

# Queen Mary, University of London

## Undergraduate History Journal



Vol. 1 Issue. 1



Hello and welcome to the first ever edition of Queen Mary, University of London Undergraduate History Journal.

The aim of this publication is to provide a place in which undergraduates could display their best work. The School of History at QMUL is full of intelligent students undertaking historical work at an extremely high level. The journal offers the chance to publish some of this work and to allow a wider audience to read and enjoy it.

The path to publishing the journal has been a tricky one and I cannot thank the Editorial Team enough for their hard work and commitment. I would also like to thank Professor Julian Jackson and the School of History for facilitating the project and allowing us to create something new and exciting. Our long-term aim is for the publication to become an established part of the School of History and something that all undergraduates strive to have their work published in.

I hope you enjoy the issue, and encourage anybody reading this to send in their work for the second edition of this fantastic publication. There really is some remarkable talent at Queen Mary, something that I feel is exemplified by the quality of this publication.

**Ashley Sweetman**  
*Managing Editor*

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## Sexual transgression in the late Victorian slum.

*Michael Manning*

In July 1885 the Salvation Army marched across East London through the districts of Shoreditch, Hackney and Bishopsgate, as part of a nationwide purity campaign to purge the sexual transgressions of London's urban poor. The campaign was a direct outgrowth of a nineteenth-century Victorian anxiety and obsession over moral corruption and sexual deviancy, its increased association with the urban poor and a change in the discourse surrounding sexual deviance.

The prominence of the prostitute within London's urban slums highlighted the association between sexual transgression and working class districts. Judith Walkowitz's in *Prostitution and Victorian Society* uses the example of Swindling Sal: a prostitute originally from Coventry who relocated to London for economic gain (13). As London's urban slum districts were in many ways a haven for prostitutes in the Victorian period, a greater proportion of them congregated in these districts rather than in the city. Walkowitz explains

this was the nature of prostitution at the time, arguing the average Victorian prostitute treated the occupation as something temporary, or at least seasonal. She adds that part of the reason for this congregation was due to the formation of support networks between prostitutes within these localities (27).

London in the mid-to-late Victorian era had a relatively lenient approach to regulating the sex industry. Sex was not sold through institutions such as brothels but through free-lance work in specific areas. It explains why London's working class districts would have been an alluring prospect for the average Victorian prostitute as they attempted to get away from police-regulation whilst trying to stay out of the grasp of a pimp or brothel-owner. Prostitution proved to be a genuine social problem as the government eventually had to enact the Contagious Diseases Acts to regulate it and prevent outbreaks of venereal disease. 'Slumming' became a social practice of bourgeois elites

who travelled into urban slums to witness the living conditions of the poor and fulfill voyeuristic fantasies. The publication and reporting of firsthand experiences by bourgeois elites and later written accounts provided by journalists contributed to the cultural association between the urban poor and sexual transgression. This was evident in publications like *A Night in a Workhouse* (1866) in the Pall Mall Gazette by James Greenwood; a journalist who disguised himself as a vagrant in order to spend a night in a Lambeth workhouse. He described the events of his experience in sensationalist terms, suggesting that the state-run institution in Lambeth was merely a station for the deviant sexual activities of the area's homeless. The publication triggered a moral panic over the sexual transgressions of London's urban poor as Seth Koven in *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* argues: the relationship between homelessness and deviant sexuality identified in *A Night in a Workhouse* led to the 1898 amendment to the Vagrancy Act of 1824. The act provided the state with greater powers to regulate homelessness and homosexuality (73).

The reports and articles of social explorers and journalists such

as James Greenwood furthered this cultural association between the urban poor and sexual deviancy. Thus, *A Night in a Workhouse* had prompted other social explorers to publish their experiences. Andrew Mearns's *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* drew a relation between poverty-stricken living conditions and a propensity for sin and vice. He wrote that: "people condemned to exist under such conditions take to drink and fall into sin is surely a matter for little surprise" (11).

Newspapers played a similar role in documenting the infamous murders of Jack the Ripper as his crimes left a significant imprint on the minds of Londoners due to their sexual motivations. The press had helped create a cultural association between the working class districts of East London and sexual transgression as Lesley Hall suggests in *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain Since 1880*:

"A major moral panic of the later 1880s owed much of its impact both to the role of the press in bringing it to the public attention and keeping it there, and to the lack of closure of the story itself. In 1888 five prostitutes were horribly murdered in Whitechapel. The victims were some-

times depicted as drawing this fate upon themselves (and even generating the sexual madness of their killer) simply by being prostitutes..." (45).

Many Victorian social commentators saw poor one-room, overcrowded housing arrangements as a dangerous social problem within where infants were likely to become sexually precocious through increased interaction with nudity. As Frank Mort explains in *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics In England Since 1830*, the application of this social and moral theory is best illustrated by the Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes. This report concluded that incest was the direct result of overcrowding in the area of Spitalfields (105). Furthermore, the notion of incest and homosexuality at a young age being brought about by the physical environment and conditions in which London's poor lived, was a reflection of the late-Victorian sentiment of pessimism surrounding industrialisation, urbanisation, and the growth of the urban working classes.

London had embraced underground transport, with large numbers of the city's working class population embracing the fruits of industrial progress, using it to travel

to and from work. Despite the benefits of industrialisation, some Londoners developed a pessimistic and cynical view of whether society was still progressing, or whether these processes of society's progress, urbanisation and industrialisation had actually introduced a regression towards something worse. For London's Victorian elites the growth and congregation of the urban working classes was something to fear as they believed their human nature was inherently and morally corrupt. This idea that the social context of industrialisation and urbanisation informed Victorian attitudes towards sexuality, as illustrated above with incest, is very important in understanding why this cultural association came to exist. For many individuals across Europe, the late-nineteenth century had come to represent something particularly sinister, and many referred to the period as the 'Fin De Siecle', translated as the 'End of an Era'. The assumptions made about human nature by scientists and social theorists, such as Gustav le Bon, Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin, were darker and more pessimistic than earlier Enlightenment conceptions.

A Foucauldian interpretation can be applied here: the Victo-

rian association between London's slum districts, with sexual transgression and deviancy, reflects a distinctly Victorian discourse surrounding normal and abnormal sexuality and sexual behaviour. As Frank Mort explains, the enactment of the Contagious Diseases Acts, was the first instance in which the Victorian state regulated sexually deviant behaviour and acknowledge what would be classed as normal. He goes on to suggest: "what lay behind the assumptions of the legislators were the gender-specific, male defined norms which had been embedded in the reforming programmes of the 1830s and 1840s. These were now crystallized in an expanded discourse on male and female sexuality" (75). A specific, state-regulated definition of sexual transgression had emerged, produced by bourgeois elites who deemed London's poor districts to be deviant and abnormal within London's various urban poverty-stricken districts. In conjunction, sensationalist journalism and the published experiences of social explorers cemented this cultural association feeding a Victorian obsession with the moral corruption of the poor. The cultural association made between London's urban slum districts and sexual transgression in this period was a reflection of Victorian pessimistic attitudes to the urban working classes, and further, to sexuality. As Jeffrey Weeks states: "it is in this context that we can appreciate the truth of Foucault's dictum that 'sexuality' was originally and fundamentally bourgeois in origins" (33).

Ultimately, the cultural and social association between London's Victorian slum districts and sexual transgression was a social construction. It was the result of a Victorian obsession with the moral corruption of the rapidly growing urban classes. This is not to say that there were not a greater number of instances of visible and recorded vice occurring

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# Review of the Royal London Hospital Museum and Archives

*Jennifer Keen*

The Royal London Hospital Museum is a small underground exhibition in the crypt of a church in Newmark Street, Whitechapel. The church, which also houses a medic's library, is to be found behind the Royal London Hospital itself, just a couple of streets from Mile End Road. The museum aims to inform the general public and presumably any interested students at St. Barts and The London Medical School about the long history of the hospital, the evolution of the schools of medicine and dentistry and their place in the history of the East End. This review will focus on how the museum explores and presents the hospital's place in East London and the ways in which the exhibits draw together and examine a variety of themes concerning London's notorious East End.

The museum draws particular attention to its philanthropic roots. Throughout its clear and chronological layout, references to the philanthropic and charitable work that helped the poor of London's East End are well documented. There are specific boards relating to the social conditions of the East End with quotes from Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, that England was split into "two nations" and that the East End was a world of "squalor, overcrowding and social deprivation" (1). The life and work of Thomas Barnardo is drawn attention to in similar fashion and the museum makes sure to highlight his ties to the hospital. Barnardo studied medicine at the London Hospital Medical School before going on to open the Ragged School in 1866, an important philanthropic venture in East End history.

The idea of the hospital as an island in the 'abyss', as the East End was frequently referred to, is quite prominent although not overwhelming. The implication is quietly there amid the depiction of the social deprivation of East London, the loss of the green fields to crowded industrial spaces and statistics on poverty and population growth. It is made clear through references to the rising infant mortality rate and

falling death rates in the area around the London Hospital and through the importance placed on exhibits focused on figures such as Florence Nightingale, Thomas Barnardo, Edith Cavell and their work helping the needy and fighting for social improvements: 'The East End had the worst slums, the worst overcrowding, the worst death rates' (2). But the museum, whilst obviously aware of this popular image tries to illustrate the good brought to the area by the hospital's reputation as a centre of excellence both for teaching and for pioneering medical practices in its ever growing school and hospital, despite its funding 'being hampered by the level of poverty in the east end that ensured a large number of cases but few subscriptions.'

The museum engages with popular ideas about the East End as an unclearly defined liminal space on the fringe of the city, where squalor and vice were prevalent and poverty and crime were rife, but it seeks to establish another view of the area: one where great philanthropists made their mark and where education and innovation did exist. The countless displays of medical equipment and narratives of the development and growth of the hospital, as well as snippets of the life and work

of doctors, nurses and students, are the main focus of the museum exhibits and serve to educate the visitor not only about medical history in general but specifically those bits relevant to the East End's past.

Amongst the main exhibits, the other interesting spotlight to be noted is specific to one man in East End history. 'Stories about Joseph Merrick—the "Elephant Man" of Victorian England—combine elements of myth and fable, tragedy and melodrama, freak show and farce (3). They seem to have perennial appeal' much like the many popular incarnations of the East End in literature or film and in the public imagination in general. Perhaps because of this, the museum devotes a wall to Joseph Merrick with three different documentaries about his life available to view. This, alongside an episode of *Casualty* 1906, the BBC TV series which was set in the Royal London Hospital. A replica of his mask and many photos and documents relating to Merrick and Dr Frederick Treeves who 'discovered' and cared for him at the hospital can be examined through the large glass casing. The museum clearly wishes to cater to popular interest in certain topics.

There are also exhibits on the

hospital during the Blitz, with photos of the rubble and ruin around the site, as well as medals and personal accounts of various local heroes associated with the hospital. The image of the cheery cockney amid the devastation caused by WWII bombing in the East End has clearly been adhered to here as, like the elephant man, it is obviously a popular topic among local history enthusiasts.

Finally, small sections are reserved for two other recurring themes in East End historical literature: social diversity and regeneration. These important topics are both mentioned with attention being drawn to the special treatment and consideration the hospital has given to the Jewish and Bangladeshi immigrant communities it served. There is also a board highlighting the ongoing development and construction of the hospital and medical school and the investment being put in to continue clinical excellence and first-rate teaching. Phrases such as “retaining historic buildings” and “creating a warm safe welcoming and healing environment” also indicate the museum’s engagement with twenty-first century issues over development and regeneration in the modern day East End.

To conclude, Dr Paul Newland sums up the image of the East End as a ‘dark, foreboding, backward and/or exotic space,’ which has, ‘become ingrained within what we might want to call the popular English imagination’ (4). Within the context of the Royal London Hospital’s long and interesting history, the museum presents all the different faces of the East End in a bright and engaging manner. The chronological layout reflects how the East End ‘also remains an ever-changing, metamorphic concept.’ Although small, the museum is packed with artefacts and information relevant to the hospital’s unique place in East End history and effectively brings together the ‘ever-changing and metamorphic’ into a coherent display of past, present and future centred on this historic hospital in the heart of the East End.

## Notes

- 1- Roy Porter, *London: a Social History* (London; Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 301.
- 2- Martin J. Daunton, *Charity, self-interest and welfare in the English past* (Oxford; Routledge, 1996), p. 195.
- 3- See cover illustration on Peter W. Graham, Fritz Oehlshlaeger, *Articulating the elephant man: Joseph Merrick and his interpreters* (Michigan; John Hopkins University Press, 1992).
- 4- Dr Paul Newland *The cultural construction of London's East End: urban iconography, modernity and the spatialisation of Englishness* (Amsterdam/ New York; Rodopi, 2008), p. 272.

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# The beginning of war between Russia and the Central Powers in 1914

*Magnus Magnusson*

**A**fter the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary on 28 June 1914, Europe began to slide into war. The First World War defined the twentieth century, with the rise of Communism and Nazism, the Great Depression and the Second World War all stemming from the legacies of the Great War of 1914 to 1918. Russia in particular was greatly affected by it. The Romanov dynasty, having ruled Russia for over 300 years, came to a bloody end as a direct result of the war and in its place we saw the rise of the Soviet Union, the world's first Communist country and one of the two global superpowers which dominated world politics until the 1990s. The question we have to ask ourselves is why did Russia go to war against the Central Powers in 1914? This question comes in two parts, firstly it asks why Russia entered the war against the Central Powers and secondly it asks us why the war began in 1914. We must look into each question separately and combine our two answers to reach a satisfactory conclusion. To answer why Russia went to war against the Central Powers we must look at a variety of subjects. The situation in the Balkans was a major area of contention and we will need to look into it in greater detail. We cannot overlook the rise of the unified German Empire and the colossal affects it had on the global political stage. We must also look into the rapprochement between Russia and the western European states of Britain and France to explain why Russia sided with the Western democracies against the Central European autocracies, with whom it shared far more in common with. Finally, we need to examine internal and domestic reasons within Russia, seeing what influences within the state might have influenced the Tsar, a notoriously indecisive man, to go to war. To answer why the war began in 1914 we need to understand the legacies of diplomatic mishaps that Russia endured, namely the Russo-Japanese War and the Bosnian Crisis, and the affects they had on Russian diplomacy and foreign relations. The Serbian issue will also be looked into, to try and understand why Russia took a massive gamble because of this small state in the Balkans. This essay will argue that the reason Russia found itself in a war was due to Balkan tensions and the desire to regain prestige lost because of

their diplomatic failures and it saw itself as being prepared to wage a war.

To begin our analysis we shall look into why Russia found itself at war with the Central Powers. The Central Powers, in this context, refers to the alliance between the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. An obvious area to start our analysis would be where the First World War began, the Balkans. Since the 1500s the Balkans had been under the dominion of the Ottoman Empire. In the nineteenth century, however, we begin to see the slow decline of the Ottoman Empire in both the Balkans and on the wider political stage. As the Ottomans withdrew they left a power vacuum in which the Russians hoped to establish themselves as the dominant power. They had competition in the form of the Austrian Empire, or the Austro-Hungarian Empire after 1867. By 1910 Russia's chief ally in the Balkans was Serbia, who achieved full international recognition in 1878. Russia had been supporting Serbia since the 1860s, encouraging Serbia to form alliances with neighbouring Balkan states against the Ottomans and subsidizing their war preparations.<sup>1</sup> By early 1908 things were becoming very precarious for the Russians in the Balkans. The Austro-Hungarians were planning railways that seemed likely to reduce the influence of both Russia and Serbia.<sup>2</sup> This soon blossomed into the Bosnian Crisis of 1909. Russia's reputation still bruised after the debacle of the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 Revolution and they caved in to a German ultimatum and Austria annexed Bosnia on 6 October 1909. The Crisis highlighted the linkage between Russia's military weakness and her foreign policy as well as effectively ending the career of the then Foreign Minister, Alexander Isvolsky.<sup>3</sup> This reinforced Austro-Russian antagonism and made it clear to St. Petersburg that Germany would favour Austria above Russia in subsequent Balkan crises. Despite this humiliation, Russia was still adamant in its interests in the region. The influence of the Pan-Slavs in the Russian court in the late nineteenth century can be seen in their aims for the Balkans, namely the creation of a unified Serbo-Bulgarian state under Russian guidance. The Dardanelles straits were also one of the major concerns for the Russian state, being locked up in the Black Sea due to the Ottoman Turks possessing control of Constantinople and the straits.<sup>4</sup> Russia in particular feared the growing influence of outside powers in Constantinople, particularly Germany.

The rise of Germany had major effects on the global internation-

al stage. Russian support of Prussia had, ironically, been given in order to maintain the balance of power and to prevent a recurrence of a situation similar as what happened during the Crimean War.<sup>5</sup> After its unification, however, Germany soon became the preeminent power on the European mainland, possessing a powerful army and a booming economy. The immediate reaction to this by Russia was to forge close relations with Germany, the result of this being the Dreikaiserbund between Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary. Tensions soon rose between Austria and Russia, however, over their respective influences in the Balkans and Germany seemingly took the side of Austria during the Congress of Berlin. Afterwards Russia became increasingly wary of German ambitions. The Dreikaiserbund effectively ceased to be in the aftermath of the Serbo-Bulgarian War in 1885 and Russia entered into an alliance with France in 1892, specifically to contain Germany. D. C. B. Lieven wrote that “whatever the warm relations between Russia and Germany’s rulers in 1871, personalities and political sympathies changed whereas overwhelming German power not just remained but grew ever more formidable.”<sup>6</sup>

The Russians were particularly frightened about increasing German influence in its western border regions. In 1883 alone Germany renewed its alliance with Austria-Hungary, entered into a new alliance with Romania and sent its first military mission to Constantinople, the Ottoman capital. It became particularly acute when, in October 1913, the German advisor Liman von Sanders, originally sent to advise the Turkish government on how to modernise their army after their failures against the Balkan League, was made commander of the army corps in Constantinople.<sup>7</sup> Russia was keenly aware of the importance of the Straits, both strategically and economically. Between 1903 and 1912, 37 percent of Russian exports went through its Black Sea ports as well as 50 percent of its grain exports.<sup>8</sup> All of this had to go through the Dardanelles Straits. Russia never wished to see another Great Power establish supremacy in Constantinople other than itself and seeing Germany’s growing influence in the city aroused great suspicion.

All of this explains why Russia went to war with Germany, but no nation can act alone, especially against the perceived superpower of the European mainland. It needs allies, and Russia found some in the unlikely of places, France and Britain. It is important to note that France was a republic at that time, in stark contrast to Russia’s strong autocracy, and

Britain was Russia's chief imperial rival for most of the eighteenth century. How did this rapprochement come around? Just as German security required the continued isolation of France, so France's desire to restore her past prestige and regain the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine resulted in the need for powerful allies. It was evident that Russia was the natural ally; with its position on Germany's eastern border dictating a two front war should Germany find itself at war with the two powers.<sup>9</sup> The alliance did not stretch far outside German containment, France did not always support the Russian position in the Balkans or the straits and Russia was largely indifferent to the fate of Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the alliance stood firm and close cooperation between their respective general staffs ensured that should war break out the armies would be prepared for joint action.

Russia also began a rapprochement with Great Britain during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century's. The two had been bitter rivals for most of the nineteenth century with both sides fighting for influence in Central Asia, known as the Great Game. Britain was also being antagonised by the Germans, who were building up their navy to rival Britain's Royal Navy. A clear sign of this rapprochement between Russia and Britain can be seen in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Here the two powers reached an agreement over spheres of influence in Central Asia, ending the long-standing quarrels between the two states.<sup>11</sup> Fiona Tomaszewski argued that the zenith of these rapprochements was in the early summer of 1914, when Russia played host to a squadron of the British navy and the French president, Raymond Poincaré.<sup>12</sup> All this does raise an interesting question, did Russia enter the war due more to external reasons, such as pressure from allies, or where there internal reasons as well that lead to that fateful decision?

Russia was still dominated by the Tsar in 1914. A State Duma was instituted in 1906 as a result of the 1905 Revolution, but in practice the Tsar still retained supreme power. During the reign of Tsar Nicholas II, 1894 to 1917, no clear ideology was followed. Before 1904 he believed that Russia had a unique 'Eurasian' destiny and thus his main foreign policy goal was to develop Russia's position in Siberia and the Far East.<sup>13</sup> After Russia's defeat at the hands of Japan, Nicholas turned his attention back to Europe. Although he did not subscribe to the popular Pan-Slavism of the period, he was determined that no other power should seize Constantinople in the event of an Ottoman collapse, a cornerstone of Pan-Slavist

ideology. In the second decade of his rule, this absence of ideological motivation for foreign policy became even more apparent as the Triple Entente, the alliance between Russia, France and Britain, emerged. In part this new direction in Russian foreign policy was a desperate bid to preserve peace, to gain time and breathing space to ensure the survival of his regime.

We briefly mentioned the Pan-Slav movement. This was a political and ideological movement which called for the union of all the Slavic peoples under Russian guidance. Of particular interest to the Pan-Slavs were the Slavic populations of the Balkans, including those under the Austrian and Ottoman empires. Since Russia did not want to contribute to the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at this time, these concepts could not win official endorsement.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, however, Pan-Slavism was very popular. Hostility to Germany swelled or diminished as diplomatic conflicts waxed or waned, but it remained always at least a constant undercurrent of Russian public opinion. Hugh O'Beirne, the British counsellor in St. Petersburg, wrote in 1910 that the most significant factors which explained this phenomena were "the racial struggle that is proceeding in south-eastern Europe between Slavdom and Germanism; jealousy of the German superiority in culture, energy and the moral qualities; the industrial intrusion of Germany into Russia; the fact Germany thwarts Russian policy at various points in the Near and the Middle East; and the dominant fact that Germany is a too powerful neighbour who seems occasionally to abuse her superior might."<sup>15</sup> It is particularly interesting to note that the 'racial' aspect of conflict, more associated with the Second World War, as also present in the prologue to the First. This anti-German feeling in the public, although having little hard influence in Nicholas' court, likely helped persuade some that war would allow them to tap into this patriotic fervour and bolster support for the regime, especially after the debacles of the Japanese War and the Bosnian Crisis.

Having looked at why Russia found itself at war with the Central Powers we must now look into the second part of our question, namely why did Russia find itself at war in 1914? A key area we need to look into is the build-up to the war. The twentieth century had not been kind to Russia by 1914. Of particular note were the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905, along with the subsequent 1905 Revolution, and the Bosnian Crisis of 1909. The Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 Revolution was severely detrimental to Russian

foreign political standing. The war caused mass discontent and revolution and paralysed the government, whilst also revealing Russia's precarious financial situation, to both allies and opponents, and crippling her capacity to wage war.<sup>16</sup> The Bosnian Crisis further humiliated St. Petersburg. Fears that Russia was either not equipped or very ill-equipped to defend her interests successfully mushroomed into such a trauma that Europe seemed in permanent danger of going to war.<sup>17</sup> By 1914 Russian diplomacy had a decade of failure behind it. The efforts of Isvolsky to reverse the damaging effects of the Russo-Japanese War by means of a diplomatic coup that would leave Russia in control of the Straits turned into the debacle that was the Bosnian Crisis. Sergei Sazonov, Isvolsky's successor, returned Russian foreign policy to attempting to keep good relations with the Central Powers whilst also maintaining the Dual Alliance with France and the Anglo-Russian Convention. However, the Moroccan Crisis of 1911 and the First Balkan War of 1912 to 1913 underscored the fact that Russia was still not prepared to resort to war in all circumstances. But these were choices made of necessity and engendered a growing sense of irritation in Russia.<sup>18</sup> Memories of these past events haunted the Tsar's court until 1914, when Germany sent an ultimatum to Russia, similarly to how the events of 1909 played. In 1914 the Russian government ignored the ultimatum and mobilized its forces. Perhaps this ultimatum failed because Russia was no longer prepared to give in. While being far from willing war to occur, the Russian government was prepared, in light of the changes that had taken place in the five years since Bosnia, to risk a conflict rather than abdicate its position as a Great Power.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, we must try and understand why Russia would want to risk fighting a war in 1914, namely the nature of Serbia. Russia was very keen, not least due to the influence of the Pan-Slavs, to see the creation of a single South Slav state out of the remains of the Ottoman's European territory. However, the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885 highlighted that the Serbians and Bulgarians were unlikely agree to a unified state where one nationality could dominate the other. As a result a compromise was hoped for; where if they couldn't create a single South Slav state then they might as well build up Serbia and Bulgaria for future unification. However, as time progressed Russian influence in Bulgaria began to diminish. This became especially true in the aftermath of the Second Balkan War, from June to July 1913, in which Bulgaria was defeated by an alliance of Serbia, Greece and Romania.

They felt that Russia had left them “in the lurch by not backing Bulgaria’s claims to a strict interpretation of the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty of 1912” and they blamed Sazonov for encouraging instead of checking the Romanian attack on their rear.<sup>20</sup> This left Russia with only Serbia as a Balkan ally. Whilst Russia sometimes went against Serbian interests, such as its support for the creation of an independent Albania at the expense of Serbia’s potential Adriatic coast, by 1914 Serbia was the only state in the Balkans Russia could realistically refer to as an ally. Thus when Austria issued its ultimatum to Serbia in the aftermath of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in June 1914, Russia felt it could not back down. As we have previously mentioned the Balkans had become a battlefield between Austrian and Russian influence. Serbia was a microcosm of this, with the previously pro-Austrian monarch Alexander I being assassinated in 1903 by a group of army officers, supposedly in the pay of the Russians.<sup>21</sup> With Serbia as its only formal ally in the Balkans, Russia was not prepared to lose it to an Austrian invasion. Leaving it would have led to its last true bastion of influence in the Balkans fall to the Austrians and give them hegemony over the peninsula. This, in combination with the aforementioned weaknesses shown by Russian foreign policy in the Bosnian Crisis, might have contributed to the decision to ignore the German ultimatum and begin partial mobilization in mid-1914.

In conclusion, the essay title effectively asked us two questions; firstly why did Russia find itself at war with the Central Powers and secondly why did Russia find itself at war in 1914. The volatile nature of the Balkans, and the competition for influence between Russia and Austria-Hungary, was severely detrimental to Austro-Russian relations and seemed to highlight German preferences for Austria. The rise of Germany itself also had severe diplomatic repercussions and Russia was immensely worried as German influence grew in their western neighbours and the Ottoman Empire in particular. Having another Great Power in control of Constantinople was unacceptable for the Russians and Germany’s influence there, culminating with von Sanders being appointed commander of the army corps in Constantinople, was seen as a direct strategic threat. Russia was also experiencing a warming of relations with the western European states, with a formal alliance with France in 1892 to surround Germany and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 putting an end to the Great Game in Central Asia and

the major area of contention between the two powers. Domestically, in contemporary Russia the Pan-Slav movement was very popular and this combined with growing anti-German sentiments, due to German economic strength and political influence, to create a strong sense of 'Slavism against Germanism' and the feeling that a clash with Germany and Austria-Hungary was inevitable and had to be accepted as a historical necessity.<sup>22</sup> In answering why Russia found itself at war in 1914 we looked into the previous decade, where Russia was overshadowed by previous diplomatic humiliations in the form of the Russo-Japanese War and the Bosnian Crisis. Russia felt that after all these humiliations that if it did not stand firm it would be cast out of the Great Power club and relegated to a regional power at best. The nature of Serbia was the final area we looked into. Serbia, by 1914, was the only area of Russian influence in the Balkans and it is likely that St. Petersburg felt that if Austria invaded and defeated Serbia then Austrian hegemony in the Balkans would have been assured and Russia would have been forced into the sidelines. If we were to decide on which of these many areas were most important in the origins of World War One, I would have to say the Balkans were critical. The competition between Austria-Hungary and Russia for influence soured relations between the two powers and Germany made it clear that it supported Austrian claims, especially during the Treaties of Berlin (1878) and London (1913). The decade of diplomatic failures by the Russians also encouraged a firm stance against the Austrian invasion and subsequent German ultimatum in 1914, with long-reaching consequences. Whilst it is easy to simply write off Russia's entry into World War One as a mistake, it seems that Russia was desperate to maintain its position as a respectable Great Power and felt, with the memories of 1905 and 1909 still haunting them, that firm action was needed. The consequences of this decision would shape the twentieth century as we know it.

## Notes

- 1 - D. MacKenzie, 'Russia's Balkan policies under Alexander II, 1855-1881,' in H. Ragsdale (ed.), *Imperial Russian foreign policy*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993), p. 226.
- 2 - K. Neilson, 'Russia,' in K. Wilson, *Decisions for War, 1914*, (University College London Press: London, 1995), p. 107.
- 3 - Ibid, pp. 107-108.
- 4 - MacKenzie, 'Russia's Balkan policies,' p. 225.
- 5 - B. Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1991), p. 203.
- 6 - D. C. B. Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War*, (Macmillain Education: London, 1987), p. 24.
- 7 - J. Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, (Longman: Harlow, 1992), p. 24.
- 8 - Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan*, pp. 204-205.
- 9 - E. McCullough, *How the First World War Began: The Triple Entente and the Coming of the Great War of 1914-1918*, (Black Rose Books: London, 1999), p. 7.
- 10 - Jelavich, *Russian Balkan Entanglements*, p. 204.
- 11 - Neilson, 'Russia,' p. 107.
- 12 - F. Tomaszewski, *A Great Russia: Russia and the Triple Entente, 1905 to 1914*, (Praeger Publishers: Westport, 2002), p. 31.
- 13 - Ibid, p. 46.
- 14 - Jelavich, *Russian Balkan Entanglements*, p. 209.
- 15 - Lieven, *Origins*, pp. 130-131.
- 16 - J. Long, 'Franco-Russian Relations during the Russo-Japanese War,' *The Slavonic and Eastern European Review*, 52/127, 1974, p. 233.
- 17 - D. Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy 1860-1914*, (Berg Publishers: London, 1987), p. 273.
- 18 - Neilson, 'Russia,' p. 109.
- 19 - Ibid, p. 112.
- 20 - J. Potts, 'The Loss of Bulgaria,' in A. Dallin, *Russian Diplomacy and Eastern Europe: 1914-1917*, (King's Crown Press: New York, 1963), p. 194.
- 21 - C. Sulzberger, *The Fall of Eagles*, (Crown Publishers: New York, 1977), p. 202.
- 22 - Geyer, *Russian Imperialism*, p. 274.

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## *Abstract*

### **The Aims and Methods of the Red Army Fraction and the Red Brigades in a comparative context.**

*Jason Frost*

With the onset of the 1960s and the subsequent maturity of the wartime/post-war generation into young adulthood, Continental Western Europe was rocked by the phenomenon of terrorism. For the majority of teenagers and young people the sixties came to be a time of wild abandon, an era of idealistic dreaming combined with a burgeoning consumer society. Yet for a small, but highly influential, number it was a time riven with the still potent threat of fascist authoritarianism. The shadow of the fascist menace so recently confronted during the Second World War had not truly been defeated. It merely lay hidden behind the smiling faces of the new democracies of the West. With the whole vestige of the State in the clutches of post-war American/NATO imperialism, many of the young saw only one recourse from which to deliver salvation to society and too mankind; Terror.

This paper focuses upon two of the most significant and dramatic manifestations of this socio-political analysis and its proposed violent solution: the West German Red Army Fraction (Baader-Meinhof) and the Italian Red Brigades. Although oft regarded as sharing many similarities: the timing of their emergence, their Leftist credentials and the penchant for kidnapping, there also existed key, if only subtle, differences in their campaigns.

By the examination of the contextual aspects of the period this study demonstrates how these movements were brought forth: highlighting the latent fears of a neo-fascist revival, the operation of the Marcusean 'hidden State', the threat of American imperialism and a more broader underlying transition taking place technologically and socially.

The findings of this paper uncover that despite the almost synonymous co-existent dominance of these two groups during this period they must be viewed as separate entities for the purpose of historical study. Both contextually and ideologically the synonymy of the groups holds, but when focussing specifically upon the details they diverge in subtle,

but nevertheless significant ways. Both the RAF and the Red Brigades emerged from a shared context of a perceived failure of their respective nations to effectively 'de-fascisise' themselves after 1945. This is mingled with a shared generational guilt. However where these groups diverge is more to do with the detail; the RAF adopted the New Left theories wholeheartedly in that they rejected the orthodox Leninism of the vanguard notion and instead confined their struggle to among the students and 'substratum', desiring really only the need to expunge their guilt presenting little in the way of an alternative ideal for the future. This is reflected in their membership. Whereas the Red Brigades adopted a more pragmatic approach to the New Left, taking elements that were useful (the 'hidden State' and the justification for violence) and rejecting the substratum theory, instead rooting their struggle in the more traditional Leninism of the industrial classes. Consequently, they tended to present a more concrete vision of the future; that of a more solidly orthodox Marxist state, over the RAF's penchant for nihilistic chaos.

The full text of this essay will be available online.



The Natural History Museum, South Kensington  
by Elizabeth Dirth



# The role of mythical and imaginary figures in the mental framework of medieval society

Olivia Crowther

J.C. Schmitt, in his *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: the Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, accurately interprets the roles of mythical and imaginary figures within society as dependant “above all on the structures and the functioning of the society and the culture at a given period in time.”<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this essay, the period of time concerning the roles of these figures within a ‘medieval society’ will be roughly 800-1600 A.D. To examine such an extensive period means that when looking at the mental framework of medieval society, one must place great emphasis on the fact that mentalities were always changing and developing. Alterations within the medieval mental framework regarding mythical and imaginary figures can be clearly identified in the accelerated development of ideas about, for example, witchcraft in the later Middle Ages. The inconsistencies in medieval thought, not only due to changes over time but also concerning regional differences, mean that it is problematic to form a direct argument as to the primary role of these figures. Instead, my argument here is multi-faceted, and concentrates on the array of roles attributed to the most prominent mythical and imaginary figures of the medieval period. To evaluate the entire array of beings considered imaginary or mythical during this time period is beyond the scope of this essay; these figures need not necessarily be monsters but also characters of tales and folklore, such as Robin Hood and Prester John. Moreover, while one cannot place emphasis on a collective medieval framework, it must also be mentioned that these figures may not necessarily have been portrayed as mythical within medieval society. Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate also whether or not medieval people distinguished the fiction from reality, and if they did, does this have an impact on the roles which certain figures performed?

Primarily, these roles can be separated into the most simplistic of distinctions- positive and negative. Through this distinction it is possible to interpret the function of these roles within society; how these mythical and imaginary figures came to fit into the framework of the Middle Ages. Therefore here, one can clearly perceive the direct impact of these figures

on the lives of medieval people. While in the world of today we undoubtedly associate the term 'monster' with negativity, often in the medieval period this was not the case. One beneficial role of the mythical cynocephali - men with heads like those of dogs - was during battle, as "before engaging an enemy in combat, [the Lombards] spread the rumour that a troop of cynocephali waited in their camp as allies, ready to do merciless battle against any opponent."<sup>2</sup> This rumour worked effectively, and often the enemy would make a hasty retreat. There are other positive roles of imaginary figures. In church imagery, green men were portrayed as fertility symbols, and sometimes even acted as guardians against evil.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Rudolf Wittkower illustrates how "the marvels were invested with an allegorical meaning," which in turn meant that "the idea of looking at the monsters as 'moral prodigies' was evolved in the later Middle Ages".<sup>4</sup> Yet, the key positive role attributed to the mythical figures of medieval society is more complex. The medieval "concept of the monstrous [functions] as a deformation necessary for human understanding."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the monstrous is an important aspect in the way medieval people came to understand and interpret their own existence. Society was able to develop its own self-knowledge through the perceptions of a disordered 'other'. As White argues, "the most important function for wild people was to help humans define their humanity, particularly important at a time when that humanity seemed threatened, or at least ill-defined."<sup>6</sup> This represents the positive role of one mythical figure in developing society's self-understanding, but more generally, "the metaphoric linking of humans and animals [regarding hybrids and other imaginary figures] seems to have opened the possibility for redefining humanity in a way that eliminated the categoric separation of the species."<sup>7</sup> That is, medieval people began to understand more about their very nature through the descriptions of imaginary figures; those which they were not, but to whom they were still linked with as part of God's creation.

Yet despite this development in understanding which the existence of a distinctive 'other' - the mythical figure - instigated, there existed also some negative roles played by these marvels, which was embedded into the medieval framework. One was the almost theatrical role of the Evil One in carrying out the lures of temptation.<sup>8</sup> Another was the curious phenomenon of the significations of a monstrous birth. Although these births can hardly be classed as imaginary, clearly not all of society would have been

present to witness such an event, and therefore in this respect, an unusual occurrence like this may seem in some ways 'mythical' to the recipient of such a tale. And it is clear that tales of such incidences were retold – one example is the monster of Ravenna in 1512. The immediate interpretation of a monstrous birth was derived from a religious influence; it was an evil omen. In response to the collective sin of Christian communities within medieval Europe, "the monster itself was a paradoxical product of God's mercy, an alert and a warning issued to allow sinners one last chance to reform themselves and avert the catastrophe to come."<sup>9</sup> This idea was reinforced by the death of the monster soon after its birth. Moreover, the monster was also "a dangerous reminder of every power/knowledge system's fragility, of its vulnerability to whatever lies outside it and that it excludes."<sup>10</sup>

Possibly, this is why so much of the literature regarding mythical and imaginary figures places these unknown beings outside of the domesticated sphere; or it could be that because of this, the society becomes vulnerable to the excluded. Either way, mythical and imaginary figures in abundance fill the gaps of the world, as it is known to medieval society, which have not yet been domesticated or explored. This is specifically true to the Wild Man, whose undomesticated environment of the wilderness defines him as a mythical figure.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, imaginary figures become central in the "idea of living races of monsters populating various remote corners of the world."<sup>12</sup> Consequently, marvels form a part of the geographical knowledge of the period, and are represented clearly within contemporary cartography; the Hereford Map and the *Mappae Mundi*.<sup>13</sup> The latter was considered to be a true representation of the world, and thus a direct reference to the belief in the existence of monsters.<sup>14</sup> And there is added a further realistic dimension to these mythical figures when one considers that the tales about monsters may be actual interpretations of unknown ethnicities and cultures encountered by a medieval traveller. It may well be that the imaginary played a significant part in furthering expansion and travel – which was an important developing element of medieval society – in that tales about marvels fed a "curiosity for exotica."<sup>15</sup>

Thus, these tales – as we have seen – served as an explanation for the increased travel and expansion of the later Middle Ages. But mythical figures were utilised by medieval society to explain other events as well, such as threats to Christian Europe. As for one example, Scott D. Westrem

illustrates that “western culture has adopted Gog or Magog or both as a pseudonym for political threats from the Goths under Alaric to the Soviets under Brezhnev.”<sup>16</sup> He further stresses this point when demonstrating how Gog and Magog appear in medieval fiction “usually to designate some threat within Christian Europe.”<sup>17</sup> In such a hostile environment, one can also identify a correlation between monstrous births and political turmoil; clearly, in times of great discord, the fascination with imaginary figures – monsters – would be at its peak.<sup>18</sup> In addition, marvels would often be used as an explanation for exotic dreams; imaginary figures such as the incubi or succubae would be responsible for the nature of the dream, which would otherwise be sinful. And so, “it was thus possible – and the phenomenon was not restricted to the Middle Ages – to explain exotic dreams.”<sup>19</sup> It seems likely that some individuals within medieval society failed to distinguish between dreams (i.e. fiction), and reality.

Because of this error in judgement, it is crucial to understand what roles mythical and imaginary figures had to play within the world of the individual, and how this contributed to their separation of the fictional and realistic spheres. This is difficult to interpret for obvious reasons: the thoughts and feelings of individuals during the Middle Ages remain largely elusive to us. Yet, we can see that the existence of these figures did have specific benefits for certain members of the medieval society. For example, “the writers of contemporary history reverted to the marvels as indispensable sources for the enrichment of their narratives.”<sup>20</sup> But, more importantly, men dignified their “specific mode of existence” by contrasting it with the imperfections of half-human imaginary figures.<sup>21</sup> Such was the function of the wild man within medieval thought. Furthermore, by dividing animalistic behaviours from human ones, and attributing these animal characteristics to mythical and imaginary figures, this allowed humans to define their own humanity and separate themselves from animals, easing uncertainty about relations between the human and the bestial world. Therefore, “through the animals that existed [in the imaginations of medieval people], from half-human monsters to occasionally human werewolves, they had become aware of, feared, and found empathy for the beast they discovered within us all.”<sup>22</sup> Certainly therefore, marvels played a crucial role in the forming of the medieval man’s identity, a role which can be both positive and negative. In ‘William of Palerne’, the werewolf once again becomes human, and conse-

quently becomes trapped in the conventional attitudes and postures of society.<sup>23</sup> In this way, imaginary figures can be seen as an 'escape', or as offering a measure of freedom which was not available within the medieval realm. Thus, it was this freedom which became a key element of the increasing popularity of the Wild Man in the later Middle Ages. White correctly interprets this imaginary figure as embodying a "threat to the individual, both as nemesis and as a possible destiny, both as enemy and as representative of a condition into which an individual man, having fallen out of grace or having been driven from his city, might degenerate."<sup>24</sup> This confusion about mythical and imaginary figures, and the role they have to play within the considerations of the medieval individual's identity, is apparent. So, for example, "for all the 'cosmic terror' they inspire, the giant and the cynocephalus are twinned bodies beyond which lies not the utter dissolution of selfhood, but just the opposite: immortality, the gift of an identity that is unending and immutable, the reward of heaven itself."<sup>25</sup> Yet, in the same breath, Cohen also argues that the medieval cynocephalus "embodied fears about the fragility of Christian identity in the face of the Saracen threat."<sup>26</sup> But despite this confusion, through defining what one must not become, individuals in the Middle Ages were clearer about their identity; this played an important part in their overall understanding of humanity. Additionally, marvels could also play a significant role in the forming of identity; having the potential to influence "a monstrous route to becoming male in the Middle Ages."<sup>27</sup>

While mythical and imaginary figures played a crucial role in the establishment of an individual identity for the men and women of the medieval period, these marvels also demonstrated their importance within the wider sphere of society, in several ways. One could argue that often, these figures were used as a coping mechanism; and that in this way "the culture of monsters and prodigies exploded in late fifteenth-century Germany and Italy, in connection with specific political, religious, and military events."<sup>28</sup> One important imaginary figure fulfilling this role was the medieval ghost. While it cannot be accurately stated whether the ghost was in fact real or imaginary, clearly apparitions and visions can be classed as 'mythical', because one cannot prove that these events truly happened. In this way, medieval people connected with the deceased, people with whom they "had formed ties considered unalterable even beyond death."<sup>29</sup> Thus, the appearance of ghosts within the mental framework of medieval society demon-

strates part of the recovery process during a period of mourning. On the other hand, imaginary figures became a significant part of entertainment during the Middle Ages, and it is with this in mind that one could consider the roles of mythical characters such as Robin Hood and Prester John.<sup>30</sup> The tales incorporated moral messages and geographical knowledge; facts and influence which could otherwise not be passed on to a largely illiterate medieval society. These legends and ghost stories alike functioned as entertainment, but also as a literary device: they could provide “coded support for particular cultural attitudes.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the monstrous races were often depicted in popular imagery, and were advertised as political and religious propaganda. Stories about specific mythical characters were so widely circulated that occasionally, the imaginary figure became almost famous, such as the previously mentioned monster of Ravenna, supposedly existing around 1512. The adventures of Alexander, a classical account, captured the imagination of medieval society; its “wide-ranging appeal spurred the creation of numerous similar collections.”<sup>32</sup> As did the stories of Sir John de Mandeville, whose fictional traveller’s tales were one of the most widely circulated pieces of literature within Christian Europe during the Middle Ages. Both narratives encompassed a comprehensive account of several mythical and imaginary figures, marvels located in remote corners of the world. Consequently, “stories of strange peoples and monsters were extraordinarily popular in antiquity and the Middle Ages ... they owed their popularity and extensive literary record partly to mythical projection, partly to observation, partly to the attractions they had for artists, always to the appeal they made to the human imagination.”<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Wild Men often featured in contemporary art and theatrical performances, indicating that for people in the Middle Ages, “horror and excitement at the exotic had – beyond any didactic intents – a wholly profane entertainment value.”<sup>34</sup>

The existence or belief in mythical and imaginary figures could have also played a part in being an excuse for criminality within a medieval community. J. Verdon, in his study on night in the Middle Ages, describes how Étienne de Bourbon (d. 1261) reported of how one woman attacked another during the night, supposedly thinking she was a stryge coming to suck her child’s blood.<sup>35</sup> Whether or not this medieval woman truly believed a monster was coming through her door, one can clearly see the way in which stories like these could be used as an excuse for criminal

behaviour. Dissident members of medieval society may have played on society's belief or occupation with mythical figures in order to excuse their actions. Moreover, marvels were also a fundamental feature of the principle of order within Western thought.<sup>36</sup> As Augustine said, "it ought not to seem absurd to us, that as in individual races there are monstrous births, so in the whole race there are monstrous races."<sup>37</sup> The contrasting nature of mythical and imaginary figures to humanity became a key element of the natural order, in that the resistance of these figures to the social norm allowed society a certain completeness. Therefore, marvels would serve an opposing function; providing moral instruction by demonstrating the behaviours one should not adopt within a civilized society. Through the adaptation of the physiognomical theory – that external appearance is a physical manifestation of inner character – Debra Higgs Strickland illustrates that "the Monstrous Races were malformed owing to their various moral shortcomings."<sup>38</sup> As a result, medieval moralists then recognized marvels as effective symbolic vehicles in educating an illiterate society. Moralized tales make use of particular physical deformities in the signification of a specific sin. Consequently, "the monstrosity of a human figure with three heads or a tree with the power of speech, functions to upset the mental expectations about the relation of the sign to what it is supposed to signify, and to underscore the element of the arbitrary [or God's power] in the relation of the two."<sup>39</sup> In this way moralists used fear, inspired through the medium of the mythical figure, in order to maintain the 'natural order' of society.

The connection between marvels and their potential to inspire fear – this being a method of controlling society – was utilised by the Church. While Christians in medieval Europe saw the birth of monsters as "locally targeted divine retribution for human sin,"<sup>40</sup> the reason for the inclusion of grotesque representations of mythical and imaginary figures in church architecture was to represent the "fate lying irrevocably ahead for all sinners, a warning to the erring to return to the paths of righteousness..."<sup>41</sup> The presence of these images, then, was deliberate. The giant was equated with Satan, while the incubus was linked to a realm of sexuality; moral shortcomings which were not acceptable within civilized society, and therefore represented through the imagery of grotesque mythical beings. Likewise, the notion of the Wild Man could be demonstrative of a man who has fallen away from God – he is perceived as "the sinner who had fallen from grace

into a state of wildness.”<sup>42</sup> Consequently, he embodies a semblance of punishment from God. Ghosts were another group of mythical figures used to symbolise a threat of punishment for sins; they “expressed in a more general way – through their return in phantasms, fears, and the tales of the living – the potential multiple dysfunctions of a good Christian death.”<sup>43</sup> These anxieties are evident in the account of Orderic Vitalis, a monk, who retells the vision of Walchelin. Here, the appearance of the ghost, a priest-murder, reflects the “pessimistic piety [which] gripped the parishes; that hell was thickly populated with souls of the dead; that ideas about purgatorial punishment had made little headway; and that the efficacy of suffrages was not fully accepted.”<sup>44</sup> Undoubtedly, mythical figures thus instigated fear and threat of punishment, through God’s wrath, within the mental framework of medieval society. And so, as Daston and Park illustrate, “in the early years of the Reformation, the tendency to treat monsters as prodigies – frightening signs of God’s wrath dependent ultimately or solely on his will – was almost universal.”<sup>45</sup> The Bible even reinforces this message of fear, in Psalm 91: ‘one must thus pray to the Lord when the night comes and ask for his protection against the terrors of the night.’ Yet, the roles of mythical and imaginary figures in relation to God’s power – as it was interpreted in the Middle Ages – were not consistently negative, as these marvels could be demonstrative of the “creative omnipotence of God.”<sup>46</sup> Ambroise Paré especially emphasises this point.<sup>47</sup> The monstra on the Ebstorf map “could serve as an example of the impenetrability and nonetheless – the well-ordered nature of the plan of creation.”<sup>48</sup> More generally, the mythical figures so extensively described in Paré’s study are considered to be a part of God’s plan for the world; they are there for a reason, whether it be to demonstrate his wrath or limitless power. In his *De civitate Dei*, Augustine concludes that “God created the monstrous races precisely to reassure human beings that monstrous human births are all a part of the divine plan.”<sup>49</sup> Mythical and imaginary figures can be seen to be used for conveying this theological message to the wider society. The sermon stories about marvels were “important vehicles for the diffusion of church and monastic lore among the rural laity... the striking anecdotes were powerful, long-lasting encapsulations of moral, theological, and mystical messages.”<sup>50</sup> The simplest way of conveying a message to a largely illiterate society was through art and imagery; a distorted physical form signified moral corruption, and so monsters were

used to demonstrate, through their appearance, that individual sin would result in physical deformity. Referring back to the vision of Walchelin, Orderic Vitalis' account makes "the theology of the other-world accessible to a wider audience through simple peasant language."<sup>51</sup> Consequently, mythical figures and the way in which they were presented to medieval society served an important role in the conveyance of moral messages and theological teaching. As society became more knowledgeable about the theological aspect of the Church, medieval religion in Christian Europe was both promoted and reinforced. Visions of ghosts were an important aspect of this religious promotion as they would reinforce public devotion. Within the sphere of the Church, tales of ghosts "favoured the promotion of the liturgy of the dead, the development of piety, the attraction of charitable donations, and finally, a reinforcement of the Church's hold over Christian society."<sup>52</sup>

While the stories about mythical beings contributed to the reinforcement of religion within the mental framework of medieval society, they were also a metaphor for religious threats, or Christian enemies. As noted above, the characters 'Gog and Magog' became ethnic synonyms for these opponents of the West. But marvels could also potentially offer "an escape from a hermetic path, an invitation to explore new spirals, new and interconnected methods of perceiving the world."<sup>53</sup> Perhaps though, these ideas about escape and freedom from cultural constraints are better interpreted through the specific role of the medieval Wild Man. While he was a representative of the "specific anxieties underlying the three securities supposedly provided by the specifically Christian institutions of civilized life: the securities of sex (as organised by the institution of the family), sustenance (as provided by the political, social, and economic institutions), and salvation (as provided by the Church)," he does not suffer from any of the restraints that are imposed through the membership of these institutions.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the Wild Man became an object of envy; the 'Noble Savage', one who elicits unconditional freedom, "fleeing the world of culture in every sense of the word."<sup>55</sup>

It is a complex array of mythical and imaginary figures that are portrayed during the course of the Middle Ages. Most of these figures were inherited from the classical tradition, and simply became a part of the legacy and continuation of these stories and legends, which had been established much earlier within the Western world. I will not argue here that these marvels had a singular function or role to fulfil in the mental frame-

work of medieval society; rather, it would be reasonable to consider that such a significant period of time deserves a more in-depth interpretation. In the later Middle Ages, there emerges “an increasing preoccupation with ambiguous creatures.”<sup>56</sup> This phenomenon was modified, and enriched, to become a form of entertainment; the Church then managed to adopt this form of popular culture and use it for the purpose of conveying moral messages and the reinforcement of the faith. Christian Europe associated these mythical beings primarily with the remote corners of the world; anything closer to home such as a monstrous birth, or an apparition, became significantly more realistic, and could be classed as less of an imaginary figure. While marvels were an ‘other’, separate from medieval society, and existing outside of the margins, the imaginary and half-human mythical monsters blurred the distinctions. Werewolves, monstrous births and ghosts, as well as legendary characters without a proof of existence, such as Prester John and Robin Hood, challenged the notions of the ‘natural order’ within society, while simultaneously helping to establish it through the demonstration of what one should not be. Therefore, within this context, “the proximity of the monster is a formal necessity to keep in motion the identity-giving process of its continued exclusion.”<sup>57</sup> Mythical and imaginary figures became significant, in that they were part of a process in which medieval people came to question and redefine their humanity. Through the existence – real or imaginary – of a negative figure, the individual would project those qualities which he had suppressed, onto this ‘other’ being. In consequence, these mythical figures became the antithesis of the Christians’ view of themselves,<sup>58</sup> a metaphor for unacceptability; “both a rejection of some traits humans possessed and a reaffirmation of those things people defined as human.”<sup>59</sup> And so, it was in this way that medieval people sought to understand their specific mode of existence. The mythical or imaginary figure was, within the mental framework of medieval society, a metaphor adapted to numerous cultural crises during the course of the Middle Ages.

## Notes

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## *Abstract*

### **The shaping of historical writing by contemporary concerns.**

*Eugene Mackie*

**T**his essay deals with the subjective and highly controversial topic of whether or not the way in which a historian writes should be governed by any overarching code. In abstract and general terms, it looks at whether the world in which the historian lives has an impact on their work, and whether or not this is a good thing. The essay question is a difficult one to answer as there is no perfect conclusion, and this essay illustrates both the difficulties of keeping free from outside influence in academic work – true objectivity, it argues, is impossible – and also why objectivity is not necessarily something to be admired in historical work, as it is often differing historical interpretations which serve to throw more light on something worth studying. It uses examples from trends within the past few decades of historical writing to support both sides of the argument, particularly the uneasy implications of only allowing historians to ‘write what they know’, and looks in depth at postmodernism, and how that came about because of events in the wider academic world. Later in the essay, it examines the influence of market forces in popular history. The chief authors from whose work it draws are E. H. Carr, Eric Hobsbawm, Richard Evans, R. G. Collingwood, Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob.

The full text of this essay will be available online.

# The Natural History Museum: How Style and Function Meet

*Elizabeth Dirth*

The *Magazine of Art* in the 1880's described the Natural History Museum shortly after it opened as "a Victorian building, and no other... not Grecian or Gothic, but thoroughly nineteenth century" (Yanni, 59). If Francis Fowke, the architect who won the design competition for the museum, had lived to build his Classical plan, the museum would have been an outlier in nineteenth century architecture rather than central to it. Thus the Natural History Museum was not built out of one coherent vision, but instead competing ones: the legacy of Fowke, the theological interpretation of its manager, Robert Owen, and the ideas of the architect, Alfred Waterhouse. This description will first examine the decoration of the museum as its most distinguishing characteristic and then explore the structure as a whole.

The most prominent and consistent feature of the museum is the themed decoration. The underlying features of the ornamentation are the use of terracotta and the natural motifs. Waterhouse is famous

for his colored and varied use of terracotta not only as manifested in his detailed decoration but also for practical purposes, as it lasted well through London weather and pollution. Waterhouse's decoration today: monkeys crawling up the archways, lion gargoyles, and butterfly air vents, all add an air of splendor and fascination to the museum. The fact that the line of lions along the roof all have their heads turned in different directions gives them a lively quality and reminds the visitor that all of the specimens in the museum represent the live, exciting, and treacherous animal world. To Richard Owen the ornament was symbolic of the vastness and diversity of God's creation. Instead of a display of wildlife, the lions as God's creatures, frozen in poses where they can look down onto humanity in the garden below, are a display of His omnipotence. Owen even insisted on the separation of extinct animals from live ones as not to inadvertently encourage the theory of evolution. Although there have been many attempts to justify the décor of the building based on the individual visions of Owen or Wa-

terhouse, the question of their intention is less important today than the question of legacy; the dimension of the ornament that creates a feeling of natural excitement was present in both Fowke's and Waterhouse's visions and is the longest-lasting interpretation of this stylistic aspect of the museum. They successfully created a structure that constantly reminds visitors of its purpose. In this way function and decoration of the Natural History Museum are and have always been harmonious.

Another important aspect of the decorative theme is the way that it attempted to represent the British Empire. On the gate around the property and atop the central towers are gold crowns and regal gold lions. The unity of the crown and animal imagery on the gate implies two things: first a spatial link symbolizes importance of exploration and wild unconquered territory to the Empire; second, the lion as a predator symbolizes the power, aggression and ultimately the success of the Empire. The whole concept behind the government funding a museum in which the fruits of the Empire are displayed reeks of an ideal of national superiority and world domination. Although the national aspect of the Natural History Museum was important in the nineteenth

century, the only remnant of this aspiration today is a small plaque near the central staircase of the main hall commemorating a British explorer's conquests in Africa, which goes unnoticed by most visitors. The legacy of science and fascination with the animal world has outlived the political ideas of the museum.

The structure of the Natural History Museum is a hybrid of numerous different styles perhaps best described as Waterhouse's own; one historian calls the museum the building where "he is most clearly himself". The numerous different styles used in creating the Natural History Museum carries a degree of eclectic ideas. The rounded arch windows of the building represent a classical style, and even though the columns used in the windows, which resemble palm trees, are not of classical order in their decoration, in their structure they resemble the Corinthian order. Although the entrance is through a rounded arch it resembles the entrance to a Gothic Cathedral and when seen in combination with the two central towers it creates a Gothic central façade. The top level of windows resembles Parisian style that adds an international element that was not yet broadly accepted by the 1860s. As the eye scans the exterior of the building

one finds examples of many different stylistic movements; however, it does not look cluttered or unorganised, but instead powerful, educated and purposeful. This suggests that rigid concepts of style are less important than feeling and overall aesthetics when judging buildings.

The interior of the building does not necessarily bring more cohesion to the stylistic identity of the structure, but it does harbor a fluid continuation of the external thematic and aesthetic identity. The main central hall has been said by many historians to look like the inside of a cathedral with stained glass and Darwin at the altar instead of Jesus. This interpretation has been heavily influenced by the motives of Owen to construct a cathedral of the natural world and does not reflect the actual feeling of the museum today. To the modern observer, the central hall with its flying staircase, ceiling panels with floral motifs, and exposed metal ribbing is not overwhelmingly Gothic. In some ways it resembles a refurbished warehouse or a prophecy of the modern regeneration efforts of industrial Britain. The idea that it appears as a warehouse is in fact quite true to the function of the museum as house for the collection of natural artifacts. The aspect of the interior that is distinctly Gothic

is the ambulatory like hallway with pointed arches and a soft yellow light that encircles the central hall. Although the structure has been exaggerated by many historians as being more exclusive to a certain style, the eclectic nature of the building is perhaps less important than the fact that the design of the hall and entrance could not be more appropriate for the function of the building.

Robert Owen had a specific vision in mind when he took the role of managing the Natural History Museum. To the modern spectator this vision of the museum embodying imperial supremacy and promoting a lens of the natural world as expansive evidence of God's omnipotence is not evident. Most historians who remain concerned with the interpersonal relations of Fowke, Owen and Waterhouse overlook why this focus may be of little importance to the average visitor today. What the museum does convey is a building meant to display the natural world and all its fascination in an effective way. It is debatable whether this was the primary goal in the nineteenth century, but it was certainly an important aspect and always has been. In this way Alfred Waterhouse answers the age-old question of the relation between form and function by effectively equating the two.

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# The Infiltration of Western Capitalism in Present-day Moscow

*Ashleigh Moore*

Considering Russia's history, with centuries of Tsarist exploitation of the majority of the population under serfdom, to brutal repression and terror under the Bolsheviks, it is difficult to predict how the country's capital will end up. Moscow in the twenty-first century seems to have

attempted to preserve the best parts of its past and combined it with an over-indulgence in Western capitalism. Tsarist rule still has a huge influence in Moscow today; strangely, the wealth of the whole country is harboured in only five percent of the population, and they all accumulate in the capital. It seems as though even after such a heavy stint of communism, Moscow has returned to its top down hierarchical roots once more. Under Bolshevik rule Russia was a communist country under a fierce dictatorship. Josef Stalin was a cruel and paranoid leader, scared of religion and any possible threat, which once actually included a talking parrot. He took charge of the city and adapted it to suit his needs. Amendments included the widen-

ing of streets, the famous Tverskaya for example, in order to accommodate more traffic and trade in the capital; Christ the Saviours Cathedral being rebuilt into a swimming pool; and the impressive metro that is used today and includes portraits of Lenin and the leader himself.

The city of Moscow is stunning, yet it is the concentration of the paradox of Russia's history. The unprecedented wealth of the Tsars and the aristocracy can be viewed in the Kremlin, its cathedrals and its armoury towers, as well as in most museums. While Lenin's mausoleum, the metro and a few small and hidden museums show the mark of over seventy years of repression that the Muscovites clearly do not want to remember. What is more unnerving however, is the unavoidable presence of Western domination. It seems as though after the fall of the Soviet Union all the Russians wanted was fast food. The queue for the first McDonalds that opened in 1990 stretched for miles and still today the Muscovite branches of the

American company are some of the busiest worldwide. The number of Dunkin Donuts and Burger Kings, and huge commercial slogans above beautiful architecture shows that capitalism has made it in Moscow. It is exactly as Karl Marx remarked in *The Communist Manifesto*:

“The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations”.

And so through Russia's integration into Western modernisation her intriguing culture has been pushed aside and replaced with crude commercialism.

The Lubyanka, previously the most feared building in Moscow, was the headquarters in the Stalinist era of the NKVD and the place where hundreds of Bolshevik party members and Russian citizens were

tortured and executed during Stalin's terror. Now, it houses the supposedly less brutal Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB). There was reportedly an underground tunnel connecting the Secret Police headquarters to the Kremlin so as not to attract too much attention to the incomings and outgoings there. What is most interesting about Lubyanka Square these days; however, is the presence of Detsky Mir, a well-known children's toy store equivalent to Hamleys just next to, and on top of, the Lubyanka and its underground prison. Such a contrast between the state's history and the capitalist world demonstrates the disturbing contradictions all over the state capital.

The House on the Embankment museum is an old apartment in the building that housed many of the top-circle Soviets; the ladies who run it lived there during the terror themselves. The museum is set up as it was in the 1930s; this includes furniture, portraits and diaries found. There is a portrait of one man who was taken to a mental institution voluntarily when it was found that he was on the Head of the NKVD Yezhov's quota list. This was done in order to save his family's lives and keep them in the apartment.

Other Bolsheviks were not so lucky: the museum has a list of names of those proven to have been taken and shot, yet it is believed to be short by hundreds. The apartment block was built in three years which indicates the levels of production that were seen under Stalin; more indicative of the time, however, is that it was built with secret passageways in order to spy on people and remove them instantly if need be. The disconcerting thing about the building is that it is barely known for its past, it is still used for apartments and now has a Mercedes logo on top. The capitalist emblem really signifies a rejection of the significance of the building in preference for commercialism.

Similarly, the Gulag museum is a very modest building adorned with barbed wire and large portraits of some of those most recognised to be associated with the camps. From the size of the building to the entry price and extent of material within it, it is clear that only a minority in Moscow wish for that period of their history to be remembered. The paradox of the hugely important museum being hidden down a side street full of designer boutiques and opposite a Marriott hotel suggests a determined look to the West; its attempted negation of the Marxist

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