

# SYM EON

..... ISSUE SEVEN .....



The magazine for Durham University History alumni

2017



Durham is uniquely blessed with some of the best medieval architecture in the country. However, beautiful as it is, the impression of solidity and permanence which it presents does a disservice to the university. In times of change, Durham has thrived: the first abortive attempts to found the university came in the midst of the Reformation and the English Civil War, and its actual foundation came in the immediate aftermath of the Great Reform Act. Historians are also uniquely placed to take advantage of change, to draw on the lessons and experiences of the past – or, alternatively, to draw some *schadenfreude*-based consolation from the future historians who have to study it all.

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Though the articles featured in *Symeon* represent a constantly-changing smorgasbord of historical interest, we hope that two things about them never change. Firstly, that they are both academically rigorous and interesting to read; secondly, that they reflect the full range of the diverse Durham history community. This year's contributions by students are suitably eclectic in both subject matter and geographical scope. In a summary of her prizewinning thesis, Emily Duthie explores the development of the lesbian community in 1970s Manchester; Tom Lowman deconstructs the familiar image of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin; and Kimberley Foy explores the public profile of a prominent courtesan in Georgian Dublin.

Our staff contributions, meanwhile, all showcase in one way or another the multifarious changes in the historical profession. Professor Richard Gameson looks at the way in which technology can illuminate

medieval illustrations; Doctor Giles Gasper provides an insight into the way that interdisciplinary collaboration can help us reevaluate the world of medieval intellectualism; and Doctor Alex Barber shows how the History Department itself is changing in order to widen the range of people who study here. Finally, our alumnus contribution comes from Natasha Bennett, the curator of the Oriental Gallery of the Royal Armouries, in a special collaboration with the Sudan Archives and the Oriental Museum.

*Symeon* itself is also undergoing constant change, and we are proud to welcome Professor Jo Fox, Caitlin Phillips, and Alanna Freedman-Mahnke as new members of the editorial board. This year, however, has seen two particularly significant departures. It was the passion of Professor Stephen Taylor as head of the department that not only conjured *Symeon* up, but made it the envy of history departments the length and breadth of the country. As unchanging

as Durham's architecture, Tom Rodger has been a keystone of the *Symeon* editorial board for the past three years. We hope that this issue, and the future issues to come, live up to the high standards which they both set.

We as editors, and many colleagues in the Department, have been very gratified in recent years to have received correspondence, reflections and articles from alumni in response to *Symeon*. In future, to support *Symeon*'s role in bringing Durham's historical community together, we would very much like to showcase short updates – one or two sentences – on what our alumni are doing now. If you would like to be included in this, please do get in touch using the contact details on the penultimate page.

In the meantime – we very much hope you enjoy this year's *Symeon*!

**MARK BENNETT, CAITLIN PHILLIPS AND  
ALANNA FREEDMAN-MAHNKE**  
*Symeon Board of Editors*



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*FRONT COVER:* This issue's bookshelf belongs to Dr Kevin Waite, the department's new Assistant Professor in Modern American History. Dr Waite's book project explores Southern visions of empire in the Pacific world and the expansion of a proslavery political agenda across the American West during the Civil War era.

# Bonnets and Brothels:



## EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN WOMEN...

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... were warned against an affinity to all things material, particularly fashion.<sup>1</sup> Yet those in and around Dublin Castle, the residence of the Lord Lieutenant or Vice-roy, grounded their public voices in materiality, understanding that an outfit, like an image, could paint a thousand words.



**KIMBERLEY FOY**

Kimberley Foy is a Durham Leverhulme Doctoral Scholar based at the Department of History, with a keen interest in visual culture. Her current research examines the relationship between dress and diplomacy at the early Stuart court, specifically the way in which ambassadors and consorts expressed local and national identity through deliberate clothing choices. In her downtime, Kim is a cat-loving cake person and is interested in meeting other scholars to discuss their research in some sort of cat or cake-related activity.



The Great Courtyard of Dublin Castle, 1792. © National Trust Images

To be seen at the levées and balls of Dublin Castle was to exert a certain social and political power. It was 'quite the fashionable place,' as a contemporary put it.<sup>2</sup> Inherent in any visual display, was the careful choice of materials. In the late 1730s, the newly appointed Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Devonshire, attracted the dissatisfaction of Dubliners with his casual approach to dress, apparently unbecoming the governor of Ireland. One of his company shrewdly noted that:

*the generality of the people of this country...are known to esteem the patrons and the patronised according to the figure they make.*<sup>3</sup>

In 1759, James, 1st Duke of Leinster, wrote to his wife Emily after a

shopping trip to London had escalated to the purchase of silk, bows, painted taffeta, several miniatures, books and India wallpaper. He lamented:

*I am really so loaded with things, not only for you but others, that I don't know what to do, or how I shall get them ashore in Ireland.*<sup>4</sup>

Far from monuments of vanity, clothing items in this kind of atmosphere offered elite figures of both sexes the important opportunity to self-fashion. Louisa Conolly, sister of Emily, wrote to her youngest sibling Sarah in 1761 with an excited request for the kind of materials appropriate to her social position:

*I beg you will be so good as to get me 6 yards of velvet ribbon*

*of every different size, and three dozen yards of lilac ribbon, one dozen of narrow and two of broad, and also two dozen yards of large pink ribbon, and two dozen yards of narrow of the same sort. I beg you will you also send me a dozen of fine large chips hats, and that you will get all these things immediately.*<sup>5</sup>

Lady Louisa Conolly, 1776. Image by permission of the Athenaeum



Women excelled at discrete political manoeuvring. Louisa's close familial relationship to Caroline Conolly, wife

A warning, Readers: bonnets do not figure heavily in this article but do make a sartorially-minded alliteration.

<sup>[1]</sup> Ingrid H. Tague, *Women of Quality: Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femininity in England, 1690-1760* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 50.

<sup>[2]</sup> Brian Fitzgerald, ed., *The Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, Vol. III (Dublin, 1957), p. 284.

<sup>[3]</sup> Toby Christopher Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: Lives and Possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven and London, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>[4]</sup> Fitzgerald, op. cit., Vol. I (Dublin, 1949), p. 85.

<sup>[5]</sup> Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox, 1740-1832* (London, 1995), p. 174.



Catherine Conolly, Countess of Buckinghamshire. © National Trust Images

of the Earl of Buckinghamshire, afforded her close proximity to the Earl when he became Lord Lieutenant in 1776, which she used to secure an important government position for her brother-in-law:<sup>6</sup>

*Lord Buckinghamshire, in the gentlest manner (upon finding the Duke of Leinster was not of the Privy Council), wrote to make him an offer of it...*<sup>7</sup>

However, throughout the century, female figures at the Castle increasingly expressed their politics, and sympathy for Irish manufacturers competing against foreign imports, by wearing fabrics produced in Ireland.<sup>8</sup> In 1745, the Vice-reine Lady Chesterfield's encouragement of a 'buy Irish' campaign saw a large number of attendees arriving at a ball in the Castle sporting Irish poplins.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the move toward Irish-made goods did not always produce the intended economic boost the country needed. In 1731, Katherine Conolly, great-aunt of Caroline, noted sourly that a precursory attempt by the then Vice-reine, the Duchess of Dorset, had seen the ladies of the court rushing to buy locally produced garments but forgetting to pay the bill:

*...the shopkeepers has the worst of it, for many thousand pounds laid out, very few hundreds paid.*<sup>10</sup>

By the 1770s, the 'Free Trade' campaign had conflated Irish political and parliamentary freedom from Britain with Ireland's right to trade freely with British colonies. Boycotting foreign imports and buying Irish now functioned as an act of political patriotism.<sup>11</sup> At home women proudly displayed their political views with teapots emblazoned with slogans supporting the campaign.<sup>12</sup> The Vice-reine and her circle went further. In May 1779, at a charitable ball at the Rotunda in Dublin, the Countess of Buckinghamshire openly and publicly called for the wearing of Irish materials, seemingly to 'aid the poor weavers of the city', but in what must have been a clear political statement on the ongoing Anglo-Irish dispute over trade.<sup>13</sup> A year earlier, in May 1778, the Dublin Evening Journal had reported

<sup>6</sup> Louisa married Caroline's brother Thomas Conolly in 1758.

<sup>7</sup> Fitzgerald, op. cit., Vol. III (Dublin, 1957), p. 254.

<sup>8</sup> For an excellent overall summary, see Mary O'Dowd, 'Women and Patriotism in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', *History Ireland* 14.5 (September/October 2006), pp. 25-30.

<sup>9</sup> Barnard, op. cit., p. 254.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed survey of the campaign, see Padhraig Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender Patriotism and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (London, 2010), ch. 3.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 90.

that women attending the Rotunda intended to wear linen gowns in the spirit of 'Free Trade' – likely another occasion in which the Countess had mobilised her peers into patriotic dressing. Louisa Conolly was probably one of many who answered the call, expressing a similar preference for Irish fabrics and a begrudging determination to attend the Castle that year, if only to participate in the communal shunning of foreign wares:

*There has been such distress among the manufacturers, that the Birthday is kept for their relief, so that Mr Conolly and I were obliged to buy clothes upon our landing, and go through the disagreeableness of this evening's ball.<sup>14</sup>*

Caroline and Louisa capitalised on a rich culture of spectacle. They were not alone. Louisa's sister Emily Fitzgerald, wife of the Duke of Leinster, had her own designated box at the theatre in Dublin, where the presence or absence of the Lord Lieutenant and his wife the Vice-reine could make or break a production.<sup>15</sup> The popular gaze was tuned to the performance off-stage – here was the real show. In 1761, the distracting display produced by some in the audience forced a Dublin Newspaper to request that attendees refrain from pirouetting on benches in the pith during the main performance.<sup>16</sup> In this setting, the upright and scandalous shared the public stage.

In the 1780s, brothel madam Peg Plunkett was severely peeved when she encountered three noble-born ladies in *her* box at the theatre. When they refused to vacate, she squeezed between them into the seats anyway, loudly shouting to her friend Sally

Hayes:

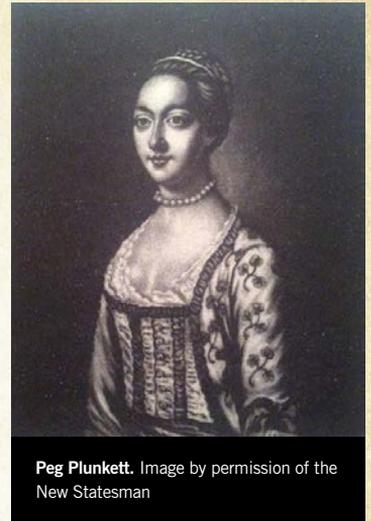
*Don't you think it was very lucky that I did not wear my diamonds tonight? And doubly so that I left my purse at home, for it would soon have been made lighter, as I have got amongst robbers...<sup>17</sup>*

Of the thieves' superior social status, she declared '*rank had no terrors for me, when what I thought was my property was concerned.*'<sup>18</sup> Peg had powerful friends. On one particular visit to her establishment at Pitt Street, the Lord Lieutenant, the 4th Duke of Rutland, had sampled the delights inside from one o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon, with a full troop of cavalry waiting outside.<sup>19</sup> Later, Peg used her connections with a barrister to secure a warrant for the arrest of Smock Alley theatre manager Senior Carnavalli.<sup>20</sup> Having sought to exclude her from his premises, Peg first physically wrestled with him and, finally, slapped him in the face. His ushers had also invited her ire:

*[They] spoiled all my clothes, by their pulling and dragging me and, I lost one of my earrings.<sup>21</sup>*

Peg understood that the kind of product placement offered by good seats in the theatre was essential to success in her kind of business. She and her employees embodied a seductive combination of sexuality and luxury, far removed from the destitution of many of the city's prostitutes. Materials were key. In Dublin, she sought to be first in fashion:

*...as Sally and I walked, we made very striking figures with bell hoops, which I had brought over and as*



Peg Plunkett. Image by permission of the New Statesman

*they were the first ever in Dublin, we were greatly stared at...<sup>22</sup>*

In London, she dressed to impress:

*All the fine ladies and demi-reps, wondered where I got so many diamonds, and such variety of fine cloths...<sup>23</sup>*

In fact, Peg was broke, but understood the power of her material-centred public image to keep her financially sound:

*...the idea of wealth produces always a degree of respect: as people are generally more ready to pay court, and assist those who they are sensible doesn't not want it.<sup>24</sup>*

Like the vice-reine and her circle, she imbued 'things' with huge communicative significance. In short, she let her clothing do the talking.

<sup>[14]</sup> Fitzgerald, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 289.

<sup>[15]</sup> Tillyard, op. cit., p. 182; Barnard, op. cit, p. 15.

<sup>[16]</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>[17]</sup> *Memoirs of Mrs Margaret Leeson*, Vol. I (Dublin, 1795), p. 275.

<sup>[18]</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>[19]</sup> *Memoirs of Mrs Margaret Leeson*, Vol. III (Dublin, 1797), p. 3.

<sup>[20]</sup> *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>[21]</sup> *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 38.

<sup>[22]</sup> *Memoirs of Mrs Margaret Leeson*, Vol. II (Dublin, 1795), p. 32.

<sup>[23]</sup> *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 18.

<sup>[24]</sup> *ibid.*

# BRITISH MEDIEVAL ILLUMINATORS' PIGMENTS



**RICHARD GAMESON**

Richard Gameson is Professor of the History of the Book, Durham University; his field of expertise is medieval manuscripts. This piece, written in collaboration with Professor Andrew Beeby of Durham University's Department of Chemistry and Doctor Kate Nicholson from Northumbria University's Department of Applied Sciences, details their work analysing the pigments used in medieval illustrations.

Accurate data about the pigments used to illuminate medieval manuscripts has, until recently, been hard to come by. While medieval recipe collections provide useful guidance about materials and techniques in general, they do not reveal what was deployed in any particular instance. To establish this, scientific examination of manuscripts themselves is crucial. However, progress in this regard has been slow. It was restrained first by the wholly appropriate requirement that the procedures be non-invasive and non-destructive, then further by the additional condition – necessitated by the physical vulnerability and very high insurance value of the manuscripts – that such work be undertaken within the relevant library premises themselves. By the 1980s it had been recognised that techniques such as Raman spectroscopy (shining a single wavelength of light upon a specific area of pigment and analysing the tiny

fraction of that light that is altered by interaction with the molecules of the sample in order to identify its nature) were acceptable from a conservation point of view; however, as the procedures in question required heavy, laboratory-based equipment, they were virtually impossible to apply to medieval manuscripts kept in cathedral, national and university libraries.

The formation and operation of 'Team Pigment' began in the context of the major loan exhibition 'Lindisfarne Gospels Durham' that was held in Palace Green Library during the summer of 2013, and which brought together a stellar selection of seventh- and eighth-century Northumbrian manuscripts. With generous financial support from a visionary alumnus, a bulky Raman spectrometer was moved from the Department of Chemistry to the basement of PGL in order to permit us to



Two thirds of "Team Pigment" inspect a manuscript. Image courtesy of CUL

take advantage of the unique opportunity of having reunited in one place volumes that are normally scattered between Cambridge, Durham, London and Oxford. Then, with the permission of the lenders, some of these manuscripts were studied prior to their installation into, and immediately after their deinstallation from, the cases. The enormous value of being able to gather data from intimately related manuscripts was immediately apparent; so, too, was the impossibility of repeating the exercise with the same large-scale equipment when such items were normally divided amongst multiple repositories far distant one from another. This was the spur for developing a unique, portable version of the equipment, specifically designed for the examination of books and documents *in situ* in almost any location. The result was a Raman spectrometer, a diffuse reflectance spectrometer and multi-spectral imaging equipment that fit into two suitcases, plus a light-weight but

robust, adjustable gantry, on which the relevant parts of the equipment can be securely supported over the books and documents to be analysed. The entire kit can, if necessary, be carried on public transport by two people – though it is much easier with three! – and assembled on site in about half-an-hour.

It is thus that, since 2013, we have identified the pigments of some 200 medieval manuscripts, mainly but not exclusively British, dispersed between collections in Aberdeen, Cambridge, Durham, Hereford, London, Oxford and York; all the Raman spectroscopy for the Fitzwilliam Museum's 2016 exhibition 'Colour' was likewise done by us. As a result, we are slowly but surely building up a reliable picture of the materials that were current in particular places at particular times. The pigments typical of high-grade Northumbrian manuscripts c. 700, for example, were red lead,



The portable pigment inspection apparatus in transit. Image courtesy of Louise Garner

orpiment yellow and a copper or vergaut (a mixture) green, plus in a few cases an indigo blue and an orcein (lichen) purple, along with a gallo-tannic black. Those featuring in fine Oxford books of the mid-fifteenth century, by contrast, were white lead, red lead, vermilion red, lead-tin yellow, copper green, azurite, lapis, and indigo blues, mosaic gold (tin sulfide), gold leaf, gold ink (shell gold), ochre brown, and carbon black. While much had manifestly changed over the centuries in question, one thing that was unaltered was the necessity of knowing some chemistry (alchemy) not only to manufacture certain of the pigments but also to understand which could and which could not be safely mixed (as one late fourteenth-century practitioner warned: 'take care never to get verdigris [a copper-based green] near any white lead for they are mortal enemies in every respect'). Another thing that remained constant was the presence of danger: if the highly toxic yellow mineral orpiment (a trisulfide of arsenic) had vanished, the deadly vermilion red (a mercuric sulfide) had arrived, while the cumulatively poisonous lead-based colours remained a fixture.

Moreover, as we map with ever greater precision what was and was not typical for different places and periods, so we can recognise exceptions and anomalies – such as later touching up, or the adulteration of one colour stuff with another – for what they were. Equally, accepted wisdom concerning scribes and illuminators and about workshop practices in general can be re-evaluated in the light of myriad new facts. Questions such as the extent to which individual illuminators may have had their own palette, and the circumstances in which particular pigments might be used by certain members of a workshop but not others – questions which it was hitherto impossible to approach – may now be addressed. And where data are, or become, available from comparable research on continental manuscripts, we can compare and contrast British pigment use with that of coeval practitioners across the Channel.

Correspondingly, the identified pigments themselves can shed light on the circumstances in which they were used, showing, for instance, that in the seventh and eighth centuries Britain was able to secure regular supplies of orpiment from Italy (and if not from there, then from Spain or Asia Minor). Whatever the trade route in question, it ceased during the ninth century and, though partially revived in the tenth, evidently remained fragile and uncertain. Conversely, from the early tenth century onwards, lapis lazuli was readily available in southern England, yet it can only have come from the mines at Badakshan in what is now Afghanistan, 3,500 miles away. In fact, contrary to what one might expect, this famously expensive pigment was widely used in many British scriptoria (and elsewhere) from the later tenth to the late twelfth centuries, even being deployed for secondary initials in minor volumes made at such modest centres as Lanthony Secunda.

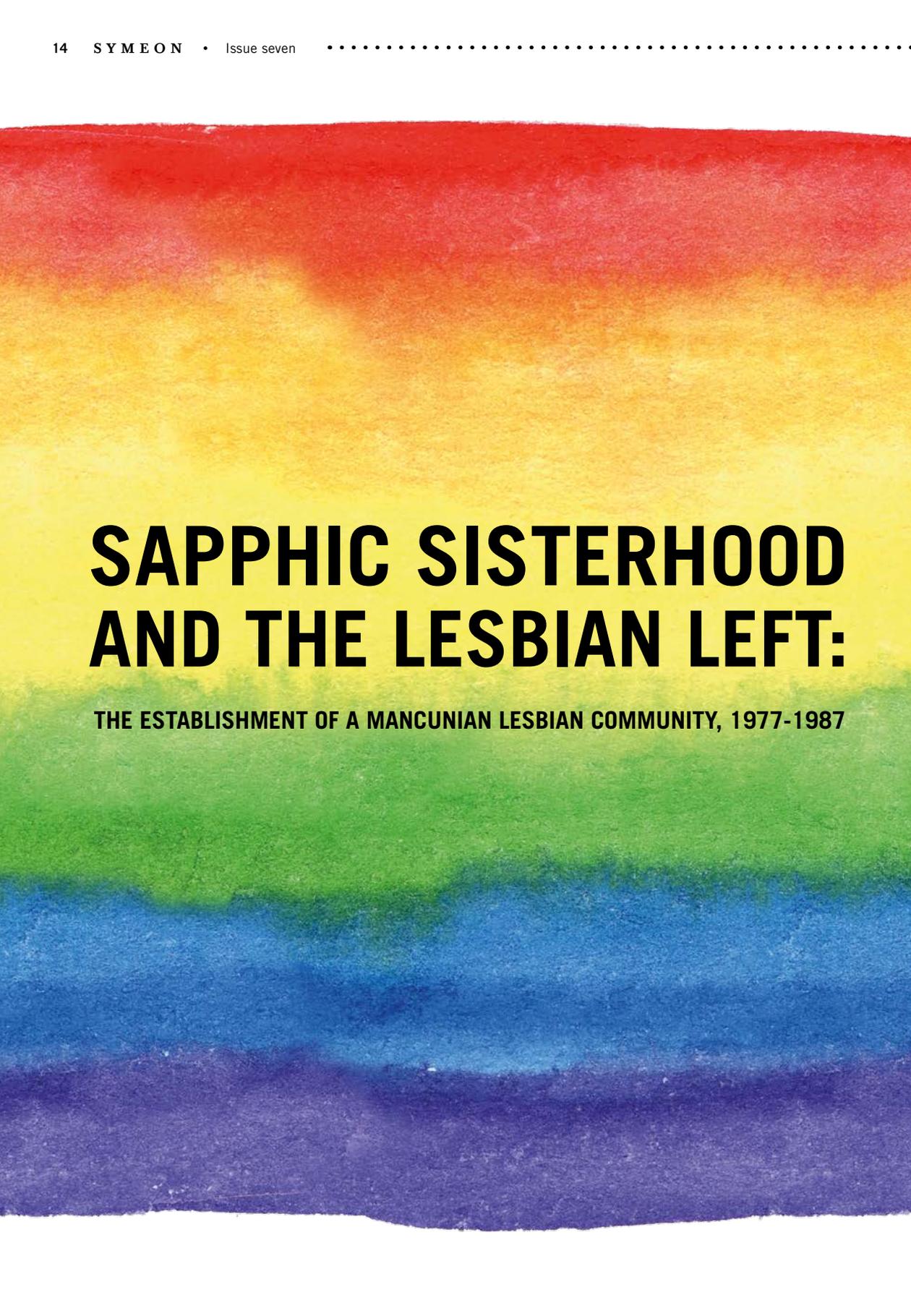
In our publications to date, we have focused on small groups of manuscripts from specific periods, thereby maximising our ability to interpret the evidence of the pigments in relation to specific historical, art-historical and cultural contexts. Our long-term goal is to extend this slowly but surely to cover the entire period from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries, and to write the first ever guide to the history of British medieval illuminators' pigments as a whole. We shall have to examine many more manuscripts to be in a position to accomplish this, but as each and every one of them will be fascinating, the prospect is an exciting one.

*Richard Gameson, Department of History, Durham University; Andrew Beeby, Department of Chemistry, Durham University; Catherine E. Nicholson, Department of Applied Sciences, Northumbria University.*





In the medieval period, trade between Europe and Asia - including Afghan lapis lazuli - flowed primarily along the "Silk Road". Image courtesy of the British Library



# **SAPPHIC SISTERHOOD AND THE LESBIAN LEFT:**

**THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MANCUNIAN LESBIAN COMMUNITY, 1977-1987**

## *'A Woman Needs a Man Like a Fish Needs a Bicycle'<sup>1</sup>*

The publication, *Lesbian Express* (LE), reports the story of women graffitiing on a railway bridge in Longsight, Manchester. Whilst writing slogans like the above, one woman, Terry, was arrested and taken into custody for questioning. According to the article, the threatening behaviour of the police turned to ridicule when they realised Terry had in fact painted 'Lesbian Liberation' not 'Lebanese Liberation' and was therefore a lesbian, *not* an urban guerrilla.<sup>2</sup>



**EMILY DUTHIE**

Emily completed her History degree in 2016, being awarded the Gibson Prize for her dissertation 'Sapphic Sisterhood and the Lesbian Left: The Establishment of a Mancunian Lesbian Community'. Since then she has completed a PGCE and worked on a project to create a more LGBT+ inclusive school curriculum. She now teaches History at a secondary school in Manchester.

<sup>[1]</sup> 'A Woman Needs a Man?', *Lesbian Express*, August 1978, p. 15.

<sup>[2]</sup> *Ibid.*

The amusing tale of Terry's rebellion in many ways reflects an unfortunate trend within the scholarship of late twentieth century social movements and wider historiography. Just as an act of vandalism by a lesbian was belittled by the police at Longsight, the activism of gay women has rarely received serious consideration in studies of this period. Scholarship focused on official campaigns and national conferences, for instance, or radical ideologies and flamboyant methods, has created a perception of 'hierarchies of activism', implicitly devaluing relentless efforts of activists on a smaller scale.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as more lesbians interacted at this micro-level, they are consistently featured as a footnote rather than as a key group, dismissed as inconsequential actors in liberation struggles.<sup>4</sup>

The setting of this study - the northern ex-industrial city of Manchester - has a rich heritage of protest and reform.<sup>5</sup> Hosting an annual international Pride Festival, the LGBT community in Manchester has undoubtedly become an important and celebrated part of Mancunian heritage. This article attempts to explore the process by which the 'L' of this community established themselves, evolving from an isolated few who sought the refuge of the big city to a sizeable and cohesive political community that were recognised and supported by local government. The Mancunian lesbians made essential contributions to social progress in their city – for both women and the gay community. They were united by a desire for genuine representation as women and homosexuals, rather than simply as reactionary separatists. The early phases in the emergence of a defined Mancunian lesbian community saw them grapple with established ideologies with hesitation, in order to generate collective values and objectives. This article will therefore focus on this initial stage through the case study of a lesbian periodical. The

*LE* was a monthly publication, run by a collective of lesbians, for lesbians, in and around Manchester from 1977 to 1982. Mutual examination through debates in the magazine represented a vital process of 'consciousness-raising' whereby lesbians gained strength in recognising they were not 'abnormal' or alone, creating an 'imagined community'. Concerns regarding 'intellectual elitism' reflected both political uncertainty and the need for concrete proof of a movement, evidence for which can be seen in features and adverts in the magazine.

On a basic level, the very existence of the *LE* newsletter suggests that a significant gap was perceived within the political scene of contemporary Manchester. 'Quite a lot of lesbians', the first editorial states, 'would like to see a newsletter concerning particularly lesbians'.<sup>6</sup> Frustrated with having to share space 'on other people's papers and pamphlets', the editorial team identified an absence of genuine representation.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, they reflected the importance placed on print culture by social movements. With the ability to circulate news, ideas and strategies not 'strained through a mainstream filter', publications were essential means of politicising the disaffected.<sup>8</sup> As one reader of the *LE* argued, the newsletter made lesbians 'aware of thoughts, needs and ideas not being generally talked about in the media'.<sup>9</sup> For lesbian women in particular, a newsletter provided a space to counteract misrepresentation in the mainstream press and represent themselves on their own terms. Conventional narratives of 'sexual deviance' ranged from depictions of lesbians as 'butch' inverts to the hypersexual lesbian of heterosexual pornography.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the label 'lesbian' was regularly cast to discredit feminist activism, representing legitimate political objectives as manifestations of sexual perversion.<sup>11</sup> By producing their own publication, lesbians could challenge the rhetoric of

'deviance' with defiance.

Significantly, the implicit objectives of the *LE* editorial collective were not concerned with projecting radical opposition externally. Instead, objectives were focused on consciousness-raising: establishing a shared understanding of what it meant to be a lesbian. As the opening text of their first issue stated: 'this a struggle to educate ourselves'.<sup>12</sup> Assembling and printing five hundred copies of a monthly newsletter clearly involved tedious labour, displayed through the *LE*'s transparency regarding the publication process.<sup>13</sup> Embracing principles of a participatory democracy, there were also consistent calls for readers to 'send in ideas, poems... anything that you might think might be interesting'.<sup>14</sup> Sincerity and encouragement fostered a sense of community, allowing the newsletter to become a basis for social and political networks. Thus the *LE* created a continuous conversation between lesbians, enabling them to share their experiences and opinions and, significantly, locate others with similar experiences.<sup>15</sup> This served an enhanced function for women at the intersections of the Gay Liberation Movement and Women's Liberation Movement because of the deeply personal way in which these movements were experienced. Encountering and analysing new territories in wider society and their own lives, an 'imagined community' underpinned this process by informing lesbians 'you are not alone'.

Whilst the production of the *LE* had been stimulated by a desire for a private theoretical 'space', lesbian activism also centred around gaining a tangible 'place' beyond a vague 'imagined community'. This was identified in the *LE* as the Women's Centre. Importantly, it provided a women-only, safe place for lesbians to 'talk, socialise, organise, everything without the oppression of men's company', as Jill Barnett argued.<sup>16</sup> She gave quotidian activities a political quality. Reflecting the

notion of 'the personal is political', it emphasised the necessity of politicised places for everyday existence where lesbians could be open without the fear of rejection or hostility from men. Moreover, Barnett used the phrase 'our territory' to describe the centre, evoking concepts of power and making a clear distinction between a political 'us' (women) and 'them' (men).<sup>17</sup> By perceiving themselves as part of a movement, 'imagined' and tangible, Mancunian lesbians gained strength through solidarity. This was buttressed by dominating a politicised space. The formation of a common identity was essential for social movements and creating an alternative culture was an important means of marking the boundaries of these identities.

The importance of this defined geographical position for Mancunian lesbians was confirmed when the centre's security was threatened. Announcing that 'the Women's Centre has reached a crisis point', *LE* aligned the centre's survival directly with the newsletter's wellbeing claiming 'the Newsletter has started up' as a direct result of its facilities.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to the usual mishmash of handwriting, font and formatting, the announcement

was placed directly adjacent to the 'Editorial', mirroring its size and title font.<sup>19</sup> If the *LE* collectively represented the 'imagined' community of Mancunian lesbians, it was visually and theoretically linked with the Centre's wellbeing as a locatable base. Permanent places such as this, conceived as 'safe' by lesbians, were important in uniting activists and allowing the development of political confidence.

From producing their own publication to operating the Women's Centre to participating in marches, lesbians could challenge the label 'lesbian' that had been regularly used to discredit feminist activism. They were trying to counteract representations of their lesbianism as sexual perversion. Moreover, the *LE* newsletter provided participants an important opportunity to discuss, debate and reinforce their own political and social identity in a safe environment. This was crucial in enabling Mancunian lesbians to challenge the rhetoric of 'deviance' with defiance. The hitherto ignored narratives contained in the *LE* celebrate the individuals who have facilitated progression to the tolerant and vibrant society of Manchester – and indeed Britain – today.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew King, 'The Quiet Activism of Everyday Queer Lives', Unpublished paper presented at: 3rd LGBT History Conference, 27-29 February 2016, University of Manchester.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 228-229; Adam Lent, 'The transformation of gay and lesbian politics in Britain', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (February, 2003), pp. 24-33, 25; Lucy Robinson, *Gay men and the Left in post-war Britain: How the personal got political* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Manchester's central role in the Industrial Revolution, for instance, signalled changes that were revolutionary in both pace and scale leading to widespread discontent and protest. See Eric J. Hewitt, *Capital of Discontent: Protest and Crime in Manchester's Industrial Revolution* (New York, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> 'What About a Lesbian Newsletter', *LE*, November 1977, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Abe Peck, 'Foreword', in Ken Wachsberger (ed.), *Voices From the Underground: Insider histories of the Vietnam era underground press* (Tempe, AZ, 1993), p. xix. For the importance of feminist print see Agatha Beins, 'A

Revolution in Ephemera: Feminist Newsletters and Newspapers of the 1970s' in Cecilia Konchar Farr and Jaime Harker (eds), *This Book is an Action: Feminist Print Culture and Activist Aesthetics* (Urbana, 2015), pp. 46-65.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret, 'Letter', *LE*, August-September 1981, p. 19.

<sup>120</sup> Larry Gross, 'The Past and the Future of GLBT Studies', *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (2005), pp. 508-528, 518.

<sup>121</sup> Tamsin Wilton, *Lesbian Studies: setting an agenda* (London, 1995), p. 93.

<sup>122</sup> Editorial, *LE*, November 1977, p. 2.

<sup>123</sup> 'Editorial', *LE*, May-June 1981, p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> 'Editorial', *LE*, March-April 1978, p. 2.

<sup>125</sup> Buckle's analysis of *Arena Three* magazine supports this as he demonstrates it as a site of common identity building. See Buckle, *The Way Out*, p. 41.

<sup>126</sup> Barnett, 'On Separatism', p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> 'Women's Centre', *LE*, April-May 1978, p. 2.

<sup>129</sup> For more on spatial intertextuality see Beins, 'A Revolution in Ephemera' in Farr and Harker, *This Book is an Action*, p. 61.



# *An Outbreak of 'Femmes Désordres' from the Salpêtrière*

— in 1758 —

In the early hours of 23rd July 1758, twenty-nine women escaped from their dormitory in the *Maison de Force* within the *Salpêtrière* hospital of Paris.<sup>1</sup> The police and hospital authorities correctly estimated that the women escaped through a window leading to a courtyard which had an opening to an aqueduct flowing into the Seine. The door to the aqueduct was protected by a metal grill and the women used an iron bar (missing from the dormitory window) to break the hinges. Once they were through this opening, the prisoners dispersed. The *dossier* in which

this case was found contains few details regarding the profile (whether criminal, socioeconomic or moral) of the twenty-nine escapees. Instead, the police records offer the following: name, date of arrest, age at date of arrest, and place of origin. These skeletal details indicate that among the twenty-nine escaped women, the average amount of time spent imprisoned was just over six years and the average age was thirty-seven.<sup>2</sup> The police arrested eight escaped prisoners and of those eight, only three interrogation records exist.



## KIRSTYN RAITZ

Kirstyn Raitz is a second-year PhD student whose project focuses on the eighteenth-century sex trade in Paris and London. Specifically, she is interested in understanding the ways in which space can play a role in analysing the contemporary perceptions of prostitution. She uses a variety of sources ranging from medical and police records to pornography and pamphlet literature. The article in this journal was inspired by the research done for a chapter that Kirstyn is composing on imprisoned prostitutes in French hospital-prisons. Kirstyn has been in Durham for three years and also received her M.A. in Early Modern History here in 2015. She is originally from California and received her BA in History with a minor in European Studies from San Francisco State University in 2013.

The three individuals represented in the existing records were equally keen to shed blame on those who managed to successfully evade police detection. Each prisoner found different ways to present herself as a victim of circumstance therefore ensuring her own survival and respecting the authority of police and hospital officials. The escape and the events that followed represented a continual struggle to both control and reform inmate behaviour within the *Hôpital Général* system over one hundred years after its founding date.

As Paris grew exponentially in the seventeenth century, the French monarchy expressed its concern for the spiritual welfare of the capital's inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> In partnership with Louis XIV, the Holy Sacrament, a Counter-Reformation group of laymen and clerics, founded the *Hôpital Général* in 1656 adhering to a doctrine that the institutionalisation of all social problem groups was necessary to maintain public order. The model for like facilities across early modern France, '*Hôpital Général*', referred not to one specific place rather to a series of physical institutions. These institutions functioned as part medical facilities, part charities, and part prisons. Beggars, vagrants, lunatics, adulterers and petty criminals made up most of the deemed 'social problem groups' that occupied such institutions. One branch of the *Hôpital*, the *Salpêtrière*, functioned as a poorhouse for women and children, but was also used for the disciplining of disorderly women, specifically prostitutes. The '*Maison de Force*' (or '*la force*') housed within the *Salpêtrière* was specifically reserved



The entrance gate to the Hôpital-de-la-Salpêtrière.

for the most hardened female thieves, prostitutes, and adulterers either sent by families through the *lettre de cachet* system or placed there by the *Lieutenant de Police*.<sup>4</sup>

Run primarily by nuns, daily life at the *Salpêtrière* was a combination of a strict routine of manual labour and religious activity with which the female inmates were forced to comply.

The conditions of the *Salpêtrière* were bleak: those who inhabited the hospital were stuffed into crowded dormitories and often came into close contact with excrement and filth.<sup>5</sup> Imprisonment as a form of punishment to correct behaviour was a new concept. As Michel Foucault observes in his *Discipline and Punish*, the threats to social disorder were diminished if such 'disorderly' people were removed

<sup>[3]</sup> Bastille Archives (BA) MS 12695 'Femmes évadées de la Salpêtrière au mois de Juillet, 1758', 3 July 1758.

<sup>[4]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[5]</sup> The 1656 edict is reinstated in 'The King's Ordinance: Concerning beggars and those who prevent them being arrested, and [those who] help them to rebel against the

archers charged with arresting them' (Paris: 10 August 1712). For a more in-depth investigation of this topic, see Philip F. Riley, *A Lust for Virtue: Louis XIV's Attack on Sin in Seventeenth-Century France* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001)

<sup>[4]</sup> Arlette Farge and Michel Foucault, *Les Désordres Des*

*Familles. Lettres de Cachet Des Archives De La Bastille Au XVIIIe Siècle*, (1982).

<sup>[5]</sup> Tenon finds a reservoir of raw sewage near the *Salpêtrière*. Tenon, *Mémoires sur les Hôpitaux*, 88.



Blue-coated policemen of the Guet Royal transport a cartload of prostitutes to the Salpêtrière, 1745

and detained from society until they were no longer a threat.<sup>6</sup> The strict confinements of space in combination with an adherence to a timetable made the prisoner, according to Foucault, more docile and more easily utilized, therefore 'disciplining' her and eradicating her criminal identity.

The police arrested Julienne Barge the same day of the escape in a barn

within the nearby neighbourhood of Saint-Marcel. In her interrogation, she claimed that a group of prisoners, led by Françoise Grandmaison, decided to escape after loosening an iron bar from the window of their dormitory. That night, as the escape commenced, Barge testified that she was 'forced' out of bed to escape with the other women.<sup>7</sup> Apparently, once outside the *Salpêtrière*, the women dispersed

and Barge was left on her own in the neighbourhood of Saint-Germain. Barge claimed that she had warned Grandmaison not to flee, but was forced to leave with the other women who feared she would be a liability if left behind.

In a different account, from Marie Thérèse Fournier, Grandmaison had an accomplice: Madelaine Masson.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Group, 1977).

<sup>7</sup> BA MS 12695, 'Interrogation: Commissaire Lemaire interrogatoire de Julienne Barge femme Viault,' 4 July 1758.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 'Capture et Interrogation de Thérèse Fournier dite Manuel comme faisant partie des partilieres qui se sont échappées de la Force de la Salpêtrière', 4 July 1758.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 'Femmes évadées', 1758. Barges was found in Saint-

Marcel, but the police found Fourniere in Saint-Germain.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 'La nommée Marguerite Stuard dite la Muette,' 4 July 1758.

<sup>11</sup> BA MS 10134-10136 'Affaires des Moeurs. Tableau des ordres du Roi pour la relegation ou l'incarcération à l'Hôpital Général' 1723-1749; See also BA MS 12692 'Etats des Prisonniers de la Salpêtrière', 1719-1721.

<sup>12</sup> Archives de l'Assistance Publique 045 FOSS D1, 'Hôpital General: Salpêtrière', 16 June 1682.

<sup>13</sup> BA MS 12692 'Personnes enfermées en la Maison de Force de la Salpêtrière par lettre de cachet bonne pour les isles', 1719. Indications of prostitutes: 'prostituées', 'femme' or 'fille du monde', 'maquerelle' (procureur), 'femme publique', etc.

<sup>14</sup> BA MS 12695 'Femmes évadées,' 27 July 1758.

<sup>15</sup> AB MS 12695, 'La nommée Marguerite Stuard, "Muette", âgée de 40 ans ou environ, d'Irlande, entre poar ordre du Roy le 21 Aout 1755', 9 August 1758.

Fournier claimed that Masson and Grandmaison woke her up and told her they were leading an escape and that Fournier could save herself 'if she wanted to'.<sup>8</sup> In Fournier's case, she admits to having wilfully followed her fellow prisoners, but not without implying that she had not been thinking clearly due to being plagued with a feverish illness. Even though Barge and Fournier both attempted to blame Grandmaison, both women were found hiding after their escape (a fair distance from the hospital) ultimately condemning their apparently good intentions.<sup>9</sup>

Marguerite Stuard spontaneously returned, supposedly of her own volition, to the *Salpêtrière* and back into the grasp of the Parisian police. She told the inspector that she had been 'dragged by the others with force because they were afraid she would warn the guards'.<sup>10</sup> Again, we see a deflection of blame and a prioritisation of survival over any sense of existing comradeship that could have existed initially among the escapees. The three interrogated prisoners claimed to be innocent victims, forced to escape by fellow female inmates. Surely, the escape would have proven unsuccessful, if not extremely difficult, if every other woman had to be dragged out of the hospital against her will. To assume that the compliance of Stuard, Fournier, and Barge indicated their preference for confinement as opposed to an insecure life on the streets of Paris forms a problematic conclusion. Instead, the compliance and self-victimisation of the prisoners was an exemplification of the difficulties the eighteenth-century hospital-prison faced in attempting to shape human behaviour in order to eradicate criminal identity. Taking Foucault's theories about space and discipline into account, the arrangements of their confinement made these women 'docile' and 'useful' enough to willingly participate in the police investigation. However, the escape and some of the other unruly events that followed (to be discussed momentarily) indicate a struggle to maintain order within the *Salpêtrière* despite itself.

An investigation of 'criminal' identity or, rather, as a social 'other' is critical when analysing why someone, like Stuard, would return to *la force* willingly. The *Salpêtrière* admittance records 1719 to 1749 provide a strong possibility that the majority of the escaped women were involved in the sex trade.<sup>11</sup> The nature of *la force* also supports this notion because its purpose, in theory, was a reformatory for prostitutes and other women perceived to be debauched.<sup>12</sup> In a log taken in 1719 of the women housed within the *Maison* to be transported to '*les isles*', the police marked sixty-two per cent of the women as prostitutes with the rest of the crimes varying from theft to debauchery.<sup>13</sup> Many of the escapees had been imprisoned for years, some as many as a decade and were forced to lose touch with life outside the *la force*, including the 'gatekeepers' to their own underworld (i.e. brothel keepers, cabaret owners, etc.). Even if not all twenty-nine escapees were prostitutes, and instead were, for example, hardened thieves, they would have run into similar problems. This explanation could provide some justification for Stuard's 'voluntary' return to the *Salpêtrière*, but it does not necessarily explain why, weeks after her return, she attacked a guard and one of the nuns who came to bring her evening meal.

There then arises the question of Stuard's defiance. The initial escape and the events that soon followed reflect a

rejection of the imposed discipline. At first, the police seem less concerned with the air of rebellion or disobedience spreading to the other prisoners within the *Maison de Force* and more concerned with the city-wide disbursement of twenty-nine women deemed too dangerous to lead lives outside of the *Salpêtrière*. This concern changes focus when two more women escaped three weeks later.<sup>14</sup> Concerns regarding the state of *la force* were inflated following Stuard's attack. Commissaire De Messan's suggestion in response was to transport Stuard to the *Bicêtre* to be put into a *malaise*: a small, uncomfortable cell in which one is unable to stand or lie down. When dictating the punishment, De Messan added that this type of interference should suppress any further inmate action by making an example of those within the prison that are 'the most rebellious'.<sup>15</sup> Foucault argued that imprisonment as punishment did not become fully realized until the nineteenth century. Stuard's lapse in 'docility' and 'utility' supports a notion of an imperfect system of punishment that, although seeking to achieve to change behaviour and reform criminal identity, was not always successful in doing so. Thus, Stuard's treatment reverts to a torturous, exemplary form of corporal punishment: a remnant of previous centuries and still prevalent (when deemed useful) in the eighteenth century.



The Hôpital-de-la-Salpêtrière

# DEPARTMENT NEWS



**ANY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT IS ONLY EVER AS GOOD AS ITS PEOPLE. DURHAM'S HISTORIANS ARE EXPLORING SOME OF THE MOST PRESSING AND EXCITING HISTORICAL PROBLEMS, SHAPING THE DISCIPLINE AND SCHOLARSHIP MORE BROADLY DEFINED.**

The Department's chronological and geographical range is beginning to open up possibilities for trans-national, trans-historical and comparative work that is the hallmark of ground-breaking historical research. We are passionate about sharing that research with our students and, because we are fortunate enough to teach the very best, we draw inspiration from them in turn.

Two innovative interdisciplinary projects feature in this edition of *Symeon*. The AHRC funded project on the Ordered Universe, led by Giles Gasper, brings together a unique configuration of natural scientists, social scientists and arts

and humanities scholars, to integrate the conceptual tools of modern science with the textual methods of the humanities. Using the works of English theologian and scientist Bishop Grosseteste, the project blends history and theology into mathematics. The connections between Faculties of Arts and Humanities and Science have been further consolidated with the work of Richard Gameson (History) and Andrew Beeby (Chemistry) using Ramen spectroscopy to study the inks and pigments used in medieval manuscripts, providing scientific evidence to map the changes in writing technology and the migration patterns of the manuscripts' authors.

Two further projects are enhancing Durham's reputation as a centre for exceptional historical research. Andy Wood's 'social relations and everyday life' project, funded by the Leverhulme



History department graduation 2016, Dr Phillipa Houghton

Trust, explores the multiple ways in which inequalities of wealth and power were experienced, understood, accepted and contested in the 140 years before the English Revolution, while Justin Willis is investigating the chequered history of elections in sub-Saharan Africa. Combining the techniques of history and political science, his project will re-examine the relationship between an individual's experience of elections and their political attitudes and behaviours, and asks why it is that elections work better in some places and times than others.

We have also celebrated the publication of important new monographs: Sarah Davies' *Stalin's World: Dictating the Soviet Order*, Nicole Reinhardt's *Voices of Conscience. Royal Confessors and*

*Political Counsel in Seventeenth-Century Spain and France*, Cathy McClive's, *Menstruation and Procreation in Early Modern France*, Adrian Green's *Building for England: John Cosin's Architecture in Renaissance Durham and Cambridge*, and David Rollason's *Princes of the Church: Bishops and their Palaces*.

Our major projects demonstrate research demonstrate the Department's commitment to transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries and reflects its engagement with the Faculty's Research Institutes and Centres. Stephen Taylor will become the Director of the Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies in September 2017, while Ludmilla Jordanova is bringing her experience and energy to bear on the work of the

Centre for Visual Arts and Cultures and its associated Leverhulme Doctoral Training Centre.

The Centre for Visual Arts and Cultures has been the driver for many of the Department's collaborations with new partners, such as the Bowes Museum and the Tyneside Cinema in Newcastle. These partnerships bring new doctoral researchers into the Department's research community and provide opportunities to explore exciting joint projects. Our partnerships underscore the importance of the region to our work and the ways in which our historians hope to contribute to the culture of the North East. In the past year, building on the success of the Lindisfarne Gospels exhibition, Christian Liddy was central to the Magna Carta Exhibition and to the



installations at Lumiere. The Magna Carta Exhibition suggested new ways to build on our extensive work with local schools, exciting young people about history as a discipline, but also raising aspirations to go on to further study.

Our work in raising aspirations is beautifully captured by Alex Barber's eloquent and provocative piece in this edition of *Symeon*. We are dedicated to helping to create the next generation of historians, internationally, nationally, and closer to home. Our own students continue to inspire us. Megan Johnston won the Royal Historical Society's Rees Davies prize for her MA dissertation on 'neighbourliness' in the Diocese

of Durham, 1624-31. The standard of work at undergraduate level is also quite exceptional, reflected, in particular, by the research of this year's undergraduate prize winners: Bethany Holden (Alumni Prize), Emily Cooper-Hockey (the Thompson Prize and the History Dissertation Prize), and Fenella Cannings-Jurd (the Gibson Prize).

As this suggests, we continue to recruit students of the highest calibre to our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and they gain much from studying with us: we are delighted that the recent 2017 Times Good University Guide placed the Department equal second in the UK, alongside Oxford, and just behind Cambridge. 95% of our

undergraduate students are satisfied our teaching and 92% with the course overall, according to the NSS.

It is on the basis of our work in education and research that we are confident about the future in a rapidly changing environment. The University plans to expand the Department by 75% over the coming decade. We have already been fortunate enough to welcome three new colleagues (Adam Bronson in Japanese History, Richard Huzzey in Modern British History, and Kevin Waite in American history), and our growing post-doctoral community is bringing much to the Department's research culture. In September, David Minto, a

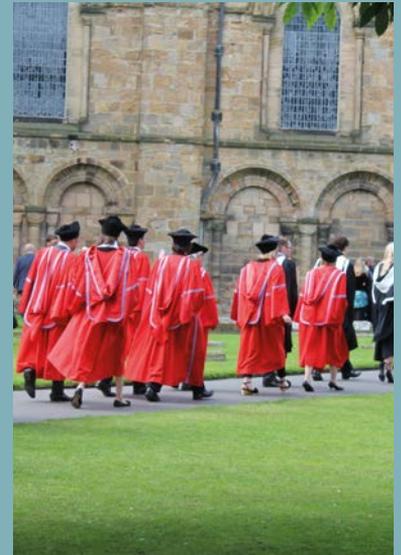


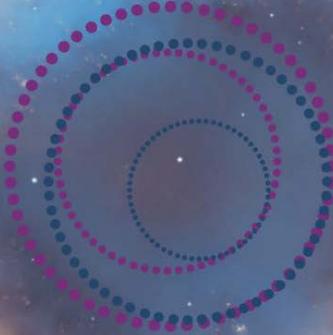
historian of sexualities in post-1945 Britain and America, joins us from Princeton, and we will be making seven new permanent appointments. It is, of course, always sad to say goodbye to friends and colleagues. Cathy McClive and Ben Dodds have been appointed new posts in Florida State University. Closer to home, Julian Wright will be taking up a new position at Northumbria in Newcastle. Paul Bailey will be retiring. Mark Hutchinson will be taking up a Senior Fellowship at Georg-August-Universität in Göttingen. We also are sad to say goodbye to Bart van Malsen, who has been a wonderful colleague and teacher of the history of China. We hope to welcome them back to Durham in the not too distant future.

Our alumni may recall the wonderfully inspiring Don Ratcliffe, who returned to Durham recently to celebrate the fact that his new book, *The One-Party Presidential Contest: Adams, Jackson, and 1824's Five Horse Race*, has been awarded the Lasky Prize for the best book on American Political

History published in the US in 2015 and the Richard E. Neustadt Prize for the best book on Government and Politics. It was wonderful to see so many of Don's friends and colleagues at the event. Alan Heesom, Paul Harvey, Michael Prestwich, Duncan Bythell, Robin Frame, and Margaret Harvey and some of the current staff had a wonderful evening reliving stories about the Department.

It is in the knowledge that we are building on such solid foundations that we face the year ahead with the beginning of the expansion and the growth of the community of historians at Durham.





# ORDERED UNIVERSE

**What do get when you put together a physicist, a vision scientist and a medievalist, along with a wide variety of other disciplinary experts? This is what the Ordered Universe project ([www.ordered-universe.com](http://www.ordered-universe.com)) is in the process of exploring. Giles Gasper (Durham, History), Tom McLeish (Durham, Physics) and Hannah Smithson (Oxford, Vision Science) lead a major Arts and Humanities Research Council grant (£1million) which runs until 2019 to make this happen.**

The project is a radically interdisciplinary, international, collaboration across sciences and humanities, with social science involvement as well, which looks at medieval science. We focus on one particular medieval thinker, Robert Grosseteste (c.1170-1253), bishop of Lincoln. Grosseteste might not be a household name today, but in the first half of the thirteenth century he was one of the most dazzling minds of his generation. A notable churchman in an age pullulating with ecclesiastical leadership, he was not only a reforming and active bishop of Lincoln from 1235, but also a political advisor of sorts to Simon de Montfort,

who held baronial rank and ruled over about twenty per cent of the English population in the 1600 parishes of Lincoln diocese.

It is to Grosseteste's intellectual achievements that the project is turned, and these were considerable. From early work on the mathematical arts, especially geometry, applied to natural phenomena, to biblical commentary, pastoral theology and translation into Latin of Greek theology and from works of advice on estate management to allegorical poetry in Anglo-Norman French, Grosseteste developed expertise and mastery across many genres. All his works exude freshness, originality and a wide range of reference. He was uncommonly well versed in his authorities: the Bible, writings of the Christian, Greek and Latin, other Christian authorities including some medieval writers, classical sources (notably Aristotle), Arabic and Jewish natural philosophy, medicine and law. He brought his own insight to bear as well, for example in his characteristic concern for a notion of the unity of the universe and the ways in which human perception must be disciplined for the



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council [grant number AH/N001222/1].



**GILES GASPER**

Giles Gasper is a specialist on the High Middle Ages, and its intellectual and religious cultures. Educated at Oxford and Toronto, he has been a member of the Department of History at Durham since 2004. Giles has a range of historical interests, from medieval food, attitudes to learning in the Middle Ages, and monastic thought, to medieval science, attitudes towards nature, and the implications of medieval thought for the modern period. He is the Principal Investigator of the Ordered Universe project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, leading an international team of medievalists and modern scientists. Giles also leads a number of collaborations with creative artists in the North-East and nationally.



The Ordered Universe - collaborative reading, and diagram-drawing in action

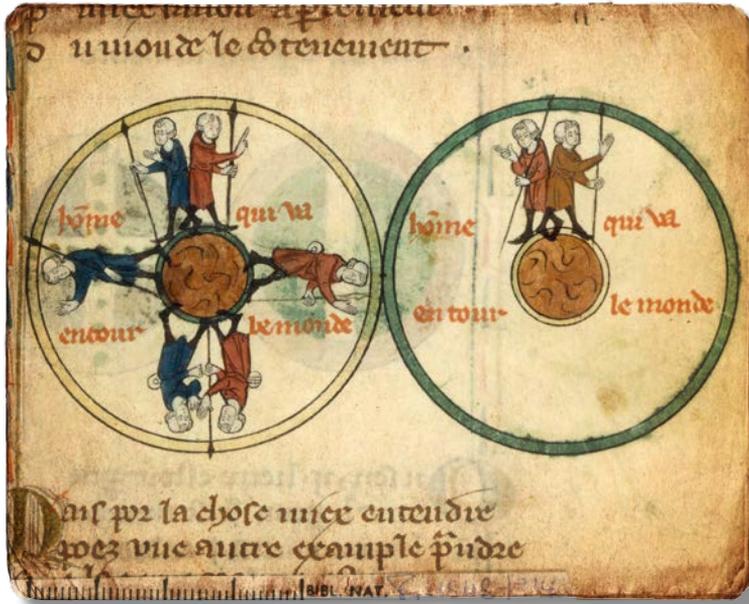


An image of the round world from a slightly later contemporary of Grosseteste, Goussouin de Metz's *L'image du monde*, c. 1245. The text is encyclopaedic and deals with the Liberal Arts, Cosmology and Geography.

proper understanding of the world, or theologically in his suggestion that Christ must have given up his life on the cross, his injuries being insufficient to kill him.

Ordered Universe concentrates on the first thirty years of Grosseteste's writing career, from about 1195 up to the late 1220s. In this period he produced a series of short treatises, thirteen in total, on light, sound, colour, the nature of place, comets, lines and angles, and the rainbow. In these works, he was engaged in natural philosophy, or, as we might call it, science. These texts, which are tightly structured and composed in a complex, dense, Latin, explore natural phenomena in a creative and startling manner. They are rich in possibilities for interdisciplinary working. Grosseteste himself lived through a period in which western scholars were absorbing the treasure-stores of scientific knowledge from the ancient world, especially Aristotle, and medieval Islamic and Jewish thought. A translation movement over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from Greek and Arabic into Latin fuelled dramatic changes in which western scholars approached the world around them. New technologies for mapping the heavens emerged, such as the astrolabe; new astronomical data and theories were made available, and a new approach to the analysis and understanding of nature and human perception. Grosseteste's treatises play an important role in these exciting intellectual changes.

The breadth of topics, and Grosseteste's own methods of investigation and interpretation are, in and of themselves, challenging to elucidate. Given the subject matter of the treatises and Grosseteste's highly mathematical imagination, an interdisciplinary approach is vital to the elucidation of his thought. So, from a starting point in 2010, we began to put together a team which encompasses History, Philosophy, Latin, Palaeography, English Studies,



An image of Robert Grosseteste as Bishop of Lincoln from British Library MS Harley 3860, f. 48. This manuscript, which includes Grosseteste's Anglo-Norman poem *Le Chateau d'Amour* belonged to the Cathedral Priory of Durham during the Middle Ages.

Physics, Psychology, Computer Engineering, Engineering Science, Theology, Mathematics, Education, Arabic Studies, Modern Languages and Classics. The group includes graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, and junior and senior staff. We come from across the globe: the project is based at Durham and Oxford, with partners at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, McGill University, Montreal, American University of Beirut, Georgetown University, Washington D. C. and University of Rome 'Tor Vergata'. Participants in the various project activities come from an equally wide range of institutions, academic and non-academic. As and when we need particular expertise, we call upon it; for example, working with the European Space Agency for research into the effect of atmospheric pollution on how the sun's light is perceived (vital, it turned out, to understanding of Grosseteste's treatise on the Rainbow).

We operate with a collaborative methodology which runs through all

of our activities and publications. At the core are the collaborative reading seminars which are held three to four times a year. We all sit down and read, line by line, the treatises for the seminar, with the Latin edition and English translation pre-prepared. Every opinion counts, every observation is important, as the text is debated in detail. From these sessions the groundwork is laid for the presentation of the treatises in a seven volume series to be published by Oxford University Press. Each volume is co-written by a multi-disciplinary team, exploring the linguistic, philosophical, historical and scientific contexts of the works.

One of the most surprising aspects of the project has been the generation of new science, emerging from our collaborative reading. Consideration of the treatise on light, led to a mathematical reconstruction of the medieval universe as described by Grosseteste. Thinking through his treatise on colour revealed a three-dimensional colour-space, not in the

same way as modern thinking on human vision would express, but three-dimensional none the less. Grosseteste applied his colour theory to the rainbow, using it to categorise the differences in colours within and between rainbows. Hannah Smithson expanded on this to create a model of a natural rainbow as perceived by human vision, the first time that this had been attempted.

Ordered Universe operates an extensive outreach programme. We have presented at public lecture series on the history of science at the Royal Society in London, at the Cheltenham Science Festival, and as part of the UK National Festival of Humanities 'Being Human'. In addition, we organise talks and hands-on activities for the public in a wide range of locations in the UK, Europe, North America and Australasia. These activities emphasise the interdisciplinary working of the project, introducing people to the mysteries of the medieval cosmos, with an interactive computer-generated model, or the intricacies of modern cosmological research into Dark Matter and Dark Energy, with an Oculus Rift Virtual Reality tour of the creation of the universe.

In addition we have developed partnerships with creative artists, and additional sources of funding. Sculptor Alexandra Carr, and Giles Gasper, received funding from the Leverhulme Foundation for a project 'Sculpting with Light' which will draw on medieval and modern cosmology – this takes place over summer 2017. We have been working with the National Glass Centre in Sunderland, principally with glass artists Cate Watkinson and Colin Rennie, as well as their students, on Grosseteste's ideas. An exhibition of work produced in response to *Ordered Universe* is to take place at the Glass Centre from October 2017-February 2018. In this we have also been working with film-maker Alan Fentiman, both to document our partnerships but also to create a film-poem on the

themes of colour, light and the elements. Finally, the project has worked closely with Ross Ashton and Karen Monid of the Projection Studio on sound and light shows for Durham Lumiere 2015 – ‘World Machine’, the Berlin Light Festival 2016 – ‘Spiritus’, and the Cambridge e-Luminate Festival 2017 – ‘Spiritus: Light and Dark’.

The different dimensions of this project are inspiring and humbling. We are developing a module for an access to university scheme, based at Oxford but incorporating the North-East, showcasing how many different disciplines and skills are needed to make sense of the world, past, present and future. The dialogue between arts and humanities, sciences and social sciences, is essential to this process. How we can work creatively between and among disciplines from the humanities and sciences, moving from respectful conversation to intense collaboration, make the project all the more radical and illuminating. It is a journey that has taken us from mutual interest in a treatise from c. 1225 on the metaphysics of light, to new editions, new translations and new science published in leading scientific journals, and a series of creative collaborations with artists and educationalists.

Above all, we strive to think about the place of science in culture, enshrining science as something deeply human and deeply old, and that its expression is as much a cultural product as music, literature or art. Quite what Grosseteste himself would have made of this, we can but speculate; his own wonder at the universe, its beauty, mystery and explicability, continue to inspire.



Medieval and Modern Cosmology, created for Durham Lumiere 2015, a collaboration between the Ordered Universe project, the Durham Institute of Computational Cosmology, Ross Ashton, Karen Monid, Isabel Waller-Bridge and John Del Nero.

The Department of Philosophy at Georgetown University and The Ordered Universe Project at Durham University present a public talk

**Modern Science, Medieval Studies and Art in Dialogue:  
Bishop Robert Grosseteste's (c.1170 – 1253)  
Scientific World of Light, Sound and the Big Bang**

Neil Lewis, Associate Professor of Philosophy,  
Georgetown University

Tom McLeish, Professor of Physics,  
Durham University

Giles Gasper, Reader in High Medieval History,  
Durham University

Ross Ashton, Projection Artist

March 31, 2017  
4:30 PM  
McShain Lounge, McCarthy Hall  
Georgetown University  
Reception to follow  
For more information please contact: lewisn@gorgetown.edu

WONDERS OF THE UNIVERSE  
PLANETARY SYSTEMS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE  
COSMOS IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND NOW

TOM C.B. MCLEISH, FRS (DURHAM UNIVERSITY)  
CECILIA PANTI (UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA, TOR VERGATA)

**PUBLIC LECTURE & RECEPTION**  
7 APRIL 2016, 18.00  
Notre Dame Global Gateway, Via Ostilia 15  
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**TOP RIGHT:** A poster advertising an Ordered Universe public talk at Georgetown University on 31st March 2017.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** A poster advertising a public talk at the University of Notre Dame in Rome on 7th April 2016.

# ONE UNIVERSITY, ONE CITY, ONE COMMUNITY

## WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT



ALEX BARBER

Dr Barber specialises in early modern British history with a particular focus on the intersections between intellectual and religious culture and on the transmission of ideas. He is currently converting his thesis 'Information and communication in England after the lapse of licensing, 1694-1721' into a book to be published this year.

**Almost a hundred years ago, Thorstein Veblen commented of American further education, 'in a general way, the place of the university in the culture of Christendom is still substantially the same as it has been from the beginning.**

Ideally, and in the popular apprehension, it is, as it has always been, a corporation for the cultivation and care of the community's highest aspiration and ideals'.<sup>1</sup> Whilst we might now quibble with the claim that our culture is exclusively Christian, there is much in Veblen's ideas to agree with and, indeed, there is much here that might help to explain the mission of the Durham history department both as it exists now and for the future. We might all agree, for example, that universities should be protected spaces in which ideals and thoughts are pursued, in both teaching and research, to the highest level free from government interference. Yet Veblen's comment also opens further discussion that are less easily analysed and accepted. What, for example, did he mean when he argued that universities should reflect the wider community's 'highest aspiration and ideals'? The obvious answer (obvious because Veblen was an American social critic) is that he believed universities should be involved in the socialization of our civic values. The connection between education and political and social ideals has always been more explicit in America (and to some degree

France) yet has rarely been the focus in Britain.

In recent years and for a variety of reasons the disconnection between British universities and wider society has looked increasingly stark and difficult to justify. No doubt some of this unease can be put down to recent social and political changes. As wider society has become increasingly diverse it is surely incumbent on all universities to reflect that change. Indeed, there is worrying evidence that elite universities are struggling to reflect the wider community. In 2016, for example, Oxford University offered places to just 45 black students out of a total of 2500 offers, a figure that is actually declining from previous years. These figures reveal a disconnection that can also be seen in class terms. While there is no doubt that the recent expansion of higher education has created new opportunities for many people of lower social class it also true that very few working class children attend Russell Group universities: according to HEA statistics only 10.2% of Cambridge University's intake can be considered to have come from the lowest social classes. And, there is little evidence that such depressing figures can be attributed to the introduction of fees. Rather, students describe elite institutions as not for them, employing social practices that are elite and exclusionary. Or, as one social commentator has recently pointed

out, discussions of social mobility are predicated around becoming middle and upper class, 'not only is that logically impossible – the room at the top of the labour market is finite – it also presents a very narrow vision of what a good and successful life entails'.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, it is currently impossible for any university to ignore the social class of their own intake. Little noticed in the furore surrounding the uncapping of fees, the coalition government insisted that any university charging £9,000 must sign agreements guaranteeing fair access to education. Since 2010, Durham's history department has operated a series of schemes designed to widen access. Our supported progression scheme seeks to identify local, talented students who possess intellectual potential. They attend taster days and a week-long summer school in which they spend time at college, visit the library to learn about sources and write an essay on a chosen topic, leading to them being offered a financial bursary and one grade lower offer. The scheme is designed to not only help students intellectually but to also recognise the lack of cultural capital inherent in many working class communities. Research suggests that being the first student in your family to attend university brings unique anxieties. At a practical level, many students have no experience of small group teaching or wearing gowns, for example, is a unknown concept as

is the dominance of certain types of middle class sports – as many budding students comment, it's rather difficult to row and play lacrosse in many of their own schools. Gratifyingly, most students attending supported progression realise quickly that they can cope; that elite universities can be for them despite the new and unknown experiences that they will need to engage with.

The scheme has been running for six years and whilst it has been successful the department now envisions a much more ambitious supported progression scheme. Whether or not we agree, the latest government guidance expects us 'to raise attainment in schools and colleges, rather than raising aspiration to participate in education'. As the criteria changes, as the government promotes a policy of much greater school engagement by universities, it is striking that we are not yet fulfilling our obligations; from a place of good reasoning and a desire to provide change we are engaged primarily in raising aspiration rather than attainment.

Proposals are under way for an expanded covenanted scheme in which we mentor talented students as soon as they have finished GCSE's. Bringing students to the department every month to engage with different academics, pairing them with a student mentor to give them pastoral support and advice throughout the two years of their A levels will, we

hope, allow us to help a much wider body of students attain better grades and attend Russell Group universities. Aside from political obligation, the newer scheme will be an example of social engagement and action that considers the progression of any local students to a Russell Group university a mark of success. Or, in other words, many of the skills that exist in the Durham history department – both staff and students – can be put to use in helping to provide access to the whole university sector for disadvantaged students.

And of course we will begin to help with the problems social origin can cause. By building relationships with working class students and spending more time with them we can begin to *listen* to what they want rather than *telling* them what is good for them. Discussions with students in widening participation schemes often reveal their fears: are they good enough to be at Durham; how was it that all the other students seemed to be adapting to their new surroundings with barely any effort? These types of fears can only be allayed by allowing students to find their voice and express their own concerns and fears. And, it helps for them to know that others have shared exactly the same experiences. Listening to students more will also mean that we examine our own prejudices properly too. George Orwell once commented rather unkindly of H.G. Wells that his world was middle-class; he saw everything outside his limits

'as either laughable or slightly wicked'. We would do well to remember that social mobility brings with it problems, especially in our education system which often self- and sub- consciously projects a set of middle-class values. Whilst we have come to understand that eating at high table, the wearing of gowns and having colleges can in fact provide a caring and supportive environment, such practices can seem exclusionary and worrying to students who are the first in their generation to attend university.

The quicker all Russell Group universities accept that the voices of its students (and its staff) should be multi-vocal, ranging across all social backgrounds, the more the sector will become a vital space for social engagement and outstrip simplistic government demands that we be 'the engine of social mobility'. Durham is proud of its commitment to social action. It is time for us as individuals, departments, colleges and universities to recognise that we must translate our desire for large-scale social action into local policies that ensure our own institution reflects the diversity of our society.

<sup>[1]</sup>Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Businessmen* (New York, 1918), 34.

<sup>[2]</sup>David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere. The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (London, 2017), 181.

# ARMS, ARMOUR AND ARCHIVES OF SUDAN



## **NATASHA BENNETT**

*Curator of Oriental  
Collections, Royal Armouries.*

Natasha studied for her BA in History at Durham, graduating in 2007. She then went on to complete her MA in Art Gallery and Museum Studies at the University of Leeds in 2010. In 2011, she secured a position in the curatorial department at the Royal Armouries, which holds the national collection of arms and armour in the UK. Now a Curator, Natasha works with the collections from Asia and North Africa.

Sudanese armour comprising a padded coat (jibbah) with split skirts for riding, and a helmet with a mail aventail. The helmet appears to be of European manufacture; it is of a type which was used by the bodyguards of the Egyptian Khedive in the 19th century, and probably passed into Sudan towards the end of the 19th century. XXVIA.137

**The Oriental Collection of the Royal Armouries Museum is full of entrancing and iconic objects, ranging from the majestic Indian elephant armour to a glittering Ming dynasty sword.**

Sometimes a little lost amongst the more well-known treasures is an interesting group of armours and weapons from Sudan: vivid padded textile coats and the famous patched tunics (*jibbah*) made famous by the Mahdist forces in the late nineteenth century;<sup>1</sup> steel helmets with mail neckguards, leaf-bladed spears, and straight swords with cruciform hilts (*kaskara*), which seem almost medieval in appearance. This area of the Royal Armouries' collection has received comparatively little study. For this article, I delved into the rich resources held at the Sudan Archive at Durham (SAD) to start exploring these emblems of martial identity, hoping to uncover more about their meaning and use over time for those people who produced them, wielded them in battle, venerated what they represented, or acquired them and all that they signified according to circumstance.

The traditional understanding has always been that much of the Sudanese arms and armour present in British collections today arrived as trophies and mementoes following the colonial wars of the late nineteenth century. One of the quilted *jibbah* on display in the Oriental Gallery appears to be a case in point; the coat has a note sewn into the lining, declaring that the armour was collected after the battle of Omdurman in 1898 by Major George Ray.<sup>2</sup> However, although the acquisition of military souvenirs has been a major



In the aftermath of the battle of Omdurman, Lieutenant C. F. Wanhill posed for a photograph on horseback, standing alongside the standard bearer and nephew of the defeated Khalifa 'Abdallahi, who was still carrying his Mahdist flag. The Lieutenant carried a Mahdist spear over his shoulder and wore a set of equipment which appears to have been looted from the battlefield, incorporating a mail shirt with a patched *jibbah* underneath, a conical helmet with a nasal guard and mail aventail (neckguard). His horse wore a typical Sudanese shaffron (head defence).

source of growth for many institutional collections since the nineteenth century, including that of the Armouries, it is not possible to say for certain that this trend was responsible for all of the Sudanese equipment which currently resides in this collection, because we simply don't know.

Though the scope and breadth of the Oriental Collection now makes it one of the acknowledged gems of the Armouries, attitudes were previously very different. In 1914, the then Master of the Armouries, Charles Foulkes, engineered the wholesale removal of the Asian and African material to the British Museum.<sup>3</sup> In his opinion, non-European arms and armour were irrelevant to the purpose of the collection at the Tower of London.<sup>4</sup> It would be fifty years until the Oriental loan

was recovered. The returned collection was dominated by material from Britain's colonies in South Asia – much of it had been acquired in large instalments as gifts from the East India Company, purchases from the Great Exhibition, and confiscated equipment from the disarmament which followed the Indian Rebellion of 1857.<sup>5</sup> The African representation had never been as extensive, and unfortunately, much of the African arms and armour sank without trace during the first decades of the twentieth century, and was not recovered or reidentified. Most of the Sudanese objects which now have a place at the Royal Armouries were later acquisitions of the middle and later decades of the twentieth century. They were accessioned through various listed means such as personal gift, museum transfer, police

[1] Muhammad Ahmad, a Sufi religious leader, proclaimed himself to be the Mahdi (meaning 'guided one'), the prophesied saviour of the Islamic faith) and established a dedicated body of followers in Sudan. The Mahdist forces were often referred to as 'Dervishes' because of the ascetic virtues to which they were supposed to adhere. They became well-known for their '*jibbahs*', garments made of tough, plain white cotton, with patches of another colour sewn on top. This clothing was intended to represent poverty and humility, and became the uniform of the Mahdist army. Under the Mahdi and his successor, the Khalifa 'Abdallahi, who assumed the leadership in 1885, the Mahdist state became sufficiently powerful to pose a threat to the security of British-garrisoned Egypt. This led to the Nile Campaign of 1884 to 1885 (which failed to rescue General Charles Gordon and relieve the besieged city of

Khartoum before it was captured by the Mahdi) and to the Anglo-Egyptian expedition to subjugate the Sudan between 1896 and 1898, which culminated in the famous Battle of Omdurman.

[2] George Lake Sidney Ray was a Captain in the 1st Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers when he fought at Omdurman. He was promoted to Brevet-Major in November 1898, but was killed in action in South Africa in December 1899.

[3] This was Foulkes' rather eccentric manner of spelling his surname.

[4] As an institution, the Royal Armouries developed as part of the functions of the Tower of London. In the modern day the Royal Armouries holds the national collection of arms and armour in the UK.

[5] For discussion of the numerous factors which help to explain this direction of collecting activity, see N. Bennett, "'Relating to a country so distant': Collecting South Asian arms and armour at the Tower of London during the nineteenth century', in *Collecting the Arts of South Asia* (David A. Cofrin *Asian Art Manuscript Series*) (Forthcoming, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017); T. Richardson and N. Bennett, "The East India Company Gift to the Tower of London in 1853," in T. Richardson (ed.), *East Meets West: Diplomatic Gifts of Arms and Armour between Europe and Asia* (Leeds: Royal Armouries, 2014), pp.112-138; M. Mercer, 'Shaping the Ordnance Office Collections at the Tower of London: The Impact of Colonial Expansion, Diplomacy, and Donation in the early 19th century,' *Museum History Journal* 9:2 (2016), pp. 153-167.



Another photograph shows the commanding officer H.J. Huddleston of the Camel Corps, on horseback in the grounds of the palace of 'Ali Dinar, the last Sultan of Darfur, at El Fasher in 1916. Huddleston poses in a mail shirt, a helmet with a mail neck-guard and textile lining, and his horse wears padded textile armour and a shaffron.



Portrait of R. von Slatin, posing with a rifle, a sword (*kaskara*) and arm-dagger (*loi-bo*), and dressed in a *jibbah* in the manner of an officer in the army of the Khalifa 'Abdallah.

amnesty, or just 'found', usually with very little attached explanation. Unfortunately, the dearth of recorded provenance information means that the objects have become somewhat disconnected from the circumstances which prompted their arrival, and from their roles and significance beforehand.

The SAD has already yielded many tantalising leads to help flesh out this sparse evidence. It is clear that the distinctive arms and armour used by Sudanese warriors really captured the imagination of those who had to confront them, and were sought after as evocative

reminders of activity in the region. A surviving note from the time of the Nile Campaign lists how trophies of a 'jibbeh', a sword, and nineteen spears were to be divided up amongst a number of officers.<sup>6</sup> Detailed correspondence and study notes have been preserved from 1968, in which K.D.D. Henderson (formerly Governor of Darfur) had a lengthy discussion with contacts at SOAS and Edinburgh University about the collection of Dervish arms and armour displayed at Blair Castle in Atholl, Scotland. Henderson described this collection as 'the best representative collection in existence, not excluding the Khalifa's house in

Omdurman'.<sup>7</sup> According to Henderson, the swords, helmets, mail shirts, spears, drums, horse armour, banners, 'djibbahs' [sic], daggers and *Löh*<sup>8</sup> had all been looted from the Omdurman battlefield by the Marquis of Tullibardine.<sup>9</sup> There are several photographs of officers posing in Sudanese armour and carrying native weapons, which had apparently been looted in the aftermath of the major battles.<sup>10</sup> More generally, individuals serving in diplomatic or military roles often had photographs taken of themselves dressed in *jibbah* and equipped with spears or lances, arm-daggers and *kaskara* (swords). Both

[6] SAD.250/1/100: From the papers of Sir Reginald Wingate, who served under Kitchener during the Anglo-Egyptian campaign in the Sudan between 1896–1898. Wingate was subsequently appointed Governor-General of the Sudan and Sirdar of the Egyptian army, and later took on the role of High Commissioner for Egypt.

[7] SAD.660/1/33-35: Notes on the collection of Dervish arms and armour at Blair Castle, by K.D.D. Henderson, dated 17 April 1968.

[8] Ibid. 'Loh' or 'lawh' are wooden writing boards, described by Henderson in his notes as 'equivalent to the slates of

English schools in the 19th century. The ink could be washed off and the board used again. Used mainly for learning verses of the Koran and presumably carried into battle by way of an amulet.' [SAD.660/1/35]

[9] SAD.660/1/30: letter from K.D.D. Henderson to Professor W. Montgomery Watt, University of Edinburgh, dated 11 June 1968. Interestingly, Winston Churchill acted as a war correspondent during Kitchener's campaign and his writings mention that he and 'Lord Tullibardine of the Egyptian cavalry' rode out to the battlefield several days after the Dervish army was defeated at Omdurman. He made no mention of any looting, but described how Lord

Tullibardine offered his water bottle to those wounded who were still lying there in agony, and used his knife to remove a bullet lodged in a man's leg. [Winston Spencer Churchill, *The River War*, Vol. II (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1899); accessed at <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.284459>]

[10] 'Ali Dinar, the last sultan of Darfur, was killed in action during the Anglo-Egyptian Darfur Expedition of 1916. (The Sultan had rebelled against paying tribute to the British and his friendship with the hostile Ottoman Empire was regarded as a threat to Sudan.)



Giuseppe Cuzzi had been a consular agent in Berber before being captured by the Mahdists. He was Slatin's fellow prisoner and remained the Khalifa's captive until 1898. This photograph was signed in 1899. Like Slatin, Cuzzi wore a jibbah and a kaskara; there is also a group of Sudanese spears at his feet.



Sword (kaskara) and scabbard, 19th century. XXVIS.204

of the men shown here, Rudolf von Slatin ('Slatin Pasha') and Giuseppe Cuzzi, had actually been imprisoned by the Mahdist regime during the 1880s and subsequently escaped or were rescued.<sup>11</sup> Assuming the traditional weapons and recognisable attire of the area acted as an affirmation of their experience.

SAD sources help to shed light on one explanation for the particular appeal of Sudanese arms and armour as souvenirs. In 1884, despite organising an evacuation of Khartoum and co-ordinating the defence of the besieged city against the Mahdi and his forces, General Gordon<sup>12</sup>

still found time to write notes in which he mused on his belief that their armour was not locally manufactured and probably came from Syria. He assumed that it was of significant age and arrived in the region with emigrants from the Arabian Peninsula after the Crusades.<sup>13</sup> He also described the swords that were supposedly wielded by the sons of the Sultan of Darfur in 1874: 'The Sultan (...) was wounded first and his horse killed – he fell on the ground, and his two sons bestrode his body and defended him with their long crusaders' swords and all of them were killed in a heap.'<sup>14</sup> A similar idea that a lot of the Mahdists' equipment

had come from the Crusades was asserted by Sir Reginald Wingate when he offered a mail shirt and sword that he had picked up from the battlefield at Omdurman to the Toc H (Talbot House) Memorial Church in 1937.<sup>15</sup> The identification of some of these pieces as being 'Crusader' in nature probably made them even more desirable and meaningful as keepsakes to the British. The theory did not please everyone however; in 1901 Guy Francis Laking, an eminent arms and armour scholar of the day, dismissed with some scorn 'the godless fables that are current as to the Soudanese [sic] warriors wearing the actual armour of our Crusaders – this

[11] Rudolf Carl von Slatin had a startling military and administrative career in the Sudan. He was in post as Governor of Dara and Darfur from 1879, before he was imprisoned by the Mahdi and kept in captivity to serve the Khalifa between 1884 and 1895. He ultimately escaped and became Assistant Director of Military Intelligence in the Egyptian Army for a while. (This portrait is recorded as having been taken at Cairo in 1895 after his escape.) He was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1898, and assumed the role of Inspector-General of the Sudan between 1900 and 1914. In 1896, Slatin published a detailed account of his career in the Sudan and his time in captivity, which was

entitled *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes*, 1879–1895.

[12] General Charles Gordon, or 'Chinese Gordon' as he was popularly called, was a Royal Engineer officer, who had won his reputation leading Chinese troops in the 1860s. He famously held out in Khartoum for months, before he was killed by Mahdist forces just before the relief force arrived in January 1885. His final moments are romantically depicted in the well-known painting 'General Gordon's Last Stand' by George William Joy which currently resides in the collection of Leeds Art Gallery.

[13] SAD.630/6/7-9: Notes by Gen. C. Gordon on Crusaders' armour in the Sudan, 1884; held in the papers of J.F. Brocklehurst, who served in the Nile Campaign 1884–1885.

[14] Ibid.

[15] SAD.243/3/16: Note by F.R. Wingate on a Dervish sword and coat of mail from the battlefield of Omdurman, offered to Toc H (Talbot House) Memorial Church; held in F.R. Wingate Personal Papers, 1937.



Turkish helmet, 16th century, modified for use in the Sudan. XXVIA.119

also appertains to the crusiform [sic] hilted sword of the Soudan [sic] which in form somewhat resemble the weapons of a European 13th or 14th century knight'.<sup>16</sup>

Interestingly, these reactions encapsulate some important characteristics of Sudanese armour and weapons which continue to intrigue and confuse even now. Due to the shared characteristics of a cruciform hilt and a straight double-edged blade, it has always been a common misconception that the Sudanese *kaskara* and the medieval sword used at the time of the Crusades are one and the same thing. The *kaskara* is probably descended from the straight swords which were widely used by Islamic forces before the single-edged sword became more popular across many areas of Islamic influence. However, *kaskara* were routinely fitted with blades imported from the sword-making centres of Europe (such as Solingen in Germany, Toledo in Spain, and Belluno in Italy), or alternatively had locally forged versions which were copied from European examples, even down to the hallmarks. This practice continued over the centuries because European blades were regarded as desirable commodities, even if this was not for the same associations with the Crusades as claimed by Gordon and Wingate.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, the armour that was picked up as booty was highly unlikely to hail from the era of the Crusades, but nonetheless many of the surviving helmets and mail armours show evidence of prolonged use despite extreme age. One helmet in the Royal Armouries collection is probably of 16th-century Turkish manufacture, but was later modified for use in the Sudan with the addition of a mail neck-guard. Indeed, much of the armour in use in Sudan suggests Turkish or Mamluk

[16] SAD.630/7/18: Letter from Guy Francis Laking, F.S.A., about a collection of armour in J.F. Brocklehurst's possession. Laking was in correspondence with the (then) Colonel John Fielden Brocklehurst about some Sudanese helmets and armours that Col. Brocklehurst owned. (Brocklehurst served in the Sudan in the 1880s.) Laking was enthusiastic about the interesting pieces which he regarded as high quality examples, but explained that although they were modelled on European styles of mail

hauberk of the 13th century or later, they were of local manufacture and certainly not 'Crusader'.

[17] J. Anderson, Abdelrahman Ali Mohamed, Amani Nureldaim Mohamed and Elghazafi Yousif Eshag, 'Royal Regalia: a sword of the last Sultan of Darfur, Ali Dinar', *Sudan and Nubia: The Sudan Archaeological Research Society*, 20 (2016), pp.161-169 (pp.161-163); G. Reed, 'Kaskara from Northern Darfur, Sudan', *Journal of the*

*Arms and Armour Society* 12.3, March 1987 (pp.165-185), pp.171-2; C. Spring, 'African hilt weapons', in Michael D. Coe (ed.) *Swords and hilt weapons* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1989) pp.204-217 (p.208); A. North, *An Introduction to Islamic Arms* (London: HMSO, 1985), p.30; T. Richardson, *Islamic Arms and Armour* (Leeds: Royal Armouries, 2015), pp.66-67.

[18] Richardson, *Islamic Arms and Armour*, pp.72-75.

influence; it is likely that the defeat of the Mamluks by the Ottomans at the battle of Ridanieh in 1517 and the establishment of the Ottoman Empire across Northern Africa released a large quantity of Turkish and Mamluk arms and armour into the region, where it continued in practical use.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the antiquity of some pieces, the sources also provide evidence that traditional weapons and mail armour were still being newly manufactured and used in Sudan well into the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> Some of this production was undoubtedly for tourist consumption, but it is important to realise that these objects retained their function as symbols signifying identity, status, prowess, ritual, respect, and favour. They are frequently on show in photographs of community gatherings and celebrations. This continued adherence to the traditions embodied by these objects, and the gravitas that was attached to them, was demonstrated on the highest level by Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, who arrived in London in 1919 as part of a delegation of Sudanese leaders who came to congratulate King George V on victory in the Great War. Abd al-Rahman presented the King with a sword which had reputedly belonged to his father, the Mahdi, declaring it to be an expression of loyalty and submission on the part of himself and the people of the Sudan. The King responded by acknowledging the gift and all that it represented, and returning it to Abd al-Rahman and his followers as a sign of acceptance and appreciation of loyalty and support.<sup>20</sup>

The Sudan Archive therefore helps to reinforce how the relevance and usage of Sudanese arms and armour extends across a wide timeframe. The longevity of some of these objects invites a

[19] Anderson et al., 'Royal Regalia', p.161, 163; Spring, 'African hilt weapons', p.208; C. Spring, *African Arms and Armour* (London: British Museum Press, 1993), pp.36-37.

[20] SAD.162/3/9-10: 'The Sudan Sword of Loyalty: The Victory Mission at Buckingham Palace – His Majesty and the Mahdi's Golden Sword', *The African World*, 2 August 1919, p.530.



**TOP:** Taken between 1921 and 1928, possibly near Kordofan, this photograph shows four warriors wearing mail shirts over padded jibbah and helmets with nasalguards and padded linings. Their horses are attired in shaffrons and padded armours tucked up at the front (presumably this was for ease of movement and circulation of air, and reflected the fact that this was not a battle situation).

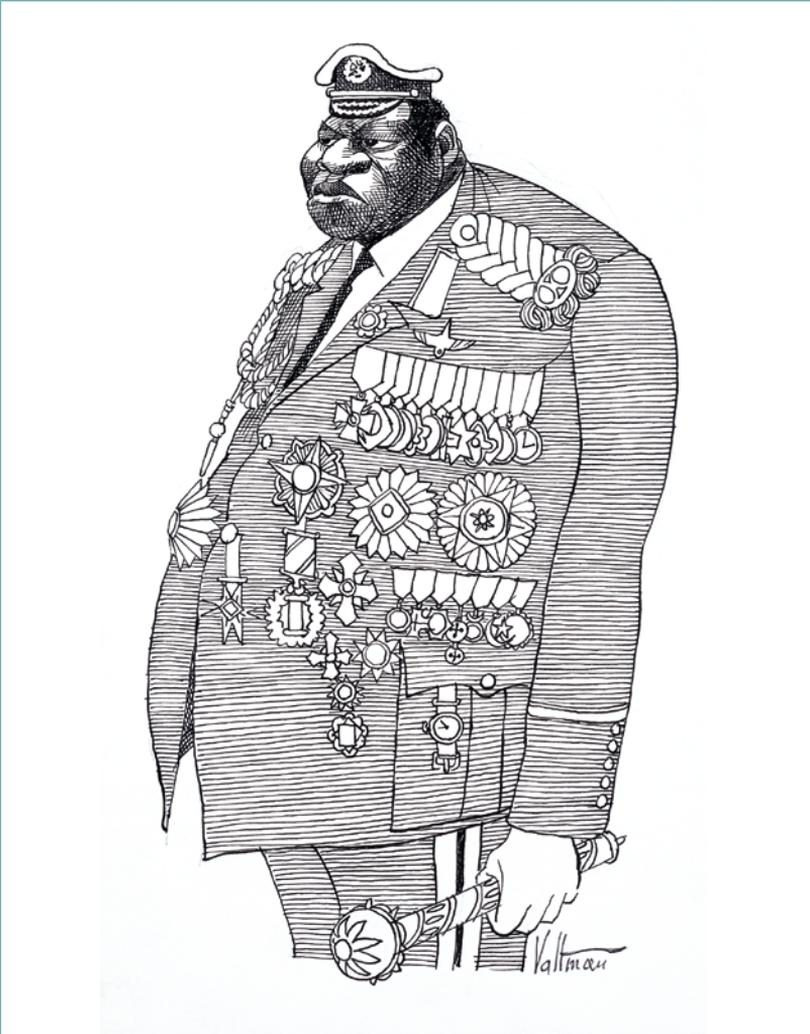
**BOTTOM:** Sudanese tribesmen salute the drums with drawn swords at a Temental gathering in 1953

consideration of the numerous paths they may have travelled over the course of their existence, which brought about their arrival in the Royal Armouries' collection. They certainly do seem to represent a snapshot of the equipment in use by forces opposing British influence during the military campaigns of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but this is only one slice of time; the roles played by these objects are likely to be more nuanced, and the narratives attached to them potentially greater in scope and variety.

### Acknowledgements

*My thanks to Francis Gotto, Assistant Keeper (Durham University Library – Sudan Archive), Rachel Barclay (Curator, Oriental Museum, Durham University) and Martin Wills (Curatorial Manager, Royal Armouries) for their help and advice, and to the Symeon editorial team for inviting me to contribute to the magazine and thereby refreshing my active contact with the University and its resources.*

# VIOLENCE IN THE TIME OF IDI AMIN: REPRESENTATION VERSUS REALITY



This 1977 caricature by Edmund Valtman stresses the conventional targets of Amin's public image: military pretensions and physical bulk

**Mention the history of Uganda in everyday conversation in Britain, and one name is certain to appear: Idi Amin, president and dictator from 1971 to 1979. Most recently portrayed in popular Western culture by Forest Whitaker in 'The Last King of Scotland', Amin endures as a nightmarish caricature of African military government. The West remembers him above all else for his eccentric behaviour, the large scale violence employed by the army against civilians during his regime, and for his expulsion of thousands of Ugandan Asian citizens in 1972, many of whom subsequently settled in Britain.**

My own PhD research has centred on the violence that engulfed Ugandan society during Amin's eight years in power. It attempts to understand the local, regional and global dynamics which shaped and drove episodes of violence, to study the organisations and individuals perpetrating it, and to explore the ways that ordinary Ugandans navigated, influenced and resisted Amin and his regime. This has meant repeated engagement with the ways in which commentators have understood and portrayed this period of history. It means untangling a web of sensationalist myths and stereotypes from the inevitably more nuanced and multifaceted realities of political and social conflict. This short article outlines some of the most significant findings from the early stages of my research, and sets out some of the key features which render the violence experienced in Uganda from 1971 onwards more understandable.

Early attempts to explain the huge loss of life that followed Amin's

rise to power focused almost solely on the man himself, and his larger than life personality. Whether his unstable temperament, his military background, or rumours of degenerative sexually transmitted diseases, early commentators sought to present what was happening in Uganda as an extension of his personal attributes.<sup>1</sup> It is important to contextualise these early works, which were written while Amin was still in power, making academic studies of the regime based on research within the country almost impossible to conduct. However, it hardly needs stating that events in a country of millions hinge upon significantly more than the character of one unstable President.

Another recurring feature in representations of Amin era violence is the idea of 'chaos,' where violence is cast as faceless, arbitrary, and senseless.<sup>2</sup> Between the verses of the song 'Amazin' Man,' in which satirist John Bird portrays Amin, the dictator guns down the four wives acting as his backing singers; American comedian Richard Pryor depicted him executing television executives for cutting short his speech.<sup>3</sup> In 'The Last King of Scotland,' members of state agencies such as the infamous State Research Centre (SRC) are portrayed as shadowy and anonymous figures in tinted sunglasses, who arrive in cars, kidnap their victims and disappear again without trace.

This notion of 'disappearance' was prevalent in Uganda itself during these years. Amin himself ordered an investigation into 'disappearances' in 1974, and the completed report remains a fascinating, if harrowing



**THOMAS J. LOWMAN**

Thomas is a current PhD candidate in the history department. His thesis, supervised by Professor Justin Willis and Dr Jacob Wiebel, examines the large-scale violence experienced in Uganda in the 1970s.

historical source.<sup>4</sup> However, dismissing events as chaotic has the effect of removing human agency from the equation. It abandons the attempt to explain what is happening because the causes and actors defy easy categorisation. Similarly, to investigate 'disappearances' rather than the institutions and actors that were making them happen was to miss the point – as Amin and his government doubtless knew all too well.

The third interpretation of this period, perhaps the most pervasive, is one of 'tribal' violence. In this interpretation conflict was not solely the result of Amin coming to power, but rather of ethnic divisions and hatreds. These hatreds, previously held in place by the colonial state, 'resurfaced' to

[1] M. Semaluka Kiwanuka, *Amin and the Tragedy of Uganda*. (Munich, 1979)

the 70's also lapse into using this kind of language.

[4] The Commission of Inquiry into Disappearances in Uganda, 1974.

[2] Jean-Pierre Chretien, *The Great Lakes Of Africa*. (New York, 2003.) Many reports made by human rights groups in

[3] John Bird, 'Amazin' Man,' *The Collected Broadcasts of Idi Amin* (1975); *The Richard Pryor Special*, 5 May 1977

cause societal conflict. Amin and his soldiers were predominantly from ethnic groups in the West Nile region; Obote, the President he deposed, had leaned heavily on the Acholi and Langi tribes for support. The support Amin enjoyed from the Nubians, a martial group descended from Egyptian soldiers recruited in Sudan, was also seen through this lens. In the tribal interpretation certain groups in Uganda are cast as somehow being inherently more violent, especially those from West Nile or those of Nubian heritage.<sup>5</sup> The Amin state was violent, it was argued, because those ethnic groups in control of it were naturally disposed towards violence. Examples of horrific forms of torture or killing were cited as evidence. Indeed the awful torture and murder scenes portrayed in 'The Last King of Scotland' also play up to this idea of an atavistic, 'African' violence, visceral and brutal in nature.<sup>6</sup>

Do these representations and explanations adequately capture the upheaval of this time? The initial findings from my own research suggest not. I have examined evidence ranging from largely unseen primary materials from the recently opened and catalogued Ugandan National Archive at Wandegaya and regional District Archives, through newspaper and written sources from the UK, to dozens of oral interviews conducted around Uganda itself. Bringing these sources together suggests a much more complex picture, in which we must understand violence as enabled and facilitated by structural conditions both inside and outside of

the country, and driven and exploited by a wide range of actors.

Firstly, Amin himself was far from the sole facilitator and perpetrator of violence during these years. Government papers demonstrate that the decision to create the infamous SRC was taken with the knowledge and consent of the cabinet, which deemed it necessary as a response to the escape of pro-Obote forces to Sudan and Tanzania, and ongoing rumours of dissent against Amin's takeover.<sup>7</sup> In the early months of Amin's rule, when selective massacres of Obote supporters began taking place, official meetings showed the government as a whole to be deeply concerned about a potential reinvasion of the country and wary of an existing network of chiefs and officials tarnished by association with the Obote government.<sup>8</sup> In this climate of fear and suspicion Amin and his unelected and unaccountable 'Defence Council' were able to pass numerous laws retroactively justifying state sanctioned violence, and protecting soldiers and policemen from being held responsible for their actions. Though this culture of impunity grew over time, Ugandan political elites were complicit in allowing Amin to establish it.

It is also quite clear that state sanctioned violence was often far from 'chaotic'. A handful of remaining files from the SRC stored at the Uganda Human Rights Commission demonstrate that it was an organised and bureaucratic unit, with dozens of squads registered and assigned to a range of security tasks. It maintained

catalogues of the distribution of its arms and ammunition, and timetabled patrols, investigations and guard operations.<sup>9</sup> Interviews with State Research and Military Police agents confirmed that systematic paper reports were generated on a daily basis, and passed through the government and directly to State House. This evidence also destroys the oft-heard argument in Amin's defence that he was unaware and uninformed of the violence employed by his agents.<sup>10</sup> The key role that government bureaucracy plays in facilitating, compartmentalising and legitimising atrocities by state forces has been explored in a range of other historical contexts, from Nazi Germany to Soviet Russia and the police torture squads that operated in Brazil and Greece contemporaneously with the events in Uganda.<sup>11</sup> The Amin state needs to be considered in these terms as well, with adequate consideration for the disconnect one might find between the written record and the behaviour of state units in practice.

Finally, one must also recognise the limitations of 'tribe' or 'ethnicity' as a lens to explain the violence of this period. Whilst it is certainly true that general perceptions of ethnic allegiances and intentions in Uganda helped to create a climate of mutual fear and suspicion, the cleavages of political violence do not map quite so conveniently. The Amin state employed Ugandans from across the country, including not just West Nile but also Ugandans from Buganda, the South West, the East and even

[5] Aidan Southall, 'General Amin and the Coup: Great Man or Historical Inevitability?' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 13 no. 1 (1975), p.85.

[6] The two most horrific and sensationalist scenes of violence in the film, one involving dismemberment and the other torture through suspension, do not have genuine basis in the historical literature on this period.

[7] Ugandan National Archive, 'Funds for Military Intelligence Unit: Memoranda by Ministry of Public Service and Administration', Box 21, Reference 2.

[8] UNA, 'Minutes of Meeting Between Ministers and District Commissioners, 28th April 1971', Box 8, Reference 20.

[9] Uganda Human Rights Commission Library, 1986 Commission, 'Exhibits Received by the Commission', particularly EXH 37-45, which are all recovered State Research Centre documents.

[10] Interviews with Brahan Malengo, 9/12/16 and 24/01/17. Interview with former SRC agent, 12/12/16.

[11] For examples of this recent literature, see Martha Knisely

Huggins, Mika Haritos-Fatouros, and Philip G Zimbardo, *Violence Workers*. (Berkeley, 2002) on Brazil, Mika Haritos-Fatouros, "A Learning Model for Obedience to the Authority of Violence", *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 18 (1988), pp. 1107-1120 on the Greek Military Police, and Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (London, 1998) on Germany.

[12] Peter F. B. Nayenga, "Myths and realities of Idi Amin Dada's Uganda," *African Studies Review*, vol. 22 (1979), p.8

from the victimised Acholi and Langi groups. Kassim Obura, one time director of the Public Safety Unit that perpetrated extensive atrocities during this period, was himself Langi.<sup>12</sup> One interviewee described being confronted during a raid by a State Research agent that he knew from their shared hometown in Kigezi District. When he appealed to him for help this man severely beat him and broke his collarbone, shouting that he was 'an enemy of the state'.<sup>13</sup> In much the same way, Amin and his regime readily destroyed members of their 'own' ethnic support in West Nile if they were deemed a threat, as seen in a crackdown on Lugbara soldiers after a failed coup in 1974.<sup>14</sup> The practical exercise of power, its factions, victims and beneficiaries, rarely fit so simplistic a template as ethnic background.

Understanding the violence of the Amin years requires a shedding of these misconceptions, and the development of new approaches, ones that recognise the importance of institutional structures, individual agency, and the wide range of different social and political networks that Ugandans formed and operated within. The resulting picture is more complex, more fragmented, and ultimately more human than 'Heart of Darkness' style notions of a chaotic and tribal African violence unleashed, an image that stems much more from long running stereotypes and prejudices through which people in the West have viewed African politics than it does with the reality of events on the ground.



Amin's dictatorship was built on a patchwork of tribes, languages and cultures. By permission of Mark Dingemans

[13] Interview with Frank Masiko, 10/11/16

[14] The International Commission of Jurists, 'Violations of Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Uganda' (1974) p.54

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