603, the blood and sweat that kept baronial feuds and castle culture running were largely drained away.

This did not stop those with means from paying tribute to the past, with castle architecture entering into something of a nostalgic phase. All across Scotland, but most prolifically in Aberdeenshire, Ayr and the Lothians, country houses best described as châteaux with mock-military features were being built or redeveloped from older structures. Although the capacity for warfare had been taken from the hands of individual nobles and placed into those of the increasingly distant state apparatus – located in London rather than Edinburgh as of 1603 – it was still an important, if increasingly imagined, part of those nobles' identities. This is why we have masterpieces such as Craigievar Castle, a pink-harled fairytale castle built upon the riches of Baltic trade, featuring exaggerated tributes to battlements that were never intended to be truly put to the test.

The ultimate conclusion of the trend towards purely military structures was Fort George, northern Europe's largest Napoleonic-era artillery fort. Following the Jacobites' last stand at Culloden in April 1746, the nascent Hanoverian dynasty was still jittery about the prospect of another Highland-led revolt. With room for 2,000 soldiers, nearly a mile's length of ramparts and more than 70 guns bristling from its spur-shaped walls, Fort George was the manifestation of that anxiety and the apex of military technology in its day. Completed in 1769, the domestic threat had decisively evaporated and the fort would never fire a shot in anger. There could be no larger stamp on the land to signal the end of the castle age.

We are left with the overwhelming impression that the same forces that led to the death of the castle as an institution also played their part in the rise of the modern nation state. From communal strongholds to instruments of frontier land grabbing, and from noble estates to state-run command hubs, Scotland's military architecture has evolved in response to the ebb and flow of regional versus centralised authority. In this way Scotland's castles are, as Sir Walter Scott opined, 'tangible documents of history', living masterclasses in the shifting nature of power itself.

David C. Weinczok is a historian, writer and presenter who has worked with Historic Environment Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland.

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Local tribunal in the town clerk's office, Tenant Street, Derby, c.1916-18.

The Undergraduate Essay Prize

Rebecca Pyne-Edwards Banks
University of Derby

Court of the Conscripts

Evidence from Britain's First World War conscription tribunals reveals a surprisingly efficient and impartial system, as **Rebecca Pyne-Edwards Banks** asserts in this extract from her 2015 undergraduate dissertation prize-winning essay.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, Britain's Liberal government introduced conscription. Uniquely among combatants in the First World War, the men of Britain could apply for exemption. Under the government's Military Service Act (1916), conscripts could go before a tribunal and claim on grounds of ill health, financial difficulties, work of national importance and conscientious objection. Historians have emphasised the ill treatment inflicted upon the small number of absolutist conscientious objectors, who doggedly refused any involvement in the war. Though fewer than ten per cent of men claimed on the grounds of conscience, it remains the most explored area of military exemption. However, using the remaining archival material from the tribunal system, it becomes clear that by allowing men a space in which they could publicly object to conscription, tribunals eased its introduction. By studying the tribunals' design, methods of implementation and the lives of their volunteer members, we can see how they played a vital role in balancing manpower between the frontline and the home front.

Off the Record

The tribunals have been overlooked due to the assumption that all records were destroyed in 1922. One exception to this oversight is James McDermott's monograph, *A Very Much Abused Body of Men* (2011), which examines the Northampton tribunals. The reason for the assumed destruction was a circular sent from the Ministry of Health dated March 1922, which proposed such action.

Various local papers reported on discussions and decisions made at local council meetings regarding the destruction of tribunal records. The *Sunderland Daily Echo* observed that the tribunal documents contained 'personal and intimate' details of men's lives. The paper questioned how many local authorities might act upon the circular and destroy these 'weird and wonderful' documents. Lamenting the circular's weak wording, the newspaper noted the government's permission for individual local authorities to elect to 'preserve any documentation they so desire'. Expressing belief that the documents were 'better burnt and forgotten', the newspaper articulates the sentiment of postwar Britain, which wanted to forget the war's intrusion into personal lives and begin to construct a better future. However, some records do still exist in the form of minute books, case papers, registers of cases and correspondences that evaded destruction.

The Derby Archives

In Derby alone there are four surviving minute books that recorded the local tribunals' work. A photograph in Derby Local Studies Library has been recently identified as the Derby Local Tribunal held in Tenant Street. The exact Derbyshire Local and Appeal Tribunal featured in the photograph (left) has been identified by its unusual decor. Interestingly, the photograph seems to have a woman seated on the panel. Female tribunal members were a rarity, despite the Local Tribunal instruction manual's suggestion that members should 'not hesitate to appoint suitable women'.

Conspicuously absent from the photograph is the clerk, probably the photographer. His presence is discernible from the paperwork and inkwell left on the table. Although absent from the photograph, the clerk rarely missed a tribunal. As an eligible man, he even found himself standing before the Derby Appeal Tribunal in October 1917, claiming exemption at the request of the military representative. The clerk's conditional exemption was granted, as the work of him, and others like him, was deemed to be nationally important. The results of their labour is available to us.

Sitting on the Tribunal

Remarkable connections can be made from the tribunals' surviving records. Consider the case of Richard Lewis Barry, imprisoned in Richmond Castle. While in this North Yorkshire prison, Barry scrawled graffiti on his prison wall with humorous yet poignant words. Wanting to be remembered, he drew a bull's head and wrote: 'To prevent anyone getting it wrong I may as well state that I mean this to be a bull's head, DRAWN BY R. L. BARRY, CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR, I.L.Per and NCF, Long Eaton, Derbys, the only thing I can draw, by the way.' This graffiti can be connected to one of the only four surviving minute books which escaped destruction, now stored at Derby Record Office. This minute book from Long Eaton, Derbyshire records a Richard Lewis Barry, lace-maker who stated 'I am a socialist', to which the clerk summarised: 'Does not belong to any religious body – Claim Disallowed'. Thanks to Barry's forceful vocal objections to the tribunals, which are recorded in local papers, his prison-wall graffiti and the surviving Long Eaton minute book, connections can be made which give clarity to men's lives during the Great War.

Tribunal members are often assumed to be elderly men, with little or no judicial experience, who enthusiastically sent the young men of Britain to war. On the contrary, the various tribunals of Derby were eager to have a system in place that echoed the edict of Walter Long, Chairman of the Local Government Board, that tribunals should have an 'impartial and tolerant spirit'. Although Long's instructions discouraged applicants seeking exemption from using legal counsel, many tribunals, including Derby's, accepted solicitors to argue on behalf of their clients. John Crow, Chair of the Long Eaton Local Tribunal, had a measure of judicial knowledge as a JP, as did many of the tribunal's members within Derby. Having solicitors present at hearings assisted men in presenting their case effectively, ensuring they had the relevant documentation to support their claims. The solicitors who frequently represented men before the Derby tribunals were reported in the local papers as holding tribunals to account for minor breaches of good practice. These same solicitors in time found themselves before the very tribunals on which they served, justifying their own work as being of national importance. At the meeting to consider potential members of the Long Eaton Local Tribunal, five members were voted onto the panel from a possible 16 elected councillors, all of whom, incidentally, had a vested interest in men staying at home, as each managed a local lace manufacturing business. It seems the Derby tribunal members commanded a good deal of respect and were generally experienced in judicial matters, which gave gravitas to proceedings and reassured the claimants they were fulfilling their role effectively.

An estimated 20,000 members sat on tribunals around Britain, predominantly men freely giving their time to complete a huge volume of work, making personal sacrifices to listen and consider the exemption requests of men. They are primarily remembered for their occasional ignorant comments, which must have been infrequent, as the same few comments are repeated in many scholarly works, adding to the myth of the tribunal's ineptitude.

The *Derby Daily Telegraph* at no time recorded major incompetency at the Derby tribunals. On the contrary, throughout the whole period of reporting on the tribunals the newspaper rarely highlighted inconsistency in verdicts. Nor were the tribunals' adjudications made to look weak, partial or ineffectual. The Derby tribunals allowed legal representation, acted impartially in matters of personal interest and were not intimidated by military representatives. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the tribunals in Derby assisted in the preservation and survival of its significant local industry and small businesses. Military authorities often attacked and blamed tribunals for applying 'localist pre-occupations', yet by having tribunals held locally with the means to appeal to two higher authorities – the Appeal Tribunal and the Central Tribunal in London – conscripted men felt they still had individual rights. This also facilitated the maintenance of local industries.

Although limited in number, the records left in Derby are large enough to demonstrate the variety of skills the tribunal members had. Thus, in contrast to the long-propagated and negative image of the tribunals, the ongoing rediscovery of their records reveals their methods and achievements in a different light. Archives around the country hold evidence that the tribunals, while under the direction of central government, managed their task without favouritism and with proficiency in an impartial and tolerant manner.

'...from the farthest lands of the English'

One of the grandest, certainly one of the largest, manuscripts produced in the medieval West, the Codex Amiatinus is often overlooked as an Anglo-Saxon treasure. **Conor O'Brien** shows how its makers used it to assert their identity and to establish their place firmly within the Christian world.

Above: the full-sized facsimile of the Codex Amiatinus in St Paul's, Jarrow, July 11th, 2016.
Left: a procession takes the facsimile from St Paul's to its permanent home in the Bede Museum at Jarrow Hall, July 11th, 2016.

MANY OF THE great artistic wonders of early medieval Britain, especially of Anglo-Saxon England, are well known and much loved: the intricate illuminations and mesmerising figures of the Lindisfarne Gospels or the glittering gold and blood-red garnets of the treasure from the Sutton Hoo ship burial. But the Codex Amiatinus, one of the greatest Anglo-Saxon contributions to European culture, rarely inspires widespread affection, or even recognition. Familiarity is key: while the Lindisfarne Gospels and Sutton Hoo treasure can be seen in Britain (albeit in London, rather than the regions with which they are associated), the Codex Amiatinus left the island 1,300 years ago, never to return.

It is a truly awesome book – and an influential one. While the books of Durrow, Kells and Lindisfarne only include the four gospels, the Codex Amiatinus consists of a complete Bible; indeed, it is the oldest complete Latin copy of the Bible in existence. Writing out a full Bible remained an unusual activity throughout the early Middle Ages because it required substantial resources in time and livestock. At least seven scribes worked on the Codex (the uniformity of their handwriting shows their high level of training) and the book consumed parchment from more than 500 calves to produce over 2,000 pages. At the time of its creation it may well have been the largest book ever made, weighing more than 75 pounds and requiring the strength of two people to be carried. Most of this monumental volume is dedicated to the words of scripture written in a clear and well-spaced script (word spaces were still unusual in Latin when the Codex was written, so other manuscripts from the period are rarely as easy to read), but there are also a number of marvellous pages of colourful illumination, using inks in a dozen colours, as well as large quantities of gold and silver leaf.

The Codex Amiatinus was assumed for centuries to be an Italian work, possibly a product of papal Rome. After all, the manuscript ▶

had spent hundreds of years at the Tuscan monastery of San Salvatore on Monte Amiata (after which it is named) and displayed a high level of sophistication redolent of Late Antique Italy. That such an impressive and sophisticated Latin Bible could have come from anywhere other than the centre of civilisation was scarcely conceived of for centuries. It was only in the late 19th century that the English origin of the Codex was established and the Anglo-Saxon monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow, at the northernmost corner of the old Roman Empire, proved to be the site of its creation.

WEARMOUTH-JARROW was in effect actually two monasteries: St Peter's in modern Sunderland at the mouth of the River Wear and St Paul's at Jarrow on the banks of the Tyne near today's South Shields. This dual monastery was founded in the 670s by an aristocrat and retired warrior called Biscop, who had taken the Christian name Benedict. Benedict Biscop clearly had money to burn. He indulged in the early medieval equivalent of the Grand Tour (or perhaps an upmarket weekend shopping spree in New York), visiting the main religious sites of Christian Gaul and the western Mediterranean, acquiring cosmopolitan tastes and all the things required to stock his own monastery: relics, liturgical vessels and garments, specialist stone masons and glaziers and, most importantly, numerous books from Rome and elsewhere in the early medieval West. Monasteries were the status symbol *par excellence* for early medieval elites and Benedict Biscop built one of the finest of his time.

Biscop's deep pockets helped him gather what was probably the largest library ever collected in Anglo-Saxon England, housed in elaborate stone buildings with multicoloured glass in their windows. Indeed, the stained glass found at Wearmouth-Jarrow is very likely the oldest in Britain. The grand surroundings in which the monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow lived, and in which Biscop's books were housed, stood in sharp contrast to most Anglo-Saxon settlements; at this time even kings still mostly lived in wooden structures of native design, stone remaining an unusual and impressive building stuff.

Biscop's European spending spree contributed not only to his monasteries' external appearance but also to their internal life, which was fuelled by learning and religious practices from across the Christian world. A young boy who arrived at Wearmouth-Jarrow in the 680s and was educated there grew into the greatest intellectual of his generation, nourished by the riches of the monastic library. The Venerable Bede (d.735) wrote dozens of influential books on science and theology, but he remains best known as the author of the *Ecclesiastical History of the*

That such an impressive Latin Bible could have come from anywhere other than the centre of civilisation was scarcely conceived of for centuries

Top: St Peter's Church, Monkwearmouth.
Bottom: St Paul's Church, Jarrow.

CODICIBUS SACRIS HOSTILI CLADE PERVSTIS
ESDRA DO FERVENS HOC REPARAVIT OPVS
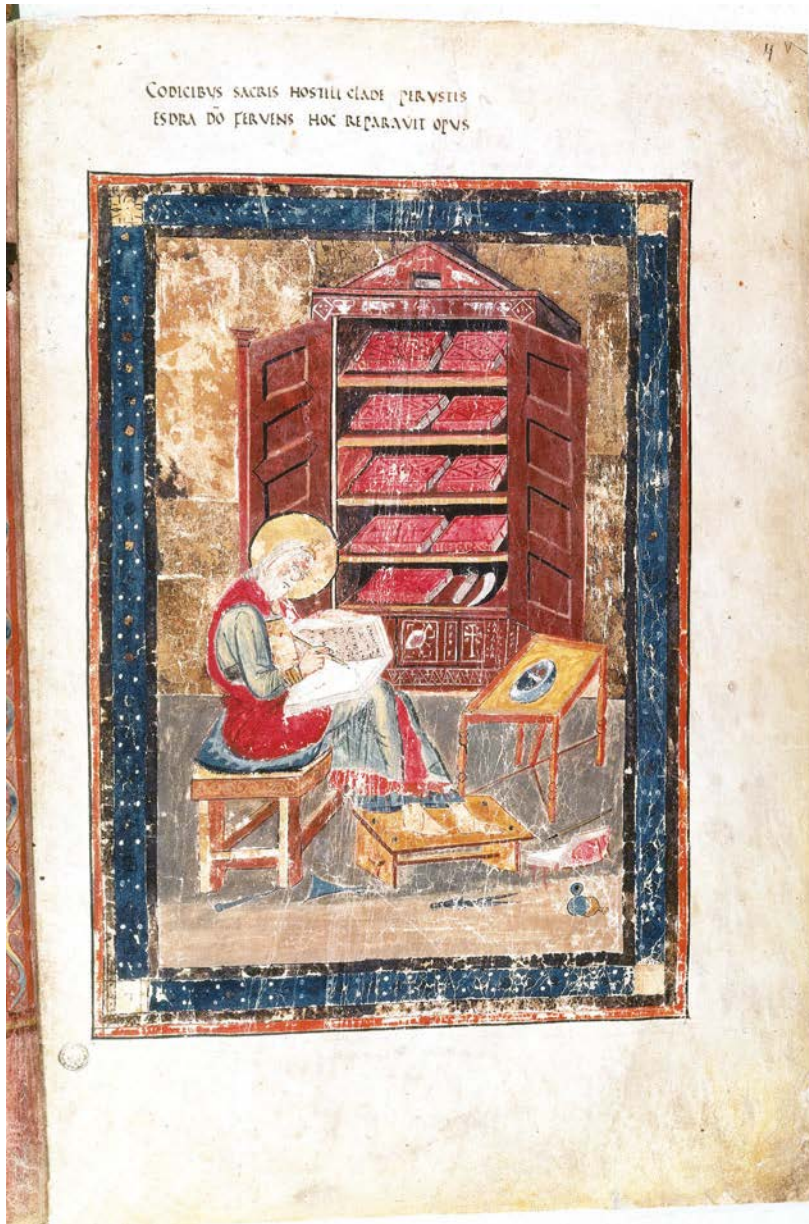
original into Latin (known as the Vulgate). Jerome's version had so much authority at Wearmouth-Jarrow that Bede actually called it the 'Hebrew Truth', as if it were equivalent to the original words themselves. So Ceolfrith and his brethren decided to improve upon the Grandior by creating new Bibles based upon its design but with Jerome's more correct text, the 'Hebrew Truth', as their preferred version of scripture. This in itself was an achievement of not inconsiderable scholarship as the monks at Wearmouth-Jarrow had to work from dozens of other manuscripts to piece together their Vulgate text. In the era before printing there was no standard text of the Bible, as each manuscript could differ from every other manuscript in ways both small and great; when the 'official' version of the Vulgate was produced during the Counter-Reformation (it continued to be used by the Catholic Church up until the 20th century), the Codex Amiatinus was a key source because of the age and excellence of its version of Jerome's text.

THIS Wearmouth-Jarrow 'edition' of the Vulgate formed the basis for three complete Bibles made at the monastery: the Codex Amiatinus and two others, which no longer exist in their entirety. The handful of pages which have survived from them (now held in the British Library) suggest that these books were slightly less massive than the Codex Amiatinus, though they still would have been quite impressive in their own right. We know that they were intended to sit upon the altar in the two main churches of the dual monastery: St Peter's at Wearmouth and St Paul's at Jarrow. Their massive size would have limited their practical use (they could hardly have been carried around without great effort and the risk of back injury); our written sources suggest they served as reference works for monks to check a scriptural passage if they needed to, though it would have been easier to slowly read through them page by page than to flip from one end to the other. But their primary function was probably symbolic; they made real the devotion to the Word of God which lay at the heart of the monastic life, linking the two churches both with each other and with Rome, the spiritual centre of Wearmouth-Jarrow's faith.

For it was to Rome that the Codex Amiatinus was to be sent. Its intended role as a high status gift probably explains the Codex's slightly larger size than its sisters, as well as its elaborate and beautiful introductory pages and images, which do not appear to have been included in the other manuscripts. One thing which certainly did not exist in those ▶

English People, making him the so-called Father of English History. He remains the only Englishman to become a Father of the Church.

This, then, was the environment in which the Codex Amiatinus was created. Biscop died in 690, succeeded as abbot by the priest Ceolfrith, probably his cousin and certainly a man of similar tastes. Ceolfrith had accompanied Biscop on his sixth and final shopping trip to Rome some years before he became abbot and, while there, he had bought a large Italian Bible, known as the Codex Grandior (literally: 'the bigger book'). This book, we now know, had been created a century earlier on the orders of a Roman aristocrat and government official turned monk called Cassiodorus. The Grandior is now, alas, lost but Cassiodorus' descriptions of it still survive. It clearly was a massive and impressive book in its own right, the 'bigger' of its name a reference to its size in relation to Cassiodorus' other Bibles; Ceolfrith must have been quite taken with it because after becoming abbot he decided to have the communities at Wearmouth-Jarrow produce their own series of Bibles modelled on it.

The Grandior was a Latin Bible but the Anglo-Saxon monks recognised that it was based upon earlier Greek translations of the Old Testament, rather than St Jerome's direct translation from the Hebrew

The pope was expected to receive one message loud and clear: 'the farthest lands of the English' belonged to the global Church
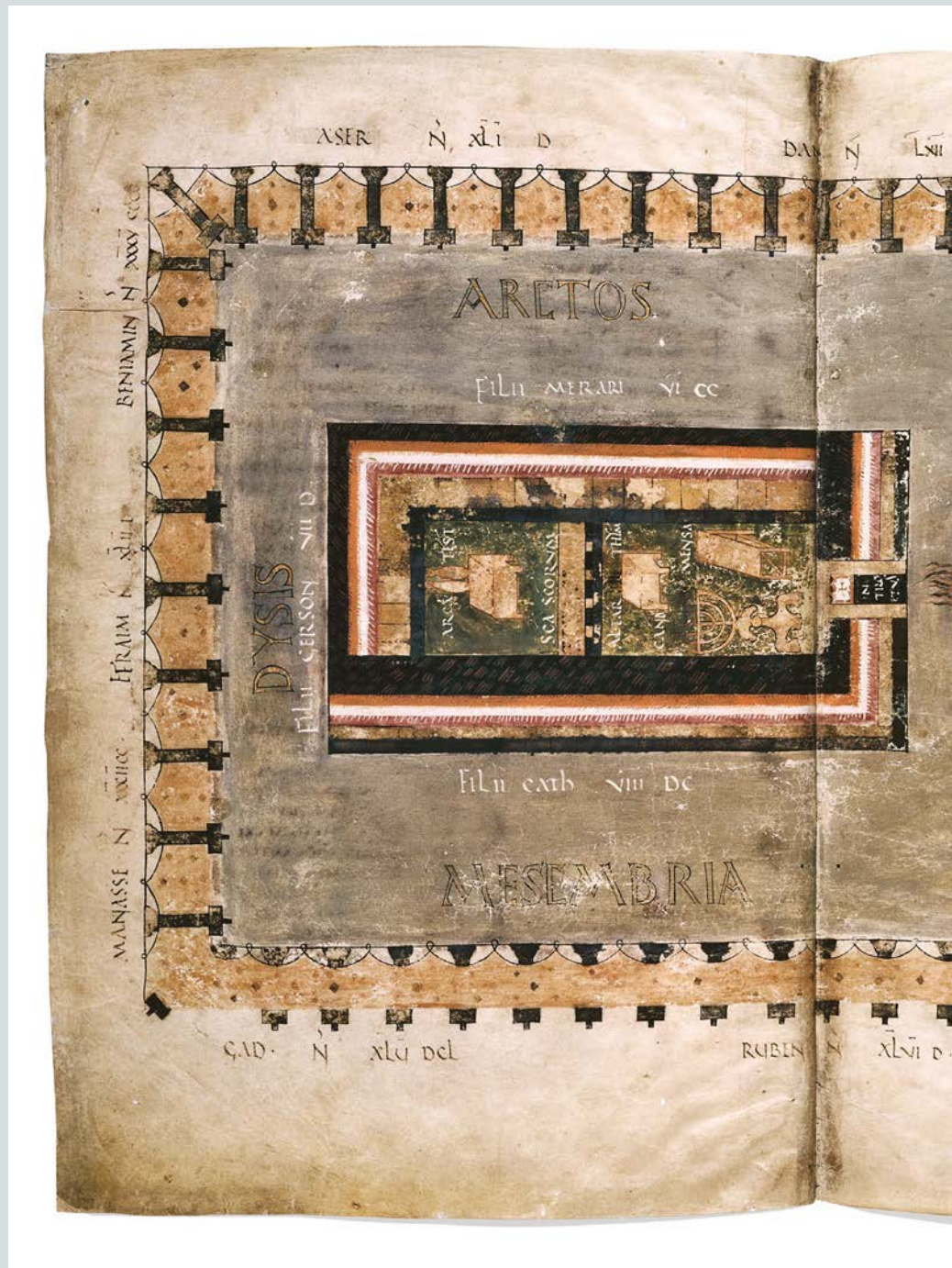
The Tabernacle page of the Codex Amiatinus.

Bibles was the poem which Ceolfrith had put into the Codex explaining its intended purpose. The abbot's verses dedicate the book to the body of St Peter, 'the head of the Church' (*caput ecclesiae*), emphasising the centrality of Rome in his understanding of the Christian world. If Rome was the centre, then Wearmouth-Jarrow was definitely the periphery: Ceolfrith declared that he sent the book 'from the farthest lands of the English' (*Anglorum extremis de finibus*). In other words, he clearly saw himself in Roman terms as dwelling at the very edge of the world but bound by a common faith to its centre.

Since the Anglo-Saxons had never been subject to the Roman Empire such an attitude may seem a little odd, but in fact it makes perfect sense when one looks at the centuries of Latin culture to which the monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow were heirs. The ancient Romans had considered Britain to be a remote and strange land, 'another world' in Virgil's words, whose northern limits constituted the very end of the habitable universe. Educated Anglo-Saxons in the early eighth century had to master a foreign language early in life as the only way to access any learning worth having. Consequently, they had no self-important convictions of living at the centre of the world, for the books they read all confirmed their peripheral status at the edges of civilisation. No surprise then that the dedication verses of the Codex Amiatinus repeat such ancient tropes; but the Bible itself subverts these very ideas, its Roman appear-

Jarrow were heirs of the great Latin Fathers of the Church. Scripture, correctly interpreted and expressed in a Roman style, formed the link which brought centre and periphery together. The Codex Amiatinus itself proved that 'the farthest lands of the English' were capable of a truly universal sophistication and learning. Ceolfrith and his brethren knew not only that they dwelt in a remote land, but also that their Christianity allowed them to transcend distance and participate in a unified Catholic world.

NO PART OF THE Codex Amiatinus reveals this message in as much detail and complexity as the magnificent diagram of the Tabernacle, which takes up two whole pages in the opening section of the manuscript. This is the largest image in the entire Codex and the loving attention which the monks gave to it justifies the focus which I, too, shall devote to it here. The picture is spread across an entire opening of the Bible and portrays the Tabernacle which Moses built in the desert to accommodate the Ark of the Covenant, as described in the book of Exodus. For Christian readers of the Bible the Tabernacle represented the Church. As Bede put it: 'The Tabernacle that Moses made for the Lord in the wilderness … designates the state of the Holy Church universal.' Since the Codex Amiatinus was all about the Anglo-Saxon monks' membership of the universal Church, the decision to open the manuscript with a picture symbolising that very body made sense. Within the walls of the Tabernacle the cardinal directions were carefully labelled, placed in the shape of a cross. The cardinal points appear on other early medieval images of the Tabernacle, too, but always written outside, not inside, the holy enclosure; by choosing to place them within the Tabernacle the monks of Warmouth-Jarrow were making a deliberate statement. Their Tabernacle had expanded to enclose North, South, East and West, just as the Church which it represented had spread to the four corners of the world, now enfolding the once peripheral Anglo-Saxons within its embrace.

THE CARDINAL DIRECTIONS actually make this point on two levels. While the artists used Latin for all the other text in the diagram, they wrote the cardinal directions alone in Greek, a highly unusual choice in a time and place where very few people, even the most educated, had much knowledge of that language. The Greek names for the directions were Arctos, Dysis, Anatol and Mesembria: their initial letters spelling out Adam. While this might seem like a sheer coincidence to us, it had great significance for early medieval theologians, because it constituted 'proof' that the biblical Adam was the father of the entire human race, scattered though it might be to the four corners of the earth. While, then, Ceolfrith, Bede and their brethren did not know a lot of Greek, they knew the significance of the cardinal directions and deliberately chose to draw attention to it in their diagram of the Tabernacle. Arctos, Dysis, Anatol and Mesembria stood out the moment a reader glanced at the image in the Codex Amiatinus: the letters were highlighted in gold and much larger than any of the other text on the same page. The Amiatinus Tabernacle literally contains all of Adam, just as the Church that it represented contained the entire human race descended from the first man. When the pope received the Codex and turned to the picture of the Tabernacle, he was expected to receive one message loud and clear: 'the farthest lands of the English' belonged to the global Church.

He also may have noticed, as he looked longer at the image, that the Northumbrian monks had produced something which looked a lot like other images of the Tabernacle, produced in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Greek cardinal directions (if not their location) form just part of the decoration of the Northumbrian image, which borrowed from the iconography of Byzantine manuscripts of an eccentric work called the *Christian Topography* by Cosmas Indicopleustes. Cosmas is notorious for having believed that the earth was flat (an unusual viewpoint in the Middle Ages) and indeed that Moses' Tabernacle provided an ▶

ance, deep Christian learning and cosmopolitan sources all asserting the Anglo-Saxons' participation in the wider word.
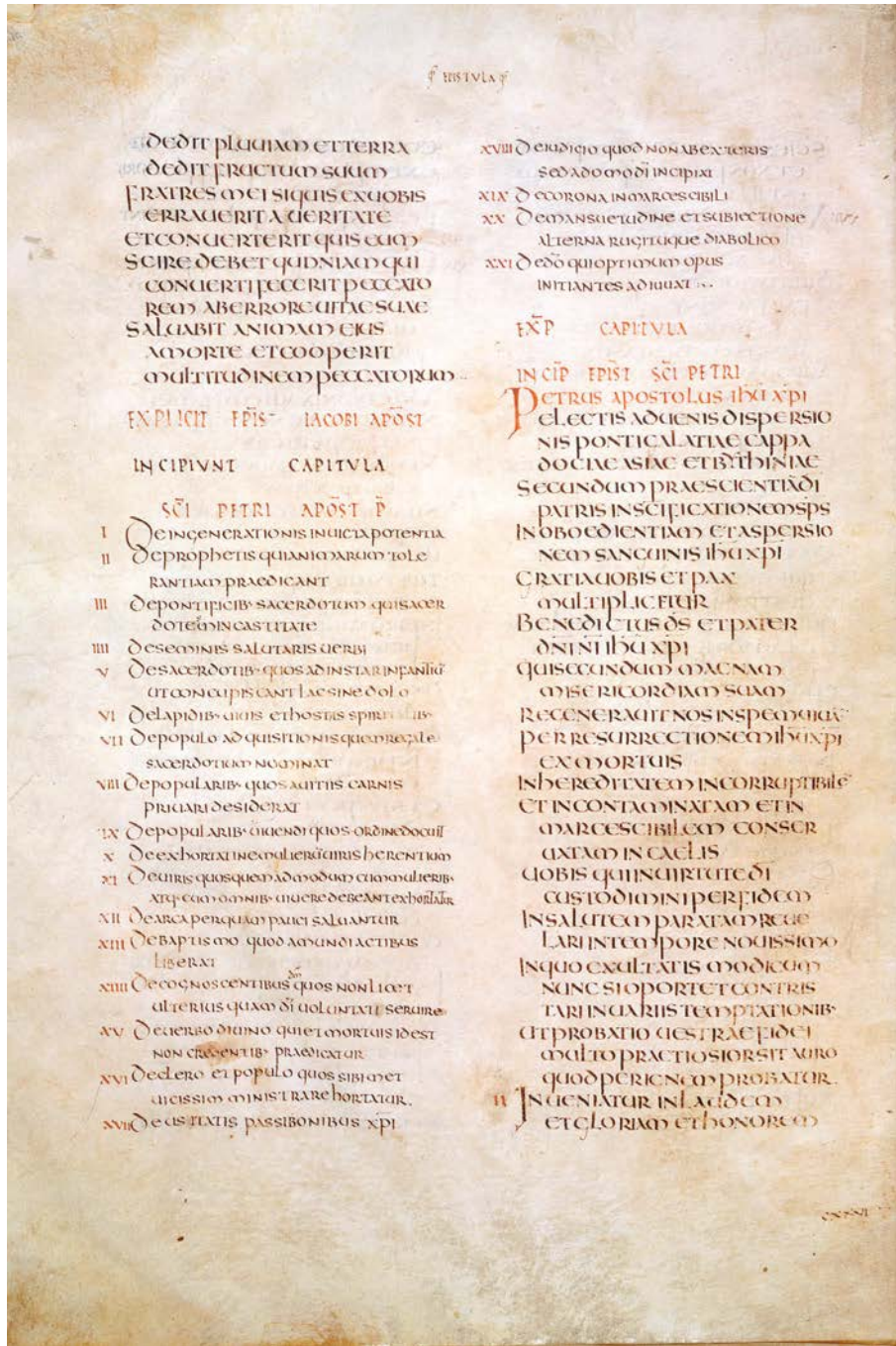
Hence the importance of a Late Antique Italian manuscript such as the Codex Grandior as the Amiatinus' model: proof that the Anglo-Saxons could make a Roman manuscript just as well as the Romans. Hence Ceolfrith's decision to have three Bibles made which directly linked Wearmouth, Jarrow and Rome, making clear that the Bible itself constituted a bond between the abbot and St Peter, a bridge between Northumbria and the papacy. Hence also the references to the great biblical scholars of the past, Saints Jerome and Augustine, in the opening pages of the manuscript: indicating that the monks of Wearmouth-

The beginning of the first letter of Peter the Apostle from the Codex Amiatinus.

accurate guide to what the universe looked like. Consequently, his *Christian Topography* included numerous pictures of the Tabernacle, which often bear a striking resemblance to that in the Codex Amiatinus. So the very design of the Amiatinus Tabernacle reveals Wearmouth-Jarrow's connections with a vast Christian world: Cosmas was probably a Greek-speaking Egyptian who had visited India. Students in the monastic school at Canterbury in the late seventh century had heard of Cosmas, thanks to their teacher, Theodore of Tarsus, a Byzantine monk who served as Archbishop of Canterbury from 668 to 690. Theodore came to England in the company of Wearmouth-Jarrow's founder, Benedict Biscop, so some connection between the work of Cosmas and the home of the Codex Amiatinus may have been possible via this route. We also know that Cassiodorus' Codex Grandior included an image of the Tabernacle based upon some of Cosmas' eccentric ideas. So even if direct contact with the East was rare in Anglo-Saxon England, Italy provided a link between Wearmouth-Jarrow and the Byzantine world. The love of Biscop, Ceolfrith and the other Northumbrian monks for Rome gave them access to a whole world of strange ideas and they revealed this to the pope by sending him a remarkably Eastern image in their remarkably Roman book.

Clearly the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus makes a grand statement about the universal spread of the Church to all peoples (includ-

ing the recently converted Anglo-Saxons themselves) and all ends of the earth; it declares Northumbria to be part of the Catholic Church, despite its apparent distance from the Church's centre in Rome and its birthplace in the Eastern Mediterranean. To modern eyes the manner in which it does so might seem esoteric and painfully abstruse; no doubt the monks at Wearmouth-Jarrow who worked on the image were being self-consciously (and probably a little smugly) intellectual. They wanted to impress their papal audience with their learning, thereby further proving that they had overcome their barbarically peripheral location to fully integrate into the Christian world. The symbolism of the Amiatinus Tabernacle was, however, no more esoteric in its context than is the use of *Star Wars* in Steve Bell's cartoons in the *Guardian* newspaper, where figures from British politics are modelled on characters from the film series. Bell can be as confident that his readers understand the symbolism of giving Tony Blair a black cloak and red light saber as the Northumbrian monks could be that the pope would understand what the Tabernacle or the Greek cardinal directions signified.

We can have no doubt then that Ceolfrith designed the Codex Amiatinus with a message for the papacy: the Anglo-Saxons, that distant people at the ends of the earth, who had only received Christianity a little over 100 years previously, were now truly part of the Christian world. By around the midpoint of the year 716 the manuscript was

Out of British sight, the Codex Amiatinus is also out of British mind to a large extent

complete and preparations began for the journey to Rome. The monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow reacted with shock when, at the start of June 716, Ceolfrith announced that he himself would lead the group carrying the Bible to Rome – and did not intend to come back. The 74-year-old abbot knew himself to be sick and possibly dying; his dream was to see Rome again before the end and to be buried there, near the relics of the great saints, 'at the thresholds of the apostles'. The sources describe the last days of Ceolfrith's preparations for his departure as being marked by floods of tears from both the abbot and the monks. He could not be persuaded to change his mind, or to delay: the abbot left the monastery on June 5th and set sail shortly thereafter for the Continent. Ceolfrith never made it to Rome, dying and being buried at Langres, in the modern Champagne-Ardennes region of France, on September 25th, 716.

While some of his companions remained with the body of their abbot, others pushed on to Rome, met the pope (Gregory II) and brought a papal letter back to Wearmouth-Jarrow for their new abbot. In it Gregory praised Ceolfrith greatly and acknowledged receipt of a 'gift' from the dead abbot; he did not specify that this gift was a book but some details of his letter make the connection to the Codex Amiatinus very likely. The pope compared Ceolfrith, leading his monks towards heaven, directly to Moses and Aaron leading the Israelites towards the Promised Land – such explicit use of the Exodus story to understand the Anglo-Saxon's life probably subtly referred to the image of the Tabernacle from Exodus, which stands at the front of the Codex Amiatinus. On Ceolfrith's final journey to Rome, which had indeed become a journey to heaven, he had borne a glorious image of the Hebrews' journey through the desert: what more appropriate imagery could there be with which to sing the praises of the English abbot and his magnificent gift?

BY THE END OF 716, then, the Codex Amiatinus was probably in Rome, or very close to being there. After that the Bible's journeys remained limited to Italy, having by the 11th century been given to the Tuscan monastery perched high upon Monte Amiata, an establishment rather like Wearmouth-Jarrow itself, possessing great wealth and a fine library. The monastery at Amiata produced its own line of giant Bibles under the influence of the Northumbrian Codex, many of which still survive. The fame of the monastery's massive and ancient Bible spread and in the 1570s the Vatican tried to have it sent back to Rome; not permanently it must be said, but to be used as a reference text for a new edition of the Vulgate, which the Catholic Church felt it necessary to produce in the wake of the Reformation. Much Protestant scriptural scholarship attacked the Church for relying upon a Latin version of the Bible, rather than the original languages; the Vatican would not give up the Latin but it could establish that the Bible used by Catholics was itself a truly ancient one and, for that, ancient copies of the Vulgate were required. There was none more ancient than the Codex Amiatinus. Unfortunately, the monks of Monte Amiata, indeed the entire local community, were rather attached to their magnificent book and would not trust the Romans to return it, if they ever got their hands on it. It took 15 years from the original request for the Codex before the Bible arrived in Rome, accompanied by Tuscan monks under orders to keep a close eye on it at all times. The book remained at the Vatican for two and a half years as cardinals and popes struggled to reconstruct Jerome's original Latin translation; the Codex Amiatinus proved central to their work, as it still is today for modern scholars working on the history of the biblical text.

Eventually, only pressure from the great Medici family proved enough to rescue the book and have it safely returned to Monte Amiata in 1590. Its final move to its current home involved a much shorter journey. When the monastery was closed in 1782 its library was taken to Florence, where the Codex Amiatinus now dwells in the beautiful Laurentian Library, with its entrance hall designed by Michelangelo. Such grand surroundings are, no doubt, worthy of the magnificent book but they have contributed to its comparative neglect in the popular image of Anglo-Saxon England. Out of British sight, the Codex Amiatinus is also out of British mind to a large extent. Hopefully that may not always be the case, for in July of this year a complete and full-sized facsimile of the manuscript arrived in England for permanent exhibition at the place where it was first created. When the magnificent Bede's World centre and museum in Jarrow re-opens, the reproduction of the Codex will play a starring role in its galleries, enabling visitors to get a real sense of the original book's extraordinary beauty, its monumental size and its designers' cosmopolitan learning. At last, 1,300 years after it left these shores, the Codex Amiatinus' place as one of early medieval Britain's greatest treasures is to be recognised.

Conor O'Brien is Junior Research Fellow in History at Churchill College, Cambridge and is the author of *Bede's Temple: An Image and its Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

FURTHER READING

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Paul Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus', *Speculum* (1996), 827-83.

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Portrait of Walatta Petros. 18th-century manuscript, Ethiopia

Walatta Petros was a woman feared even by kings. **Wendy Laura Belcher** tells the story of the Ethiopian saint, her relationships with centuries of monarchs and the stories of the miracles she performed.

Of Saints and Kings

THE 17TH-CENTURY saint Walatta Petros was not the sweet and gentle angel that many might imagine when thinking of a holy woman. This Ethiopian leader was fierce, more given to reprimanding her devoted followers than comforting them and not above killing those who disobeyed her. It is not surprising, then, that she controlled the fate of kings.

When the Jesuits came to Ethiopia in the late 1500s, they managed to convert the Ethiopian king Susenyos from the Ethiopians' ancient form of Christianity to Catholicism and, in 1622, he commanded his subjects to do the same. Enraged, Walatta Petros went round the country to preach against him and his 'filthy faith of the foreigners', barely surviving the persecution of the king's soldiers, the rebuke of his court, attempted rape by her jailer, the perils of desert exile and the propaganda of the Jesuits. She, and the many noblewomen who joined her in refusing to convert, eventually succeeded in forcing Susenyos to rescind his conversion edict in 1632, thus ending a civil war and returning the country to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahedo Church.

As the art historian Claire Bosc-Tiessé argues, Walatta Petros' monastic community was, in addition to being a centre of orthodoxy and a home for powerful abbesses, an asylum for rebels against the king. Following her death in 1642, legends grew up about the miracles she performed

over the centuries to protect those in danger from kings.

We know about these legends from two relatively new parts of the saint's hagiography, added in 1769 and 1870 to the original text, which was first written down in 1672 in Ge'ez, an Ethiopian classical language. This hagiography, the *Gadla Walatta Petros* (Life-Struggles of Walatta Petros), is actually a composite text of four different sections: the *gadl* (the saint's life), the *ta'amer* (the saint's miracles), the *malke'* (a long poem praising the saint from head to toe) and the *salamta* (a short hymn praising the saint's virtues). The miracles, the *ta'amer* (literally, 'signs'), are not those that were performed while the saint was alive but the ones that happened after her death, when followers called upon her to intervene and grant their prayers. The problems she solved generally have to do with physical danger, whether from illness, animals, hunger or attackers.

In Ethiopia, miracles can be added to a saint's hagiography over the years. Two manuscripts of the *Gadla Walatta Petros*, for example, include miracles that the saint performed posthumously for those escaping a succession of kings across the 18th and 19th centuries. In them, Walatta Petros not only protects her community from the persecution of kings, she teaches disrespectful monarchs to fear her. Thus this hagiography – the earliest known book-length biography devoted to the life of an African woman – documents not just a remarkable life but also Ethiopians' belief that women can – and do – shape history.

In her hagiography, some kings take the saint seriously from the first. Just a few months after Susenyos rescinded his conversion edict, he died. His son Fasiladas came to power and presided over the newly restored 'right faith'. The new king had long been a friend of Walatta Petros and, in 1650, he granted land and goods in order to establish a permanent monastery for her community.

> *This hagiography is the earliest known book-length biography devoted to the life of an African woman*

Cattle dancing

The legend of Walatta Petros quickly rose in eminence. She appears in the royal chronicles of various kings. In 1693, for example, the king consulted the leaders of her community about the suitability of a new head of the church. And again, in the 1730s, a chronicle relates a vision Walatta Petros had that legitimated the reign of the current king, Iyasu II (r. 1730-55, the great-great-grandson of Susenyos). The chronicle depicts Walatta Petros on her way to the Ethio-Sudan borderlands, banished into exile in the 1620s by an angry Susenyos. In a dream, she saw cattle dancing in front of Iyasu's great-grandmothers on both sides, thus predicting that their line would yield a son who would lead the nation. In this, her ability to fight heretical kings had transformed into an ability to identify just kings.

Other kings were slower to understand that Walatta Petros was a figure to be feared. Indeed, quite a few of the miracles depict kings ignoring her messages to them – to their peril. For instance, in the late 1720s, a group of rebels rose up against King Bakaffa, the great-grandson of Susenyos. According to her miracles, more than 2,000 rebels sought refuge at Walatta Petros' monastery. When Bakaffa learned where they were, he dispatched troops to the monastery with orders to kill everyone there, including the monks and nuns. An enraged Walatta Petros appeared to Bakaffa in a dream, demanding that he reverse his orders. Bakaffa, frightened, woke up but then fell asleep again. Twice more, Walatta Petros delivered the same message and finally, in the last dream, she cast him from his throne and set it on fire over him. The terrified Bakaffa then began to suspect that Walatta Petros was not merely a dream figment but was actually speaking to him. He summoned a nun who had met Walatta Petros over 60 years before, who confirmed that the woman he described was indeed the saint. Finally heeding her warning, Bakaffa sent a swift-running messenger after his army to tell them to turn back instantly. Everyone at the monastery was saved. According to her hagiography, a king who was so powerful that he had not hesitated to execute a noble rebel in front of his entire camp quaked at the thought of Walatta Petros' indignation. The power of her reputation was enough to subjugate kings as well as to validate their reigns.

Miracles and wonders

Much later, Walatta Petros protected her community from another king, Tewodros II (r. 1855-68), known in British history for taking European missionaries and British government representatives hostage and forcing them to build him a cannon. In the miracle, he is called Tewodros Me'rabawi, the western Tewodros, probably because of this association. His miracle involves, perhaps predictably, a cannon. An earlier king, Takla Giyorgis I (r. 1779 and 1800), had seized a cannon in battle, which he then donated to a church in the capital dedicated to Walatta Petros. The cannon remained there until Tewodros became king when, in an effort to assert his authority, he issued a decree saying that those found to possess cannons or firearms should have their houses pillaged and their possessions seized. The cannon in her church was found and confiscated, the priests were taken into custody and Walatta Petros' feast day was cancelled. But, due to the miraculous intervention of Walatta Petros, when the cannon arrived at court, it disintegrated. When Tewodros realised what she had done, he immediately set the priests free to save himself from her wrath. The miracle concluded with the words: 'In just this way does Walatta Petros still work miracles and wonders.' Even Western technology was no match for her.

Before Walatta Petros was born, her father had a vision of her future, in which 'the kings of the earth and the bishops will bow to her'. Susenyos was Walatta Petros' mortal enemy – condemning her, calling her before a tribunal, ordering her to undergo re-education by the Jesuits, exiling her and only narrowly avoiding killing her – but, when he rescinded his conversion edict, her hagiography claims, he also sent Walatta Petros a message informing her of his change of heart, hinting that he regretted his actions. Walatta Petros' relationship with Susenyos' progeny seems to echo this shifting relationship from disrespect to obedience, all learning to fear her.

Walatta Petros continues to be revered as a saint to those who resists authority and are dedicated to the pursuit of peace in the world.

Wendy Laura Belcher is co-translator with Michael Kleiner of *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros: A Seventeenth-Century African Biography of an Ethiopian Woman* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

Portrait of the Author as a Historian

Witnessing the slow decline of his native Sicily, the last Prince of Lampedusa saw both blame and possible salvation in the island's unique location and history, writes **Alexander Lee**.

Family time: Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa and his wife, Licy, 1940.

No.5
Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa

Born: December 23rd, 1896, Palermo.
Died: July 23rd, 1957, Rome.

WHENEVER Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa thought of the Sicily of his youth, it was always of 'nature's Sicily'. Though he had been born into aristocratic privilege and could recall many great events – such as the assassination of Umberto I (July 29th, 1900) and a visit from the ex-Empress Eugénie of France – his earliest memories were coloured by the magic of the Sicilian landscape. Even in the last months of his life he, like the characters in 'Lighea' (1956-7), would close his eyes, and recall

the scent of the rosemary in the Nèbrodi mountains, the taste of Melìlli honey, the wavering harvest seen from Etna on a windy day ... the gusts of perfume poured by the citrus groves onto Palermo at sunset ... [and] the enchantment of ... summer nights in sight of the Gulf of Castellammare, when the stars sparkle on the sleeping sea.

Left to play among such wonders as a boy, he had believed himself to be living in a fairytale kingdom, timeless and unchanging. But as he grew older, his faith was broken. Wherever he looked, he saw Sicilians ravaged by the march of time. His family fell on hard times; their villa at San Margherita di Belice was sold to pay their debts; part of the palace in Palermo had to be rented out; and, as death approached, he could hardly make ends meet. In the city the cosmopolitan elegance of the Belle Époque disappeared and was replaced by a hidebound parochialism. The countryside suffered even more. Before the First World War, liberal governments watched it degenerate into a backward, agrarian society dominated by bourgeois Mafiosi. Mussolini did little to stop the slide. And despite the land reforms of the 1950s, rampant corruption had prevented any real progress from being made. As Lampedusa's cousin Fulco observed, death seemed to be at home in Sicily.

Modern ways

But how had an island that was so beautiful, so fertile and so rich in resources fallen so low?

In *Il gattopardo* (literally *The Ocelot*, but usually translated as *The Leopard*), Lampedusa placed the blame squarely on noble families like his own, which, despite their traditional role as bastions of Sicilian society, had failed either to preserve their feudal prerogatives or to embrace the modern world as fully as they might. Inspired by the life of his great-grandfather, the novel follows Fabrizio Corbèra, Prince of Salina, as he struggles to uphold the aristocratic and paternalistic values he holds dear, in the face of the social and political changes of the late 19th century.

Italian unification poses the most immediate challenge. Within days of Garibaldi's landing at Marsala (May 11th, 1860), Don Fabrizio realises that he is facing a difficult choice. Should he remain loyal to King Francis II of the Two Sicilies, upon whose legitimate authority justice and right were founded? Or should he accept that the Bourbon monarchy is no longer able to defend the old order? Would it not be wiser to recognise Vittorio Emanuele II as king of Italy, even at the cost of his ideals?

There is also a wider economic danger. Like many Sicilian nobles, Don Fabrizio pays little attention to the management of his estates and has seen his wealth decline steadily in recent years. His nephew, Tancredi Falconieri, has already been left destitute by such indifference and it is clear that, unless something is done, his own children will be forced to sell off their lands to the greedy bourgeoisie who grew richer by the day. But what is to be done? Should he regard such matters as beneath his dignity? Or should he adopt bourgeois ways, manage his estates actively and even marry his relations to *nouveaux riches*?

Don Fabrizio tries to be pragmatic. He sees that Tancredi had been right to suggest that, for everything to remain as it was, everything would have to change. Overlooking his daughter's suit, he arranges Tancredi's marriage to the daughter of Calogero Sedàra, the vulgar mayor of Donnafugata, realising that it will bring his nephew the money to rebuild his fortunes. He supports the creation of the kingdom of Italy, declines a senatorship, and – after proposing Sedàra for the position – even takes the mayor's advice about estate management.

For a time, there is some hope. The prince's income briefly increases and Tancredi eventually becomes an ambassador. But Don Fabrizio has only postponed the inevitable. Soon enough, the Corbèra's expenditure again exceeds their income. Piece by piece, their lands are sold, until almost nothing is left. By the time of the prince's death in 1883, the 'Leopards and Lions' of old have been usurped by 'jackals' like the Sedàra, while the peasants they once protected have become prey for 'hyenas'. Over the next 20 years, things only grow worse.

In *I gattini cieci* (*The Blind Kittens*) – the unfinished sequel to *Il gattopardo* – the Corbèra have become impoverished dilettantes, frittering away their time in Palermo while Batassano Ibba (a 'quasi-baron') oppresses their former tenants with appalling rapacity.

Cursed by nature

But if aristocrats such as Don Fabrizio were to blame for Sicily's decline, Lampedusa nevertheless believed that their short-sightedness was the product of a wider malaise. From the Annales School, of which he was an avid reader, he derived the notion that the Sicilians' fate had been determined by the geographic conditions in which they found themselves.

As Don Fabrizio explains, the 'violence of the landscape', the 'cruelty of climate' and the location of the island had formed the Sicilian character. Alluring and adrift in the middle of the Mediterranean, she had grown used to

How had Sicily, an island that was so beautiful, so fertile, so rich in resources, fallen so low?

being assailed by peoples from far and wide – Greek, Roman, Arab, Norman, French, Spanish; and yet, sweltering in a feverish climate, she had succumbed to a 'voluptuous torpor' from which nothing could rouse her. Indifferent to all that was new, the Sicilians greeted those who landed on their shores with docile obedience, then resentment, but never with any understanding. They were content to remain passive spectators of change, seldom thinking any more than a year or so ahead. And yet, despite it all, Sicily's wonders had instilled in them an absurd belief that they were as immortal and unchanging as the gods themselves. They had been cursed by nature.

Yet if Sicily's landscape was the cause of its people's suffering, it also offered them a means of transcending the tragedy of their history. Whatever else might change, the island itself was eternal. Her nature neither slept nor grew old. Amid the waves of the wine-dark sea, in the searing summer sun, heaven and earth met and death had

no meaning. By accepting her embrace, Lampedusa believed, Sicilians could escape their sorrows into an undying world of poetry and song.

He had already begun to explore this idea in *Il gattopardo*. Desperate to 'go on living the life of the spirit', Don Fabrizio throws himself into astronomy and finds solace in charting the course of comets across the Sicilian skies. But it was in 'Lighea' that Lampedusa explained his thoughts most clearly.

After being rejected by his lovers in late 1938, Paolo Corbèra – a descendent of Don Fabrizio working as a journalist in Turin – takes to drowning his sorrows in a café frequented by artists and writers. There, he meets Rosario La Ciura, whose father had been the Corbèra's tenant but who is now an eminent classical scholar. Sharing a deep attachment to Sicily's landscape and a profound sorrow about its present condition, they quickly become friends.

One night before setting off on a journey to Naples, La Ciura invites Corbèra to his apartment, where he relates a curious story from his youth. Aged 24, he had gone to prepare for an examination in a secluded house by the sea. Enchanted by the beauty of the place, he would row out into the bay and declaim Greek verses at the top of his voice. But one morning, he was amazed to see 'the smooth face of a sixteen-year old emerging from the sea' beside him. Flashing a smile, she lifted herself into the boat, only to reveal that she had a fish's tail instead of legs. She was a Siren. Her name was Lighea.

Lighea and La Ciura became lovers. For three weeks, they lived as man and wife and the immortal siren introduced him to her life beneath the waves. But it could not last. Staring wistfully out to sea after a storm, Lighea was unable to resist her sisters' calls. Plunging back into the water, she vanished in the foam.

His tale ended, La Ciura leaves for his journey the following morning. But by dawn the next day, Corbèra learns that he had fallen from his ship into the sea and that his body had not been found. No longer willing to endure the present, he had returned to seek Lighea's eternal embrace once more. For Lampedusa, if Sicilians wished to escape their sorrow, they too should heed Sicily's Siren call.

Alexander Lee is a fellow in the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance at the University of Warwick. His book *The Ugly Renaissance* is published by Arrow.

Key works
The Leopard (1958)

Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa had already succumbed to lung cancer by the time his only completed novel, *The Leopard*, was published in 1958. Finished in 1956, it was rejected by the two publishers to whom he had submitted it during his lifetime. Posthumously, the novel was recognised as a masterpiece and was awarded the Strega Prize, Italy's most prestigious literary award, in 1959. It went on to become one of the bestselling Italians novels of the 20th century, though it was condemned by Marxist critics who denounced its 'denial of progress'. The Italian film director Luchino Visconti's epic adaptation of the novel starring Burt Lancaster won the 1963 Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, bringing the story to a new audience.

From*theArchive*

Since the early 1960s, historians have shone a more positive light on the Battle of the Somme, writes **Allan Mallinson**. But we must not forget the excesses and failures of that terrible campaign.

The Permanent Stain of the Somme

IN HIS 1918 poem 'Futility', Wilfred Owen plays with the theme of Nature's restorative power. 'Move him into the sun', begins the speaker. But the effort is futile because the soldier is already dead. Owen has created a metaphor for the conflict as a whole.

The 'futility narrative' is an enduring one, despite the efforts of a number of revisionist historians, starting with John Terraine. And to no battle is 'futility' more attached than the Somme.

Yet as Gary Sheffield has argued ('An Exercise in Futility?', July 2016), tragic though the unprecedented losses were for the British, they were apparently not without effect. The German C-in-C, Erich von Falkenhayn, for example, found it difficult to transfer divisions from the Somme to reinforce his faltering offensive against the French at Verdun, one of the reasons the French C-in-C, Joseph Joffre, had asked his British counterpart, Douglas Haig, to accelerate his plans to attack on the Somme. And the man who replaced Falkenhayn in August 1916, Paul von Hindenburg, soon began to press the Kaiser to authorise unrestricted submarine warfare to bring Britain to its knees, a desperate measure which brought the US into the war in April 1917, changing the strategic balance.

The four-and-a-half-month slogging match on the Somme certainly made the German army blanch: early the following year, German troops withdrew 40 miles to the Siegfriedstellung ('Fortress Siegfried'). Finally, the British army on the Western Front – predominantly 'green' troops – learned a great deal about how to fight. But were the gains proportionate to the losses?

There was never a serious possibility of the sustained breakthrough and restoration of mobility that Haig dreamed of. Nor was the alternative attritional approach favoured by Henry Rawlinson, whose Fourth Army was the instrument of the offensive, very 'economic'. Around 130,000 British troops were killed on the Somme and 300,000 wounded. German losses are disputed, but they were fewer. The withdrawal to the Siegfriedstellung was as much a calculation of British potential in 1917 – the year in which Hindenburg intended to

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finish off the Russians – as a response to actual losses. It gave the Germans better ground to hold and a shorter front, allowing them to withdraw several divisions into reserve.

It is also the case that Germany's naval chief, Reinhard Scheer, had been pressing for unrestricted submarine warfare since the Battle of Jutland (May 31st), as his surface ships could not get past Jellicoe's Grand Fleet and the Royal Navy's blockade was beginning to starve Germany of food and raw materials, a fact the Kaiser could not ignore forever.

As for the British army's so-called 'learning curve', it was very uneven. What did Haig learn? Judging from Third Ypres ('Passchendaele') the following summer, very little. Several hundred thousand dead and wounded had learned nothing at all.

Was the Somme even necessary? No. An offensive, especially one going off half-cock, was not the way to relieve Verdun. Taking over more of the allied line to release French troops

would have been better suited to Haig's green regiments. Sending heavy artillery and aircraft to Verdun would also have helped. Above all, persuading the French to stop playing to Falkenhayn's game plan by mounting costly counter-attacks to recover ground of no importance except to national (or, rather, Joffre's) prestige would have preserved France's fighting strength. When the Somme ceased to be an Anglo-French offensive because of the demands of Verdun, the plans ought to have been torn up. The Western Front was a single front but, in effect, the conference at Chantilly in December 1915, which had decided strategy for 1916, treated it as two.

The Somme was not futile, but the losses were excessive. Worse, they would haunt the British (as would those of the French at Verdun) ever after. In November 1918 the allies were too quick to accept the Germans' call for an armistice. In 1919 the losses made for a bad treaty at Versailles. In the 1930s they begat appeasement.

Allan Mallinson is the author of *Too Important for the Generals: Losing and Winning the First World War* (Bantam, 2016).

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