

CRITICAL HISTORICAL STUDIES

Published by Durham University History Society

VOL.2

2023

ISSN 2754-6225

PUBLISHING

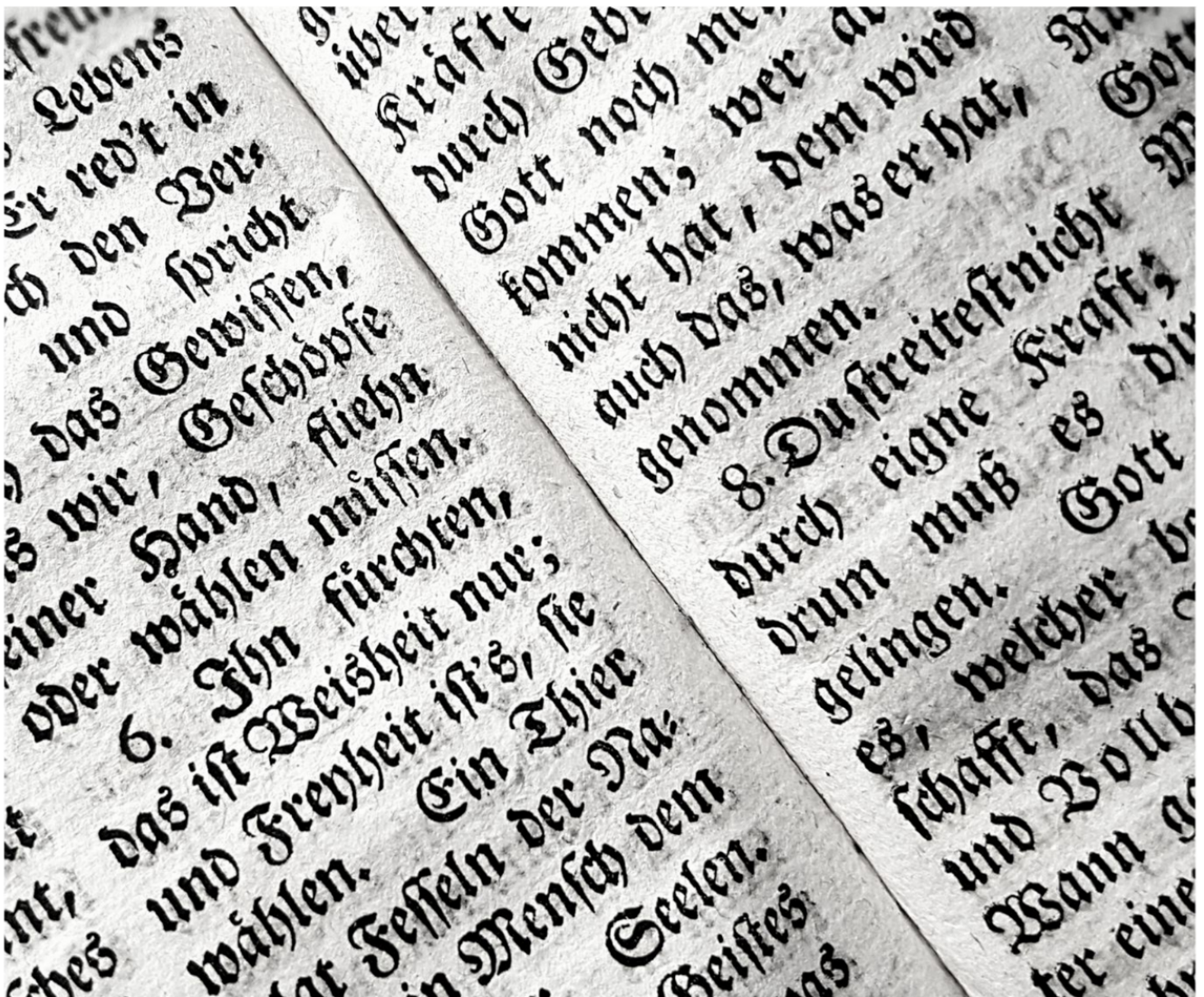
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Designed and typeset at Durham University by the Editor of the journal

Published by Durham University History Society

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ISSN 2754-6225

Critical Historical Studies welcomes the submission of unsolicited manuscripts of articles, reviews, discussions pieces and suggestions for symposia or special issues by undergraduates worldwide. Submission guidelines can be found at:

<https://www.duhistorysoc.org/critical-historical-studies>

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An open access journal devoted to the critical study of
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MMXXIII

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Editor's Introduction

Reviewing the Editor's Introduction from last year – the first of this new journal – it's tone and content provide quite a sombre read. *Critical Historical Studies*, a journal with a refreshingly global outlook seemingly fell flat, receiving rejection from the department whose students it represented and near silence from the world outside of Durham. While the conclusion of last year's editor that this amounted to 'a very precise impression of the state of the study of history at Durham University' verges on the absurd, in light of the first edition's shortcomings, its pessimism may have been understandable.

Such a conclusion is now, thankfully, wholly unsustainable. This year's edition warrants a much more optimistic reading of the state of history at Durham and comes much closer to realising the admirable goals my predecessor had when inaugurating the journal. Behind the scenes, our editorial team places the journal in a truly global context, with assistant editors and peer-reviewers from across the United Kingdom and the United States, representing a host of leading global institutions from Durham University to the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford, and from Columbia University to the University of Chicago. Though the final written output is perhaps more Durham-centric, this is not for the lack of applications, which even more aptly reflected the journal's global reach.

With a global range in publications has inevitably come a welcome diversity in time periods, regions, subjects and perspectives. The articles range from the medieval to the late modern, from Asia to Africa and from the granular, focussing on individual agency and family life, to the macro. Many cover relatively niche areas. This is not a surprise. Achieving truly original research, particularly at the undergraduate level, is a difficult task, and seeking out unexplored corners of the past makes originality more forthcoming. Thus, in this volume, it is easy to find yourself learning of something completely new, confronting an aspect of history you had never really considered. At least, that was the case for myself. Having specialised towards the end of the last academic year in British colonial history (particularly Africa), the lives and memories of medieval and early modern English families and domestic servants, for instance, was not something that would have naturally made an appearance on my reading list. And yet those essays, alongside the others included here, served as a gentle reminder of one of the most wonderful aspects of undergraduate study in history: the emphasis on exploring a vast diversity of stories; learning of peoples and processes from a whole host of different contexts. It is, of course, easy to feel a pressure to specialise narrowly, especially in preparation for your dissertation, but it is in the awareness of heterogeneity and the resultant ability to critique, contextualise, compare and contrast that the true value (at least in part) of a history undergraduate degree lies.

This edition thus offers an illuminating example of the diversity of the subject, as well as providing an exciting and varied read that speaks to the continued vibrancy of historical

study in Durham and beyond. It realises the laudable emphasis on originality in argument and global range in editorship and authorship that my predecessor envisaged and happily undercuts the at times pessimistic narrative woven around the first edition.

ANTON HIGGINS

‘FAMILY’ IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH CITY: WAS THE MEMORY OF THE FAMILY THE KEY TO ITS PRESERVATION?

CERYS WARWICK

John Snow College, Durham University

ABSTRACT: First advocated in Sylvia Thrupp’s seminal publication, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, the fragility of London’s urban dynasties – to Thrupp, a ‘peculiarly English phenomenon’ – has become a central tenet within urban historiography. In 1976, Colin Platt surmised that the English medieval town did not see ‘the creation of urban patriciates on lines familiar with the Continent’, making explicit a juxtaposition between continental stability and English fragility predicated on family memory. Responding to this, this essay explores literature on memory and the survival of families in medieval towns to argue that a distinction should be made between ‘family’ and ‘lineage’, which in turn situates memory as contingent upon individual experience.

THE LINK BETWEEN family memory and the survival of dynasties has been used to highlight differences between England and the continent. Jacques Heers attributes the survival of Italian dynasties to their broad, clan-like structure, held together through bonds of family memory; Sylvia Thrupp argues urban dynasties in England were short-lived due to high child mortality and lack of father-to-son succession – similarly placing the memory of the family as central to its preservation.¹ Yet inherent in these arguments is the confusion of ‘family’ and ‘lineage’. In response to this ambiguity, Marta Gravela identifies three groups in interplay, ‘co-resident relatives, the lineage as a line of descendants, and kinship as a complex consideration of different lineages’.² Consequently, while lineage inherently looks to the past, and thus memory, as a source of legitimation, ‘family’ was not always understood as ‘lineage’.³ Indeed, though theorised by Maurice Halbwachs as a specific context where ‘relations of kinship shaped perceptions of the past’, the theory subsumes the individual into an assumed family group: testamentary evidence instead reveals strategic and variable identification with ‘lineage’, for instance when seeking citizenship.⁴ Notably, though land, heraldry and funeral monuments have

traditionally been considered stores of family memory, their use by individuals highlights a broad ‘social memory’, characterised by emotive ties and experience, informing actions.⁵ Thus ‘lineage’ *could* preserve the family, yet underlying this was individual strategy: the actions of individuals were key to the preservation of the family – memory instead formed a specific context that was sometimes, though not always, utilised.

Land inheritance highlights the significance of individual actions: though Samuel Cohn Jr. presents memory as the key to the preservation of the family, his argument relies on the juxtaposition of family and community ties.⁶ Cohn suggests that with the absence of land-based inheritance in urban environments, the transmission of moveable goods ‘reinforced horizontal as opposed to longer-term vertical bonds among family members’, in turn presenting land as the primary store of family memory.⁷ Initially supporting this assessment, Coventry lawyer John Smith valued land both dynastically and economically: his son Henry is to have his residual money only if it is ‘applied to the purchasing of land to his use and his heirs’.⁸ Yet the specification that the money is ‘neither to buy sheep or cattle nor to pay his debts therewith’ implies Henry did not share his father’s

¹ J. Heers, *Family Clans in the Middle Ages: A Study of Political and Social Structures in Urban Areas* (New York: North-Holland Pub. Co, 1997); S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

² M. Gravela, ‘The primacy of patrimony: kinship strategies of the political elite of Turin in the late Middle Ages (1340-1490)’, *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2017), p. 296.

³ D. Herlihy, ‘The Making of the Medieval Family: Symmetry, Structure, and Sentiment’, *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1983), p. 117.

⁴ M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. L. A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 63.

⁵ J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1992).

⁶ S.K. Cohn Jr., ‘Two Pictures of Family Ideology taken from the Dead in Post-Plague Flanders and Tuscany’, in Myriam Carlier and Tim Soens (eds.), *The Household in Late Medieval Cities: Italy and Northwestern Europe Compared* (Leuven: Garant, 2000), pp. 165-179.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁸ ‘Will of John Smith of Coventry, gentleman’, translated by Christian Liddy, The National Archives PROB 11/13/88, p. 2.

concern.⁹ That Smith entrusts the ‘keeping thereof’ to Thomas Bands, ‘my son and trusty friend’, supports this – though not physically related, Bands (husband of Smith’s late daughter, Alice) is trusted above Henry, highlighting the pluralism of family structures beyond lineal descent.¹⁰ That Harry Oldeman similarly distrusts his son, stipulating ‘20s [of his inheritance] is to be paid every year’ and consequently disinherits him further challenges family memory as an inherently preservative force.¹¹ Indeed, while wills depict an individual’s strategy, they are innately prescriptive: identification of property by their previous owners supports Chris King’s contention that the new owners maintained the familial symbolism of the previous owners, yet this was not maintained through generations.¹² Henry Flemming identifies property through his father’s (Henry Flemming Sr.) actions: one ‘lately acquired from Isabel Wrangly’, another ‘[where] my father lately lived’.¹³ However, Henry Sr’s residence is absent from his father’s will, suggesting both that it was a recent acquisition, and a lack of attachment to the ancestral home. Nonetheless, the Flemings can be identified as surviving for at least seven generations: significantly, each of the examples above prioritised the survival of those they have emotive ties to above property. Pragmatism

was more useful than lineage, and thus memory was not preservation.

Equally, family memory was primarily a tool used by individuals, evident in its specific invocation in the *Liber Lynne*. Here, Jenny Kermode links memory to the supposed impermanence of the urban family, contrasting Florentine families’ ‘sharp awareness’ to that of English merchants, who ‘did not articulate anxieties about the precarious existence of families’ – an argument evocative of William Caxton’s claim of essential difference between England and continental Europe.¹⁴ Historians have considered the lack of family books in England further evidence of this, yet the survival of private cartularies highlights a similar store of family memory. Giovanni Ciappelli defines family books as a ‘memory text, tendentially multigenerational, in which the family is at once the author, subject and receiver of the writing’.¹⁵ Though describing the Florentine phenomenon, this bears remarkable resemblance to the *Liber Lynne*, a record of the family’s property transaction intended for ‘all my children and their heirs’.¹⁶ Significantly, however, family history is invoked for a particular reason: a family feud surrounding property in Lynn ‘sinfully sold contrary to the truth’ by Lawney’s mother-in-law.¹⁷ The command to future heirs, who ‘shall recover it’, highlights property as the primary incentive

⁹ ‘Will of John Smith of Coventry, gentleman’, translated by Christian Liddy, The National Archives PROB 11/13/88, p. 3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Testament of Harry Oldeman, translated by Christian Liddy, Norfolk Record Office, NCR Will Register Wilkins fos. 114r-115v., p. 2.

¹² C. King, ‘Private lives and public power: Norwich merchants’ houses between the 14th and 16th centuries’, in T.A. Heslop and H.E. Lunnion (eds.), *Norwich: Medieval and Early Modern Art, Architecture and Archaeology* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2015), pp. 341-58.

¹³ Will of Henry Flemming, translated by Christian Liddy, Queen’s College Oxford, DY 1087.

¹⁴ J. Kermode, ‘Sentiment and survival: family and friends in late medieval English towns’, *Journal of Family History*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1999), p. 6.

¹⁵ G. Ciappelli, *Memory, Family and Self: Tuscan Family Books and Other European Egodocuments (14th-18th century)* (Boston: Brill, 2014), p. 5.

¹⁶ *Liber Lynne*, translated by Christian Liddy, London Metropolitan Archives COL/CS/01/015, p. 1.

¹⁷ Ibid.

for the writing of the document.¹⁸ Indeed, the book contains primarily documents evidencing the family's property rights, in contrast with the inclusion of marriage alliances in the Da Lutiano Genealogy, for example – the Codicil to Philip Wyth's testament suggests that in times of crisis, concern was for individuals considered family (and the transference of property to them), rather than the lineage. 'Each of the aforesaid tenements' is left to John de Warmegeye, previously Wyth's servant.¹⁹ Though John later adopts the Wyth family name, identifying as 'John de Wermegrye called Wyth', inheritance was not conditional upon this but rather their personal relationship – indeed, in doing so, John failed to preserve the Wermegrye lineage, highlighting the importance of individual experience.²⁰ Thus, though English families were aware of their recent history, which could in turn preserve familial interests, it was not inherent but required specific invocation.

While commemorative practice could preserve family identities, contemporaries sought remembrance primarily for spiritual aid. As Paul Binski argues, 'what defined a person was that person's history in the continuum of his own society'; the predominance of the Church in individuals' lives highlights its significance in shaping their worldviews.²¹ Though J.D. Alsop suggests religious preambles to testaments were simply

'relatively conventional formulae', concerns surrounding the redemptive process were shaped by the doctrine of Purgatory.²² John Smith of Coventry bequeathed 20s to six religious institutions 'with the purpose to pray for me...my soul and for my wives' souls', thus directly indicating concern for the souls' transition through Purgatory after death.²³ Roger Blickling demonstrates a similar breadth of bequests, reflecting a concern to guarantee intercessory prayer through the establishment of chantries.²⁴ Notably, though Kermode argues 'this form of collective remembrance also satisfied a wider social purpose' representing 'familial responsibilities', it is significant that both John and Roger took action for only their immediate family's souls.²⁵ Roger remembers his wife, his brother and his brother's wife, supporting Herlihy's characterization of the family by 'particular...emotive ties'; the lineage, and thus family history, is not represented.²⁶ The individualised focus is evident further in the choice of bequests by how efficacious they were perceived to be: Robert bequeathed money to servants 'to pray for my soul', while John requested 2,000 'poor people' be given 1d, reflecting the belief that the prayers and intercession of the poor were blessed as Christ and the Apostles lived in poverty.²⁷ Blickling similarly left 'to every leper at the gates of the city of Norwich, 2d', reflecting Canon 23 of

¹⁸ Liber Lynne, translated by Christian Liddy, London Metropolitan Archives COL/CS/01/015, p. 2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ P. Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 22.

²² J.D. Alsop, 'Religious Preambles in Early Modern English Wills as Formulae', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1989), p. 20.

²³ Will of John Smith of Coventry, gentleman, translated by Christian Liddy, The National Archives PROB 11/13/88, p. 1.

²⁴ Will of Roger Blickling, translated by Christian Liddy, NRO, NCC Will Register Aleyn 169, fos. 130v-132v.

²⁵ Kermode, 'Sentiment and Survival', p. 13.

²⁶ Herlihy, 'The Making of the Medieval Family', p. 117.

²⁷ Will of Roger Blickling, translated by Christian Liddy, NRO, NCC Will Register Aleyn 169, fos. 130v-132v; Will of John Smith of Coventry, gentleman, translated by Christian Liddy, The National Archives PROB 11/13/88.

Lateran IIV's advocacy of provision for lepers, presenting commemoration as primarily individualistic: wills demonstrate concern for the individual and their descendants, but do not look to the past.²⁸

Indeed, while David Crouch argues that heraldry demonstrates 'clear consciousness' of the family group beyond written evidence, which 'shows a strong consciousness of family links [only] between parents and children', the variability with which they were applied by urban elites challenges their role as a preservative store of family memory.²⁹ Caroline Barron identifies that urban elites did not emulate aristocratic life: they were 'not ignorant of chivalry', but simply chose not to enact this through tournaments and heraldic arms.³⁰ Supporting this, of 54 seals used by fourteenth-century Londoners over half were armorial seals, invoking London's civic culture, whereas only 6% used merchants marks, a personal identification.³¹ Where arms were inherited, this was typical of an aristocratic background. Richard Whittington, for instance, displayed the arms of the Whittingtons of Pauntly – yet even this display did not necessitate family memory.³² Whittington's actions demonstrate an interest in accumulating position, rather than property, dying without property outside of London despite family property in Gloucester, in turn suggesting Whittington did not perceive

himself as head of a lineage, wherein 'stewardship' creates an obligation to preserve property for future generations – instead, Whittington was present-focused. Indeed, though the tombs of London aristocrats William Viscount Beaumont, Richard Beauchamp Lord St. Amand and Sir Stephen Jenyns incorporate coats of arms, each feature at least eight contrasting designs, challenging the notion of a single cohesive lineage in favour of identification with a broader kinship group.³³ That urban elites did not view heraldry as a codified genealogy is supported by John Smith's request for a 'tomb of marble...with similar sculpture and imagery in every respect [to that of William Maryner and his wife]'.³⁴ Christian Steer's analysis of the Grey Friars burial lists suggests the Maryner tomb was a 'tumbra elevata', like those of the aforementioned aristocrats; that the use of 'similar imagery' is specified suggests arms would not typically be incorporated, or perhaps a direct emulation of the Maryner's arms – supporting Barron's thesis that 'most Londoners who wanted a heraldic device...simply assumed a coat of arms which they designed themselves'.³⁵ Thus heraldic arms do not appear to encode genealogy but rather served as a status symbol: as Michael Clanchy demonstrates, they formed 'an alternative language of signs' understandable by the illiterate.³⁶

Consequently, a lack of commemoration was not inherently

²⁸ Will of Roger Blickling, translated by Christian Liddy, NRO, NCC Will Register Aleyn 169, fos. 130v-132v.

²⁹ D. Crouch, 'The historian, lineage and heraldry 1050-1250', in P.R. Coss and M. Keen (eds.), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell Press, 2002), p. 18.

³⁰ C. Barron, 'Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture in Medieval London', in P.R. Coss and M. Keen (eds.), *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell Press, 2002), p. 225.

³¹ R.H. Ellis, *Catalogue of Seals in the Public Record Office: Personal Seals* (London: H.M Stationery Office, 1978-1981).

³² Barron, 'Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture', p. 231.

³³ C. Steer, 'Burial and Commemoration in the London Friaries' in N. Holder (ed.), *The Friaries of Medieval London: from Foundation to Dissolution* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), pp. 272-292.

³⁴ Will of John Smith of Coventry, gentleman', translated by Christian Liddy, The National Archives PROB 11/13/88.

³⁵ Steer, 'Burial and Commemoration', p. 277; Barron, 'Chivalry, Pageantry and Merchant Culture', p. 233.

³⁶ M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record* (Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1979), p. 230.

detrimental to a family's survival: separate conceptions of 'family' and 'lineage' emphasise the importance of individual actions. Though David Herlihy contends that Lateran IV's reduction in the forbidden degrees of consanguinity led to an increased identification with lineage from the thirteenth century, for the deliberate forgetting of ancestors was no longer advantageous, preservation of the family did not always mean preservation of the lineage.³⁷ While Nigel Saul argues the typicality of elaborate funeral brasses in the Cobham family '[bore] vivid witness to the family's dynastic crisis', this was a crisis of patrilineage, not family, obscured in the assumption that urban elites identified dynastically.³⁸ Saul convincingly situates John 3rd Lord Cobham's patronage in light of his status as the last of his family's male line, and thus concern that 'the memory of the Cobham's lived on', but Cobham's protective attitude towards his granddaughter Joan demonstrates the undisturbed survival of 'family'.³⁹ That Joan's identity as family heir was able to be enacted through her brass demonstrates the utility of memorialisation in legitimating family identities: Joan's brass sits centrally, highlighting her status as matriarch, with visual links to both the past and future – significantly, dynastic disruption is concealed. Thus, the lineage could be reinvented so long as the kinship group survived: heirs (and their use of strategies)

were key to the preservation of family, not memory. Significantly, a lack of commemoration did not prevent familial survival. Though Walter Flemming requests to be buried in 'a certain place long provided for me and mine', likely a burial crypt, five generations later Henry Flemming, though still identifying as a 'burgess of the town of Southampton', requested to be buried in 'the church of St Peter of Rollerstone' in Wiltshire: individual experience was thus broader and typically superseded familial associations.⁴⁰ Supporting the variability of lineage, Christ's ancestry was also identified through both male and female lines, reflecting but also shaping contemporary norms.⁴¹ Indeed, the subsequent shift from depictions of the extended Holy Family to a limited, 'nuclear' family oriented around Mary, Joseph and Jesus highlights the separation between 'family' and 'lineage'.⁴² 'Family' and 'lineage' were thus perceived and preserved separately.

Notably, communal memory was often more impactful for individuals than memory of the family. The display of 'A Table of Kindred and Affinity' in Little Cawthorpe Church presents a visual representation of who contemporaries could not marry, suggesting laypeople did not conceive of 'family' generationally, an assertion supported by burial and marriage practice.⁴³ Though Robert Dinn suggests

³⁷ D. Herlihy and C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Castasto of 1427* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 345-347.

³⁸ N. Saul, *Death, Art and Memory in Medieval England: the Cobham Family and their Monuments, 1300-1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 240.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁴⁰ Will of Walter le Flemming, translated by Christian Liddy, Queen's College Oxford, DY 1071; Will of Henry Flemming, translated by Christian Liddy, Queen's College Oxford, DY 1087.

⁴¹ P. Sheingorn, 'Appropriating the Holy Kinship: Gender and Family History' in K. Ashley and P. Sheingorn (eds.), *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society* (London: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 169-199.

⁴² T. Brandenbarg, 'St. Anne and Her Family: the Veneration of St. Anne in Connection with Concepts of Marriage and the Family in the Early Modern Period', in L. Dresen-Coenders (ed.), *Saints and She-Devils: Images of Women in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (London: Rubicon, 1987), p. 124.

⁴³ 'A Table of Kindred and Affinity', from Little Cawthorpe Church in Lincolnshire.

testators' specific instructions about their burial contradicts John Bossy's conception of cemeteries as 'anonymous and collective' places, it is notable that testaments survive from the 'middling' classes and up: poorer individuals, illiterate and without property lacked the ability to do so.⁴⁴ Indeed, excavations at St Mark's church in Lincoln reveal only seven stone grave markers, the scarcity of which suggests their exceptional nature.⁴⁵ Similarly, excavations at Wharram reveal burials stacked five times, thereby preventing graves from acting to preserve family memory.⁴⁶ Rather, memory of the community dominated individuals' lives: the use of the Banns of Marriage to legitimate an individuals' lineage highlights family memory as inherently social, and indeed memories of marriage were considered proof within the London Consistory Court. The case of William Hawkyns c. Margaret Heed consistently invokes parochial associations as a form of legitimation, beginning testimonies with reference to how long they have lived in the parish, while the fourth and fifth articles discuss the reception of the marriage as evidence for its validity.⁴⁷ Margaret Heed notes: 'to the fourth article...William and Margaret are reputed as man and wife in the parish'.⁴⁸ Thus, for laypeople, families were remembered socially: while, as

Bronach Kane argues, the celebration of marriage '[embedded] unions in the social memory of the area', the absence of property and burial markers left individuals without access to a lineal store of family memory.⁴⁹

That urban families conceptualised 'family' in terms of 'lineage' when seeking guild membership and citizenship (both institutions 'preserving' individual interests) presents memory as a tool utilised by individuals. Both institutions characteristically include an oath of loyalty taken by members, highlighting the importance of trust and thus civic honour – significantly, family was the primary means through which to establish this. Though Cohn Jr. juxtaposes familial and communal ties, the York Freemen Register demonstrates similarities between English and Barcelonese custom, where Carolina Obradors-Suazo highlights public faith as 'a network which created and ensured [individuals'] reputation as citizens'.⁵⁰ Although family, 'per patres', typically legitimates citizenship, patrilineal descent is not the only requirement. William Gorge was 'sworn into the liberty because his father was recorded in the liberty', an atypical justification explained by William's record as 'son of John Gorge of *Leicester*', suggesting his father was an

⁴⁴ R. Dinn, 'Monuments Answerable to Men's Worth: Burial Patterns, Social Status, and Gender in Late Medieval Bury St. Edmunds', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (1995), pp. 237-255.; J. Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1985), p. 33.

⁴⁵ B. J. S. Gilmour and D. A. Stocker, *The archaeology of Lincoln. Vol. XIII-1, St Mark's church and cemetery* (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1986), p. 77.

⁴⁶ J. Hurst, P. A. Rahtz, R. D. Bell and M. W. Beresford, *Wharram, a study of settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds. Vol. 3, Wharram Percy: the Church of St. Martin* (London: Society for Medieval Archaeology, 1987), p. 84.

⁴⁷ A Marriage Dispute from the London Consistory Court, translated by Shannon McSheffrey, London Metropolitan Archives, MS DL/C/A/001/MS0965B, fos. 11v-12v, 13r-15r.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ B.C. Kane, *Popular Memory and Gender in Medieval England: Men, Women and Testimony in the Church Courts, c. 1200-1500* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2019), p. 141.

⁵⁰ Cohn Jr., 'Two Pictures of Family Ideology', p. 178.; C. Obradors-Suazo, 'Making the Citizen, Building the Citizenry. Family and Citizenship in Fifteenth-Century Barcelona' in A. Van Steensel and J. Colson (eds.), *Cities and Solidarities: Urban Communities in Pre-Modern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 27.

immigrant to York.⁵¹ That John de Santon, a member of the drapers guild and thus citizen, 'stood as security' suggests that it is the community's memory of the family that is preservative, rather than simply 'family memory': throughout the Register, the provision of additional information consistently relates to community ties.⁵² Cases of exclusion highlight the value of community, with Thomas Burton's '[disobedience] to Richard York, mayor' superseding descent, and William Lede is excluded 'because he admitted that he was not born in the city of York', reflecting perceptions of belonging.⁵³ Similarly, William Lord Darcy's admission 'by the grace of the mayor' highlights legitimation beyond the family; that contemporaries used this strategically is evident in Harry Olderman's disowning of his son in order to preserve the family name.⁵⁴ Therefore lineage was invoked strategically, presenting individual action as the key to the preservation of the family.

To conclude, while memory could facilitate the preservation of the family, it was not the 'key' to family survival: 'lineage' was dependent on memory, but this was not inherently the 'family'. Instead, individuals' actions were inherently shaped by their experience, with inheritances determined primarily by emotive connections and legitimated by experience. Though lineage was certainly important to some families, and indeed utilised strategically, to argue this was the key to the preservation of the family assumes contemporaries thought dynastically – directly challenged by testamentary evidence, by nature a reflection of individual strategies and values. Strategies could invoke family

memory, but did not depend on this. Thus, the memory of the family was not the key to its preservation.

⁵¹ F. Collins (ed.), *Register of the Freemen of the City of York, Vol. 1* (Surtees Society 96, 1896), p. 13.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 152 and p 155.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

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‘INVISIBLE WARRIORS’: FEMALE DOMESTIC SERVANTS’ STRUGGLE FOR AGENCY IN PRIVATE LIFE THROUGH LAW IN EARLY MODERN LONDON

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ABSTRACT: This essay explores the lives of female domestic servants in eighteenth-century London following the city's economic and demographic boom. It hopes to challenge the historical perception of maids as docile, propertyless women who had little control over their lives. Instead, it uses ecclesiastical and criminal court cases to reconstruct their struggles in the dangerous domesticity. Basing its argument on the public nature of metropolitan households, the essay examines how female servants manipulated legal concepts and social networks to protect their lives and career prospects against sexual abuses, unlawful pregnancies and charges of infanticide.

FOLLOWING A HEAVIER participation in colonial expansion, international trade and industrial advancement in the seventeenth century, London underwent unprecedented economic and demographic boom. Domestic service thus became a robust market economy of high demand in which laborers marketed their skills and reputations for an annual wage contract unavailable for them in other menial works. However, while the rising bourgeois class of craftsmen, artisans and petty business owners employed the majority of domestic servants in London by the end of the eighteenth century, these new elites did not leave many records of their servants. Limited ones tended to focus on male servants. As a result, knowing comparatively little about the maids, some historians perceive domestic service as a pre-marital phase for docile, illiterate, propertyless women who had little control over their lives. This paper intends to challenge the common belief in female servants' vulnerability by reconstructing their struggles for agency in the hazardous domesticity using ecclesiastical and criminal court cases from the eighteenth century. It will derive its argument from the public nature of metropolitan households in London which rendered domestics' physical wellbeing and economic stability highly dependent upon interpersonal interactions. It will then explore how domestic intimacy simultaneously empowered and oppressed women as they sought to endorse and refute the patriarchal hierarchy and various feminine virtues in legal proceedings. On the one hand, knowledges about private affairs enabled the lower class to determine the fate of their

superiors in court. On the other hand, despite remaining sexually susceptible to abuses and pregnancies, female servants were able to secure their lives and career prospects by manipulating legal concepts and social networks to fabricate a virtuous appearance.

The historiography of domestic service is not large due to scarce resources about the laboring population, especially the maids. After all, they usually "existed in the shadow of another more important person."¹ Limited historiographies, however, broadly portray female servants as young, single, and financially depleted. They entered domestic service in order to cover personal maintenance until marriage, hence, had to risk their chastity, well-being and reputation. To explicate, since the pre-industrial era and continuing into the eighteenth century, the British society had always expected women to marry and contribute to the family economy at least sufficient to cover their own living expenses. In other words, female wages served as a negligible addition to the overall household income and thus remained low even in industries requiring considerable skills. Under such harsh economic environment, most women sought subsistence by "marrying and sharing in their husbands' work."² In the meantime, domestic service became the most ideal employment for unmarried women precisely because it offered a year-long contract, food and lodging unavailable for them in many other works. Despite enjoying some relative benefits, young women frequently faced predatory advances "of their masters, their masters' sons, or their male fellow servants and others."³ According to Bridget Hill, their

¹ David A. Kent, 'Ubiquitous but Invisible: Female Domestic Servants in Mid-Eighteenth Century London', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 28, No.1 (Autumn, 1989), p. 111.

² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

³ Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 55.

sexual vulnerability resulted from their accessible living quarters, their visible day-to-day work routines and what's more, the physical distance between them and their families and relations who would have otherwise provided timely help and support.⁴

These scholarships are accurate, but inadequate. By scrutinizing and only scrutinizing domestic servants' susceptibility to the dangerous domesticity, they assume their complete, immediate submission to exploitations, as if most of them quietly endured injustices until being salvaged by some husbands. Instead, this paper hopes to delve deeper into their work lives with an emphasis on both their sufferings and more importantly, their struggles against a lack of privacy and protection. Despite threats of sexual abuses, unlawful pregnancies and charges of infanticide, these young women manipulated knowledge of private affairs and legal concepts to secure their lives and career. They may be invisible in history, but they were warriors in life.

Ironically, a sharper distinction between the private and public sphere towards the second half of the eighteenth century did not make metropolitan households more private. To be more precise, the burgeoning capitalist production destroyed the traditional family economy and created a more gendered labor division—housework became exclusively women's responsibility, and for those from the upper-middle class, the management of servants. The notion of households thereby distanced itself from the chaotic, masculine public life and started to mean "a group of individuals in a

discrete domestic location."⁵ In spite of its expected seclusion, private life was highly visible and information was highly transmissible. In fact, cramped urban housing in London fostered ample interactions both between and within different classes and genders. Ever since the seventeenth century, terrace houses with uniform fronts facing the street dominated London's landscape and housed most of its population, whether rich or poor. Terrace houses, however, were not private. Regardless of its size, the general floor plan had to cater to its narrow outline—each floor was thereby divided into smaller units along the hallway with a staircase on one side. That means not only did servants rest and work in proximity to each other, their space was often wedged into that of their employers.

The floorplan for a three-story town house in Charles Street illustrated a close integration of servants' working and living areas—the servant hall located right across from the larder and scullery; the housekeeper dwelled next door to the wine cellar and the plate room. What's more, while all butlers shared one three hundred square feet bedroom, there was no specific bedroom for the maids other than a sitting room.⁶ Hence, maids likely slept in the cloak right next to the morning room on the ground floor, where the master family would spend time together during the day. Another middle class one-story flat, N9 Russell Mansions, enjoyed less space for residential segregation and further exemplified sensible class interactions. That four bedrooms enclosed the kitchen and a large hall stood in between the drawing room and the kitchen indicated

⁴ Hill, *Servants*, pp. 55-58.

⁵ Timothy Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender: 1660-1750: Life and work in the London household* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. 71.

⁶ Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House: Or, How to Plan English Residences, from the Parsonage to the Palace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

masters' endeavor to evade the foul smell of cooking though they had to endure it during some time of the day. In addition, the 11'*7' bedroom might be for servants, for a service lift was attached to its back door.⁷ Therefore, in early modern London, even the lowliest servants resided next to their employers.

Among all domestics, women developed greater intimacy with their mistresses. Mary Gough was indicted for infanticide in 1719. During trial, her master's daughter deposed that "she lay with [Gough], and when she waked in the Morning (before six) the Prisoner complained that she was very ill of the Chollick, and said she had endeavour'd wake her several times in the Night, but could not."⁸ That Gough slept in the same bed as her young mistress illuminated the lack of privacy to domestic living for both servants and their superiors. To conclude, the absence of clear residential and work boundaries in London's metropolitan households promoted frequent daily contacts. Private affairs became public. Witnessing incidents, overhearing discussions, and exchanging gossips within the unit and among the neighborhood became common experiences for female domestics.

For female servants, learning about their employers' lives was not just recreational. It was central to their agency. In fact, their knowledge of private affairs allowed them to determine the fate of the higher class in court, thereby, undermining the rigid class hierarchy and violating the traditional demand for revering one's social superiors. In *Allen v Allen* of 1705, Willian

Allen accused Elizabeth Allen, alias Marson, of falsely claiming that she was legally married to him. All four witnesses were female domestics who either served Mr. Jeremiah Audrey, the man to whom Willian Allen was apprenticed or worked in the surrounding area. Deborah Selman, a cookmaid for Mr. Audrey claimed that "Allen usually went with or waited on Mr Audrey to church both mornings and evenings on Sundays during all the time the deponent lived at Audrey's as follows, and usually came home with Mr Audrey after church time."⁹ As a cookmaid who supposed to spend much of her time in the kitchen on culinary tasks, Selman demonstrated surprising familiarity with Audrey and Allen's daily routines as specific as their Sunday church trips. Hence, she either clandestinely observed their behaviors or acquired the information from the coachman or the footman through conversations. In regard to the matter at dispute—Allen's marital condition, Selman recalled that "William Allen frequented and was often at the house of Mr Joseph Clarson, a grocer...and several times saw William Allen in the company of Mrs Mary Clarson, daughter of Joseph, and saw William Allen and Mary Clarson very free and familiar with one another."¹⁰ By revealing Allen's romantic pursuit, the object of his pursuit and what's more, his intimacy with Mary Clarson at a time when a single woman's behaviors underwent strict social scrutinization, Selman not just contributed to a legal decision over Allen's marriage, but may have indirectly influenced the prospect of the daughter of a petite bourgeoisie. As a menial servant, she

⁷ G.A. Middleton, *Floorplan for N9 Russell Mansions*, 1921, in G. Middleton, *Modern Buildings, Their Planning, Construction And Equipment* (London: The Caxton Publishing Company, 1921)

⁸ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 27 November 2022), September 1719, trial of Mary Gough (t17190903-32)

⁹ 'London Court of Arches Records, 1690-1706' in Paula Humfrey, *The Experience of Domestic Service for Women in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Routledge, 2016), p. 104.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

held power over two privileged social members.

In addition to providing factual evidence, these female witnesses disregarded hierarchical deference as they expressed their personal opinions about their superiors' relationships and characters. Jane Wright, a servant in a house next door, "believed that William Allen courted Mrs. Clarson in the way of marriage."¹¹ Wright not only recounted Allen's interest in Clarson, but also defined the nature and the objective of such interest—that it was for marriage. In the meantime, Frances Everard, another servant of Mr. Audrey, described Allen as "very careful and diligent in Audrey's business" and "a person of a sober and virtuous life and conversation."¹² Her remark contradicted the contemporary legal tendency which tended to take into consideration masters' comments about their servants when making the final verdict. Even though it was positive, Everard's judgment of Allen still constituted an implicit violation of class respect. In short, female servants' agency emerged out of their daily labor in the household and in their interactions with the wider community. These proletariats subsequently exercised and even maximized this agency by sharing private details in court, thus, directly or indirectly affecting the lives of some bourgeoisies.

However, servants' apparent domination over their masters in court did not completely trample the patriarchal system. Maids continued to remain extremely susceptible to abuses and

pregnancies, both of which could have cost their lives and prospects. In fact, domestic intimacy threatened the most salient indexes of a woman's worth in early modern London—chastity and motherhood. Eliza Haywood's *A Present for a Servant Maid* in which she provided servants with guidelines on how to navigate the domesticity reflected ubiquitous sexual violence and very limited female autonomy. After urging chastity in general terms, "sin is of yielding to any unlawful Sollicitations," Haywood suggested strategies of self-defense against different types of men with different preying habits in a single household.¹³ For single masters "under less Restraint," servants "must humbly, and in the most modest Terms you can, remonstrate to him the Sin and Shame he would involve you in."¹⁴ When facing a married one who may "endeavor to clear himself by throwing the Odium on you," one ought to "keep as much as possible out of his Way" and "remonstrate the wrong he would do to his Wife" without letting the "Mistress know the Motive of it."¹⁵ If young masters offered "a Settlement for Life..., even a Promise of marrying you as soon as he shall be at his own Disposal," one should be aware that "examples of this kind are very rare, and as seldom happy."¹⁶ Last but not least, if gentlemen lodgers "came home in Liquor and rudely made offers", one should acquaint the mistress with it, "who, if a Woman of Reputation," would not permit "any Indecency in her House."¹⁷

By explicating the dangerous domestic sphere, *A Present for a Servant*

¹¹ 'London Court of Arches Records', p. 106.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹³ Eliza Haywood, *A PRESENT FOR A Servant-Maid OR, THE Sure Means of Gaining Love and Esteem* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1743), p. 44.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Maid highlighted young maid's lack of agency within an intimately patriarchal environment. On the one hand, Haywood advocated for female passivity—she advised her readers to use mere words to deter predatory masters or to rely on the circumstantial good will of their mistresses. If nothing was effectual, they should “go directly out of his House.”¹⁸ That is to say, female servants could not in practice and should not in concept openly defy their male authorities, unless at the expense of economic stability. Even doing so failed to inflict any harm upon the perpetrators, but only deepened the anguish of the victims. On the other hand, Haywood urged her readers not to disclose their masters' sexual attempts to their mistresses, for such a discovery would “give her an infinite Uneasiness,” and “turn the Inclination your Master had for you into the extremist Hatred.”¹⁹ She hence denied intimacy between the mistresses and the maids out of hierarchical deference—that the lower class should not bother the upper class—, as well as women's powerlessness regardless of their social status—that the mistress likely was unable to redress her husband's wrongful behaviors. In short, this handbook appeared to equip young women with strategies of self-defense, but barely shielded them from all kinds of domestic threats as a result of residential proximity.

The forfeiture of chaste femininity, when evidenced by pregnancies and bastard children, would incur rightful persecutions. Yet to avoid these persecutions, female servants risked violating the legal demand for loving maternity. To explicate, while

annual contraction made domestic service an economically secure occupation, there were certain grounds to discharge a servant without notice nor payment. Gross moral misconducts such as “theft from his master, embezzlement, pregnancy of a maid-servant, being the father of a bastard child,” all represented solid reasons for immediate dismissal.²⁰ What's more, if a female servant was dismissed due to sexual immorality, she could not easily find employment in another household, because contemporary norm expected masters to “honestly discharge their duty in speaking of the characters of those who have quitted their service, and acquainting those with the truth who are about to take them into their homes and service.”²¹ It was nevertheless impossible for such maid to defend herself against arbitrary or incomprehensive accusations, because “though the statement should be untrue in fact, the master will be held justified by the occasion in making that statement, unless it can be shown to have proceeded from malicious mind.”²² After all, how could a menial woman prove that her master had malicious mind? Therefore, in order to retain their prospects as wage earners, many female servants endeavored to uphold an appearance of virtue after suffering sexual wrongs by hiding their pregnancies and resorting to infanticide. In doing so, they defied the legal requirement of maternal provision for one's children. The Infanticide Act of 1624 established that if a woman delivered a bastard child and secretly concealed its death “whether it were born alive or not,” and “if the Child be found dead,” she shall suffer death.²³ This

¹⁸ Haywood, *A PRESENT FOR A Servant-Maid*, p. 48.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁰ William Eversley, *The Law of the Domestic Relations: Including Husband and Wife: Parent and Child: Guardian and Ward: Infants: And Master and Servant* (London: Steven and Haynes, 1896), p. 838.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 852.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ ‘Appendix 1. the 1624 Infanticide Act’ in Josephine Billingham *Infanticide in Tudor and Stuart England* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), p. 327.

legislation illuminated and aggravated domestic servants' lack of agency in the following ways. First, by equating the concealment of death with deliberate murder, it presumed guilt. Second, this act punished the murder of bastard children, meaning that if a married woman concealed the death of her legitimate child, she was presumed innocent. In other words, the severity of sentence in the case of infanticide relied on the mother's marital status and the legitimacy of her children. Thereby, victims of rapes and accidental pregnancies were convicted of their sexual vulnerability, whether or not they actually killed their babies. To conclude, being unable to resist violence and seduction, female domestics risked their economic stability if accusing their superior perpetrators or disclosing pregnancies. However, to eliminate the proof of their moral lapse—to commit infanticide, they risked their lives. Whether socially or legally, female servants had little control over their bodies, their jobs and their future. They faced a lose-lose situation.

Despite ubiquitous sexual threats, female servants fought to fabricate a pretense of virtue as means of protecting their lives and careers. In fact, criminal court records of rape and infanticide in the eighteenth century demonstrated the ways in which maids secured some level of agency using legal concepts and domestic connections. For most rape cases with a guilty verdict, the female victim would appear as a fierce defender of chastity by revealing the details of her struggle, the brutality of the perpetration, and the circulation of her misfortune in the community. For example, in a case in 1776,

Richard Arnold was convicted of feloniously raping his servant, Elizabeth Russ. Upon interrogation, Russ recalled that "I struggled with him from one bed-post to the other; I told him I would die or lose my life before I would yield to him, and I would cry out again; I struggled as long as I had any strength in me."²⁴ When the judge asked whether she felt his private part inside hers, Russ seemed to show little unease at this intrusive question, but perceived it as an opportunity to accentuate her relentless resistance at the expense of severe physical afflictions, "Yes; and something came from him...he hurt me very much; I shrieked out, and said, I was almost dead."²⁵ She subsequently shared this incident with servants in the same household, her neighbors and her mistress, "the other lodgers came into the room; seeing me crying, Mrs. Bolton (her neighbor) wanted to know what was the matter...I told her my master had ruined me, and desired she would go for my mistress...my mistress...had brought a woman with her, to hear."²⁶ Russ also reported this atrocity to a magistrate "as soon as I had my senses."²⁷ By stressing the immediacy of her response and the wide spread of the news of the crime, Russ turned prying eyes and gossips in an intimate setting to her advantage. She further exploited the legal appreciation of feminine chastity to defend her character at a time when she had already suffered irrevocable bodily and reputational injuries.

In the meantime, another case in which Elizabeth Morris only conveyed her master's abuse of her body to her mistress did not produce a verdict of guilty. Instead, her master, Richard Newall, brought

²⁴ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 13 November 2022), October 1776, trial of Richard Arnold (t17761016-17).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

several persons to “prove there was no Noise; but they could not tell whether they were asleep or no at that Time.”²⁸ Some even gave evidence to “make it appear a Malicious Prosecution, occasion'd by the Prisoner's Wife.”²⁹ In other words, despite of these clearly ambiguous testimonies on Newall's behalf, even the more privileged mistress had to endure unduly accusations if she failed to curry favor with her surrounding, let alone a lowly servant.

In the meantime, for most infanticide cases with an unguilty verdict, female servants also constructed moral appearances to save their lives and careers. To appeal for acquittal, they advertised their maternal affection and “[made] proof...that the Child (whose Death was by her so intended to be concealed) was born dead.”³⁰ In fulfilling both objectives, they needed witnesses. Sarah Lucas' infanticide trial exemplified the ways in which maids, though falling victim to domestic intimacy, were able to use legal knowledge and favorable connections to create a narrative of sexual virtue to explain their “crimes”. After Mary Row found a child in the vault, her husband Joseph Row, reminded by “a Man who used his House,” recalled Sarah Lucas going to the house on the Sunday morning “under pretence of bringing home a Candle she had borrow'd.”³¹ Upon her return, he perceived her “to have a Gown,” and when he asked her about it, she “to'd him she had been to a Sister in Covent Garden for it to do her Work in.”³² He thus

concluded that Lucas put the child in the vault. The discovery of Lucas' relationship with the dead baby by three non-professionals through conversations and arbitrary encounters illuminated her lack of privacy in a close-knit neighborhood.

During the trial, Lucas framed her pregnancy as being deluded by a servant from another place who promised her marriage, and “had put her off from time to time.”³³ She thereby presented herself as a moral woman in search for sacred marriage and shifted the blame for producing a bastard child to the licentious male seducer. What's more, she brought to court a considerable number of witnesses who testified on her behalf according to different requirements for defeating an infanticide charge. One witness deposed that “three Days before this Accident the [prisoner] had spoken to her to procure her a Lodging, telling her she was with Child.”³⁴ Another proved that “two Women who went to [Lucas'] Mistress's found Childbed-Linnen, in the presence of her Mistress and others.”³⁵ Three others recalled Lucas “ask[ing] them to help her to Childbed Linnen some time before.”³⁶ Last but not least, “her Mistress did remember some Tokens of her having had a Fall.”³⁷ Based on these statements, Lucas was able to show that she never intended to hide her pregnancy and had adequately prepared for the birth of her child. She even provided a legitimate reason for its death other than murder. Lucas also brought in witnesses

²⁸ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 27 November 2022), April 1716, trial of Richard Newall (t17160411-42).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ ‘1624 Infanticide Act’ in Billingham, *Infanticide*, p. 327.

³¹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 13 November 2022), July 1718, trial of Sarah Lucas (t17180709-17).

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

who “confirm'd the distance of her Lodging from that of her Master and Mistress” to clarify why she did not notify others nor ask for help during labor.³⁸ Though it remained unknown to the modern audience if Lucas actually committed infanticide or not, by endorsing the traditional values of marriage and motherhood in court, she avoided a capital conviction and continued pursuing her career with a relatively good reputation. In short, Lucas’ acute legal understanding allowed her to most effectively utilize her social connections.

On the other hand, female servants who did not maximize communal support in spite of their legal knowledge often failed to escape death. For instance, servant Christian Russel was found guilty of murdering her male infant bastard in 1702. The difference in sentence between Russel and Lucas might have resulted from the different extent of local resources they exploited. Compared with five witnesses who affirmed Lucas’ attempt to provide for her child, Russel only called in one witness “to prove that she had provided Things for a Lying-in, which she sent to her Sister.”³⁹ While both had a fall before labor and both claimed to never feel their children to stir afterwards, Lucas shared this incident with her mistress, yet Russel “could not prove that ever she had made any one acquainted with her Condition.”⁴⁰ Consequently, Russel was convicted even though she defended her character upon similar grounds. Moreover, that the judge dismissed the midwife’s suggestion of an accidental death, “she found no Marks

about [the child], only that the Arm was broke,” implied that in early modern London, witnesses and gossips occasioned by contingent interpersonal interactions even outweighed forensic evidence.⁴¹

However, the selective manipulation of one’s social network after the discovery of the corpse did not guarantee acquittal, for legal examination sometimes reached beyond favorable witnesses. In fact, verdicts of infanticide relied on female servants’ habitual exchange of favors with the entire community, whose perception of their virtues lied outside of their control. To explicate, record of Sarah Clayton’s infanticide case did not include her personal account of the incident, but consisted of the attestations of the discoverer of the crime scene, the direct witness of her concealment of the body and her masters. Since these people were summoned to court by the judge, not by Clayton, their opinions of her should remain relatively ambiguous before the trial. Yet all of them unanimously affirmed her good character— “[her character is] a very good one;” “she behaved like a good servant;” “she was a very sober, civil, modest girl.”⁴² Clayton was subsequently acquitted. On the other hand, Ann Hullock, who suffered capital sentence for infanticide, received harsh criticism from her mistress, “there was some grease upon the floor, I desir'd her to get it up; she down on her knees, and as she stoop'd, I said you are a good servant, but I fear you are spoil'd.”⁴³ It was nevertheless hard to gauge the exact effect of these

³⁸ *Old Bailey Proceedings*, July 1718, Sarah Lucas (t17180709-17).

³⁹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 13 November 2022), January 1702, trial of Christian Russel (t17020114-7).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 27 November 2022), February 1760, trial of Sarah Clayton (t17600227-6).

⁴³ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 27 November 2022), May 1760, trial of Ann Hullock (t17600521-17).

testimonies on the final verdict in addition to or in lack of the indicted' own confession, positive testimonies, and other material and forensic evidence. But female servants' ability to protect their own interests in unknown legal situations was at least partially commensurate with their daily discourses and interactions with other people.

Cramped living conditions in early modern London mitigated privacy in favor of interpersonal relationships. Domestic intimacy thus became a double-edged sword. It was empowering because

knowledge about private affairs allowed lowly servants to undermine the rigid hierarchy, as they actively influenced some legal decisions about their superiors. It was also oppressing because it rendered female domestics legally vulnerable to sexual abuses and unlawful pregnancies. However, their ability to turn a lack of privacy and protection to their advantage by manipulating legal concepts and local resources in the defense of their names made them admirable warriors in a painfully patriarchal world.

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‘JUST A PRELUDE TO *A VINDICATION
OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN?*’
ASSESSING THE CONTRIBUTION OF
*A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF
MEN* TO WOLLSTONECRAFT’S
POLITICAL THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT: Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) is overshadowed by the writer’s second publication, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). The latter has rightly garnered praise for Wollstonecraft’s advocacy of greater educational equality between the sexes. Accounts which stress *Vindication* (1792) as entirely “ground-breaking”, however, fail to appreciate the contributions of *Vindication* (1790). This earlier tract set out the thematic framework which Wollstonecraft would return to in 1792 and 1794. Alongside a genuine concern for the advancement of women, Wollstonecraft’s focus on this subject in *Vindication* (1792) also had a rhetorical function. She considered the plight of women analogous to the problems in wider society, invoking their cause as an articulating concept to develop themes introduced in *Vindication* (1790). In this sense, *Vindication* (1790) was more formative than simply a prelude to *Vindication* (1792). This article builds on the work of Sylvana Tomaselli and Barbara Taylor who have both acknowledged the significance of *Vindication* (1790). It aims to draw attention to Wollstonecraft’s broader works and emphasise the value of each part to her overarching philosophical system.

DESIGNATING *A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MEN* (1790) a ‘prelude’ denies its own importance and exaggerates its difference from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). In musical terms, a prelude introduces the next piece; it is shorter in length, lacking much of the content which makes the following movement so captivating – other than limited foreshadowing (it might reveal the core motifs, for example) the two pieces are individual and distinct. In the case of the *Vindications*, only their respective sizes fit this brief. Underscored by a consistent interest in the French Revolution, they share the same motifs: they expound the superiority of the natural over the artificial; valorise ‘enlightened self-love’; criticise the corruption caused by luxury and ‘the demon of property’; and suggest the cultivation of reason through education as the solution to these ills.¹ Given such thematic congruency, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* should not be separated from Wollstonecraft’s preceding publication. Rather, it joins up the dots which Wollstonecraft had already traced connections between. Wollstonecraft’s first *Vindication* is more significant than is often assumed, therefore.² The publication propelled her career to new heights, placing her at the centre of a philosophical movement.³ The importance of *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* for Wollstonecraft’s broader corpus of work is consolidated through its influence on *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*

(1794). Rather than mutually exclusive pieces, *Vindication* (1790), *Vindication* (1792), and *An Historical and Moral View* should be taken together. Instead of a prelude followed by distinct movements, *mutatis mutandis*, their structure and relationship reflect the contemporary musical mode – a sonata. Comprising an exposition, development, and recapitulation of Wollstonecraft’s motifs, the succession of works combines to affirm the importance of her initial *Vindication*.

The thematic consistencies between the two *Vindications*, exemplified by their shared arguments, certainly suggests an introductory function of some kind to *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*. *Vindication* (1790) was spurred by aversion to the recent publication of Burke’s *Reflections* which attacked Price’s *Discourse* (1789).⁴ Considering Richard II, Wollstonecraft reasserts the people’s right to pressure the king when his positive laws produce inequality – ‘prescription can never undermine natural rights’.⁵ She then transitions into a defence of the natural over the artificial, dichotomising ‘enlightened self-love’ and unenlightened self-interest which limits society’s progress by establishing inequality – ‘among unequals there can be no society’.⁶ Exemplifying the latter, she attacks property rights which support ‘a barbarous feudal institution’ and luxury which blinds man to his human nature as ‘all his wants are instantly supplied’.⁷ Wollstonecraft explores its societal impact through women; as men tell women ‘that littleness and weakness are the

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in S. Tomaselli (ed.), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 7 and p. 34.

² For an example of this oversight, see the British Library’s summary of *Vindication* (1790) as presenting an argument which “wasn’t unique”: ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’, *British Library*.

³ Barbara Taylor, ‘Wollstonecraft, Mary’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2017).

⁴ Sylvana Tomaselli, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016).

⁵ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 23 and 43.

very essence of beauty' they promote an unenlightened self-interest and 'confine truth, fortitude, and humanity, within the rigid pale of manly morals'.⁸ The solution is to cultivate reason through education which 'must be the director of the whole host of passions'.⁹ The second *Vindication* employs the same motifs, albeit in a different sequence, as demonstrated by its introduction. Starting from the premise that 'the minds of women are enfeebled by false refinement' (implying both luxury and beauty), she criticises men's efforts to use artificial morals to suppress women, going beyond natural, physical differences.¹⁰ Once again, the solution is to cultivate 'strength of body and mind' and so too, reason.¹¹

Owing to its length, these shared arguments are more developed in *Vindication* (1792). Wollstonecraft demonstrates an increased interest in women beyond criticising Burke: she challenges Rousseau's conception of 'wild chimeras' - that women are incapable of the same education as men and should be educated on (false) virtue alone - and criticises Dr Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1761) where 'a fondness for dress he asserts is natural' to women.¹² The chapter on National Education similarly deepens Wollstonecraft's argument, combining her conviction in the necessity of reason with her fight against inequality - 'mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship'.¹³ *A Vindication of*

the Rights of Woman, therefore, both repeats and expands upon the motifs first identified in Wollstonecraft's preceding publication - notably, the attention to women is significantly enlarged. Juxtaposed to the diminutive size of *Vindication* (1790), *Vindication* (1792) certainly appears more significant. Taken on the basis of length and detail alone, the view of *Vindication* (1790) as an introductory prelude is certainly warranted.

On the basis of content, however, such a perception is easily challenged. While deepening understanding, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* does not significantly go beyond the motifs of its predecessor, challenging the former work's designation as a prelude. In the third chapter of *Vindication* (1792) Wollstonecraft declares, 'It is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason. This was Rousseau's opinion respecting men: I extend it to women'.¹⁴ From this the reader might be led to infer that her work gives a new direction to such thinking; whereas previously virtue and reason were considered in the context of man (i.e. male-dominated society), her work - it is suggested - is applied exclusively to a smaller feminine subset. As Taylor notes, such an interpretation is erroneous.¹⁵ The plight of women should be considered analogous to the challenges faced by wider society. The layout of *Vindication* (1792) confirms this view. Utilising consistent comparison between the two, the work repeatedly shifts from an overview of

⁸ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 47.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in S. Tomaselli (ed.), *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 74.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 110 and 97.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁵ Taylor, 'Wollstonecraft'.

society to a specific interest in women. Starting with ‘the civilisation of the bulk of the people of Europe... [where] rank and titles are held of the utmost importance, before which Genius “must hide its diminished head”’ (I) Wollstonecraft then details the experience of these vices particular to women (II, III, IV).¹⁶ Within chapter IX the pattern is repeated; studying the ‘pernicious effects’ of property and richness on wider society, women are again identified within this discussion as similarly ‘rendered weak and luxurious by the relaxing pleasures which wealth procures’.¹⁷ While admittedly the interest in marriage as ‘the laws respecting woman... make an absurd unit of a man and his wife’ and Wollstonecraft’s suggestion of potential careers for women if they were afforded an equal education are novel to *Vindication* (1792),¹⁸ they remain rooted in the same dichotomy of the natural against the artificial. Rather than going beyond the former work, new ideas are introduced to consolidate the existing perimeters and motifs of Wollstonecraft’s political thought. While not to deny the significance of *Vindication* (1792) for subsequent feminist thinking, the work primarily develops on its predecessor. The focus on women, although essential to Wollstonecraft’s political thought, should also be recognised as a rhetorical device which she employs to expound the motifs exposed in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*.

Indeed, *Vindication’s* (1790) importance goes beyond acting as a basis for subsequent, more detailed writings. The tract garnered significant acclaim on its

own merit and was pivotal in informing Wollstonecraft’s later work. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* was widely lauded by contemporaries as a significant contribution to current political thought. Tomaselli and Taylor both identify Wollstonecraft amongst a wider body of female writers in the eighteenth century;¹⁹ works like Macaulay’s *Letters on Education* (1790) meant that there was little to distinguish Wollstonecraft. All this changed in 1790. The publication of *Vindication* saw Wollstonecraft propelled to the centre of a new wave of political thought as she was compared to Thomas Paine amongst other prominent male counterparts.²⁰ Evidently, *Vindication* contributed more to political thought than simply setting up Wollstonecraft’s next book. If contemporaries recognised the importance of *Vindication* (1790), Wollstonecraft’s return to its core motifs in 1794 suggests she too acknowledged its significance. Wollstonecraft recapitulated many of the same ideas in her *Historical and Moral View of the Origin and progress of the French Revolution*, concluding her sonata of political thought. The 1794 text possesses the same thematic congruency, exemplified through the events of the French Revolution: the dangers of luxury are highlighted in the corruption of the *ancient régime*, creating grievous inequality; the liberating effects of reason are extolled in the contributions of Voltaire and Rousseau, who first disseminated educated ideas to the French people – ‘reason has at last shown her captivating face, beaming with benevolence’.²¹ The focus on the core motifs of *Vindication*

¹⁶ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 80.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Sylvana Tomaselli, ‘The Enlightenment Debate on Women’, *History Workshop*, Vol. 20 (1985), pp. 101-24; Taylor, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’.

²⁰ Taylor, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’.

²¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* in J.

(1790) draws the three biennial publications into a strong unison. With each tract, the significance of the ideas which Wollstonecraft first exposed in 1790 are consolidated, affirming *Vindication* (1790) as much more than a prelude.

A Vindication of the Rights of Men is more significant than a prelude to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. As close attention to the thematic congruency of Wollstonecraft's 1790, 1792, and 1794 publications confirms, each text should be understood as part of a broader and more significant corpus of works. Recognising this has clear implications on our understanding of the relationship between *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Rather than going beyond *Vindication* (1790),

Vindication (1792) reinforces it, using its greater length and its particular concern for women to deepen the reader's understanding of the same motifs. While today there exists a habit of emphasising the value of the latter *Vindication* over the former, among contemporaries, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* was at least equally well-received. Rather than separate movements, therefore, the three pieces constitute the exposition, development, and recapitulation of Wollstonecraft's philosophical sonata. By emphasising the value of one component over another, we risk failing to appreciate the totality of Wollstonecraft's composition.

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IS THE HISTORY OF THE URBAN HOUSEHOLD FUNDAMENTALLY A SOCIAL HISTORY? A DISCUSSION OF POLITICS IN THE ENGLISH MEDIEVAL TOWN

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ABSTRACT: Originating from the work of Max Weber and Henri Pirenne, historical discussion of medieval towns continues to imagine a ‘public’ realm defined by citizens, an approach emphasising the separation between ‘social’ and ‘political’ history. In contrast, this essay explores the role of the household in urban society to challenge the oft cited public/private and social/political dichotomies. Adopting Sarah Rees Jones’ definition of the household as ‘a place, a community and a set of personal and social processes’, this essay highlights the plurality with which contemporaries experienced the household: as neither a singularly social nor political entity.

MAX WEBER'S EMPHASIS ON citizenship as a unique characteristic of the 'occidental city', and thus modern capitalist development, has informed conceptions of a 'public realm' defined by citizens.¹ In contrast, the household is situated as the locus for 'continuous and intensive social action', a paradigm evident in the ideology of separate spheres.² Phil Withington distinguishes between 'male heads of household [who] could be elected to places of civic power' and 'household dependents', who experienced only 'mediated representation within the civic polity', locating both public and political participation as a male domain.³ However, the separation of 'social' and 'political', upon which the separate spheres ideology is predicated, relies on a singular understanding of the urban household. Responding to this, Sarah Rees Jones defines 'households and householding as a place, a community and a set of personal and social processes'.⁴ Thus, the household was at once a physical structure, social network and idealised social norm. Though civic discourse emphasised the ideal of an orderly, patriarchal household, locating the 'home' as a place of work challenges a gendered division between 'private' and 'public'. Indeed, trust, established through reputation, was essential to the function of

urban politics and society; significantly, reputation was derived from the 'social network' of the household. Consequently, while the history of the urban household is fundamentally a social history, this does not detract from the household's political significance. Instead, urban politics were inherently social: reputation, and thus political participation, was mediated through the household – a challenge to the supposed dichotomy of 'public' and 'private'.

While Sarah Salih identifies the household as '*the* privileged locus for medieval women', conduct literature challenges a gendered division of domestic labour; reputation, essential for civic participation, was the responsibility of both husband and wife.⁵ Although the separate conduct poems 'What the Goodwife Taught her Daughter' and 'How the Wise Man Taught his Son' suggest 'good conduct' was gendered, thereby supporting Salih's argument, it is significant that both situate their advice within a concern for the household's reputation.⁶ The 'Goodwife' should monitor her behaviour in public, 'for he who acquires a bad name gains an unsavoury reputation', demonstrating that a wife's action was reflected upon her husband, and thus could impact the family's reputation; equally, the wife was involved in the creation of a good reputation.⁷ While

¹ M. Weber, *The City*, transl. and ed. D. Martindale and G. Newirth (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1958), pp. 114-115.

² S. Kalberg, *Max Weber's Comparative-Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 43.

³ P. Withington, *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early-Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 10.

⁴ Sarah Rees Jones, Felicity Riddy, Cordelia Beattie, Charlotte Carpenter, Matthew Holford, Laura McClure, Sarah Williams, Jayne Rimmer, Jeremy Goldberg, Bethany Hamblen, Isabel Davis, Rachel Moss, Wanchen Tai, Bronach Kane and Kate McLean, 'The later medieval English urban household', *History Compass*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2007), p. 121.

⁵ Sarah Salih, 'At home, out of the house', in Caroline Dinshaw and David Wallace (eds.), *The Cambridge companion to medieval women's writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 125.

⁶ Claire Sponsler, 'The English How the Good Wif Taughte Hir Doughtir and How the Wise Man Taught His Sonne' in Mark Johnston (ed.), *Medieval Conduct Literature: An Anthology of Vernacular Guides to Behaviour for Youths with English Translations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 285-305; Salih, 'At home', p. 125.

⁷ Sponsler, 'The English', p. 290.

the ‘wise man’ is advised to avoid actions which ‘displease your neighbours sorely’, the ‘good wife’ assumes an active role in managing neighbourly relations: she should ‘welcome [her] neighbours...according to [their] rank, requiring an understanding of local politics and thereby challenging a separation between ‘social’ and ‘political’.⁸ Indeed, the ‘good man’ of Paris demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of household management, while the inclusion of over 380 recipes in a text written for his wife’s use, suggests a knowledge of the ‘domestic’ gained through everyday involvement.⁹ Consequently, though Sandy Bardsley notes that ‘women’s speech...was policed in a wider range of situations’ than men’s, the existence of gendered social norms did not restrict women to the household; as Amanda Vickery questions, ‘is the maintenance of a sexual division of labour within institutions *the same thing as* the separation of public and private spheres?’¹⁰ Indeed, testamentary evidence suggests that separate, gendered, actions were nonetheless informed by a ‘household’ strategy. In her will, Anna Blickling bequeathed 6s 8d to three children Joan, Katherine and Simon.¹¹ Although Robert Blickling, also Anna’s son, is not mentioned, his testament refers to an inherited corpus of property, ranging from ‘annual rents in Norwich’ to ‘[his] manors,

lands and tenements’; though Roger Blickling’s will does not survive, it likely included the bequest of these properties.¹² Thus, both husband and wife were responsible for the maintenance and reputation of the household.

Indeed, reputation was an essential pre-requisite for civic officeholding; crucially this was often established by marriage, and thus the ‘social processes’ of the household.¹³ While Henry Wyman, a German merchant and mayor of York from 1407 to 1409, initially supports Carl Hammer’s argument that English towns maintained a ‘porous oligarchy’ which left ‘local government open to new men’, Wyman’s funeral monument emphasises the social connections which facilitated his role as mayor.¹⁴ Particular emphasis is placed on Wyman’s wife, ‘daughter of John de Barden’, the 1378 mayor of York; though the conjugal unit was often remembered together (Robert Blickling, for instance, requested that his tomb ‘make conspicuous reference to me...and Margaret my wife’), matrilineal remembrance is atypical, presenting, therefore, Wyman’s relationship with John de Bardon as a source of credibility.¹⁵ In turn, this situates marriage as a political alliance and suggests reputation was established through social connections, particularly the household – supporting, therefore, Sarah Rees Jones’ argument that

⁸ Sponsler, ‘The English’, p. 295 and p. 299.

⁹ *The Goodman of Paris (Le Ménagier de Paris): A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy by a Citizen of Paris, c. 1393*, transl. E. Power (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 271-341.

¹⁰ Sarah Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues. Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), p. 50; A. Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronologies of English Women’s History’, *Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (1993), p. 400.

¹¹ Will of Anna Blickling, Norfolk Record Office, NCC Will Register Hirning, fos. 95v-96r.

¹² Will of Roger Blickling, Norfolk Record Office, NCC Will Register Aleyne 169, fos. 130v-132v.

¹³ Rees Jones, ‘English urban household’, p. 121.

¹⁴ C.I. Hammer, ‘The Oxford town council in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries’, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1978), p. 20.

¹⁵ Antiquarian description, reproduced in C.M. Barnett, ‘Memorials and Commemoration in the Parish Churches of Late Medieval York’ (2 vols., University of York, PhD thesis, 1997), Vol. 2.; Will of Roger Blickling, Norfolk Record Office, NCC Will Register Aleyne 169, fos. 130v-132v.

‘the elite rarely reproduced itself through descent in the male line’.¹⁶ Though Rees Jones identifies this pattern of reproduction surrounding York specifically, Nicholas le Fevre’s adoption of the surname ‘Farndon’ after marrying William Farndon’s daughter and heir suggests a similar trend in London.¹⁷ Both the Farndon and le Fevre families were members of London’s political elite: William was sheriff of London in 1280-81, while Nicholas was mayor of London four times between 1308 and 1323 – notably, ‘Nicholas de Farndone’ is listed as mayor, situating marriage, and the correspondent status, as a factor facilitating his mayoralty.¹⁸ Significantly, both families likely resided in Farringdon ward. Ralph le Fevre purchased the ward’s aldermanry in 1277 and then granted it to William Farndon in 1279; significantly this transfer encompassed both the office *and* territorial district of alderman, thereby implying residence also.¹⁹ Consequently, while Francis Kent situates ‘ancestral districts’ as a product of the Florentine lineage, a similar phenomenon is identifiable in English towns – albeit between families linked by marriage.²⁰ Thus social connections, established by marriage, underlay English politics; the

household, formed by marriage, was the site of civic reproduction.

While Barbara Hanawalt argues that space was ‘very gendered’ in the Middle Ages, informing ‘women’s marginality’ and thus restricting ‘respectable activity’ to the home or cloister, the patriarchal household was an ideal, eschewed by the location of work within the home.²¹ As Martha Howell demonstrates, this ‘economic imperative’ renders an idealised division of labour mutable: for instance, women not only inherited brewing equipment, to the extent that Maryanne Kowaleski identifies brewing as the artisanal wife’s imperative, but actively bequeathed their craft equipment to other women.²² Indeed, while Caroline Barron argues that ‘for artisan widows...it was important to marry a man who could help in the running of the business’, Harry Oldeman, a ‘freshwater fisherman’, bequeathed to his wife ‘all my boats, trinks, nets and all my other fishing gear’ to use ‘as I do’ – a transfer of business predicated on the wife’s prior involvement, and thus knowledge of the craft.²³ Thus, women maintained a role in the family business even when the business operated outside of the home, a significant challenge to Hanawalt’s thesis; as Jennifer Ward argues,

¹⁶ Sarah Rees Jones, *York: the Making of a City 1068-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 202.

¹⁷ S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 339.

¹⁸ Caroline M. Barron, *London in the later Middle Ages: government and people, 1200-1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 321.

¹⁹ John Stow, *A Survey of London*, (ed.) C. L. Kingsford, vol. 1, pp. 310-11.

²⁰ F. W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: The Family Life of the Capponi, Ginori and Rucellai* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 177.

²¹ Barbara Hanawalt, ‘At the Margins of Women’s Space in Medieval Europe,’ in Barbara Hanawalt (ed.), *Of Good and Ill Repute’: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 87.

²² M. Howell, ‘Merchant Masculinity in Early Modern Northern Europe’, *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2021), pp. 275-296.; M. Kowaleski, ‘Women’s Work in a Market Town: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century’, in B. Hanawalt (ed.), *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 151.; Heather Swanson, ‘The Illusion of Economic Structure: Craft Guilds in Late Medieval English Towns’, *Past and Present*, No. 121 (1988), p. 34.

²³ C. M. Barron, ‘Introduction: The Widow’s World in Later Medieval London’, in C.M. Barron and A. F. Sutton (eds.), *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), p. xxvi.; Testament of Harry Oldeman, Norfolk Record Office, NCR Will Register Wilkins fos. 114r-115v.

‘it was taken for granted in the fifteenth century that work within the household would include helping in the husband’s craft or trade’.²⁴ Consequently, though Weber locates the household socially as ‘the basic unit of economic maintenance’, women’s role in the craft, under the purview of guilds, was inseparable from the public sphere.²⁵ Indeed, women’s role in the household economy explains the requirement that guild members marry before they become a master, depicting the household as a unit representative of both husband and wife.²⁶ Reflecting this, citizenship was commutable by marriage: a 1344 Bristol ordinance claimed that if ‘a woman of the liberty’, whether the ‘daughter of a burgess’ or ‘wife of a burgess’, married someone of ‘servile status’ she would lose her burgess status.²⁷ Though an asymmetrical power dynamic, the household nonetheless situated women as political actors within both the guild and citizenry, challenging the characterisation of women as ‘unpolitical citizens’ through their participation in their family businesses.²⁸

The urban house situates private space and public identity as inherently linked. That private halls developed into

public, civic buildings demonstrates the ambiguous divisions between the ‘political’ and ‘domestic’; equally, as Jeremy Goldberg demonstrates, that ‘parish churches were filled with material objects that had formerly functioned for domestic use’ challenges a division between the household and wider ‘social’ sphere.²⁹ Notably, though the proliferation of rooms in the urban house after c. 1400 has been used to evidence a desire for privacy, which John Schofield suggests facilitated a growing separation between ‘working’ and ‘domestic’ space, John Stow’s *A Survey of London* suggests the hall retained a semi-public role into the sixteenth century – indeed, Stow has ‘often seene’ Bakewell hall’s interior.³⁰ Chris King’s argument that residences were transferred between elite families, enshrining ‘shared cultural identities and public, civic authority’ through the maintenance of previous owners’ family symbolism can thus be applied to London: while ‘Bassings hall’ is now known as ‘Bakewell hall’, Stow is able to identify the ‘originall’ ownership through the display of the ‘Armes of that family’ – the house is thus part of a broader social continuum.³¹

²⁴ J. Ward, ‘Townswomen and their Households’, in R. Britnell (ed.), *Daily Life in the Late Middle Ages* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), p. 38.

²⁵ Weber, *The City*, pp. 114–115.

²⁶ Katherine French, *Household Goods and Good Households in Late Medieval London: Consumption and Domesticity After the Plague* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), p. 104.

²⁷ ‘Ancient’ customs of Bristol recorded in 1344, translated from F.B. Blickley (ed.), *The Little Red Book of Bristol* (2 vols., Bristol. 1900), Vol. 1, p. 37.

²⁸ Andrea Löther, in ‘Unpolitische Bürger. Frauen und Partizipation in der vormodernen praktischen Philosophie’, in R. Koselleck and K. Schreiner (eds.), *Bürgerschaft. Rezeption und Innovation der Begrifflichkeit vom Hohen Mittelalter bis ins 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1994), cited in Christian Liddy, ‘The city and the household: Towards a social history of politics in the pre-modern town’, [unpublished essay]

²⁹ P. J. P. Goldberg, ‘The fashioning of bourgeois domesticity in later medieval England: a material culture perspective’ in Maryanne Kowaleski and P. J. P. Goldberg (eds.) *Medieval Domesticity. Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 134.

³⁰ John Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 61–93.; John Stow, *A Survey of London*, (ed.) C. L. Kingsford, vol. 1, pp. 286–287.

³¹ C. King, ‘Private lives and public power: Norwich merchants’ houses between the 14th and 16th centuries’, in T.A. Heslop and H.E. Lunnon (eds.), *Norwich: Medieval and Early Modern Art, Architecture and Archaeology* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2015), p. 341; John Stow, *A Survey of London*, (ed.) C. L. Kingsford, vol. 1, pp. 286–287.

Though a transition in the uses of domestic space is identifiable following the Black Death, an overarching concern with status remains evident. Echoing Goldberg's argument that 'craft workshops [became] increasingly masculinised and mercantile households increasingly feminised', Louise Campion argues that fifteenth-century England saw 'changes to household design [that reflects] a growing concern for privacy'.³² However, as French convincingly argues, the '[post-plague] house design did not appreciably change', but rather 'the smaller population after the plague purchased more furnishings', allowing a different use of domestic space.³³ Here, Campion situates the developing 'domestic sphere...as the primary affective framework' for identification with Christ.³⁴ However, while Campion argues this domestic piety was gendered female, a similar rhetoric pervades devotional texts; Robert Grosseteste's *Templum Tei* similarly utilises the familiar 'domestic' to encourage efficacious pastoral care.³⁵ Thus, while domestic furnishings facilitated moral improvement through prayer, study and reflection, the associated privacy was not gendered. Indeed, though adding rooms was representative of new ideas surrounding the role of space, this did not derive from interiority, but rather demographic population shifts. As French

argues, 'with fewer people, urban space was no longer at a premium'; in this context, the development of the parlour was a mark of status, an adaptation of residence unavailable to servants³⁶

As Shannon McSheffrey has argued, therefore, 'publicity was situational as well as spatial'; while concepts of 'privacy' were inherently gendered, this was not limited to the domestic sphere.³⁷ 'Clandestine' marriage was defined socially, not spatially: a 'Case of Clandestine Marriage' in 1364 recorded that Isabel de Scarsbrok 'was carried off without knowledge' and had thus entered into a 'clandestine contract of marriage', situating, therefore, 'clandestine' as the absence of witnesses.³⁸ Significantly, the physical location of both the kidnapping and establishment of the marriage contract is not recorded; both 'publicity' and 'privacy' were situational. The trial of William Hawkyns c. Margaret Heed further situates marriage as a public institution: though each testimony mentions where marriage was contracted, 'in the hall of Henry Heed's dwelling-house', the fact that both extended family acquaintances were present demonstrates a widespread association between witnesses (and thus publicity) and legitimacy.³⁹ Crucially, while Thrupp argues the 'gossip of the tavern...gave voice to neighbourhood opinion', public fame was perceived as

³² P.J.P. Goldberg, 'Household and the Organisation of Labour in Late Medieval Towns: Some English Evidence', in Myriam Carlier and Tim Soens (eds.), *The Household in Late Medieval Cities, Italy and Northwestern Europe Compared* (Leuven: Garant, 2000), p. 61; Louise Campion, *Cushions, kitchens and Christ: mapping the domestic in late medieval religious writing* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2022), p. 4.

³³ French, *Household Goods*, p. 15.

³⁴ Campion, *Cushions*, pp. 44-45.

³⁵ Robert Grosseteste, 'On the Corporeal and Spiritual Temple of God' (translation in progress, supplied by translator).

³⁶ French, *Household Goods*, p. 135.

³⁷ S. McSheffrey, 'Place, Space, and Situation: Public and Private in the Making of Marriage in Late-Medieval London', *Speculum*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (2004), p. 986.

³⁸ P.J.P. Goldberg (transl. and ed.), *Women in England c. 1275-1525* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 85-6. Abridged translation from *Calendar of Papal Registers*, Vol. 4 (London, 1902).

³⁹ A Marriage Dispute from the London Consistory Court, translated by Shannon McSheffrey, London Metropolitan Archives, MS DL/C/A/001/MS0965B, fos. 11v-12v, 13r-15r.

testamentary evidence.⁴⁰ Gregory Brent notes that ‘Margaret was in the tavern’, where she said ‘I am sure to William Hawkyns’: that Brent notes that Margaret was with ‘Lord Bryan...William Hawkyns and the parents of Margaret’ suggests Brent himself was not present, and thus testified on the basis of reputation.⁴¹ Notably, no moral reprobation accompanies Margaret’s presence in the tavern – instead, Margaret is ‘chided’ for voicing hesitation after the banns had been called.⁴² Indeed, it was only when Margaret’s actions became a subject of rumour, leading ‘Copwode’s father...[to say]...Margaret loved his son better’, that Henry Heed escalated his actions and beat Margaret. Consequently, while Margaret’s actions were certainly viewed through the lens of gendered social norms, this did not inform a unilateral restriction of the public sphere; instead, the tavern only had the *potential* to impact reputation, echoed in the ‘Wise Man’s advice to ‘beware of frequenting taverns’.⁴³ Thus concerns surrounding ‘privacy’ can be linked to reputation, a concern shared by both genders.

Notably, while Claire Sponsler argues that, in locating socialisation within the domestic sphere, advice literature ‘placed responsibility for self-governance on the bourgeois household...[and assumes this] will be rewarded outside the household’, the ideal of the patriarchal household as a microcosm for society was

primarily discursive.⁴⁴ As Felicity Riddy has demonstrated, this ideal represented a particular ‘bourgeois ethos’; as the counterpart of the ‘goodman’, ‘goodwife’ was a term of respect, conflating the idealised ‘virtuous women’ and ‘citizen’s wife’.⁴⁵ Reflecting this, the ‘good man’ of Paris was both householder and citizen; the public discourse of ‘worthy men’ was thus domestic *and* political.⁴⁶ Consequently, while David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber view the household as ‘fiscal units’, the household was both a political component and social identity, epitomised in the will of Robert de Holme.⁴⁷ Holme bequeaths ‘100 marks to be distributed...among *other* heads of household’, and thus implicitly identifying as a ‘householder’; that the money is ‘to be divided among the poor heads of household’ invokes notions of common good prevalent within civic discourse, perhaps reflecting a concern for his posthumous reputation.⁴⁸ Notably, while Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber’s study excludes children from consideration, Holmes’ household includes apprentices; though Ariès located the emergence of childhood in the early modern period, closely associated with the development of the nuclear family, apprentices fulfilled a

⁴⁰ Sylvia Thrupp, ‘Social control in the medieval town’, *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 1, No. S1 (1941), p. 42.

⁴¹ A Marriage Dispute from the London Consistory Court, translated by Shannon McSheffrey, London Metropolitan Archives, MS DL/C/A/001/MS0965B, fos. 11v-12v, 13r-15r.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 5

⁴³ Sponsler, ‘The English’, p. 300.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

⁴⁵ Felicity Riddy, ‘Mother knows best: reading social change in a courtesy text’, *Speculum*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1996), p. 67.

⁴⁶ *The Goodman of Paris (Le Ménagier de Paris): A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy by a Citizen of Paris, c. 1393*, transl. E. Power (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 271-341.

⁴⁷ D. Herlihy and C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁴⁸ Will of Robert de Holme late of York, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, PR1, fos. 100v-103v.

quasi-familial role.⁴⁹ Indeed, while Ariès' approach informed a history of the urban household as history of socialisation, inherent within Ariès' approach is confusion of 'family' and 'household' – 'household' was not, as Marta Gravela defines, 'co-resident *relatives*'.⁵⁰ Consequently, though the patriarchal household was primarily a civic ideal, 'public' adherence to 'private' norms was nonetheless as source of reputation; as such, the political was inherently social.

Indeed, concern surrounding individuals who lacked a household, epitomised in the marginalisation of vagrants, suggests that the ideal, patriarchal household was far from hegemonic. Crucially, however, this did not reflect an attempt to establish the household as an instrument of civic governance, as Philippa Maddern suggests, but rather reflects a concern with the establishment of trust and reputation.⁵¹ As Liddy argues, the urban residence symbolised trust, epitomised by the destruction of houses as a form of civic punishment: the Low Countries, for instance, saw a 'judicial practice of demolition' echoed in English towns – for instance, a penalty for prostitution was the 'systematic dismantling of the prostitute's lodging...in order to render the building uninhabitable'.⁵² Thus, residence was a

symbol of belonging; that breaching oaths warrants exclusion from the civic community highlights the centrality of trust within urban society. Indeed, the York Freeman Register situates good reputation, derived from residence, as a pre-requisite for citizenship: William Gorge, 'son of John Gorge of *Leicester*', a migrant, required John de Santon to '[stand] as security' to ensure 'he will carry out his duties in all things pertaining to the city'.⁵³ Echoing this, English common law defines the 'householder' through the 'frankpledge', linking residence to a moralised communal obligation; migrants, who Riddy argues were the intended audience for advice literature's 'bourgeois ethos', are thus excluded.⁵⁴ Significantly, this demonstrates the applicability of Ian Forrest's model of a 'social church' composed of 'trustworthy men' – equally, politics should be conceived socially.⁵⁵ Consequently, though Duby argues the 'public-private' divide was 'demarcated by different kinds of power', viewing politics as the *negotiation* includes the various household forms evident across medieval society in a social model of politics.⁵⁶

Finally, while Weber's work has encouraged historians to consider the centrality of the craft guild-urban citizenship axis, in turn juxtaposing the

⁴⁹ D. Herlihy and C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Jonathon Cape, 1996), pp. 397-8.

⁵⁰ M. Gravela, 'The primacy of patrimony: kinship strategies of the political elite of Turin in the late Middle Ages (1340-1490)', *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2017), p. 296.

⁵¹ P. Maddern, 'Order and Disorder', in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds.), *Medieval Norwich* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 189-212.

⁵² C. D. Liddy, *Contesting the City: the Politics of Citizenship in English Towns, 1250-1530* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 207.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Sarah Rees Jones, 'The Household and English Urban Government in the Later Middle Ages' in Myriam Carlier and Tim Soens (eds.), *The Household in Late Medieval Cities. Italy and Northwestern Europe Compared* (Leuven: Garant, 2000), p. 76.; Riddy, 'Mother Knows Best', p. 67.

⁵⁵ I. Forrest, *Trustworthy Men: How Inequality and Faith Made the Medieval Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

⁵⁶ Georges Duby, 'Introduction: Private Power, Public Power', in Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (eds.) *A History of Private Life, vol. 2, Revelations of the Medieval World*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 6-7.

horizontal ties of guild membership with the family, it is significant that the transfer of citizenship was mediated through the household.⁵⁷ Indeed, guild membership was inextricably linked to familial associations. As Rachael Harkes has demonstrated, ‘family networks across the country’ were an important influence on choices to join Palmers’ Guild, a familial connection equally prevalent in regional guild membership.⁵⁸ Though Thrupp attributes the ‘three-generation’ life-cycle of English dynasties to a lack of occupational continuity, John, Richard and William North are all members of the York Corpus Christi Guild; equally, all are tanners, suggesting continuity in both craft and guild membership.⁵⁹ Significantly, a 1365 London ordinance identifies ‘three ways’ an individual could be ‘received into the franchise of the City’: by ‘birth, apprenticeship, or by presentment of some misery’, a craft association.⁶⁰ As discussed, craft associations were influenced by familial ties; equally, apprenticeship occurred within the household, situating apprentices as members of the co-resident group. Apprenticeship was often familial: Robert Blickling’s son, Leonard, is described as a draper and apprentice to Robert in the Norwich freemen roll, while William Albon requests his son ‘be bound as an apprentice’, depicting a familial role in the arrangement of apprentices.⁶¹ Notably, Weber’s association of guild

membership with citizenship overlooks competition between guild and civic interests: the 1365 London ordinance sought to raise the payment to enter the liberty, thereby protecting guild predominance in trade. Crucially, this concern is underlined by reputation; as Liddy argues, ‘reputation was a shared and mutually binding resource’, necessitating the regulation membership.⁶² In this, therefore, citizenship and guild membership can be characterised as social institutions – equally, both were transmissible through the household.

To conclude, social notions of trust and reputation, generated through the household, were essential for political participation; while the household was not unilaterally political, the face-to-face communities of medieval towns made the ‘political’ sphere by nature inseparable from social relationships. Thus, the label of ‘private’ or ‘public’ implies an illusory distinction: as Jeff Weintraub argues, ‘any single or dichotomous model...[is inadequate]...to capture the institutional and cultural complexity of modern societies’ – a statement of particular validity when considering the role of the household in medieval English town politics.⁶³ Viewing the household as at once a physical structure, social network and idealised social norm thereby challenges its singular definition as a site of ‘private’ socialisation, creating instead a model

⁵⁷ M. Weber, *The City*, transl. and ed. D. Martindale and G. Newirth (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1958)

⁵⁸ Rachael Harkes, ‘Sociological approaches and the urban history of medieval England: research trends and new perspectives (2017-2022)’, *Urban History*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (2022), p. 650.

⁵⁹ S.L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300–1500* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948); Sarah Rees Jones, *York: the Making of a City 1068-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

⁶⁰ R.R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of letter-books of the City of London, G: 1352-1374* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1905), p. 179.

⁶¹ Will of Roger Blickling, Norfolk Record Office, NCC Will Register Aleyn 169, fos. 130v-132v.; Will of William Albon, The National Archives, PROB 11/11/414.

⁶² Christian Liddy, ‘Urban Revolt and Town Politics in Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, in Patrick Lantschner and Maarten Prak (eds.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Europe, Volume II: The Middle Ages and Early Modern (c700-1850)* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

⁶³ Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (eds.) *Public and Private in Thought and Practice. Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. xiii.

encompassing the fluidity of medieval models of household. As such, the imposition of models along a singular spectrum, ‘public’ *or* ‘private’, ‘social’ *or* ‘political’, obscures the interconnected nature of social and political thought, in turn dismissing the role of women and household dependants as political (and often implicitly also historical) actors.

Consequently, medieval politics were inherently social, shaped by the ideals and practices of household. While the history of the urban household was, therefore, fundamentally social, it was not apolitical; a reconsideration of the household thus allows a more nuanced understanding of politics

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ECCENTRIC, DESPOTIC AND NAÏVE? REVISING THE PLACE OF OWENISM WITHIN BRITISH SOCIALISM, 1800- 1850

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ABSTRACT: Owenism has been unfairly misunderstood and disregarded within the British socialist tradition. Believing in human perfectibility and progress, Robert Owen sought to enact radical social transformation through communitarian experiments that upheld the notion of environmental determinism. Although peaking in the 1830s, the movement really emerged at New Lanark in 1800. Owenism's eccentric, despotic and naïve reputation rests on four grounds: the failure of its communitarian experiments, his shirking dictatorial personality, the lack of historical source material and Owenism's antagonistic relationship to orthodox 'scientific' Marxism. Owenism's refutation of dialectical materialism and belief in peaceful evolutionary social change has warped and imprisoned discussions of Owenism within a strict Marxist paradigm. Yet a reappraisal of Owenism is possible and essential. Through contextualising Owenism within its economic and ideological context, exploring its political and intellectual legacy and its Marxist overlap, Owen's title as the 'Father of British Socialism' emerges as robust. Revising Owenism is essential because it not only provides a unique insight into the social landscape of the first half of the 19th-century but its rare attempt at *praxis* continues to inspire practical instances of communal living and city planning today.

DESPITE BEING HERALDED AS THE ‘Father of British Socialism’, Robert Owen (1771-1858) and his ideas have been chronically misunderstood and misplaced.¹ A ‘Smilesian self-made man’, Owen rose from a draper to the leader of the most important early socialist movement in the space of forty years.² Writing during a time of immense social change and dislocation, Owen’s principle aims were the alleviation of misery and promotion of happiness.³ Inspired by Enlightenment ideas regarding human perfectibility and progress, Owenism found its practical expression in the notions of environmental determinism – the belief that character is determined by circumstance – and his communitarian experiments.⁴ Despite Owenism peaking in the 1830s, any reappraisal of Owen’s ideas must take into account his management of New Lanark from 1800, as the Scottish milling community formed the laboratory for his thinking. Aside from New Lanark and Owen’s American project, New Harmony, the key British Owenite communities were Orbsiton, North Lanarkshire (1825-7), Ralahine in County Clare, Ireland (1831-3) and Queenwood in Hampshire (1839-45). Owenism drew from a complicated intersection of radical, republican, natural law and puritanical arguments in its call for

social transformation through enlightened educational and work patterns.⁵ Neither contemporaries nor historiography has been particularly kind to Owen. Criticisms range from labels of naïve utopianism and veiled managerial self-interest, to claiming that totalitarianism is the logical outcome of Owen’s thinking.⁶ A tradition that was largely initiated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Owen’s ideas are often judged purely on the longevity of his experiments, or teleologically by how well they fit both into orthodox Marxism and future industrial conditions. Despite the revisionism of those like Gregory Claeys, J.F.C. Harrison and Ophélie Siméon, Owenism is still not taken seriously.⁷ A revision of Owen’s place in the history of British socialism is crucial not only for matters of historical accuracy but also in enabling the movement to encompass a broader sense of ideals – particularly in light of failed attempts at Marxist praxis in the last century. Owenism posits a unique insight into the social and intellectual landscape of the first half of the nineteenth century and its legacy is found not only in the work of notable writers like William Morris and William Booth, but also in practical instances of communal living and city planning that continue today.

There is no shortage of interpretations as to Owenism’s place

¹ Ophélie Siméon, ‘Robert Owen: The Father of British Socialism?’, *Books and Ideas, Collège de France* (2012)

² A.J. Robertson, ‘Robert Owen, Cotton Spinner: New Lanark, 1800-25’, in Sidney Pollard and John Salt (eds.), *Robert Owen, Prophet of the Poor: Essays in Honour of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 160 ; Keith Taylor, *The Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists* (London ; Totowa, N.J.: Cass, 1982), p. 155.

³ A. Haworth, ‘Planning and Philosophy: The Case of Owenism and the Owenite Communities,’ *Urban Studies* 13, No. 2 (June 1976), p. 148.

⁴ Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2009), p. 69 ; Taylor, *Utopian Socialists*, p. 36.

⁵ Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 15 and p. 23; Vincent Geoghegan, ‘Ralahine: An Irish Owenite Community (1831–1833)’, *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (December 1991), p. 379.

⁶ See Chris Rogers, ‘Robert Owen, Utopian Socialism and Social Transformation’, *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October 2018), pp. 263-4; Sidney Pollard, ‘The Factory Village in the Industrial Revolution’, *English Historical Review*, Vol. 79 (1964), p. 514 and p. 529 ; Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 13.

⁷ See Claeys, *Citizens*; J.F.C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America by J.F.C. Harrison: The Quest for the New Moral World* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969); Siméon, ‘Robert Owen’.

within British socialism.⁸ Indeed, Harrison claims that each age invents their own.⁹ For contemporaries, Owen was labelled as an eccentric who in challenging classical political economy disguised ‘his immoral aims behind overly liberal views’.¹⁰ Frank Podmore, Owen’s biographer, described him as ‘aristocratic in...the whole cast of his mind’, whilst working class radical leaders accused Owen of belonging to an elite conspiratorial paternalist plot to turn Britain into a workhouse.¹¹ Figure one depicts an 1840 cartoon from the periodical *The Penny Satirist* (1837-46). The source reveals contemporary social attitudes towards Owenism as well as simultaneously hinting at the infectious influence of its ideas. Four matronly elderly mothers attack an insect-like figure labelled Owen’s newspaper, *New Moral World* (1834-45), as it darts across the floor. Aside from the humorous nature of the title, the exaggerated expressions and reactions of the figures suggest the cartoonist C.J. Grant is mocking public hysteria towards Owenism. The dialogue beneath the cartoon describes the Owenite figure as a ‘deuce’ who threatens to ‘corrupt the morals of our children’. This parasitic understanding of Owenism is arguably echoed further in the name of one of the mothers; ‘Blightfield’ as well as in the mothers’ references to how Owenism invades the home and threatens domestic order. Knowing that by 1840 Owenism had

reached its peak in the form of constructing its final experiment at Queenwood, the fear expressed by the figures seems pertinent and ties into anxieties amongst those such as members of the clergy that Owenism was irreligious and subversive.¹² Furthermore, the declaration that ‘when we try to hit [the figure] we only hit ourselves’ seems to signify the publics’ feelings of powerlessness in the face of Owen’s dogmatic commitment to fulfilling his aims. Knowing that the *Penny Satirist* was renowned for being a ‘repository of radical cartooning’ and weeklies in general at this time were often comic and sensationalist, arguably the fear expressed by the women is overstated.¹³ Nevertheless, the source is a good indication of hostility towards Owenism particularly considering the fact the periodical’s working-class audience would in theory be sympathetic to its egalitarian vision – yet surprisingly here seem to distance themselves from it.

Despite Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels considering Owen the most significant utopian socialist, they are singlehandedly responsible for his pigeonholing as such.¹⁴ In both the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* (1892) the thinkers pioneered the pejorative binary label of ‘utopian’ and ‘scientific’ socialism, largely to delineate between those who held a materialist conception of history and those that didn’t.¹⁵ Despite praise for his

⁸ J.F.C. Harrison, ‘A New View of Mr. Owen’, in Sidney Pollard and John Salt (eds.), *Robert Owen, Prophet of the Poor: Essays in Honour of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 5.

¹¹ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 64 and p. 169; Gregory Claeys, ‘Owen, Robert (1771–1858), Socialist and Philanthropist,’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

¹² Geoghegan, ‘Ralahine,’ p. 379.

¹³ Donald J. Gray, ‘A List of Comic Periodicals Published in Great Britain, 1800-1900, with a Prefatory Essay,’ *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, Vol. 15 (1972), p. 4.

¹⁴ E. Hasselmann, ‘The Impact of Owen’s Ideas on German Social and Co-Operative Thought during the Nineteenth Century’, in Sidney Pollard and John Salt (eds.), *Robert Owen, Prophet of the Poor: Essays in Honour of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 286.

¹⁵ Harrison, ‘A New View of Mr. Owen,’ p. 2.

critique of industrial society, Owen was criticised for failing to recognise the inevitability of class conflict. Consequently, later socialist thinkers and labour historians such as the Fabians, have labelled Owen a ‘misguided reformer’ and afforded him only a niche in histories of the movement.¹⁶ G.D.H. Cole’s *History of Socialist Thought* for example, devotes barely a line to Owenism.¹⁷ Continuing the problematic Marxist tradition, E.P. Thompson has claimed that Owen had a ‘vacant place in his mind where most men have political responses’, and his plans for social transformation ‘smelled of Malthus’.¹⁸ Conservative-liberal thinker J.L. Talmon likened Owenism and other early socialists to forms of ‘totalitarian democracy’ where the emphasis on a single objective truth is facilitated by mutual surveillance.¹⁹ Karl Popper and Friedrich von Hayek similarly see utopianism as synonymous with the domineering control of man’s activities.²⁰ Even revisionist historians have fallen victim to this narrative, with Sidney Pollard claiming that Owen was not motivated by a utopian vision but rather ‘responding to managerial necessity’, and Taylor declaring that ‘politically radical groups [find] little of substance in Owenism’.²¹

In assessing the legitimacy of Owen’s place within British socialism on the back of these interpretations, it is necessary to interrogate the verity of criticisms levelled at him. Generally, Owenism’s reputation as eccentric, naïve

and despotic rests on four grounds. Unsurprisingly, the perceived failure of the communitarian experiments is central in Owenism’s erosion from socialist historiography. Secondly, Owen is seen as a shirking dictatorial, increasingly millenarian, and patronising leader. His belief in an evolutionary and non-violent social revolution and omission of historical materialism contradicts Marxist orthodoxy – whilst his view that the root of working class distress does not stem from the costs of government exacerbate accusations of naivety and diverge from other early radical movements such as Chartism.²² Lastly, the systemic lack of source material has compounded the view that Owenism starts and ends with Owen himself, making it difficult to assess Owenism on its own terms. Indeed, particularly after the 1830s, many Owenites diverged from Owen’s thinking, and the movement had an extremely high turnover rate.²³

Before examining whether Owenism’s position within British socialism is justified, one needs to examine the validity of Owenism’s place in historiography. The two are inevitably linked and any revision of Owenism’s legacy must be holistic. One of the chief criticisms levelled at Owenism is that environmental determinism facilitated scapegoating and the avoidance of blame, whilst assuming that most people would be ‘passive receptacles for new impressions’.²⁴ Indeed, this is not untrue. In the case of the Owenite community in Ralahine, Owen

¹⁶ Harrison, ‘A New View of Mr. Owen’, p. 2.

¹⁷ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 5.

¹⁸ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 649 and p. 648.

¹⁹ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 120.

²⁰ Goodwin and Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p. 182.

²¹ Kriashan Kumar, ‘Utopian Thought and Communal Practice,’ *Theory and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (February 1990), p. 12; Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p. 157.

²² Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 177.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 121; Haworth, ‘Planning and Philosophy,’ p. 149.

saw himself as leading a quasi-civilising mission, aided by a 'jaundiced view' of the Irish peasantry probably inherited from John Finch, a Liverpool iron merchant and sympathetic visitor to the Ralahine community, who described them as poor, ignorant, idle and violent.²⁵ This seems out of keep with an ideology that purported to be based around the ideas of equality. This accusation, largely made by contemporaries, is further bolstered by the questionable use of phrenology within parts of the Owenite project. Edward Craig – who partly oversaw the running of Ralahine – drew on phrenology and physiological deficiencies to argue that some people were easier to 'reform' than others.²⁶ This patronising stance is inevitably paradoxical to the idea that circumstances alone determine character, and although not related to socialism per se, it does weaken our ability to take Owenism seriously. Owen's despotic tendencies too have contributed to his place in historiography. At the third congress of co-operative societies (April 1832), several disagreements culminated in Owen forcing through the committee the insertion of an amendment regarding a proposed secular. Upon hearing accusations of despotism, Owen claimed that they 'must consent to be ruled by despots till [acquiring] sufficient knowledge to govern [themselves].'²⁷ Owenism's reliance on philanthropists who often had alternative motives is a further contemporary criticism that supports the accusation of Owenite naivety. Again, in the case of Ralahine, John Vandeleur, the architect and patron, saw the project as

much as a business venture as a philanthropic act.²⁸ Vandeleur appointed the secretary, treasurer and storekeeper of the community's inhabitants – undermining Owenite commitment to decentralised power.

And yet, aspects of Owenism's place within historiography seem underserved. Above all else, the claims of naivety levelled by contemporaries and revisionists alike overlook the fact that the premise of a thinker is to think the unthinkable. Krishan Kumar asserts that all 'social theory is utopian'.²⁹ In other words, the idea that only the theories which stand a chance of being implemented are worthy of being considered is narrow minded.³⁰ Furthermore, it is important to recognise the innovation of Owenism at a time when classical liberalism and Malthusian economics dominated public discourse. Owenism refuted Malthus' claim that unemployment was inevitable and desirable, attacked Smithian advocacy of the division of labour and digressed from Ricardo's argument that low wages were the result of low consumption.³¹ The totalitarian claims of Talmon equally fall short. Although Owenism's 'politics of perfection' anticipated totalitarianism's coercion as a means of regulating human behaviour, ultimately Owenism's voluntary and pacifist emphasis mean parallels between the two are almost absurd. Further, none of the Owenite community experiments even lasted long enough to fully assess these claims.³² Ultimately, Owenism is damaged by the fact that there exist no reputable biographies on any

²⁵ Geoghegan, 'Ralahine,' p. 386.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

²⁷ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 73.

²⁸ Geoghegan, 'Ralahine,' p. 380.

²⁹ Kumar, 'Utopian Thought,' p. 4.

³⁰ Taylor, *Utopian Socialists*, p. 36.

³¹ Claeys, *Citizens*, pp. 28-9.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 137 and p. 129.

figures aside from Owen and Thompson, nor local studies of the movement.³³ Indeed many historians have relied excessively on Owen's own biography published in 1857 – which inevitably inflates his own importance, again inviting despotic and totalitarian accusations.³⁴

More importantly though, is the question of how appropriate Owenism's place is within British socialist thought. In some senses, Owen does depart from the socialist tradition. Until 1820, Owen's main focus was on improving the condition of the poor, not on radical social transformation.³⁵ It was only when the of *Report to the committee of the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor* (1817) and *Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System* (1819) failed to bring anything but piecemeal reform that Owen reconsidered his political views.³⁶ It has been said that Owenism's failure to develop a theory of history is in some respects his greatest weakness in the face of socialism.³⁷ Thompson's claim that Owen had 'not the least sense of the dialectical process of social change' is relatively true.³⁸ Owen's environmental determinism meant he did not see class conflict as inevitable, but rather the result of external circumstance.³⁹ Owenism's divergence from such a fundamental aspect of socialist theory, inevitably complicates locating its place within the movement. Furthermore, it is important not to overstate the

significance of Owenism's influence on British socialism. Albeit by no means marginal, Owenism perhaps only contained between four thousand to ten thousand members during its peak.⁴⁰ Unlike hundreds of thousands of Chartists then, it was by no means a mass political movement.

Ultimately though, Owenism's place within British socialism needs revising. The idea that because the communitarian experiments collapsed, the movement was an ideological failure, misses the purpose and value inherent in the plans. Measuring Owenism's influence by the longevity of its experiments fails to recognise the 'depth of experience' that transcended the community's lifespan for those that participated in them. Karl Mannheim argues that the value of utopias is not that they 'are realised in toto' but rather that, in breaking the bonds of the existing order, they allow a new one to be constructed.⁴¹ Indeed, by 1830 300 co-operative societies had sprung up across the country and Owenism's involvement in the trade union movement in the 1830s – heading up the Grand Consolidated Trade Union – helped inspire a new conception of labour organisation.⁴² Owenism's ability to work within existing structures meant that by 1840 the Rational Society ran over 60 branches of 'self-styled socialists' with 50,000 attending weekly lectures, among them Engels.⁴³ In terms of the Marxist

³³ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 208.

³⁴ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 209; Harrison, 'A New View of Mr. Owen,' p. 4.

³⁵ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 68.

³⁶ Taylor, *Utopian Socialists*, pp. 74-5; Gregory Claeys, *Machinery, Money and the Millennium: From Moral Economy to Socialism, 1850-60* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p. 39.

³⁷ Taylor, *Utopian Socialists*, p. 82.

³⁸ Thompson, *The Making of*, p. 652.

³⁹ Taylor, *Utopian Socialists*, p. 83.

⁴⁰ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 212.

⁴¹ Gregory Claeys, 'Non-Marxian Socialism 1815-1914', in Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 218.

⁴² Claeys, 'Owen, Robert'; Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 206.

⁴³ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 206.

tradition, Owen ultimately diverged on the question of goals, not means.⁴⁴ Both Marxism and Owenism envisaged a world governed by human happiness, where man was able to reach his potential and freed from alienating labour.⁴⁵ Despite Kumar's insistence that Owen had a moral not political agenda, ultimately both were mutually reinforcing.⁴⁶ Both Marxism and Owenism saw labour as the source of all wealth, rejected hierarchy – with Owen's exception of gerontocracy – and emphasised the role of machinery in the construction of a new order.⁴⁷ In fact, Owen's concept of 'elective paternalism', whereby during the establishment of communities Owen would oversee management, seems to parallel Marxism's 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Indeed, in order to assess the validity of Marxist criticisms vis-à-vis Owenism's 'irrational' and 'utopian' nature, one must interrogate the standpoint from which Marx grounds his analysis.⁴⁸ Marx's belief that the proletariat is the agent of historical change has never been truly realised either. Engel's criticism that Owenism 'arose with a manufacturer, and proceeds...with great consideration towards the bourgeoisie' seems to overlook the fact that both Marx and Engels were members of the bourgeoisie too, yet managed to transcend their class interest.⁴⁹ Marxism has teleologically warped and imprisoned discussions of Owenism within a strict

Marxist paradigm, which Claeys describes as a matter of the 'victors imposing terms upon the vanquished'.⁵⁰ It is important to recognise that socialism was only coined in 1827, after Owen had already set up New Harmony in Indiana and New Orbiston. The term was not even used by Owenites until the mid 1830s – preferring 'social system' instead.⁵¹ In order to assess Owenism's place within socialism it must be recognised that the meaning of the term has shifted considerably – moving from the social revolution envisaged by Owenism to a more explicitly political one posited by Marxists.⁵² If the meaning of socialism is permitted to change, one may question why Owenism cannot. As mentioned, after 1817 Owen's views were radicalised and by 1852, Owen's understanding of the social and political were merged in the form of a socialist state.⁵³ Thompson's criticism that Owen attempted to 'bypass the question of property rights' overlooks the fact that the later Owen increasingly identified property, not labour as the basis of capitalist exploitation.⁵⁴ Lastly, the reductive labels of 'utopian' and 'scientific' overlook internal differences within, and cooperation between, movements. Within Owenism, figures like John Gray called, in *The Social System* (1831,) for a more proto-Marxist centralised economic system.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Owenism fraternised with other early socialists, like the Chartists. Bailey attempted to unite convictions under

⁴⁴ Taylor, *Utopian Socialists*, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 29.

⁴⁶ Kumar, 'Utopian Thought,' p. 21.

⁴⁷ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 150-2; p. 82, Taylor, *Utopian Socialists*, p. 85.

⁴⁸ Thompson, *The Making of*, p. 652.

⁴⁹ Friedrich Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845; repr., Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), p. 162.

⁵⁰ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 8.

⁵¹ Harrison, *Robert Owen*, p. 35.

⁵² Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 8.

⁵³ Claeys, 'Owen, Robert'; Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 291.

⁵⁴ Thompson, *The Making of*, p. 652; Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p. 130.

⁵⁵ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 163.

the banner of ‘Charter Socialism’ from 1842, whilst O’Connor’s land plan after 1843 was ‘curiously familiar’ to Owenism in areas of morality, equality and the free market.⁵⁶

It is important to note too, the influence Owenism had on Marxism and socialism more broadly. Owen’s ideas regarding industrialism, private property, religion and democracy all foreshadowed Marxism.⁵⁷ After arriving in England in 1842, Engels became involved and documented the British socialist movement. In fact, for a time Engels supplanted his belief in violent revolution for an evolutionary approach.⁵⁸ In *Letters from London* – a series of articles written between May-June 1843 for the journal *Schweizerischer Republikaner* – Engels applauds Owen’s comprehensive social approach, claiming his ‘three evils’ of marriage, property and religion have done an ‘incredible amount to educate the working classes’ and the English socialists are ‘more principled and practical’ than the French.⁵⁹ Engels was impressed with Owenism and the cordiality between the two movements is manifest in Engels’ regular contribution to *New Moral World* up until May 1845, despite having left England. Owenism in many ways transcended other forms of socialism, offering a prescient critique of violence and a rare attempt at praxis. Although criticised by those like Thompson for his ‘messianic’

millenarianism, arguably this was one of Owen’s greatest strengths.⁶⁰ In ‘An Address to the Inhabitants of New Lanark’ (1816), Owen deliberately invokes the language of Biblical prophecy, claiming the ‘period of the supposed Millennium’ will be marked by ‘universal love’.⁶¹ This language not only appropriates a guiding voice of spiritual authority in an increasingly secular age but its vague discourse accommodated a variety of diverging views.⁶² Although Engels claimed in 1852 that ‘Owen’s writings have been forgotten’ – arguably it is more that his place in British socialism goes uncredited.⁶³ When Marx discusses working conditions and the struggle for factory reform in England in *Capital* he makes no reference to work of Owen at New Lanark or his initiative in limiting the working day and regulating child labour.⁶⁴ Owen’s establishment of the Institution for the Formation of Character (1816) and The School for Children (1817) at New Lanark have only recently been recognised as the origin of modern kindergartens and primary schools – despite their influence on the Education Acts of 1833 and 1902.⁶⁵

If Owenism’s place within British socialism is often misconstrued, any revision of his legacy must examine a broad range of sources that go beyond pure academic scholarship. Owenite literature was extensive, and its influence can be seen in works like Morris’ *News from Nowhere*

⁵⁶ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 209, p. 235 and p. 254.

⁵⁷ Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p. 161.

⁵⁸ Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Witney: Lang, 2010), p. 55.

⁵⁹ Friedrich Engels, ‘Letters from London,’ in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1843-44 Vol. 3* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), p. 379.

⁶⁰ Thompson, *The Making of*, p. 659.

⁶¹ Robert Owen, ‘An Address to the Inhabitants of New Lanark’, in Robert Owen, *A New View of Society, and Other Writings* (London: Dent, Everyman’s Library, 1966), p. 197, cited in Kumar, ‘Utopian Thought,’ p. 15.

⁶² Claeys, ‘Non-Marxian Socialism,’ p. 554.

⁶³ Levitas, *The Concept*, p. 61.

⁶⁴ Hasselmann, ‘The Impact of Owen’s Ideas,’ p. 288.

⁶⁵ Siméon, ‘Robert Owen,’ p. 5; Ophélie Siméon, *Robert Owen’s Experiment at New Lanark: From Paternalism to Socialism* (Springer International Publishing AG, 2017), p. 6.

(1890).⁶⁶ Much like Owen, Morris spoke of how machinery would be harnessed in order to free labourers of their enslavement and ‘achieve a state of practical equality.’⁶⁷ Likewise, Morris’ vision of London being transformed into a collection of villages seems to echo Owen’s decentralised, federalist, communitarian agenda. Booth’s socialist work *In Darkest England, and the Way Out* (1890) is similarly indebted to Owenism – with Booth claiming that he intends to ‘start a co-operative farm on the principles of Ralahine’.⁶⁸ Haworth has stressed that Owen’s plans were precursors to modern day town-planning, whilst Owen’s emphasis on conciliation meant that the manifesto of the first co-operative, founded in Rochdale in Manchester in 1844, bore a strong resemblance to Owenism’s tenets.⁶⁹ Although no government describes itself as Owenite, this is largely due to the dissemination of socialist ideas after 1848, as they were subsumed under the categories of Marxism, democratic socialism and syndicalism.⁷⁰ Siméon has pointed out, however, that Owen was a major source of inspiration for the 1946 New Towns Act which explicitly declared that the Labour Government would reignite the Owenite impulse ‘to provide decent conditions...for workers, which [is] one of the things that gave birth to...Socialism’.⁷¹ Siméon astutely traces Owenite influence right up to contemporary British politics – pointing out that Blair’s

‘third way’ built off Owenism’s anti-revolutionary, moderate socialism that stressed ‘traditional community and solidarity values as opposed to...[an] abusive Cromwellian state.’⁷² In fact, Blair’s 1996 pamphlet mentioned Owen as an ‘early socialist’ who recognised that ‘a society that did not encourage people voluntarily to carry out their responsibilities...would always be in danger of slipping into...the tyranny of collective coercion’.⁷³ In this way, Owenism continues to posit a refreshing alternative to conventional Marxism and inadvertently reveals the limitations of an ideology that takes starts and ends with Marx and Engels.

It is perhaps within the tradition of communal living though, that Owen’s socialist legacy is strongest. Figure two is a 1970s advert for a Welsh co-operative project. Describing its aim of developing ‘local community ties’, self-sufficiency and a mixed economy – the project strongly echoes Owen’s ideas as laid out in *A New View of Society* (1813). Its rejection of the division of labour, the competitive system and commitment to sexual equality has led some historians to assert that ‘there is much in the modern commune that would be recognisable to the nineteenth century communitarian.’⁷⁴ Indeed, the number of communes in the 1970s outweighs that of the nineteenth century combined – again highlighting not only the undeniable

⁶⁶ Harrison, *Robert Owen*, p. 216.

⁶⁷ William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (London: Longman, 1919), p. 122 cited in Ronald George Garnett, *Co-Operation and the Owenite Socialist Communities in Britain, 1825-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), p. 226

⁶⁸ William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: n.p., 1890), p. 231 cited in *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁶⁹ Haworth, ‘Planning and Philosophy,’ p. 147; Siméon, ‘Robert Owen,’ p. 6.

⁷⁰ Taylor, *Utopian Socialists*, p. 37.

⁷¹ M. McAllister MP, Minutes of the House of Commons, HC Deb 08 May 1846, vol. 422 cc1072-184 cited in Siméon, ‘Robert Owen,’ p. 6.

⁷² Siméon, ‘Robert Owen,’ p. 6.

⁷³ Tony Blair, *New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country* (London : Fourth Estate, 1996) cited in Siméon, ‘Robert Owen,’ p.6.

⁷⁴ Dennis Hardy, *Alternative Communities in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Longman, 1979), p. 224.

longevity of Owen's ideas but also countering the criticisms made by those like Marx and Engels as to Owenism's 'fantastic..and hopelessly idealistic' character.⁷⁵

The historical record is not set in stone. Starting with Harrison's 1969 reappraisal, there has continued to be a stream of scholarship that counters a host of totalitarian and utopian accusations levelled at Owenism. Albeit limited by a dearth of primary source material, recent historians such as Siméon have taken a micro-historical approach to Owenite studies – looking at the logbooks and population statistics of experiments such as New Lanark in order to accurately gage their importance and broaden the study of Owenism from just an examination of Owen himself.⁷⁶ Likewise, in an attempt to gage public opinion at Ralahine, Geoghegan triangulates a range of sources including documenting the rise in applications to join the community from the local peasantry. Although overstating the number of applications – claiming they were 'numerous' when realistically they numbered in the tens – Geoghegan's research does help to counter the bulk of anti-Owenite scholarship.⁷⁷ Siméon in particular, seeks to challenge the idea that Owenism was 'flawed in essence' and points out the paradox arising from Owen's label as both the 'Father of Socialism' and a millenarian despot.⁷⁸ Historians like Gareth Stedman Jones, Claeys and Jonathan Beecher also interrogate the meaning of the words 'utopian' and

'scientific' socialism, highlighting the constant overlap between the two terms.⁷⁹ Claeys encourages us to assess Owenism's adherence to socialism in relation to its ends, not its means – warning of socialism's ability to attach new meanings to key terms.⁸⁰ Owenism is valuable, Claeys asserts, not necessarily due to its constructive programme but rather in its 'searching criticisms' and 'enthusiasm' for an alternative future.⁸¹ Kumar has gone so far as to claim that the failure of Soviet Russia is a measure of the impact of what was lost of socialism because of its rejection of Owenite communitarianism.⁸² In light of these overdue revisions, some aspects of Marxist teleology are no longer so dominant in Owenite studies and it is now preferable to speak of early, rather than utopian, socialism.⁸³

Overall, any revision of Owenism's place within British socialism, 1800-50 needs to interrogate the movement's blighted place within history more broadly. Owenism was neither eccentric, despotic nor naïve. Instead, it offered an innovative critique of a society plagued by socio-economic upheaval and proposed an ambitious plan for its alleviation. Despite the collapse of its experiments, Owen's occasional tendency towards coercion, and ideological inconsistency in the form of environmental determinism, these criticisms are neither fair metrics by which to judge the legitimacy of the movement, nor criticisms that cannot also be levelled at other early socialists. The biggest of downfall of Owenism was the fact that it did

⁷⁵ Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p. 161.

⁷⁶ Siméon, *Robert Owen's Experiment*, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Geoghegan, 'Ralahine,' p. 404.

⁷⁸ Siméon, *Robert Owen's Experiment*, p. 5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁸⁰ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 19.

⁸¹ Claeys, 'Non-Marxian Socialism,' p. 555.

⁸² Kumar, 'Utopian Thought,' p. 22.

⁸³ Claeys, 'Non-Marxian Socialism,' p. 525.

not pay sufficient attention to devising the means for its ends.⁸⁴ In regard to Owen's place within socialism, albeit undeniably lacking a material conception of history and shifting its focus over time – the end goal of Owenism hardly differs from orthodox Marxism. Both ideologies were reactions to industrialisation that envisaged a future where labour, culture and self-cultivation would be widely accessible.⁸⁵ In some cases, such as in its commitment to non-violence, Owenism arguably transcends Marxism. In Owenism, the lines between theory and practice are consistently blurred, and thus it is inherently more vulnerable to criticisms than other movements. Despite Owen lamenting that '[his] principles have never been carried out', the longevity of his thinking is reflected not just in the labour and co-operative movements that immediately followed his death but in present-day communal experiments and more recent New Labour policies.⁸⁶ The period 1800-1850 is important because it witnessed the birth of two different, but equally legitimate and interrelated types of British socialism – its traditional, constitutional manifestation embodied in Chartism, and its perfectionist and transcendental form embodied in Owenism. Although any study of Owenism is inevitably weakened by a chronic lack of source material, recent historiography has freed Owenism from reductive teleological Marxist readings and broadened the discussion to include a greater diversity of figures. Despite Harrison's claim that it is 'doubtful' whether there is much to be learned of Owenism, many of the problems that Owen outlined almost two centuries ago regarding man's relationship with work

and his environment, and the existence of mass suffering amidst plenty, are still pertinent today.⁸⁷ Through taking Owen and his ideas seriously, perhaps he can still offer some practical guidance for the twenty-first century.

⁸⁴ Chushichi Tsuzuki, 'Robert Owen and Revolutionary Politics', in Sidney Pollard and John Salt (eds.), *Robert Owen, Prophet of the Poor: Essays in Honour of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of His Birth* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 41.

⁸⁵ Claeys, *Citizens*, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Haworth, 'Planning and Philosophy,' p. 152.

⁸⁷ Harrison, 'A New View of Mr. Owen,' p. 1.

APPENDIX

Fig 1.

**The Goblin Sprite, or the Old Women
and the Bugaboo.**

Mother Fillpurse.—Ah, here it is! the deuce is in the imp, it's *here, there, and everywhere* in a moment, and *not a blow* can we give it.

Mother Blightfield.—Curse it! when we try to *hit it*, we only *hit ourselves*. Here it is; ha! it's gone again! and bids us defiance, too!

Mother Cantaway.—What shall we do to destroy it? If it is suffered to run about our *holy house*, it will soon corrupt the *morals* of our children, to say nothing of our own. Mother Wellington, you've been along of the sogers, perhaps you know of the best method to put an end to the varmint.

Mother Wellington.—Why, the best way I know of to kill all these unorthodox devils is with a mixture of *dry powder, leaden pills, and steel lozenges*, strewed about; but I'm afraid, if great tact is not observed, the *experiment* will prove rather *dangerous* to ourselves.

Cartoon from *The Penny Satirist*, 1840.

Harrison, J.F.C, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: The Quest for the New Moral World* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969)

Fig 2.

'People are wanted to develop a rural village cooperative on the Welsh borders. A group of cottages and some land is available. Anyone interested should be concerned to relate personal growth to a wider political perspective of alterative, feminist and socialist ideas. Long-term aims would be to develop local community ties, build more houses, be relatively self-supporting with a mixed workshop agricultural economy. Capital is not essential, willingness to work hard is.'

Advertisement in *In the Making*, a directory of co-operative projects, No.4 (1977), p. 53.

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WHAT IS THE EARTHLY CITY AND WHAT IS THE CITY OF GOD?

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ABSTRACT: In *The City of God*, Saint Augustine's conceptualisation of two realms emerges: the earthly city and the city of God. Augustine's distinction portrays the imperfect nature of the earthly city, contrasting it with the domain of divine perfection. This essay navigates through Augustine's elucidation of the consequences of sin and the redemptive mercy offered by God, refracting insights on theodicy, justice, peace, and happiness as they intersect with the existence of the two cities. While selection to the heavenly city of God represents one outcome for the citizens of the earthly city, non-selection and condemnation to eternal punishment represents the other. Augustine's vivid portrayal of the earthly city and the city of God serves as a salve for the anxieties produced by the Sack of Rome in 410, and a rebuttal of the pagan critique of Christians as the cause. His theological brushstrokes offer a sweeping vista of hope, emphasising the possibility to exist within this ethereal realm of transcendence that stands apart from the imperfect world. Ultimately, the Sack of Rome held marginal importance. Through this exploration, alternative interpretations of the two cities are unveiled, anchored in the profound eschatological underpinning that Augustine weaves into his opus.

IN *THE CITY OF GOD* SAINT AUGUSTINE of Hippo established his conceptualisation of two cities: the earthly city and the city of God; the city of man and the heavenly city. Where the city of God – the heavenly realm – embodied perfection, the earthly city represented a denigrated mediatory state. Augustine observed the social consequences of sinfulness and portrayed the earthly state as a function of God's mercy upon man to cope with this unnatural predicament. Augustine is considered amongst the greatest Church Fathers, foundational in the development of Christian tradition and Western Philosophy. The fundamental eschatological nature of his concepts propagated the idea of Augustine being a bridge between the patristic period he belonged to and the medieval Christian society of the commencing centuries. *The City of God* encapsulates the essence of this. Augustine formulated the treatise as a refutation to pagan critiques in the aftermath of the sack of Rome in 410, particularly the claim that Rome's fall resulted from the adoption of the Christian God and the abolition of pagan worship by the Roman Emperors.¹ Augustine aimed to show the truth of Christianity over the pagan traditions and philosophies; he also elucidates upon the inherited sin of man from Adam, the suffering of the righteous, the nature of evil, and the distinction between free will and divine predestination.² Where his *Confessions*, an autobiographical project emphasising his sinful youth and spiritual development on the path to finding Christianity, can be labelled a theology of the self, *The City of God* is a theology of history that completes this project. In *The City of God*, Augustine

presents the history of the world as a conflict between God and the devil manifested in the ends attributed to the earthly city – the victory of the heavenly city and its citizens is predestined over the inhabitants of hell. While the existence of man on Earth is unnatural, Augustine argues that a flawed state can better correspond to the flawed nature of humanity. By bestowing divine grace, God will save the elected from the earthly city at the final judgement, guiding them towards the realm of heavenly perfection. In stark juxtaposition, divine justice delivered through the withdrawal of divine mercy firmly governs the destiny of the damned non-elects, consigning them to the realm of hell and eternal punishment. This essay will distinguish between the earthly city and the city of God as presented in Augustine's *City of God*, serving the role of refuting paganist critiques by substantiating earthly matters as insignificant. An examination of Augustine's philosophical thought, its interaction with justice, peace, and happiness will elucidate the faculty of existence for the two cities. This essay will also elaborate on what the end of the respective cities are and juxtapose some alternative interpretations of his two cities.

Understanding the context is crucial in comprehending the aim and meaning of Augustine's two cities. *The City of God* was written in refutation to paganistic claims produced in the aftermath of the Sack of Rome in 410. The event left Romans and contemporaries alike in a deep state of shock, for the Eternal City was never meant to fall. What could assume itself safe if the city that took the world was itself taken? It was a question that rocked foundations.³ The adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire turned a

¹ Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward, *Religion and Political Thought* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 25.

² G.J. Lavere, 'The political realism of Saint Augustine', *Augustinian Studies*, Vol. 11 (1980), p. 135.

³ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 288.

persecuted minority into the ultimate bandwagon: where Rome was, the Church would be. Another question arose, this time about the relationship between the Church and the state, which had seemingly been reconciled. This reconciliation was exemplified through the penance of Theodosius I, under the guidance of Saint Ambrose (Bishop of Milan and teacher of St. Augustine), after the Massacre of Thessalonica in 390. However, this relationship was promptly thrown back into uncertainty with the sack of Rome. Nonetheless, Augustine's incorporation of the forwarded apprehensions about Christianity's role in the cataclysmic event into the new doctrines he presented allowed the mending of fundamental bridges as opposed to burning them. In addition, Augustine aimed to provide a systematic account suggesting the opposite, offering a Christian substitute history and eschatological alternative to make sense of such downfalls, stressing the importance of acquiescence.⁴ Augustine's Christianised history declared the claims of the pagans as misrepresenting why Rome was successful to begin with. Success was not caused by pleasing pagan gods; rather, the sound virtue of the old Romans drew the favour of God.⁵ Indeed, Rome had been sacked before the advent of Christ, were his followers to be blamed for this too? This position is further emphasised by Augustine in Book V, Chapter 1, damning the suggestion that Rome's success was caused by God handing over his will to fortuitous circumstances or the position of the stars, doing 'heaven a grave injustice'.⁶ Certainly, the doctrine of divine providence played a pivotal role in Augustine's

theological outlook. The implementation of such a *sub specie aeternitatis* assessment serves the purpose of minimising the importance of the fall of Rome, for Augustine considers it merely a speck in the divine plan of God. As J.S. McClelland states, it was a very intellectually audacious position from Augustine, to render Rome's fall irrelevant.⁷ Within this context, Augustine implemented a cohesive linear sequence seamlessly integrating his conceptualisation of the ontological separation of the earthly city, with the course of human history progressing toward the divine selection for the city of God. This overarching perspective held paramount importance, overshadowing individual events, no matter how impactful they may be.

St. Augustine's foundational approach in elucidating the earthly city and the city of God is to depict both as a *polis*, or city. Augustine's impetus to construct the conception as such is derived from his understanding that God allows the establishment of provisional states to make life bearable in the human condition of sinfulness. In Genesis, Cain murders his brother Abel, and his sons are the source of the first cities. Augustine discerns within this narrative a profound parallel between the ultimate destinies of the earthly city. Those endowed with divine grace are portrayed as transcendentally separated, ascending to the city of God, while the damned are consigned to a divergent fate. His definition of city is traced to Cicero's *De Re Publica*, defining it as a community of people with an agreement in law and what is good for the people, in hope of achieving justice and peace.⁸ While the city

⁴ Adam Kotsko, *The Prince of This World* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2016), p. 177.

⁵ Andrew R. Murphy, 'Augustine and the Rhetoric of Roman Decline', *History of Political Thought*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (2005), p. 591.

⁶ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by Henry Bettenson, (London: Penguin Classics, 2009)

⁷ J.S. McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 96.

⁸ *Ibid.*

of God is subsumed by it in perfect form, the earthly city cannot find justice or peace, nor is its law eternally binding and unchangeable, as Cicero asserts. Indeed, while human law might reflect some degree of the orderliness of God's law and goodness, Augustine makes clear that it cannot stand as a copy, for the perfection of God cannot be replicated in this world. This is the basis of Augustine's argument that the Roman Republic was not a true *res publica*. Justice, the virtue of giving others their due, could not be established in a commonwealth that worshipped pagan gods. The same applied to finding peace and happiness or establishing truth and law. Once the two cities' forms are established, it can then be inferred that the development of these counter realities, cascades not only in different being or thinking, but difference in the form of love they exude. In Book XIV, Chapter 28, Augustine declares that the two cities are created by two different loves; the earthly by the love of the self, in contempt of God and the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of the self.⁹ To expound upon this, the earthly city is distracted by its infatuation with the temporal. Comparatively, the city of God cares only for God and his eternal truth; the importance of acquiesce lays here, that the ever-present struggle of the righteous is rewarding as it complies with the plan of the divine, fostering an ethic of compromise for as peaceful a coexistence in the unnatural earthly city as possible. While love is an ever-present motif in Augustine's conceptualisation of the two cities, how he defines love of the self in contempt of God, is more multi-faceted. The earthly city can be characterised by a love of pride for an ordinary citizen or emperor. As Augustine states in both Book XII, Chapter 6 and Book XIV, Chapter 13, 'Pride is the

beginning of sin' and it is a vehicle to earn God's disdain and the abandonment of the soul.¹⁰ The search for peace and justice through this means is ultimately futile, and for that reason it is marked with imperfection. The standard of loving the self leads to man being the premise to set the corollary criteria; this standard of opinion is falsity and thus the earthly city is characterised by lies, violence and death. The city of man is therefore subsumed in unhappiness. Conversely, the city of God which embodies perfection, houses God and the angels, containing truth, peace, justice, and happiness, subsumed by perfect love, continuing for eternity.

Augustine in his theodicy is adamant that good precedes evil. Man's natural condition was innocence until the fall of Adam, resulting from an act of disobedience. As such, bad has no independent existence and is simply falling away from God. The origin of this argument from Augustine, is in refutation of the Manicheans he once associated with. Manichaeism maintained the duality of light and dark, with an evil creator co-existing with a good creator. Augustine, willingly or not, incorporates aspects of Platonism to refute this, drawing parallels between Plato's form of good and the sun, and that of Christianity and God. Augustine constructed a framework that substantiated the presence of some elements of goodness within this world of imperfection. This framework facilitated an emphasis of God's mercy to reconcile human fallibility, offering the opportunity to be chosen for salvation, countering the notion of an evil co-creator's existence. From this, it can be deduced that just as love of the self characterises the earthly city, it can also be marked with what is considered bad. Similarly, the city of God can be

⁹ Augustine, *City of God*, p. 515.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 467 and p. 515.

characterised by the love of God and is marked by complete goodness – befitting man’s original condition and his natural inclination to please God. Yet Augustine is critical of the Neoplatonists, rebuking their ways within the construct of the two cities. In Book XIII, Chapter 16-19, Augustine explains how they erroneously believed that the soul and body were divested before their return to God, independent of the divine. Refuting this was key for Augustine’s conception of the two cities, but also his linear eschatological timeline, as it allowed for the insertion of the ideas of reward and punishment as respective ends of the citizens of the earthly city. Augustine’s social pessimism and insistence on the self-destructiveness of a life preoccupied with the earthly city, resulting from succumbing to desire, is bred by his disapproval of the dualism of Manichaeism and the Platonist emphasis on the splitting of body and soul. While he implements this framework to spiritual institutions in *The City of God*, how Augustine extrapolates this view as defining the respective cities from an individual can be seen in his earlier works, particularly *The Confessions*. Here Augustine’s regret for following Manichaeism, but more importantly, the two-fold assessment of his sinful youth, is established. In Book XX, Chapter XXIX, Augustine proclaims that God never goes away from man, only man has difficulty in returning to God.¹¹ This notion complements his earlier statement in Book I, Chapter XII, where he states that ‘the punishment of every disordered man is his own disorder’.¹² Augustine in an assessment of his own confessed sinful phase of life, establishes key concepts in his

conceptualisation of the two cities; that bad has no independent existence and is simply falling away from God, and that the lack of God’s grace in the life of the disordered who love themselves, is punishment in itself, a key characteristic of the earthly city. It therefore holds that those who are not saved by the divine grace and elected to the city of God, are the citizens of the city of man. Here they will abide with the removal of any remnants of good and mercy from the earthly city, to be punished eternally.

The most popular and closest to literal reading of Augustine is one that posits the existence of two spiritual institutions, with all their components mixed together in this world, yet to be separated by God.¹³ What Rex Martin elicits as the ‘identification model’, is the interpretation that identifies the earthly city and the city of God, as the archetypal state and Church; this was a popular reading in medieval Christendom, the society most immediately impacted by Augustine.¹⁴ This view exacerbates the dangers of pessimism, for it can make man apathetic to his political and social condition, as a result of political and social devaluation: Augustine dictates that earthly states, while imperfect, exist to make life bearable in this condition of sinfulness. It does not imply an exhortation to repudiate earthly institutions. Correspondingly, it can trigger the dangers of optimism through clericalism; typical of medieval Christendom. It provided the means for a Christian ruler, or Church member, to fervently postulate that their actions paralleled that of God, striving to produce the heavenly city on earth, which would require an understanding of God’s

¹¹ Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 298.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹³ McClelland, *Political Thought*, p. 99.

¹⁴ Rex Martin, ‘The Two Cities in Augustine’s Political Philosophy’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (1972), p. 196.

plan. In light of the content of *The City of God*, this is an invalid position. Augustine in line with scripture, supports the position that God's method of election is ultimately mysterious to man, and the heavenly city and its citizens will only be completely distinguishable after the last judgement. Indeed, to know God's plan and be God amount to the same thing. In Book XX, Chapter 1, Augustine declares that Jesus Christ will descend from heaven to judge the living and the dead, and it will become 'wholly clear that only the good have true and full happiness, and that...only the evil have merited unhappiness'.¹⁵ The idea that the Church is the city of God, thus revealing who the citizens of the respective cities are beforehand, cannot be reconciled here. While Martin does not wholly agree with this interpretation, he promotes the idea that this view enables the exemplification of a clear distinction between state, its deficiencies and its Christianised form. That is to say, Martin proposes the idea that the Christianised state or Church, while not directly the city of God, maintains a special relationship with it, and acts as its earthly agent.¹⁶ This view lacks credence, for it is not what Augustine aimed to establish in his work – this is exemplified by his commentary on Matthew 13:24-43, the Parable of Tares.¹⁷ Augustine identifies the invisible distinction between wheat and weed, as growing within the Church, full of both good and bad. Thus, it can be inferred, that an interpretation that identifies any remnant of the City of God with a worldly institution, including the Church determined to be breeding weed, is not supported by Augustine. Suggesting a remnant of a single quality of the city of God, like goodness, is present in the earthly

city is wholly different to asserting that an entire institution is itself a remnant of the city of God. The eschatological nature of Augustine's *City of God*, supports the position that the city of God, will only be established in the context of God's last judgement. However, it must be acknowledged that Augustine does not go into detail as it pertains to how the mixture of the cities on Earth will work, and the details of their split.

Understanding the ultimate fate of the earthly city is critical in deciphering the eschatological conception of both the earthly city and the city of God. Augustine emphasises this point as he reiterates that people won't know in this life if they are citizens of the heavenly realm. Instead, God desires people to live this imperfect life to the best of their ability, despite its potential to afflict the mind, so that they may receive divine grace and attain the right end. To interject on one specificity here, the labelling of life as miserable, similarly to the command to acquiescence, can also lead to the danger of pessimism. Augustine's ends for the two cities are the Christian conceptions of ultimate good and ultimate evil, juxtaposed with the philosophical concept of supreme good and supreme evil.¹⁸ Marcus Terentius Varro, a prolific Roman author who Augustine quotes in *The City of God*, represents the classical philosophical position, that eudemonia (happiness), is the supreme good; the supreme evil will be the opposite of this – both can be found within the human. Augustine contravenes, stating that only God can provide true happiness and thus the attempts of the philosophers is fruitless. In Book XIX, Chapter 14, Augustine explains that the ultimate good is eternal life in the

¹⁵ Augustine, *City of God*, p. 703

¹⁶ Martin, 'Two Cities in Augustine's Political Philosophy', p. 200.

¹⁷ Saint Augustine, 'Sermon 23 on the New Testament' (<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1603.htm>, last accessed 4 October 2023).

¹⁸ McClelland, *Political Thought*, p. 101.

city of God, whereas eternal punishment, as an end of the earthly city with the withdrawal of God's mercy upon the damned, is the ultimate evil.¹⁹ Similar conclusions can be drawn from the concepts of eternal peace, eternal love, eternal justice, eternal happiness, and eternal truth, which are all subsets of eternal life.

As we conclude, it becomes evident that the doctrine of the imperfect earthly city of death, juxtaposed with the perfect city of God of eternal life, forms the fundamental basis of St. Augustine's response to pagan claims on Christianity in the aftermath of the sack of Rome. Ultimately, men are fruitless in their aim to establish peace, justice, and happiness in this realm, for it can only exist in its true form in the city of God. This is the basis of Augustine's interaction with the classical philosophers and the bewildered pagan Romans. He is quite astute in his aim to ease Roman anxieties, incorporating them into his philosophy; Rome was not to last for eternity, only the city of God had that status. Augustine emphasised that struggle is part of this life, yet some remnants of good can be found in it, denoting the mixture of the two cities in this world. Man was beset with a condition of sin since the fall of Adam, it was only in the hope of divine grace that the status of one's selection to the heavenly realm, mysterious hitherto, would be settled with the separation of the two cities.

¹⁹ Augustine, *City of God*, p. 691.

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TO WHAT EXTENT WAS JAPANESE POLITICAL CULTURE SHAPED BY POLITICAL AND CULTURAL MOVEMENTS CRITICAL OF ‘WESTERN CIVILISATION’?

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ABSTRACT: Following the growth of Western interactions with Japan from the Meiji Restoration onward, the “Civilisation Movement” in Japan led by government officials enacted the imitation and implementation of Western governing institutions and systems. As this movement gained pace, a substantial number of opposing movements formed in reaction throughout Japanese political life. A superficial analysis within historiography has thus culminated in the characterisation of Japanese political culture at this time as shaped by criticism of Western Civilisation. This thesis dispels this notion by illuminating the ways in which Japanese governing movements and actors continued to interact with and to some extent adopt the ideas and systems of Western Civilisation.

FROM THE LATTER half of the nineteenth century, ‘Western Civilisation’ became defined as the intellectual and material culture, systems, and institutions related to the “West”—namely Europe and the United States.¹ It was in this period, primarily due to Europe’s growing imperial dominance, that Western Civilisation was contextualised as a superior, more “civilised” and “enlightened” entity within the growing Social Darwinian framework of a hierarchy of nations, until the end of the Second World War.² From the steadfast introduction of various elements of Western culture and institutions following the modernisation projects of the Meiji restoration, discourse surrounding Western Civilisation has been formative for the construction of Japan’s modern political culture.³ Following the developments in Pan-Asianism and “traditionalist” thought in opposition to Western culture, historians have argued that this criticism had shaped the intellectual debate, government activities, and popular discourses of Japan’s political life.⁴ However, once examined this argument is revealed to be unsubstantiated due to its superficial analysis. This thesis instead proposes that the growth of these ideologies does not indicate a genuine movement toward a consensus of critique against Western Civilisation itself. Rather, when contextualised in the Social

Darwinian framework of the hierarchy of nations, it can be explained as a defensive reaction against contemporary Japan’s self-perception of inferiority.⁵ This is evidenced by the fact that despite this ostensible criticism, Japan continued to promote and implement Western systems nationwide for the benefit of its future. Further, it would pursue imperialist projects under Western notions of civilising missions, nominally under the pursuit of Pan-Asianism projects. Therefore, though present, Japan’s political culture was not shaped by criticisms towards Western Civilisation, instead, debate and discourse were directed by the subject of how to adopt, apply and respond to it within domestic and foreign policies.

Japanese intellectuals were formative in curating initial Japanese perceptions within government and popular discourse of Western Civilisation as they were involved in the initial first-hand interactions with Western nations.⁶ During and following the enthusiastic introduction of “civilisation and enlightenment” under the Meiji Restoration’s modernisation projects, many travelled to Western nations to observe the West’s intellectual and material strengths.⁷ This is demonstrated both by state-sponsored projects such as the Iwakura Mission between 1871-73 and the determination of independent Japanese intellectuals to pursue knowledge from foreign nations.⁸ Following these travels,

¹ Albert Craig, *Selected Essays by Fukuzawa Yukichi: On Government* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³ Shohei Saito, ‘Crossing Perspectives in ‘Manchukuo’ Russian Eurasianism and Japanese Pan-Asianism.’, *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (2017), p. 607.

⁴ Sven Saaler, ‘Pan-Asianism in modern Japanese history: overcoming the nation, creating a region, forging an empire’, in Sven Saaler and J. Victor Koschmann (eds.), *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, regionalism and borders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), p. 2; Benjamin Duke, *The History of Modern Japanese Education: Constructing the National School System, 1872-1890* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2009), p. 349.

⁵ Robert Eskildsen, ‘Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan’s 1874 Expedition to Taiwan’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 2 (2002), p. 390.

⁶ Shinichi Kitaoka, *The Political History of Modern Japan* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2018), pp. 28-29.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28; Sukehiro Hirakawa, *Japan’s Love-Hate Relationship with the West* (Folkestone, Kent: Global Oriental Ltd, 2005), p. 65.

intellectuals produced works appraising an often homogenised Western culture, illustrated in Fukuzawa Yukichi's bestseller *Conditions in The West* in 1866-69 and following essays such as *Outline of Theories of Civilisation* in 1875 following his travels abroad in 1862.⁹ Enthusiasm for the appropriation of Western Civilisation was shown in the latter work whereby Fukuzawa articulates the West's intellectual, commercial, and industrial superiority.¹⁰ Further, he notes that the goal for Japan should be to reach "European civilisation" through selective imitation and adoption of its culture and techniques.¹¹

These intellectual discourses thereafter penetrated government debate, initially demonstrated by Okuma Shigenobu, a politician heavily involved in the "civilisation movement", who collaborated with Fukuzawa to promote the idea of a constitution, following Western models.¹² This is not to say Fukuzawa's influence on political culture was absolute. However, given his monograph's popularity as a bestseller, he was formative in igniting discourse amongst his contemporaries.¹³ This was evidenced by the likes of Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi who soon favoured Germany as an appropriate model for Japanese institutional structure, and Sakuma Shozan who called for a more "selective process of Westernisation".¹⁴ Thus, not only was a

consensus of endorsement toward the implementation of Western Civilisation within intellectual discourse, but also, the variations of thought which developed illustrate the way in which this debate monopolised Japan's political culture. There were, however, other schools of thought that provided alternative views for civilisation in the modernisation process such as simultaneous developments in "Buddhist Modernism", which emerged in the nineteenth century against encounters with "Western modernity".¹⁵ Though one must acknowledge the diversity of propositions in reaction to Western Civilisation, to characterise the scope of Japan's political culture, it must be examined using a holistic approach. In doing so, movements of alternative visions take a marginal position in comparison to the consensus of endorsement of Western Civilisation. Overall, when analysing the consensus and variations of intellect and government discourses which developed, it is evident that Japanese political culture was ultimately overwhelmingly shaped by discourse regarding how to respond, adapt, and apply Western Civilisation for the benefit of Japan's future.

To sufficiently understand how political culture was shaped, its full scope must be analysed, beyond establishment politics and analyse popular discourse. Sebastian Conrad highlights how during the

⁹ Hirakawa, *Japan's Love-Hate Relationship*, p. 65; Albert M. Craig, *Civilization and Enlightenment: The Early Thought of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 10; Craig, *Selected Essays*, p. 19.

¹⁰ Yukichi Fukuzawa, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, translated by David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst III (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 128-129.

¹¹ Craig, *Civilization and Enlightenment*, p. 104.

¹² Jan Schmidt, 'Just for the Record: Ōkuma Shigenobu and the Mediatisation of 1910s Japanese Politic(ian)S', *Media History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2022), p. 64; Kitaoka, *The Political History*, p. 32.

¹³ Sebastian Conrad, 'Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 117, No. 4 (2012), p. 1017.

¹⁴ Mark R. Thompson, 'Japan's 'German Path' and Pacific Asia's 'Flying Geese', *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (2010), p. 708.

¹⁵ Prasenjit Duara, 'The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism', *Journal of World History*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2001), p. 102; Jeff Schroeder, and Richard K. Payne, *The Revolution of Buddhist Modernism: Jōdo Shin Thought and Politics, 1890–1962* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2022), p. 12.

period of debate over European enlightenment, nations such as Japan unconsciously adopted Western Civilisation's geopolitical language, understanding, and standards of civilization and barbarism into popular discourse.¹⁶ This notion is demonstrated by the way in which the Geisha, a distinguished figure within Japanese culture, was subjected to moral standards introduced by Western Civilisation of "civilisation and enlightenment" within this period.¹⁷ This began with feminist activists such as Ishimoto Shidzue projecting Western Civilisation's standards of sexual morality against the geisha, calling the figure "enemies of civilization in Japan".¹⁸ This increasingly frequent public discourse normalised and encouraged the vernacular and cultural standards of Western Civilisation within popular political debate. This increasing appropriation of Western moral standards in public opinion is shown when examining how Tokyo brothels promoted their efforts to "enlighten" Geishas within popular newspapers by opening schools to provide them with Western education.¹⁹ In acknowledging their aim of raising their profile within the public eye, one can infer an established adoption of enlightenment values within the public realm.²⁰ This phenomenon extended beyond Tokyo as the increasing use of this vocabulary was accompanied by translations of Western political texts for Japan's public readership.²¹ Translations of

European texts such as *Democracy in America* by Tocqueville and Samuel Smiles's *Self-help* were published in the 1870s, discussing key Western concepts such as the idea of rights and decentralisation of government.²² This is not to say the publication of these texts resulted in the passive acceptance of Western political values. However, with the growing familiarity of European enlightenment thinkers such as J.S. Mill and Rousseau, accompanied by the increasing adoption of the moral framework of civilisation and enlightenment, it is evident criticism towards Western morality had been marginalised in popular discourse.²³ Thus, Japan's political culture was instead shaped by the adoption and appropriation of Western standards and ideals, demonstrated within public discourse.

The appropriation of Western Civilisation in Japan's political culture was extended beyond political discourse and consequently shaped domestic government policy. Within Japan's intellectual discourse, a "civilizational worldview" was adopted as a framework of understanding and examining the world, which entailed labelled contemporary nations as "civilised" or "barbaric" dependent on the aforementioned Western standards.²⁴ Following the adoption of this model, many Meiji intellectuals and government officials sought to appropriate Western knowledge and institutions in pursuit of a

¹⁶ Conrad, 'Enlightenment in Global History', p. 1010.

¹⁷ Amy Stanley, 'Enlightenment Geisha: The Sex Trade, Education, and Feminine Ideals in Early Meiji Japan', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (2013), pp. 540-41.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 551-2.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Reiji Matsumoto, 'Fukuzawa Yukichi and Maruyama Masao: Two "Liberal" Readings of Tocqueville in Japan Tocqueville, la Chine et le Japon', *The Tocqueville review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2017), p. 26.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Rustin B. Gates, 'Pan-Asianism in Prewar Japanese Foreign Affairs: The Curious Case of Uchida Yasuya', *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2011), p. 8.

“modernisation” project to contest a feeling of inferiority within contemporary geopolitics.²⁵ One of the most noteworthy domestic reform policies of the Meiji Restoration was the effort to modernise the Japanese military, under which the new government rapidly introduced modern weapons, systems, and techniques imitative of Western Civilisation.²⁶ Further, the Meiji government employed modernising individuals such as Yamagata Arimoto, who, following his travels in Europe and given his knowledge of Western military expertise, was hired as Vice Minister of Military Affairs.²⁷ Further, this knowledge would be applied in the implementation of a universal conscription system in February 1871, accompanied by Western-style uniforms, combat techniques, and weaponry.²⁸ Appropriation of Western systems was also evident in education reform, directed primarily by Mori Arimori. Prior to his appointment as First Minister of Education, he not only sought advice from American educators regarding education in Japan, but also, in 1872, went so far as to propose that Japanese be replaced by English as the national language.²⁹ Though he was criticised by many such as fellow enlightenment scholar Baba Tatsui, from his later employment in the government, one can infer that within government circles there was enthusiasm toward reform

policies that reflected, rather than criticised Western systems.³⁰

Historians such as Joseph Pittau and Robert Eskildsen note that the high point of the discourse surrounding civilisation and enlightenment was reached in the 1870s, casting a narrative of an increasing political culture shaped by criticism toward the West thereafter.³¹ However, in national government politics, it is evident these increasing criticisms of Western systems did not wholly shape Japanese political culture. This is most explicitly demonstrated in the government-endorsed Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890.³² Though it calls for more “traditional”, Confucian values to be obeyed such as the call for subjects to be “filial to your parents”, it simultaneously encourages Western values such as to “observe the laws”.³³ Further, the author employed to write the Rescript was scholar Inoue Kowashi, who after becoming a specialist in Western constitutional law following his European travels, was employed in writing the Prussian-style Meiji constitution of 1889.³⁴ From this, one can infer the continued endorsement of Western ideals within the Japanese government. In understanding that government policies were orientated around the imitation of Western institutions during this period, it is evident that Japan’s political culture was

²⁵ Gates, ‘Pan-Asianism in Prewar Japanese Foreign Affairs’, p. 8; Matsumoto, ‘Fukuzawa Yukichi and Maruyama Masao’, p. 23; Eskildsen, ‘Of Civilization and Savages’, p. 392.

²⁶ Robert F. Hackett, ‘The Meiji Leaders and Modernization: The Case of Yamagata Arimoto’ in Marius B. Jansen (ed.), *Changing Japanese Attitudes Towards Modernization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 250.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 253-259.

²⁹ Patrick Heinrich, *The Making of Monolingual Japan: Language Ideology and Japanese Modernity* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2012), pp. 21-23.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³¹ Joseph Pittau, ‘Inoue Kowashi, 1843-1895. And the Formation of Modern Japan’, *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 20, No. 3/4 (1965), p. 253; Eskildsen, ‘Of Civilization and Savages’, p. 392; Duara, ‘The Discourse of Civilization’, pp. 109-111.

³² Duke, *The History of Modern Japanese Education*, p. 348.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 356; Matsumoto, ‘Fukuzawa Yukichi and Maruyama Masao’, p. 21.

not shaped by criticisms towards Western Civilisation. Rather, contemporary political discourse was instead driven by debates over the tempo, priority, and selection of reforms, often characterised as a process of “Westernisation”.³⁵

Further, another government policy reflective of Japan’s imitation and therefore endorsement of Western Civilisation was the Japanese imperial model inaugurated at this time. It is evident that from the earliest moments of Japan’s imperial project, its rhetoric, notions, and motivations were imbued with the Western Social Darwinian language of civilisation and enlightenment. This is demonstrated in the use of the western justification for the colonisation of indigenous peoples, which ascribed civilisation as a form of currency, and it was the duty of those who had more, to bestow it upon those who perceivably had less.³⁶ These ideas were reflected in the justifications used for the 1874 “expedition” to Taiwan by the Japanese government, imbued with colonial intent.³⁷ Following the advice of American minister LeGendre hired by Japan’s foreign minister, Prime Minister Sanjo Sanetomi announced on April 5th, 1874, that one of the two purposes of the expedition – what LeGendre called the “real object” – was to “lead the natives gradually toward civilization”.³⁸ These concepts were echoed beyond the project and into the intellectual discourse of Japanese political culture. This manifested into the publication of *Fifty Years of New Japan* in

1907 by now-former Prime Minister and politician involved in the imperial project, Okuma Shigenobu. In his writings, he explicitly proclaims, “we have...and will endeavour, to carry the benefits of Western civilization...to our neighbours” by engaging in “the glorious humanitarian world of civilising”.³⁹

Though it is thus evident that Western ideas of exporting civilisation penetrated government discourse, to interpret this as shaping the entirety of Japan’s political culture, the full scope of public discourse must be examined.⁴⁰ Sources that illustrate that these ideas were active within popular discourse are contemporary newspapers such as the *Yubin hochi Shinbun*.⁴¹ This paper, like many others, emphasised the dichotomy of Japan’s status as a “civilised nation” in comparison to the savagery of the Taiwanese indigenous population.⁴² Though they more often used the familiar Chinese-language categorisation of savages, this paper indicates that increasing imperial notions of the Western civilising mission were shaping popular political discourse.⁴³ Demonstrated by its attempts to work within, rather than criticise the Social Darwinian framework, Japan utilised Western imperial justifications, vernacular, and systems, combined with its domestic reforms, to establish its position as a civilised nation, as set by Western standards.⁴⁴ It is therefore evident that Japan’s political culture was shaped not by the critique of Western Civilisation, but was

³⁵ Hackett, ‘The Meiji Leaders’, p. 269; Saito, ‘Crossing Perspectives in ‘Manchukuo’, p. 607.

³⁶ Conrad, ‘Enlightenment in Global History’, p. 1019.

³⁷ Eskilden, ‘Of Civilization and Savages’, p. 388.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 396-7.

³⁹ Shigenobu Okuma, *Fifty Years of New Japan*, translated by Marcus B. Huish (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1909), p. 53.

⁴⁰ Eskilden, ‘Of Civilization and Savages’, p. 389.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 392; Hackett, ‘The Meiji Leaders’, p. 245.

instead driven by discourses around the selective appropriation of its systems, resulting in a foreign policy imitative of contemporary Western imperialism.

One of the growing schools of thought in this period within Japan was Pan-Asianism, a political and cultural movement which articulated the belief of a racially, geographically, and culturally coherent Asia often interpreted with Japan as its leader.⁴⁵ Both historians such as Sven Saaler and contemporary figures such as Mitsukawa Kametaro place Pan-Asianism in inherent opposition with Western Civilisation.⁴⁶ With this context, historians have highlighted the encompassing growth of Pan-Asianism within political discourse as indicative that Japan's political culture was determined primarily by criticisms toward Western Civilisation. Conversely, this thesis contends that the growth of Pan-Asianism does not necessarily signify an increasing criticism toward Western Civilisation. Instead, its growth indicates a heightened concern of foreign threats from Western nations, whilst simultaneously subscribing to Western Civilisation's standards and world views.

Explicit growth of Pan-Asian thought is often highlighted through the political discourse of intellectuals and government officials. One of the earliest of such was Uchida Yasuya, a Japanese diplomat and later Foreign Minister who in 1891 wrote a collection of notes entitled

“Random Thoughts and Miscellaneous Writings”.⁴⁷ In this, he called for an East Asian union, with Japan leading Korea and China, ambiguously deploying their “civilisation and enlightenment” to make them “submit”.⁴⁸ Supported by the growing writings of Pan-Asianist works by the likes of Okakura Tenshin and Tarui Tokichi, discourses such as these were acknowledged and discussed within the political realm.⁴⁹ This is demonstrated by Koderia Kenkichi, a contemporary member of the Lower House of the Imperial Diet who in 1916 wrote his “Treatise on Greater Asianism”.⁵⁰ In this he called for a Japanese-led “Asian civilization” under which Japan would act as the “educator”, introducing Asia to “Western modern civilization”.⁵¹ Further, his works were utilised by politicians and intellects such as Sawayanagi Masataro in his book “Asianism”, as well as Murobuse Takanobu's study on Asianism in the post-World War I world.⁵² Further, Pan-Asianist thought gained popularity within the public realm, which manifested into various increasingly popular movements in this period. The growing popularity of pan-Asianism was manifested in the creation of the Manchurian Youth League in 1928.⁵³ This group of educated Japanese youth and small merchants were a major proponent of promoting the idea of a racially harmonious relationship with China, whereby Manchuria would as a focal point for

⁴⁵ Gates, ‘Pan-Asianism in Prewar Japanese Foreign Affairs’, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Sven Saaler, ‘Pan-Asianism in modern Japanese history’, p. 2; Christopher W.A. Szplingman, ‘Between Pan-Asianism and nationalism: Mitsukawa Kametaro and his campaign to reform Japan and liberate Asia’, in Sven Saaler and J. Victor Koschmann (eds.), *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, regionalism and borders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 91.

⁴⁷ Gates, ‘Pan-Asianism in Prewar Japanese Foreign Affairs’, pp. 1-8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Sven Saaler, ‘The Construction of Regionalism in Modern Japan: Koderia Kenkichi and His ‘Treatise on Greater Asianism’ (1916)’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 6 (2007), p. 1261.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1262-9

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1269.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 1286-7.

⁵³ Mariko Asano Tamanoi, *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), p. 11.

cooperation toward elevating both the Chinese culture and economy.⁵⁴ Though this uptick in popularity is frequently interpreted as an index for growing opposition to Western Civilisation, when analysing the language of these Pan-Asianist thinkers and movements, it is evident its ideology was imbued with ideas of strengthening an Asian union with Western standards of ‘civilisation and enlightenment’. One can thus deduce that its growth in popularity was less reflective of an increase in criticism toward Western culture, than illustrative of the growth of concerns as to how to defend against Western imperialism, with many perceiving the strengthening of Asia an apt solution.⁵⁵

One of the largest manifestations of the Pan-Asianism movements which historians use as evidence for the idea that Japan’s political culture had become shaped by ideologies critical of Western Civilisation is the project to create the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Curated by Japanese government officials, the vision of this “sphere” was the establishment of a regional political-economic bloc, from which Foreign minister Matsuoka Yosuke announced, Japan would liberate “the peoples of the orient against “the white race bloc” or Western Civilisation.⁵⁶ Historians have emphasised the Co-Prosperity Sphere as a project born from the ideologies of *Meishuron* or Japan-led Pan-Asianism, whereby efforts were made to homogenise Asian citizens through educating and “infusing” them with Japanese “values and culture” in opposition to Western

Civilisation.⁵⁷ However, once analysed, it is evident this was not a result of genuine criticism toward Western culture and the promotion of Japanese values. Instead, within the context of the “Greater East Asia War” nominally waged against Western domination, this project was motivated by efforts to defend and strengthen Japan’s political-economic dominance both within Asia and against their wartime adversaries.⁵⁸ This observation was even made by contemporaries, such as Prime Minister Tojo in 1942, who at a liaison conference asked what the difference was between “the national defence sphere” and “the co-prosperity sphere”, where he was met with little response.⁵⁹ This evidence combined thus demonstrates that efforts toward creating the Co-Prosperity Sphere were not wholly driven by Pan-Asianist thought, which itself was supposedly inherently critical of Western Civilisation. Instead, this manifestation of the climax of the Pan-Asianism movement ultimately indicates that Japanese political culture was encompassed by a debate over how to react and respond to the threats of Western Civilisation within the wartime context.

Following the rapid modernisation projects of the Meiji Restoration, the impact of the appropriation of the culture, systems, and values of Western Civilisation in Japanese society was immense. This thesis does not deny the existence of critiques of Western Civilisation within Japanese political culture; however, these did not shape, nor steer, political discourse. The political life of Japanese society was instead driven by concerns regarding how

⁵⁴ Tamanoi, *Crossed Histories*, p. 11.

⁵⁵ Szplingman, ‘Between Pan-Asianism and nationalism’, p. 92.

⁵⁶ Jeremy A. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), p. 4.

⁵⁷ Eri Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan’s War 1931-1945* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 86 and p. 204.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 199; Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, p. 11.

⁵⁹ Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, p. 4.

to adapt, apply, and imitate elements of Western Civilisation for the modernisation of Japanese society. This is shown in the earliest stages of its modernisation through the undeniable enthusiasm towards the appropriation of Western vernacular, doctrines, and moral standards by political intellectuals, public officials, and popular culture. This went beyond the bounds of discourse as Western systems were appropriated both in domestic structures and in imperialist projects. Though Pan-

Asianism evidently grew, the supposition that this observation indicates a growth in genuine criticism towards Western Civilisation proves shallow when contextualised against the perceived threats of international competition. Thus, it is evident that Japan's political culture was not shaped by movements critical of Western Civilisation, but rather, in all realms was shaped by discourse about how to appropriate, adapt, and respond to it within intellectual and material culture.

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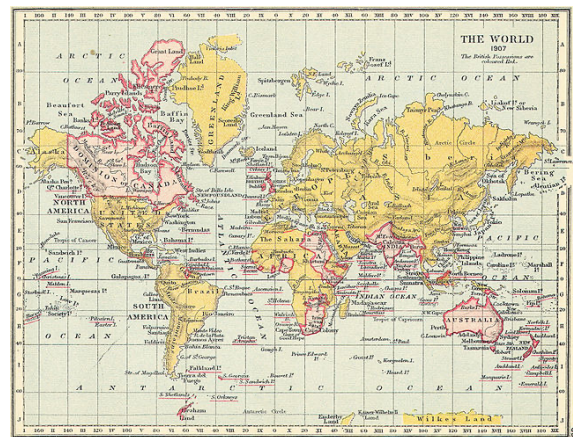
REVIEWS

LEGACY OF VIOLENCE: A HISTORY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

CAROLINE ELKINS

London, The Bodley Head, 2022, 875 pp.

IT HAS LONG BEEN ORTHODOXY among historians to note the unsuitability of those (in)famous rosette-coloured maps for representing and understanding the British Empire.¹ The homogeneity, power, and confidence they asserted are seen as an exercise in invention and propaganda that obscured a much more splintered and uneasy reality. Not so for the author of this explosive piece. The maps are afforded prominent places, occupying two double-spread pages on the book's inside covers. No arbitrary choice: they feel aptly located. After all, Caroline Elkins' new work was not intended to slot neatly into the libraries of established historiographies, but instead, building on her earlier work *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*, confront Britain's allegedly largely amnesiac public with a searing indictment of its nation's 'liberal imperialism', exposing the brutal racialised violence endemic (and increasingly so) to its seemingly reformist endeavour.² Confront, she does. Elkins unpacks a disturbing history of punitive violence, incarceration, and torture, facilitated and justified by imperial law. She demonstrates how methods of violence spread around the empire, often by officials moving between colonies, with a particular focus on India, Ireland, Palestine, Malaya, Cyprus and



World Map with 'British Possessions' coloured red/rosette, from 1907, unknown author.

South Africa. Britain's civilising mission emerges as a wholly malevolent force. Lacking any genuine qualities, it was instead a discursive cloak for repression, as well as its very ideological basis. Calling for the punishing of indigenous peoples who resisted colonial authority, it provided a moral effect of subduing and domesticating them.³ Violence was thus not just a means but also an end.⁴

That violence was important to the maintenance of empires, whether they were European or not, is not new. Nor is the argument that a sense of racial superiority could help permit and justify severe repression.⁵ Nonetheless, the amalgamation of records of imperial violence into such a cohesive work is laudable and will prove important for generating further research into a topic that

has sometimes played second fiddle to emphases on negotiation and collaboration with indigenous peoples. Such research must be cautious however – there is much for historians to take from this work, not least the fruits of important archival work, but also much to be avoided.

Crucially, this research should not, as Elkins does in constructing her narrative of endemic racialised violence, lose sight of the significant complexity of empire. Many of the assumptions underpinning her work are plagued by over-simplification. For one, British views of indigenous populations cannot be explained, as Elkins suggests, by sole reference to (a sometimes constructed, rather than actual) skin colour. While few would deny that ideas of racial difference were a foundational ideological framework for many within the empire, it was not *'the mark of difference'* by which shades of humanity and civility were measured, but (an important) one among many.⁶ Looking for points of difference and similarity with indigenous groups, British agents variably drew off narratives of earlier European explorers, their colleagues and indigenous peoples, as well as their own (diverse) experiences. They assessed what they could grasp of indigenous peoples' social, cultural, and religious practices, as well as political and military organisation, all against their own civilisational benchmarks. This hierarchy was thus one of multiple interlocking subjective measures in which indigenous peoples of similar skin tones could have very different placing. The Ganda of Uganda, for example, were widely held in particularly high regard. Early explorers such as John Speke, Samuel Baker and James Grant had heaped much praise on Kabaka Mutesa (ca. 1857-1884), who was seen as the embodiment of his people, noting his significant military might, ability to send letters in Arabic and, more broadly,

the relatively developed (by their own western understandings of the term) pre-colonial state he oversaw.⁷ The Ganda's similarly impressive neighbours, the Nyoro, were not so lucky. To Baker, whose account was highly influential in British circles, their leader, Kamurasi, ruled by tyranny, deceit, and brutality.⁸ And so was formed a widely held dichotomy, in which the Ganda were highly civilised, and the Nyoro were not, regardless of their similar skin tone.⁹ Such distinctions were not uncommon. In early colonial Sudan, the Dinka were able to garner a favourable reputation among British officers, while ensuring that the neighbouring Nuer were seen as brutal savages.¹⁰ In northern Nigeria, the non-Muslim peoples of the Middle Belt were expected to learn from their supposedly enlightened Hausa-Fulani Muslim superiors – a narrative continually promoted and enhanced by the Hausa themselves.¹¹ Elkins' mention of constructed skin colour, by which peoples could be likened to those possessing a higher or lower position in a racial-civilisational hierarchy, helps explain some distinctions (like those sometimes made between Afrikaners and the British), but hardly all of them, and at all times.

Moreover, predicated on subjective measures and narratives, as these opinions were, they could never be as monolithic as Elkins' racial-civilisational hierarchy assumes. While there was undoubtedly some level of standardisation, British views of indigenous peoples remained eclectic and changeable. The widespread disdain for the Nuer was quickly undercut once Nuer chiefs challenged them in meetings with colonial administrators, and supposedly impending Nuer raids failed to materialise.¹² Administrators were divided and often became tribalised in their opinions. District Commissioners in the Mongalla Province tended to view the

Dinka more favourably, while those in the Upper Nile Province sought to resist what they called 'Dinka intrigue'.¹³ Even among early accounts of the Ganda there were dissenters, with the missionary Gordon viewing Mutesa as a 'stuck-up savage'.¹⁴ Though so strong a view never gained much currency among officials, by the 1920s many of them no longer admired the Ganda as extravagantly as they once had.¹⁵

But it is not just the British who are left as only partial caricatures of their true whole. Appreciating the advances made by sub-altern historians of the 1980-90s, Elkins notes the agency of indigenous populations in resisting colonial violence, and some of the diversity of means to that end.¹⁶ Yet while indigenous peoples who engaged in resistance are spotlighted, those who shaped, enacted and facilitated colonial violence are left residing in relative anonymity. We may ask what of the chiefs who manifested colonial authority in their localities, the interpreters and spies who controlled and manipulated information flow, the guides and scouts who directed expeditions and military columns and, of course, the indigenous soldiers who marched under the imperial flag? In Elkins' account, their agency is largely silent. To her, colonial violence was merely a product of 'the ideological and political will of, and choices made by, the purveyors of institutions that included Downing Street and Whitehall, as well as central and district administrators'.¹⁷ But this strict coloniser, colonised divide cannot be universally sustained. In Uganda, the protectorate's expansionist policy was as much, if not more so, the product of Ganda initiative than British.¹⁸ It was also a Ganda chief who was responsible for this policy's expansion in geographical scope from southern Bunyoro, with Chief Kakungulu first suggesting the invasion of Bukedi.¹⁹ The same chief was also able to use his

military might to establish forts on the Namulimuka, Kaweri and Kigi islands in Lake Kyoga on his own prerogative.²⁰ While the Ganda's level of agency was substantial relative to most other indigenous groups, many chiefdoms had the right to determine their own police forces or tribal retainers (choosing both size and personnel) for use at their discretion, meaning that low-level daily state violence could often be dispensed at the whim of a non-British agent.²¹ Even low-level officials could sometimes dispense state violence on their own initiative, as was common among Dinka soldiers in the Mongalla Province, who frequently used their military resources to intervene in disputes (sometimes drawing significant violence).²² The relative involvement of indigenous peoples in such activity varied of course, but it is part of the story of colonial violence nonetheless. Many more indigenous peoples, though not engaged in sanctioning violence, were crucial in shaping and facilitating it. Often the British found themselves embroiled in pre-existing disputes of which they could often only obtain partial information on and rarely adequately understood, making them susceptible to manipulation by interested parties. By curating the aforementioned derisory narrative about the Nuer, the Dinka, for example, successfully directed colonial violence towards them, leading to numerous destructive punitive patrols, which they often personally guided.²³ Others, in pursuit of their own interests, facilitated this violence. As Tirthankar Roy has shown, merchants and bankers were central to the British war effort during the Mutiny of 1857, staking money and material to help the British military operation in northern and central India, while maintaining crucial long-distance trade routes and displaying a policy of passive resistance in rebel-held areas.²⁴

Equally important, if not more so, were the vast colonial armies filled by indigenous volunteers (and those pressed into service) that made up, and shaped, much of the British imperial force.²⁵ When Elkins does mention such figures they are often portrayed as members of a narrow elite, reduced to statistics (without comment on what their significant size can tell us), noted for their ‘crimes’, or used to evidence ‘British’ domination, a diminution, mischaracterisation and denial of agency that sits uneasily with prevailing emphases on uncovering indigenous voices.²⁶

Perhaps more surprisingly, given her emphasis on indigenous resistance, this mismatch with prevailing emphases and simplification of indigenous agency is also evident in her characterisation of colonial law. Instead of building on narratives that have established courts as important sites for contesting colonial authority, claiming rights, and gaining protection, Elkins returns us to an older historiography which viewed colonial law as simply an instrument of hegemony.²⁷ To her, it was only utilised to codify difference, curtail freedom, expropriate land and ensure labour supply while any demands subject populations may have made resulted in criminalisation and suppression.²⁸ While it was undoubtedly utilised for such means, the law was not just a resource for domination but also one for resistance. Indigenous peoples sought out administrators to lodge sometimes successful complaints, often couched on a moral, paternalistic or (sometimes imperial) citizenship basis.²⁹ Often times these were specifically focused on curtailing perceived (sometimes violent) excesses indigenous peoples faced from either their British or indigenous overlords.³⁰ Moreover, successful claims could build up a body of precedent constraining, rather than simply facilitating,

colonial rule, both locally in native courts and, in the case of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC), empire-wide.³¹ As Ibhawoh Bonny has demonstrated, the JCPC’s judgment over the *Amodu Tijani* case of 1921 reverberated across the empire because of the new precedent it set on the question of indigenous land rights, asserting the existence of a ‘pure native custom’ of communal land tenure across communities along the West African coast.³²

Without an appreciation of such nuances, the empire that emerges from Elkins’ narrative is one more coherent, more British and more dominant than we might have otherwise assumed. It is an empire in which the British are impossibly homogenous overlords to indigenous peoples who operated in near binary opposition to the British and with overly limited agency with which to determine their experiences of colonisation. Nonetheless, we should be cautious to dismiss Elkins’ work. Her emphasis on punitive violence and repressive uses of the law is valuable, reminding us of the brutality that could at times typify colonial rule. Instead, it can, and should, be worked into a more complete narrative – one in which violence, as with colonial rule more generally, is viewed not simply as the product of British machinations, but that of the interactions between local, national and transnational actors engaged in a process of negotiation, contestation and exchange.³³ This is not to say that these processes occurred between co-equal parties or in an inclusive manner. Indigenous peoples were only able to variably exert their influence in some places, at some times and only on some matters. Such a narrative better accounts for the full range of actors engaged in the shaping, enactment, facilitation and restriction of colonial violence as well as the highly variable

levels of violence across time and space not only in the empire at large, but in each colony. It also helps ward against broad brush arguments such as Elkins' that the empire 'became increasingly violent over time', a much too linear assertion that also pays no heed to variety, and instead enables us to understand the production of violence and repression in each locality on its own terms, in reference to the changeable power dynamics between, and demands of, metropolitan Britons, British men-on-the-

spot and varying groups and individuals from among the indigenous peoples of the colonies.³⁴ It foregrounds diversity, recentring what John Darwin coined the 'chaotic pluralism' of the empire, and crucially does not, as Elkins does, sacrifice nuance for neatness, when the reality of empire was really rather messy.³⁵

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