

JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND CULTURES

**A peer-reviewed online journal dedicated to pioneering new research
in history and cultures**

University of Birmingham

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Journal Editors: Shahmima Akhtar & Ruth Lindley

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The Conversion of the North: Regional Antiquarianism and the Negotiation of Allegiances in Early Modern England

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When I first started working on this project, debates about the Ten Commandments monument on the Capitol lawn in my home state of Oklahoma were topping both local and national news headlines. After years of cultural controversy and legal battles, the state Supreme Court had ordered that the monument be removed because it violates a constitutional ban against the use of public property to promote a religion. The responses to this controversy reveal a range of views regarding the dynamic relationships between national, local, and religious identity. In the ruling, the court noted that the Ten Commandments are “obviously religious,” while Christian lawmakers, wanting the monument to stand, argued that it was indeed not religious, but rather historical.¹ On the other hand, the sentiments expressed by the local people from both sides of the debate demonstrate the virtual impossibility of separating religious identity from state and national identity. Statements about representation, memory, and morality are common, as many have expressed the idea that the majority of people in Oklahoma identify as Christian, thus the monument represents “us”. Others continue to voice the familiar claim that America is a “Christian nation”. But perhaps more than anything, the popular discourse revolves around “the values we were founded upon” and “what our founding fathers intended”. These arguments about origins both reflect and are shaped by the complex and, for many, inseparable relationship between what it means to be Christian and American and Oklahoman. The struggle to lay claim over our founders is based on the idea that if we can articulate the ways in which this particular religion is part of our national past, we can justify certain actions in the present—actions that have implications for how communities deal with cultural difference and issues of inclusion and exclusion.

Evoking Foucault’s claim that identity is continuously created in discourse, these conflicts – between different Christian denominations, between Christians and non-Christians, between the church and the state – serve as sites where identities are negotiated. In this way, founding figures, symbols, and monuments are fundamental tools for constituting collective memory. The ways in which these figures can embody, resist, complicate, or transform drives my interrogation of the intersections between devotion, memory, and identity. This article examines one such case of founding figures, focusing on the arrival of Christianity in England (the North, in particular) and those who spread it. My analysis is focused on how early modern English Catholics and Protestants reinterpreted the lives of “native” saints – British, Celtic, and Anglo-Saxon saints who were venerated locally – to form a historical base and to negotiate their various allegiances.

When delving into the question of early modern uses of English Christian origins, focusing on widely-circulated printed histories puts the focus on the appropriation of history for the dominant

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¹ Abby Philip, “Oklahoma’s Ten Commandments Statue must be removed, state Supreme Court says”, *Washington Post*, June 30, 2015, <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/06/30/oklahomas-ten-commandments-statue-must-be-removed-state-supreme-court-says/>>

national discourse at the expense of the local, confessional and personal. There were certainly polemical uses of history on a national and international scale, and the methodological progress brought by the critical scholarship of humanism and the spread of print were central to both the development of historical consciousness and, in some ways, the decline of popular folk tradition.² But, at the same time, there was a clear vitality to local memory, communicated through devotional material including the *vitae* of native saints, oral tradition, pilgrimage sites, and the liturgy.³ Understandings of Christianity's beginnings were shaped by the spaces and the physical environment in which they occurred, and these visual and ritual reminders of Christian origins made local figures the dominant ones. Placing local antiquarians in dialogue with national histories reveals that the native English saints who brought and spread Christianity to the various regions of England were powerful tools of collective memory. The primary debates in national histories – an archipelagic British versus distinctly English identity, Celtic versus Roman Christianity, British versus Anglo-Saxon lineage – are not as hotly contested in devotional sources. While competing national histories told of a Protestant Christianity preserved by the Britons, cruelly repressed for centuries, versus the Roman tradition, the heir of their Angle ancestors, the foundation stories told through local historians were not interested in this debate. By and large, regional concerns reframed the narratives: by combining the tales of Briton, Welsh, Irish, and Anglo-Saxon saints, these antiquarians were able to embrace a more archipelagic identity while also celebrating their local heritage.

The spread of Christianity in the North of England, in what was the powerful Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, is a particularly important episode that resulted in a variety of local saints and confessors who remained meaningful and useful figures both nationally and internationally. The saints were not only significant to the “superstitious masses,” but also crossed boundaries and played a dynamic part in the historical consciousness of early modern English men and women across the socioeconomic spectrum.⁴ In this article, I focus on the ways in which a few early modern antiquarians interpret and reconstruct the lives of two popular regional saints, Oswald and Cuthbert, interacting with a complex dynamic of regional, national, confessional, and social identities. I show that these antiquarians framed the past with very different concerns than more widely-circulated national and ecclesiastical histories, highlighting the importance of regional identity in shaping early modern attitudes toward England's medieval past.

Local Historians and Regional Saints

These native and founder saints continue to be remembered in some capacity throughout Britain, even now, because cities, towns, parishes, and landmarks bear their names and images. In the sixteenth century, these material and visual depictions were often supplemented by the celebration of a feast, a trip to a chapel or holy well, and stories about the saint's exploits. Part of what ignited the antiquarian tradition in Britain was post-Reformation iconoclasm. The destruction of places was the impetus for many to record and collect what they could while it was still standing. These local historians from across

² D. Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past English Historical Culture 1500-1730* (Oxford, 2003).

³ See E. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, 1992); K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1991). For a more recent assessment as it relates to the natural environment, see A. Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape* (Oxford, 2014).

⁴ For example, in *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England*, Alison Shell shows how oral tradition and local folklore was not merely known, used, and valued by the “unlettered” but was received by a much wider audience. See especially chapter 3.

the confessional divide expressed nostalgic loss; as Protestant William Dugdale put it, the destruction of monasteries, chantries, and shrines was “the greatest blow to Antiquities that ever England had, by the destruction and spoil of many rare manuscripts and no small number of famous monuments”.⁵ Protestant antiquarians were often torn between their appreciation for the medieval past and their religious beliefs, which told them that the past was full of Papist superstitions. Church and abbey ruins inspired a folk and print tradition of reverence for the old faith even among adherents of the new.⁶ Protestant antiquarians negotiated faith and nostalgia in a few different ways. Some expressed reluctance to record certain superstitious customs, yet their explanation of why they were being left out lets us know they were still around, retaining them.⁷ Others record local devotions in great detail in order to expose what they saw as the villainy of medieval Catholicism. For example, in his *Perambulation of Kent*, William Lambarde describes local legends about footprints left on a rock by St Mildreth, explaining that they were faked by “monkish counselors” trying to profit off of them; similarly, Robert Hegge criticizes the miracle traditions surrounding Cuthbert while Thomas Fuller mocks the healing tradition of St. Winefride’s Well. Catholic antiquarians like William Claxton, on the other hand, record with sympathy everything they could find. Thus, while the retrospection inherent in antiquarian work tends to fit well with the religious motivations of Catholics or Protestants, each of these local historians included descriptions of these sites, regardless of the tone of the portrayal, preserving the landmarks, names, monuments, and customs surrounding founder saints across the countryside.

Fortunately, there is a rich British tradition of local history, which goes back to the topographies of the early modern period. Because this study focuses on the early reworking of origin narratives after the split with Rome, I examine sixteenth-century and very early seventeenth-century antiquarian sources. This was near the beginning of the antiquarian tradition in England, which exploded in the seventeenth century. These earlier antiquarians, what Jan Broadway loosely defines as “local historians” whose emphasis was “on the use of primary source materials,” were also engaged in the chorographical work of mapping the landscape and describing local monuments.⁸ The use of antiquarian sources could involve certain methodological issues: these records came from men embedded in context and motivated by a combination of political, religious, and class differences.⁹ Therefore, I pay particular attention to the ways in which antiquarians are portraying the saints and narratives represented in these sites, and the ways in which they reinterpret the arrival and spread of Christianity in the North.

⁵ W. Dugdale, ‘Preface’, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated* (London, 1656), p. 147. See also O. Harris, “‘The Greatest Blow to Antiquities that ever England Had’: The Reformation and The Antiquarian Resistance”, in *The Reformation Unsettled: British Literature and the Question of Religious Identity, 1560-1660*, ed. J. Frans van Dijkhuizen and R. Todd (Belgium, 2009), pp. 225-242, quote on p. 231.

⁶ See Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 187, and Shell, *Oral Culture*, especially chapter 1.

⁷ For specific examples of this, see Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp. 478-479.

⁸ J. Broadway, *‘No Historie So Meete’: Gentry Culture and the Development of Local History in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Manchester, 2012), p. 4; Broadway uses “local historian” as synonymous with “antiquarian” throughout her work, as she believes that this term, though anachronistic in some ways, best represents their work. For more on the emergence of the English antiquarian tradition in the sixteenth century, especially its growth from the methods and practices of continental humanism, see A. Vine, *In Defiance of Time: Antiquarian Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2012).

⁹ The works in this essay are analyzed with full understanding of the postmodern principle that these historical monuments, towns, shrines, and landmarks do not exist outside the texts in which they are described. The fact that antiquarians explicitly foregrounded documentary and physical sources does not mean, of course, that they are “objective.”

Christianity in England: An Origin Story

Prior to the English Reformation, the Venerable Bede's well-known *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* answered crucial questions regarding Christianity's beginnings in England—when, where, how, and by whom. According to Bede, an eighth-century Northumbrian monk known as the “Father of English History”, Pope Gregory the Great sent a missionary named Augustine to convert King Ethelbert of Kent and the pagan Anglo-Saxons at the end of the sixth century. Augustine became the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Roman mission spread to the North of England, the most powerful region at the time, where the Northumbrian kings converted to the faith. From there, local missionary saints continued to spread the gospel across the island during the seventh century, establishing churches and monasteries throughout the countryside.¹⁰ This story was known and accepted by virtually everyone until the sixteenth century, when Henrician evangelicals first began to seek a historical basis for ecclesiastical separation from Rome. There was plenty in Bede's narrative to ruffle the feathers of English reformers, starting with an abundance of monks, miracles, and saints. Nevertheless, the early reformers believed that the primary point of contention lay in the link it established between the English Church and Rome; indeed, the Gospel had been sent by none other than Pope Gregory the Great. Many Protestants attempted to rework this narrative by claiming that certain regions of Britain were early outposts of True Christianity, cruelly repressed for centuries by the Anglo-Saxons and their Roman Catholicism, and that the ancient Britons preserved the pure version of the faith. Catholic historians, on the other hand, reinforced the idea of the English Church as the proud heir of their Angle ancestors with a Christianity that came directly from Rome. By the time Elizabeth took the throne, this debate had developed into a fully-fledged quest for the origins of English Protestantism. At the same time, English Catholicism struggled to regain territory, both ideological and geographical, and reappropriating the Christian foundation narrative played a fundamental role in the effort to do so.

Antiquarianism and the Conversion of the North: Oswald and Cuthbert

After its introduction by Augustine, Roman Christianity gradually spread to the powerful Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria where Paulinus, a member of the mission launched by Pope Gregory, converted King Edwin to Christianity in 627. It was the next-generation king Oswald, however, who did the most to spread the religion in the North. According to Bede, after Edwin's death on the battlefield by the united armies of Penda, the Anglo-Saxon pagan ruler of Mercia, and Cadwallon, the British Christian ruler in the West, the region reverted to paganism. King Oswald famously defeated Cadwallon at the Battle of Heavenfield, uniting the kingdom of Northumbria once again and restoring Christianity to the region. Already a Christian convert himself due to his childhood in Scotland, he invited an Irish missionary from Iona, Aidan, to help convert the people, and he gave the island of Lindisfarne to Aidan as his episcopal see. Tensions between the Roman Christianity brought by Paulinus and the Celtic Christianity spread by Irish and Scottish monks came to a head at the famous Synod of Whitby in 664, where Roman customs won out. Oswald eventually died in battle in Shropshire at the hands of the pagan King Penda. His head

¹⁰ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds. Judith McClure and Roger Collins, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). The Augustine narrative is recounted in Book I, chapters 23-34, and the rest of the book covers the spread of Christianity throughout England.

is buried at Durham Cathedral in the tomb of St. Cuthbert, the patron saint of Northern England, who is also associated with obedience to the Roman tradition.¹¹

Thus, the conversion of the North is a central episode in the narrative of early English Christianity. Because Christianity spread in the North immediately after Ethelbert's conversion by Augustine in Kent, many of these local saints receive national attention, especially in regard to the Christian foundation narrative. Several published local histories and collections show that the legacy of the North was famous enough for dissemination, making it unique in that its local traditions were well known outside of the region.¹²

The local antiquaries who surveyed and recorded the topography of the North in the sixteenth century, preserving the local landscape, also constructed a narrative of the arrival of Christianity in their region. Unlike the debates raging in the national histories of polemicists, Anglo-Saxon versus British spiritual ancestry does not seem to be of much of a concern in this case. Protestant antiquaries did not seize the opportunity to play up the role to the British King Cadwallon nor to denigrate the Anglo-Saxon Oswald. Rather, the more radical Protestants took issue with the miracles and superstition involved in the contemporary cults of figures like Oswald rather than the saint's actual role in the historical narrative. In other words, their arguments were more inspired by reformed belief and identity rather than embedded in a debate about confessional lineage. In fact, I argue that Protestant antiquarians highlight Anglo-Saxon victories over British rulers in the service of regional pride, demonstrating the extent to which the county gentry and urban elites possessed a strong sense of local identity.

There were many aspects shaping their identity that obviously contributed to the way they viewed these things: their own family line/pride. While Jan Broadway argues that these local historians were motivated by societal concerns, linking their interest in local history to their obsession with genealogy driven by the "patriarchal concept of descent", Daniel Woolf and others categorize them according to confessional affiliations, questioning the role that religion played in their histories. Patrick Collinson argues for a more pluralistic community that included local historians working together from across the confessional divide.¹³ Similarly, Oliver Harris downplays the sectarian nature of antiquarianism and argues that they were driven by class, national identity, and "simple fascination with the past" rather than religious agenda.¹⁴ In addition to these concerns, I argue that a central motivation that should be considered is that of regional affinity and the persistence of local identity in the sixteenth century. In the works by moderate Protestant Robert Hegge and radical Protestant Christopher Watson, we can see how the narrative surrounding converter saints in a region known for Catholic resistance plays out locally, in contrast to national historians trying to present a neater, more comprehensive narrative.

¹¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds. Judith McClure and Roger Collins, Oxford World Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). The Augustine narrative is recounted in Book I, chapters 23-34, and the rest of the book covers the spread of Christianity throughout England.

¹² For example, *The Rites of Durham*, ed. J.T. Fowler, No. 107 (Surtees Society, 1903) and *The Origin and Succession of the Bishops of Durham*, ed. T.R. George Allan (Durham, 1779), both circulated widely in manuscript and were published in multiple editions in the seventeenth century.

¹³ Broadway, 'No History so Meete', p. 154. Woolf, *Social Circulation*, pp. 185-187; P. Collinson, 'John Stow and Nostalgic Antiquarianism', in *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720*, ed. J.F. Merritt (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 27-51. For more on the correlation between Catholicism and Antiquarianism in England, see R. Cust, 'Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour: The Writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', *Midland History*, 23 (1998), pp. 40-70. For a survey of the religious loyalties of sixteenth and seventeenth-century antiquarians see Harris, "'The Greatest Blow'", pp. 226-228.

¹⁴ Harris, "'The Greatest Blow,'" p. 241.

Oswald's Popularity and Commemoration

Oswald became a hugely popular saint in the North of England in the Middle Ages, but his commemorative landmarks existed beyond the North. For example, the church near his healing spring on the Welsh border (where he died during the Battle of Maserfield) was named White Church of Oswester, or “the town of Oswald”. His bones were scattered across Britain and the Continent, giving him a unique connection with many localities. As the story goes, Oswald’s brother and successor, King Oswiu, had retrieved his head and arms from Penda’s army and had a special church built for his arms at Bamburgh. This village on the east coast became the center of a dynastic cult that continued throughout the Middle Ages and even after the Reformation.¹⁵ Originally buried on the battlefield, the rest of his body was quickly translated to Bardney Abbey in Lincolnshire, and then moved again in the tenth century to St. Peter’s Priory in Gloucester, which was thenceforth known as St. Oswald’s. His shrine in Gloucester was a popular local pilgrimage destination even into the sixteenth century. Three bones have apparently remained at Bardney, and monasteries across Britain claim to have other bones, including those in Bath, Glastonbury, Reading, St. Albans, Tynemouth, and York. Oswald’s head has a messier history. According to Nicholas Harpsfield, Oswiu originally hid it at Lindisfarne, but it was later translated to Durham. Harpsfield and the local antiquaries report that it remains in Durham in the tomb of St. Cuthbert, the other major saint of the region, with whom Oswald had become associated.¹⁶ However, rival head-shrines throughout Europe claim to have this relic, including Schaffhausen & Zug in Switzerland, Utrecht in the Netherlands, and Hildesheim in Germany.¹⁷ St. Winnoc’s monastery in Flanders also claims to have been given Oswald’s body during the Danish invasions. All this is to say that the sites dedicated to Oswald enjoyed not only widespread domestic but also Continental fame.¹⁸

Oswald’s *vita* appears in virtually all extant medieval and early modern English martyrologies as well as the Roman Martyrology. Although he was not included in the Elizabethan Calendar as part of official customs and festivals, he was discussed at length in John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*, where Foxe praises his bravery as a king, his virtuous life, and his dedication to charity for the poor in addition to crediting him with the conversion of Northumbria and influencing the conversion of the ruler of the West Saxons. Foxe even mentions Oswald’s miraculously uncorrupted hand, though he expresses uncertainty regarding its authenticity.¹⁹

Alongside his continued popularity in the world of saintly devotion and pilgrimage, Oswald retained importance in the national historical narratives of the sixteenth century. The early medieval history of the North was central to competing versions of the national narrative, as the Synod of Whitby was a very important episode in the more polemical national histories. Northumbria was also the most powerful Anglo-Saxon kingdom during the spread of Christianity in the seventh century, thus many of

¹⁵ J. Wilson, *The English martyrologe conteyning a summary of the lives of the glorious and renowned saintes of the three kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland* (St Omer, 1608), p. 165; Camden, *Britannia; or A Chorographical Description of Great Britain and Ireland, Together with the Adjacent Islands*, ed. Edmund Gibson (London, 1722), p. 853; D. Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo Saxon England* (Chichester, 1989), pp. 101-103.

¹⁶N. Harpsfield, *Historia Ecclesiastica Anglicana* (Douai, 1622), ‘Septimum Saeculum’, Caput XXVI, p. 91.

¹⁷ R. Bailey, ‘St Oswald’s Heads’, in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. C. Stancliffe and E. Cambridge (Stanford, 1995), pp. 195-209.

¹⁸ Wilson, *The English Martyrologe*, pp. 214.

¹⁹ J. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of Matters Most Speciall and Memorable, Happenyng in the Church with an Universall History of the Same* (London, 1583), Vol 1, Book 2, 175. The version of the Oswald legend in *Actes and Monuments* is taken from the life of St Oswald attributed to Byrhtferth of Ramsey, BL, Cotton MS Nero E. i/1 (fos. 3r-23v). Cf. ‘Vita sancti Oswaldi autore anonymo’ in *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. J. Raine, 3 vols., Rolls Series 71 (1879), I, pp. 403-4.

the missionaries that converted the rest of the island came from the North. Oswald, in particular, had the potential to be very useful in early modern confessional polemic. On the Protestant side, he was a king who utilized Celtic Christian missionaries, a possible anti-Roman thread, and his death had been portrayed as the martyrdom of Holy Saint Oswald at the hands of a pagan king. On the other hand, he defeated the last British Christian King to hold significant territory outside the West until the rise of the Tudors. Despite this potential, most Protestant antiquarians of the North did not use this particular episode of history to frame their confessional polemic. Celebration of regional heroes, on the other hand, was a central part of their narrative.

This can best be seen in the moderate Protestant Robert Hegge's treatment of St. Oswald.²⁰ Hegge, born in Durham, was very interested in the history of his native country. He wrote this treatise on the churches at Lindisfarne, Cuncastre, and Dunholme, and while he focuses much attention on Cuthbert, Oswald features prominently in his narrative. This manuscript is dated 1626, and it was published as *The Legend of St Cuthbert* first by Richard Baddeley, secretary to Bishop Thomas Morton of Durham, in 1663 and eventually by J. B. Taylor in 1816.

While Hegge certainly bemoans the corrupting influence of Rome upon the English Church, his other, more pressing goal is to celebrate local heroes and demonstrate the importance of the region in England's history.²¹ Hegge credits Oswald with the conversion of the region to Christianity, noting that he "made conquest of religion as well as men". Indeed, he writes of Oswald's military exploits in terms of religious significance, explaining that the purpose of his defeat of the King of the Britons, Cadwallon, was so that "he might conquer likewise his people to Christianity".²² Cadwallon, as the last powerful Briton ruler, was thereafter remembered as a national hero by the Britons. Indeed, many Protestants writing national histories at this time were claiming to be heirs of the Britons, having received their Christian heritage from them, not from the Anglo-Saxons who had been corrupted by Rome.²³ But Hegge does not paint a sympathetic picture of Cadwallon, emphasizing that Oswald's victory was "by virtue of the cross" and even proven righteous by "illustrious" miracles.²⁴ Thus the defeat of the Britons by Oswald in the name of Christianity is certainly not in service to the national narrative being constructed by the likes of John Bale and John Foxe; for Hegge, this episode was about local patriotism. Indeed, he finishes his Oswald section by commemorating "this great monarch, the pious founder of that church to whose womb all the churches of the North owe their birth".²⁵ Hegge then draws attention to the many places where Oswald's relics are still venerated, without any judgment of the veneration itself. He celebrates Oswald as a converter and martyr, finding in Oswald a perfect example of the region's glory and antiquity. Regional pride, then, must be taken into account alongside familial, confessional, and national polemic.

²⁰ I focus on BL Sloane MS 1322, R. Hegge, 'The Legend of St Cuthbert with the Antiquities of the Church of Durham', in which he talks at length about Oswald. A copy of this manuscript can also be found in Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MSS 40, 430, 28. For the many manuscript and printed editions, see P. Pattenden, 'Robert Hegge of Durham and his St. Cuthbert', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, ns v (1980), pp. 107-123. The following quotes from Hegge's work come from *The Legend of St. Cuthbert*, ed. J.B. Taylor (Sunderland, 1816), unless otherwise noted.

²¹ S. Scutts makes a similar argument in "'Truth Never Needed the Protection of Forgery: Sainthood and Miracles in Robert Hegge's 'History of St. Cuthbert's 'Churches at Lindisfarne, Cuncacestre, and Dunholme' (1625)', in *Saints and Sanctity*, Studies in Church History 47, eds. P. Clarke and T. Claydon (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 270-283.

²² Hegge, *The Legend of St. Cuthbert*, p. 3.

²³ See, for example, J. Bale, *Image of Both Churches* (Antwerp, 1545) and J. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1583).

²⁴ Hegge, *The Legend of St. Cuthbert*, pp. 3-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

The celebration of St. Oswald's victories, miracles, and righteousness in local histories is one clear example, but the ways in which these antiquaries deal with the more controversial figure of St. Cuthbert is even more telling.

Cuthbert and Antiquarian Polemics

As popular as Oswald was throughout the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century, regional identity in Northumbria rested significantly on St. Cuthbert, a seventh-century monk and bishop of Lindisfarne. He became one of the most important medieval English saints due to the many miracles associated with intercessory prayer at his shrine.²⁶ The monks of Lindisfarne removed his purportedly uncorrupted body during the Danish invasions of the eleventh century, and it eventually ended up in Durham, where it remains today. This discovery of Cuthbert's uncorrupted body by the monks had given a new impetus to the cult, and his shrine, which includes the head of Oswald and the remains of Bede, helped his cult penetrate local identity. The shrine was dismantled in 1538, but Cuthbert was reburied in the same spot during the reign of Mary, and pilgrims continued to visit the desecrated shrine into the 1570s and 80s.²⁷ Like St. Oswald, Cuthbert was known as a fierce protector of the Northern lands, particularly Durham; the notion of the *Haliwerfolc*, "the people of the saint" or the community of the Liberty of St. Cuthbert, continued into the sixteenth century.²⁸ When talking of Durham, William Camden notes that it is still called "the Land or Patrimony of Saint Cuthbert because of his great fame", and devotes several chapters to the history of his cult and description of his shrine.²⁹ There were also countless parish churches dedicated to Cuthbert beyond the North, and his life was included in virtually every medieval and early modern English martyrology. He appears in the 1584 Roman Martyrology, celebrated specifically for "peacefully reconciling the austerities of the Celts and their way of living with Roman customs", and thus was associated by both Catholics and Protestants with obedience to the Roman tradition.³⁰

Cuthbert, unlike Oswald, became a sticking point in the narratives crafted by the early modern antiquaries of the North, and in fact we can use the way Cuthbert and his cult were treated in these local histories as a litmus test to see where a particular antiquary fell on the confessional spectrum. The Catholic version, for example, celebrates Cuthbert's miracles, his medieval cult, and the healings that had occurred at his shrine. However, there is a clear emphasis on the regional over the universal aspect of the saint. For example, writing in the 1590s, Catholic antiquary William Claxton's treatment of Cuthbert reflects the attitude of many conservatives and recusants in the North, who had at their heart the cult of St. Cuthbert.³¹ A native of Durham, Claxton laments the stripping of Durham Cathedral by Henry's agents in 1539, especially the shrine to Cuthbert, calling it "one of the most sumptuous monuments in all

²⁶ For more on the popularity of Cuthbert's medieval cult, see the works of D. Rollason, especially *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North* (Stamford, 1998); *Northumbria, 500-1100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 244-249; and *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Chichester, 1989). See also C. Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham in the Late Middle Ages: Lordship, Community and the Cult of St Cuthbert* (Woodbridge, 2008), and J. Crook, *English Medieval Shrines* (Woodbridge, 2011).

²⁷ *Dobsons Drie Bobbes: A Story of Sixteenth Century Durham*, ed. EA Horsman (Oxford, 1955), p. 83; M. Harvey, "The Northern Saints After the Reformation in the Writings of Christopher Watson," *Saints and Sanctity*, pp. 258-269.

²⁸ Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham*, p. 205; J. Scammell, 'The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 81, No. 320 (Jul., 1966), pp. 449-473.

²⁹ Camden, *Britannia*, pp. 771-774.

³⁰ For more on Cuthbert and regional identity in the North in particular, see D. Newton, *North-East England, 1569-1625: Governance, Culture and Identity* (Woodbridge, 2006).

³¹ Newton, *North-East England*, p. 143.

England”, and praising Cuthbert for his intercession for the people of the North.³² Indeed, the purpose of the work is to record as much as possible of the decorations and rituals of the monastic church in Durham itself.

The Protestant antiquaries Hegge and Watson are both dubious of Cuthbert’s miracles, explaining that the monks had probably lied and deceived people into devotion. Hegge’s *Legend of St Cuthbert*, written early in the seventeenth century, attracted attention, circulating in manuscript form before it was published in three printed editions.³³ Hegge certainly denigrates the “superstition” and stories of miraculous healing that were said to have taken place at the shrine, but although he is skeptical of the cult, he, like the Catholic Claxton, is explicitly grateful for the role of Cuthbert’s celebrity in England’s consciousness.³⁴ He celebrates Cuthbert primarily as a protector of the region who always had the welfare of Durham in mind. Hegge specifically plays up episodes in which Cuthbert had guarded Durham against invasion and attack. For example, he recounts how Cuthbert protected Durham against the Scots after King Edmund’s visit to his shrine before battle, making Cuthbert the official “Tutelary Deity”.³⁵ By highlighting Cuthbert’s provisions for the welfare and security of the North, Hegge attempts to reclaim Cuthbert from the universal Catholic “superstition” of healing and miracle working by emphasizing instead his role as patron and protector, demonstrating the crucial role Cuthbert and his cult still played in the consciousness of the people of the region.

Reworking local saintly devotion to fall more in line with Protestant identity while retaining regional loyalty was certainly a dominant trend among Northern antiquarians, but there is one notable exception. Christopher Watson, another Durham native but a more radical Protestant, not only denigrated Cuthbert’s life and miracles but also his historical association with the Synod of Whitby and the Roman Church. Though he praises the Celtic tradition over the Roman, he still shows disdain for Cuthbert’s origins, calling him “an Irish man and bastard borne” who was called in from the monastery in Scotland to bring “that devilish doctrine” to England.³⁶ Though it seems contradictory, Watson then portrays the Celtic Cuthbert as representative of Roman Christianity, highlighting his obedience to Rome after Whitby. However, Watson spends very little time on the actual historical figure of Cuthbert, and all of his examples of Roman abuses come from the legacy of his cult, referring mostly to “idolatry” and Cuthbert’s retributive miracles, which, according to Watson, is not the way a true saint would behave.³⁷ Thus, while in practice Watson merely denigrates medieval superstition, it is clear that his goal is to argue for the independence of the Protestant Church, which is much more in line with the comprehensive histories of Bale and Foxe than with the regional histories of the North. There are several reasons for this: Watson was associated with Matthew Parker and the historians who were collecting manuscripts for an ecclesiastical history, specifically in order to reappropriate the history of English Christianity for the Elizabethan Church. Watson also explicitly notes that he is relying on Foxe, Bale, and Jewell for the outline of his narrative.³⁸ His structure, then, was similar to those writing more comprehensive histories, and his goal was to produce his work in three volumes: pre-Augustine Christianity, Augustine to Whitby, and

³² *Rites of Durham*, p. 4. Evidence from some of the contents and the handwriting of the earliest dated copy, 1593, suggest that William Claxton was the author and compiler. See also A.I. Doyle, ‘William Claxton and the Durham Chronicles’, in *Books and Collectors 1200-1700. Essays presented to Andrew Watson*, ed. J. P. Carley and C. G. Colin (London, 1997), pp. 335-355, see especially pp. 347-8.

³³ For the many manuscript and printed editions, see Pattenden, ‘Robert Hegge of Durham and his St. Cuthbert’, pp. 107-23.

³⁴ Hegge, *Legend of St. Cuthbert*, p. 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

³⁶ BL MS Cotton Vitellius C IX, fol. 68r.

³⁷ Vitellius, fol. 84r. See also Harvey, ‘The Northern Saints’, pp. 258-269.

³⁸ Vitellius, fol. 66r, 86r, 94r.

Whitby to the present. Furthermore, Watson was writing in 1574, in the wake of the 1569 Northern Rebellion, which also contributes to his loyalty to the Crown over his rebellious hometown.³⁹ In this way Watson's work has more in common with national histories rather than a local antiquarian work, even though he focuses on the history of Northeast England.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Watson's attack on Cuthbert, though drawing on the widely circulated works of Bale, Foxe, and Jewel, shows how some aspects of these larger narratives were indeed playing out locally. In other words, in contrast to the notion that antiquarian work is the collection of miscellaneous facts and local/familial minutiae, Watson's work shows that many local historians did apply analysis, placing local figures and events in a wider context. Although an important part of the work of local historians was to celebrate their regional identity, they were not unaware of their region's role in national narratives. There were a variety of ways to negotiate the competing and complementary narratives of national, confessional, and local allegiances. Ultimately, the different treatments of Cuthbert show there was no one way to deal with him; while many Protestants described these areas as the "dark corners of the land", viewing them as economically, socially, and religiously backwards in comparison with sophisticated urban centers, the complex and multi-faceted reconstructions across the confessional divide flies in the face of stereotypes of the Northeast as isolated and unlearned.⁴¹

Conclusions

These two saints had the potential to be very useful in early modern polemics. Oswald was a king who utilized Celtic Christian missionaries and killed the last major Briton ruler while Cuthbert was a miracle-working, celibacy-advocating monk, the epitome of medieval Catholic identity. As we saw from his entry in the Roman Martyrology, Cuthbert was known for his adherence to Roman tradition after the Synod of Whitby. In some ways, then, the history of Durham was ill-suited for sixteenth-century Elizabethan Protestantism. In fact, the role of Durham, and Cuthbert in particular, in the Northern Rebellion in 1569 shows the endurance of Roman Catholic commitment in the North in direct opposition to Elizabeth's Protestant regime. However, regional affinity for their heroes, as well as the different concerns of local histories as opposed to national ones, made these figures palatable and even beloved by many Protestants. Protestant antiquarians did not surge on the opportunity to play up Oswald's Celtic imports over Edwin's Roman conversion, and instead celebrated Oswald as a local war hero. They did not, as national historians did, claim any confessional lineage from the native Britons over the Anglo-Saxon king-converters; indeed, they highlighted the piety and holiness of Oswald in contrast to paganism. Similarly, Cuthbert's medieval cult, while called out for its crude medieval superstition, still retained great importance to the community. Reworking Cuthbert to fit in a Protestant world was certainly possible, as Hegge, Camden, and others showed. Thus, regional historians framed the past with very different concerns than more widely-circulated polemicists like Thomas Stapleton and John Jewel—social standing, familial lineage, confessional concerns, and, most potently, regional identity all played a dynamic role in the narratives they constructed.

Narrative lives of saints, along with their images, relics, and sacred spaces, not only shed light on devotional practices, but also reveal the ways in which collective memory of the past was constructed.

³⁹ Harvey, 'Northern Saints', p. 269.

⁴⁰ For an analysis of the various local phenomena comprised by antiquarian and apocalyptic history contributed to the development of English national consciousness in the sixteenth century, see Andrew Escobedo, *Nationalism and Historical Loss in Renaissance England: Foxe, Dee, Spenser, Milton* (Ithaca, 2004), pp. 45-80.

⁴¹ C. Hill, 'Puritans and "The Dark Corners of the Land,"' *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 3-47.

They can be read as historical material, providing alternative histories that disrupt more univocal national narratives. Indeed, the power of saints in shaping the historical imagination of English people comes from the fact that they not only relayed certain versions of the past, but also legitimized them. The confidence in human history to inform matters of religious belief and practice made them potent tools in shaping and reshaping spatial identities. These sources were used by Catholics to negotiate between tradition and Trent as well as between Catholic communities and Protestant authorities. Protestants, either through destruction, criticism, or nostalgic remembrance, used these saints to deal with historical rupture and express cultural and political change. Looking more closely, then, at the sacred historical imagination of local communities reveals a more nuanced English historical culture – one that highlights the continuing importance of county and community history in shaping collective identities.

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'Outside Scope': The Inefficacy of Britain's Early Race Relations Acts

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Abstract

Originally written in response to the question, 'How Useful is it to Talk of "Race Relations"?' this essay argues that the primary failing of the original anti-racist legislation in Britain, the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968, was the failure to interrogate institutionalised forms of racism. By their nature, as institutional solutions for an issue that was largely the result of institutions such as the law, policing, bureaucracy and capitalism, the Acts were invested in protecting and perpetuating racist institutions before they were intended to create conditions for the radical change in society that would lead to meaningful change in attitudes to immigrants and immigration. Harold Wilson's Labour government provided Race Relations legislation as a mere token to eliminate and suppress effective action by the Black Power movement in Britain. This is evidenced by the content, scope and establishment of the legislation itself and, in this essay, through the presentation of archival material that records how Race Relations' 'Conciliation Machinery' worked (or failed to work) when applied to real life situations, particularly instances of violent discrimination perpetrated by the police.

The term Race Relations was originally applied to a field of sociological investigation popularised in the 1960s due to the 'increasing politicisation of racial issues in the US, Britain and elsewhere'.¹ It was then enshrined in British law in 1965, 1968 and 1976: the Race Relations Acts. It is a truth only occasionally acknowledged that 'there is... difficulty experienced in translating sociological ideas into flexible and meaningful legal concepts'.² This means that a discourse capable of great fluidity in form and meaning as a theoretical concept tends to be rendered intransigent, and rather banal, when it is concentrated into an institution with such a heavy reliance on binary distinctions as the law through the compromising process of politics. Moreover, the model of Race Relations that British lawmakers eventually encapsulated was prone to problematic oversights regarding institutional racism. Michael Banton, one of the sociologists who 'helped to institutionalise research on race relations by running... the major British research centres in this field', asserted that, 'for every act of racial discrimination someone is responsible and needs to be brought to account'.³ His espousal of the belief that the source of racism is the individual and that they can be held solely accountable is emblematic of the primary ideological limitation of the strand of Race Relations that was translated into legislation in Britain. Both Banton and law makers ignored the fact that racism is deeply embedded in the structures of society. The term 'Race Relations' itself uncritically enshrines 'race' as a real category of difference, tacitly ensuring 'the survival of biological thinking' about race instead of attempting to re-frame it as 'a discursive construct' or imaginary category.⁴ It also gives primacy to the private, interpersonal realm of 'relations' between individuals and groups as the site where discrimination occurs. Even after the Macpherson Report of 1999 brought the

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¹ J. Solomos, *Race and Racism in Britain*. 3rd ed. (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 21.

² B. Hepple, 'Race Relations Act 1968' *The Modern Law Review*, 32 (March 1969), p. 181.

³ Solomos, *Race and Racism*, p. 20; M. Banton, 'The Nature and Causes of Racism and Racial Discrimination', *International Sociology*, 7 (1992), p. 73.

⁴ S. Hall & S. Jhally 'Race, the Floating Signifier', *Media Education Foundation*, Northampton, 1997.

<<http://www.mediaed.org/transcripts/Stuart-Hall-Race-the-Floating-Signifier-Transcript.pdf>>

phrase 'institutional racism' into everyday parlance, the view that racism is the preserve of the exceptional, if unpleasant, individual and not a cornerstone of Western civilisation pervades popular thought. This attitude is traceable in the 'largely symbolic or inadequate' scope and enforcement of the original Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968, from which the contemporary Equality Act is descended.⁵

According to Erik Bleich, 'national policies and laws designed to fight racism and to influence interactions across racial and ethnic boundaries... are the most important tools a society has at its disposal' because they 'set a public tone for what will or will not be tolerated'.⁶ However, the law can, at best, alter the way people act; it cannot change the way they think and feel. The anti-racist laws of an institutionally racist nation cannot be relied upon to diminish racism. Gavin Schaffer argued in his analysis of the first Race Relations Act that it only 'served to clarify the legality of some forms of racism, extending the shelf life of political intolerance by providing clear legal boundaries for the articulation of racist views'.⁷ One example of this used by Schaffer is the failure to imprison members of the Racial Preservation Society, who circulated literature with a scientific racist bent but who did not, according to the court ruling, actually incite violence.⁸ He also discusses how the Act was deployed, in a move utterly counter-intuitive to combatting institutional racism, to imprison Black Power activists for inciting racial hatred.⁹ Further examples as to the gerrymandering of what was, and was not, acceptable racist behaviour will be provided in this essay predominantly through the use of archival material: internal memos and government records of discrimination cases that were judged to be 'Outside Scope of Act'.

'British race relations legislation... established in 1965, 1968 and 1976, has formed the core of British race institutions, setting out most of the general rules and founding many of the official organisations'.¹⁰ Therefore, despite their inefficacy (even insidiousness), the origins, ideological implications and enactment of Race Relations legislation in Britain provide an essential genealogy for the social, legal and political discourses of race and discrimination in Britain in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This essay begins with an examination of the background, scope and proposed enforcement of the first two Race Relations Acts in Britain, before presenting and exploring the archival material which illustrates primarily the Race Relations Acts' and associated bodies' treatment of police brutality and their use of and approach to the conciliation process.

The Race Relations Act 1965

The 1965 Act was the first tangible result of 'attempts to introduce legislation... first made in Britain shortly after the Second World War' and materialised only as a result of a 'Labour Party pledge... in its 1964 election manifesto to introduce legislation'.¹¹ The introduction of antiracist legislation had been a topic of discussion in parliament for some time, but was met with reluctance from a Conservative government. Alec Douglas-Home, then Prime Minister, is quoted as saying that 'those who ask for special legislation [dealing with racial discrimination] ignore the fact that at present all British citizens,

⁵ Solomos, *Race and Racism*, p. 78

⁶ E. Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France: Ideas and Policy Making Since the 1960s* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 5.

⁷ G. Schaffer, 'Legislating Against Hatred: Meaning & Motive in Section Six of the Race Relations Act of 1965', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25 (2014), p. 252.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 268.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 269

¹⁰ Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p. 9.

¹¹ G. Bindman, 'The Law and Racial Discrimination: Third Thoughts', *British Journal of Law and Society*, 3 (1976), p. 110.

irrespective of race, creed or colour, are equal under the law'.¹² However, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, three major events persuaded the Labour party that 'quintessence of colour blindness' attributed to British law by the Conservatives was a myth.¹³ These were the 1958 riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill, Labour's embarrassment over their 'acquiescence to the Conservative Party's 1962 immigration restrictions (the Commonwealth Immigrants Act) and the 1964 election of Peter Griffiths as MP for Smethwick which 'marked the emergence of overt racism into the official electoral politics of Britain for the first time in the post-war period'.¹⁴ The 1965 Race Relations Act emerged as a well-meant attempt to protect but also integrate and ingratiate migrants from the commonwealth who were to remain in Britain. During its struggle through parliament, the Act had to mediate between the ferocious 'Powellism' of the right and 'appease labour supporters who bridled at immigration reform, and to head off the troublesome problems of racism'.¹⁵ This political balancing act goes some way to explaining why the 1965 Race Relations Act has been consigned to history as 'a whimper of an Act that arrived with a bang', and Bleich's statement that 'from today's perspective, the passage of the [1968] legislation sees wholly natural' but 'from the perspective of the late 1960s... [it] was anything but assured'.¹⁶

At a concise seven pages, the Act was certainly 'limited in scope'.¹⁷ Many argue that it was, however, *symbolically* important for 'confirming the government concern about racial discrimination and its broad objective of using legislative action to achieve good race relations'.¹⁸ It also provided some indication as to what the government thought 'better' Race Relations might look like. The 1965 Act 'restricted to those areas of potential racial conflict which were considered by Parliament to constitute the greatest threat to public order and to be the most readily susceptible to legislation'.¹⁹ This meant swimming pools, cafes and public transport. Section Six, which unlike the rest of the legislation was 'promptly used to put offenders [of all colors] in prison' prohibited 'incitement to racial hatred' in a public place.²⁰ What the bill 'did not include [was] employment discrimination, or racism in the banking and insurance areas'.²¹ Housing discrimination was mentioned but 'parliament... left open a loophole for a landlord who wishes to impose a racial restriction'.²² Home Office memoranda confirm that the government's opinion was that suggestions to extend the Bill 'to deal with discrimination in such fields as employment and housing... should be resisted'.²³ The Act's primary concern with public places where money was exchanged betrays the government's rather cynical, capitalistic idea about what good 'Race Relations' would look like: as long as people were able to trade and exchange goods and services without fear of discrimination, better Race Relations were being achieved.

The 1965 Act also saw the creation of the Race Relations Board and a white paper on immigration which led to the creation of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (NCCI) as

¹² Quoted in N. Deakin, *Colour and the British Electorate, 1964: Six Case Studies* (London, 1965), p. 10.

¹³ E. J. B. Rose, *Colour and Citizenship* (London, 1969), p. 200.

¹⁴ Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France* p. 43; S. Hall, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke and B. Roberts, *Policing the Crises: Mugging, The State, And Law And Order* (London & Basingstoke, 1978), p. 240.

¹⁵ Bleich, p. 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 35, 70.

¹⁷ Solomos, *Race & Racism*, p. 80.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ B. Hepple, 'Race Relations Act 1965', *The Modern Law Review*, 29 (1966), p. 306.

²⁰ Schaffer, 'Legislating Against Hatred', pp. 275, 307.

²¹ Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain & France*, p. 58.

²² Hepple, 'Race Relations', p. 313.

²³ The National Archives (TNA): CAB/129/121/27, p. 4.

consolidation of volunteer organisations that had worked since before the 1965 Act to 'welcome and assist incoming migrants'.²⁴ The NCCI was an organisation:

Autonomous from the government but with whom the government could maintain close ties... as of the mid 1960s, therefore, Britain had two parallel institutional structures [the NCCI and local conciliation committees] for managing different aspects of Race Relations.²⁵

These were the first of the 'weak quasi-governmental bodies [with] responsibility for enforcing the 1965 & 1968 Acts'.²⁶ 'Between 1965 and 1975 successive governments left the tackling of racial discrimination to these bodies, and provided little direction or support'.²⁷ Under the 1965 Act, the Race Relations Board was made up of 'a chairman and two other members appointed by the secretary of state' and its subsidiary local Conciliation Committees 'for such areas as the board considers necessary'.²⁸ The purpose of the Conciliation Committees was to 'make such inquiries as they think necessary' when a complaint about an act of discrimination was made to them and 'use their best endeavours by communication with the parties or otherwise to secure a settlement of any difference... and a satisfactory assurance against further discrimination'.²⁹ It was here that the 'spirit of compromise' that pervaded the language and enforcement of the Race Relations Acts in Britain was concretised.³⁰ The Act was not intended to lead to convictions but rather to 'satisfaction' that perpetrators would be made aware of their wrongdoings, if not punished. The administrative approach to the implementation of the acts, as opposed to a punitive one where complaints might be pursued through court proceedings not conciliation (as was implemented in France), was not considered until the committee stage. 'The Bill from which the [1965] Act originated followed the penal approach by providing a maximum fine of £50 on conviction for a first offence and £100 for subsequent offence'.³¹ The change in approach was seemingly inspired by anti-discrimination laws in North America, which many Race Relations enthusiasts in the Labour party considered to have more similar issues to Britain than France, despite the obvious divergences in colonial history. However, in the British iteration of the North American approach 'many powers which the U.S. commissions found to be indispensable... [were] not conferred'.³² For example, under the administrative apparatus, the Committee's main role seemed to lie in recording complaints of discrimination, as the hundreds of complaints files available to view in the National Archives attest.³³ The Race Relations Board and its conciliation committees were, therefore, almost entirely tokenistic and Race Relations legislation in Britain was never to overcome this tendency towards 'unnecessary exceptions and loopholes'.³⁴ This was unequivocally the outcome desired by most legislators, who could not have communicated their lack of commitment to the actual elimination of discrimination in Britain more effectively than through the Act's phrasing, its enforcement and the tightening of immigration laws that both followed and preceded it.

²⁴ Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain & France*, p. 65.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

²⁶ J. Solomos, *Black Youth, Racism and the State: The Politics of Ideology and Policy* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²⁸ Hepple, 'Race Relations', p. 310.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 311.

³³ Bindman, 'Third Thoughts', p. 111.

³⁴ A. Lester, 'From legislation to integration: twenty years of the Race Relations Act' in T. Blackstone, B. Parekh and P. Saunders (eds.), *Race Relations in Britain: A Developing Agenda* (London, 1998), p. 27.

The Race Relations Act 1968

'Although [Frank] Soskice told the House that it would be an "ugly day" if the Parliament needed to extend the legislation, new law was enacted only three years later, in 1968'.³⁵ The Labour party leadership, with its two seat majority, lack of support from both the opposition party and such Labour bastions as The Trade Unions Congress (TUC), had no intention of extending antiracist legislation past 1965. 'The initiative for legislation was not taken by the Labour party, but by a progressive coalition' made up of 'race bureaucrats and a key cabinet minister' (Home Secretary Roy Jenkins) and the 1968 Act was passed just six months after Enoch Powell delivered his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech.³⁶ It extended the scope of the law and established a 'Community Relations Commission to complement the work of the Race Relations Board'.³⁷ The size of the Race Relations Board was increased from two to twelve members, and the Board was granted powers 'to initiate civil proceedings itself when conciliation failed, without resort to the attorney general'.³⁸ It also expanded the scope of the Act.³⁹

Despite extended powers and a widening miscellany of enforcing bodies the 1968 Act 'still contained unnecessary exceptions... section 75(5) of the Act permits the crown, as employer, to discriminate on basis of birth, nationality, descent or residence'.⁴⁰ The Race Relations Board still had 'no powers, prior to the institution of legal proceedings, to secure information or documents' rendering it 'less powerful than factory inspectors, Ministry of Social Security inspectors, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration'.⁴¹ Therefore 'when conciliation fail[ed]... and legal proceedings [were] instituted, the Board face[d] considerable difficulties of proof'.⁴² The Board also denied legal aid to claimants in industrial tribunals which meant 'deny[ing] legal assistance to many who will find it very difficult to pursue a claim without it'.⁴³ Finally, the 1967 Act's definition of 'Discrimination' (not defined at all in the 1965 Act) 'ignores what many social scientists regard[ed] as a major problem, namely, giving preferential treatment to those social groups who, as a result of past discrimination over many generations, are at present underprivileged'.⁴⁴ The Government feared that any cadence of affirmative action would lead to a "separate but equal" interpretation' of race in Britain, which they were desperate to avoid.⁴⁵ Promoting integration, not equality, was a major motivation behind the phrasing of the Race Relations Acts and the implementation of the immigration legislation that was passing in parallel. Roy Hattersley, Labour MP for Birmingham Sparkbrook famously encapsulated the logic behind this 'package deal' of migration controls and Race Relations Acts when he said 'integration without limitation [of immigrants] is impossible... [but]... limitation without integration is indefensible'.⁴⁶ The new immigration policies gradually ensured that new Commonwealth migrants were 'reduced to the effective status of short-term contract workers rather than settlers' as it was hoped that 'the fewer immigrants (particularly black ones) there were, the easier it would be to integrate them'.⁴⁷ Bleich observed that 'loopholes and

³⁵ Schaffer, 'Legislating Against Hatred', p. 255.

³⁶ Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain & France*, p. 70.

³⁷ Lester, 'Twenty Years of Race Relations Acts', p. 24.

³⁸ Bindman, 'Third Thoughts', pp. 111-12.

³⁹ Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain & France*, p. 87.

⁴⁰ Lester, 'Twenty Years of Race Relations Acts', pp. 24-5.

⁴¹ Hepple 'Race Relations' p. 185.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Bindman, 'Third Thoughts', p. 114.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Hansard*, vol. 721, col. 359, 23 November 1965, quoted in Schaffer, 'Legislating Against Hatred', p. 255.

⁴⁷ Solomos, *Racism and the State*, p. 40; Solomos, *Race and Racism*, p. 81.

weaknesses were [purposely] built into the institutions' by those 'who feared that the law created a disincentive to minority integration [or] that it allocated substantial power to minorities'.⁴⁸ Solomos has put it only slightly more mildly: "Race Relations legislation, particularly when linked to immigration controls, was no more than a gesture...to give the impression something was being done".⁴⁹ Arguably, the laws were also designed to act as infuriating, bureaucratic distractions from potential radical organising by providing 'potential' (in fact merely frustrating) official recourse for acts of discrimination. Discrimination was therefore tacitly encouraged by the very laws that were meant to limit it.

Race Relations & The Police

Both the 1965 and the 1968 Acts contained a fatal oversight regarding one major British institution: that of the Police and policing. Although it is widely acknowledged today that police racism is an omnipresent threat to the lives of black and minority ethnic people in North America and Europe, this does not seem to have been much of a concern in the late 1960s.

Before the Race Relations Bill was introduced, we decided that actions taken by the police when carrying out their operational duties in relation to members of the public should not come within the scope of the Bill, but that the police discipline code should be amended in due course to make discrimination a specific offence against police discipline... this proposal has run into difficulties... I invite my colleagues to agree it should be dropped.⁵⁰

The 'difficulties' with providing explicit discrimination legislation or an amendment to police code originated, according to Callaghan, with the 'intense and deep seated' opinion among all police bodies that because 'members of the service make a declaration upon appointment that they will serve the Queen in the office of constable "without favour"' so 'to have a special provision in the code about racial discrimination would be to pick out the service in such a way as to put a slur on it'.⁵¹ An interesting choice of language by the then Secretary of State (he would become Prime Minister in 1976), as members of the service certainly had no such objections to 'putting a slur', both literally and figuratively, on members of the communities they worked with.⁵²

In 1969 Kendrick Montrose Young of Willesden Green took the trouble to fill in one of the Race Relations Board's rather officious forms. This standard starting point for any conciliation process required the complainant to answer questions such as 'In which country were you born' and 'If you were not born in Britain, when did you come here?' On the back of the form, where it was requested that Young 'give FULL DETAILS' of his complaint, he hand wrote a detailed account of an incident in which a policeman accusing him of taking a corner too fast in his car had asked to see his licence. As this confrontation was taking place more or less in front of the complainant's home he said he would go to get it.

As I turned in upon my gate he held onto my jacket at the back and said to me come back here you black bastard and he Tumped [sic] me on my jaw and as I turned around he tumped me again in my chest... then he went back in his car and phone for some more police. And about 10-12 come

⁴⁸ Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain & France*, p. 64.

⁴⁹ Solomos, *Race and Racism*, p. 76.

⁵⁰ TNA: CAB/129/139/22 p. 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 2

⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.

along and 4 of them grab me... they held me against the wall and 2 of them kick me in my tummy... and they charge me for assaulting the police.⁵³

In response to this horrifying allegation of extreme brutality and miscarriage of justice, P. W. Philpott, Principle Conciliation Officer for the London area sent a letter, 'I was sorry to hear of the difficulties you have experienced with the police but must tell you that complaints against police officers while they are in their operational capacity are outside the provisions of the Race Relations Act, 1968'.⁵⁴ The slender file that records Young's complaint concludes with a typed missive confirming that the complainant consented to their case being forwarded to the Commissioner of Police. Blocking out a different section of the text provided would have confirmed that his consent was not given.⁵⁵

The next year, James Olagoile Kila from Notting Hill filled in exactly the same form and produced an account of how he was stopped in his Peugeot 404 by two police officers whose constabulary numbers he quoted. They accused him of taking a right turn at a set of traffic lights where there was to be no right turn. Kila wrote that he had pointed out to them that 'the NO RIGHT TURN sign was limited from 7am-7pm, Monday-Friday only and today was Sunday'. After conferring with PC134B, who accompanied him, PC232B reportedly replied 'Alright Nigger, don't do so again'. Later the same day, the same officers stopped the Peugeot 404 again, this time while Kila's wife and children were in the car. They insisted that he submit his car to a search. 'While this was going on he [PC134B] went to my wife... to my surprise I saw him dragged my wife out of the car and my children started crying'.⁵⁶ He was granted an interview at Notting Hill Police Station about his complaint and the interviewing officer 'promised to look into my grievances and reprimand the constable if need be... since then I never hear anything until I received a plan of the route from Notting Hill Police station indicating a proceeding against me'.⁵⁷ He received an almost identical letter of reply from Mr Philpott as Kendrick Montrose Young had. The concluding form of his case folder is the same missive that concludes Young's, with a handwritten note that 'Complainant has already submitted' his petition to the Commissioner of Police.⁵⁸ In the National Archives records of the Race Relations Board under the 1968 Act (reference CK 2) there are 18 records of complaints filed against the police that were dubbed outside the scope of the Race Relations Act. Michael Banton once suggested 'that the isolation of the British police has resulted in their espousing a value system somewhat different than that held by the general public'.⁵⁹ Whether he was referring to their isolation from Race Relations legislation is unlikely, but it clearly led some of them to behave as if they were beyond reproach.

The physical violence of the police on members of the black community was paralleled by Race Relations bodies' epistemic version of the same brutality. In 1974 the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration's 1972 report on *Police/Immigrant Relations* were criticised for their application of 'a narrow interpretive framework which served to neutralise or define as illegitimate statements of analysis which did not fit with its own pre-conceived notion of "what the problem was"'.⁶⁰ This narrowness 'shaped the way its members approached the memoranda submitted to them, their conduct in verbal

⁵³ TNA: CK2/623, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁶ TNA: CK 2/718, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.4 .

⁵⁹ Quoted in J. P. Clark, 'Isolation of the Police: A Comparison of the British and American Situations', *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 56 (1965), p. 314.

⁶⁰ J. Clarke, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson and J. Lambert, 'The Selection of Evidence and the Avoidance of Racism: a Critique of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration', *New Community*, 3 (1974), p. 2.

exchanges, and the conclusions they eventually reached'.⁶¹ The report highlighted the Committee's employment of four key 'inferential structures' through which they justified what might be dubbed their selective hearing of the evidence presented to them by members of the Asian and Caribbean communities about their relationship with the police. These were ideas of balance, conventionalism (as in they wished to know what migrants 'typically' thought), majority/minority and 'superficialism'.⁶² When questioning Lynch, the Committee continually 'dragged [the discussion] back into the practical and manageable world of recruitment' by asking how they could convince 'black school leavers' to join the police force; their preferred, integration based, solution to the problem.⁶³ They also asked Lynch to 'justify his challenges' to the committee's preconceived notions of how to solve the problem where speakers who had agreed with the committee's assessments had not been asked to justify their opinions.⁶⁴ When Lynch insisted that his evidence be taken seriously, he was rebuked by a member of the Committee who said 'we are trying to see, in the end, what *constructive* steps *should* be taken and not *destructive* and *alienating* steps that can be taken'.⁶⁵

The use of forms and interviews that captured and quantified every detail of discrimination in Britain for the records reveals a key aspect of the inner workings of the Race Relations Acts in its bureaucratic rigidity. The transformation of complainants' experiences of hate crime into data and files represents an aspiration towards a bureaucratisation of experience which could transform traumatic events into statistics that could be categorised, catalogued and then made to disappear through redirection to the relevant department. Colonial discourses clearly persisted in Race Relations rhetoric: bureaucracy was a key feature of the British colonial machinery. The construction of a 'constructive' majority of immigrant voices (who agreed with the Committee) versus 'those who undermine the committee's definition of the problem' and who were 'necessarily not rational or reasonable and.... exploit the race relations act' and should be subject to 'exclusion from the discussion' is easily traceable to Kipling's 'civilising mission' and Macaulay's 'mimic men'.⁶⁶ It is also notable that 'preoccupation with screening and profiling' is symptomatic of 'the desire to pre-empt a danger that is not yet fully shaped'.⁶⁷ In the case of the bureaucracy of Race Relations, the shapeless danger that alluded capture was, as a conciliation officer for Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire stated in 1968, that 'wide discrimination' will cause migrant communities to 'turn ugly and will try to organise some kind of black power movement'.⁶⁸ Additionally, the 'high-profile prosecution[s] of five black men [black power activists] within the first 2 years of the new law' created the impression among some members of the immigrant community in Britain that the secret agenda behind the Race Relations Act was to target black militancy.⁶⁹

Race Relations & 'Conciliation'

Conciliation and reconciliation were key discourses in institutional social justice efforts in the twentieth century. The Truth & Reconciliation Committee (TRC) established in Post-Apartheid South Africa is the

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 4.

⁶³ Clarke et al., 'Critique of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration', p. 8.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 3; H. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry of Man', *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), p. 87.

⁶⁷ Hall, 'These People Could Be Anyone', p. 890.

⁶⁸ A. Buchan, 'Multicoloured Britain', *International Journal*, 23 (1968), p. 530.

⁶⁹ Schaffer, 'Legislating Against Hatred', p. 271.

most prolific example, because of its vast scale, perceived success and obvious pitfalls. Its terms of 'individual amnesty for the perpetrator, truth for the society, and acknowledgement and reparations for the victim' individualised crimes against humanity and actually ensured that the vast majority of perpetrators walked free.⁷⁰ Reconciliation is not another name for justice but rather implies obtaining forgiveness and restoring friendship after wrong doings from both sides. The word 'conciliation' literally means 'the action of *preventing* someone being angry'.⁷¹ The application of this term to the official process of dealing with discrimination implies that no harm has been done by the initial act of discrimination. It also empowered the Race Relations Board to determine what constituted discrimination over the complainant or victim. This was problematic (as I have already exemplified with the aforementioned episodes of police brutality) because it was emphatic that the purpose of Conciliation Committees was suppressing discrimination cases, not championing them:

It will be the duty of the committees to receive and enquire into individual complaints of discrimination in public places... to *attempt to secure a settlement of the differences* between parties and, where appropriate, to *obtain assurances against any repetition of discriminatory acts*. The committees will act informally and will not be armed with the power to summon witnesses.⁷²

Like the TRC, Conciliation Committees were instituted in order to individualise institutional systems of discrimination. According to the same memorandum quoted above, 'organisations representing immigrant communities' were in favour of conciliation machinery 'as a *preliminary* to any proceedings in the courts' (my italics).⁷³ However, Soskice (the memo's author) goes on to clarify that 'conciliation and criminal proceedings are difficult to reconcile and there are serious procedural difficulties in attempting to combine them' thus steering the Conciliation Committees back into toothless territory.⁷⁴ 'For Soskice, race relations legislation was in large part related to concerns of public order' as opposed to maintaining emotional security for the immigrant population which, admittedly, would have been a tall order considering the political climate he was working in and the tools he was working with as a politician and not a community activist or advocate.⁷⁵

The use of the term 'Machinery' in 'Conciliation Machinery' is connotative of the automation or mechanisation of the so-called reconciliation process between complainants and their persecutors. The pairing of 'Conciliation' which 'predefines the problem as one which is the result of faults on both sides' and precludes the 'stress on balance, compromise and acceptability' that obsessed Race Relations bodies with 'machinery' is indicative of how they envisioned conciliation working as more of a production line than a meaningful mediation.⁷⁶ It also echoes the ideas of the Select Committee's *Police/Immigrant Relations* enquiry that there would be standard for what a 'legitimate' claim of discrimination might look or sound like (i.e. 'reasonable', 'constructive' and 'relevant' according to the committee's interests).

The other connotation of the word 'machinery' is that the system is automated, efficient and devoid of emotion. Naturally, in a system set up to deal with complaints of discrimination in a society built on such discrimination (colonialism was well within living memory at this point) it was impossible

⁷⁰ M. Mamdani, 'Amnesty or Impunity? A Preliminary Critique of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC)', *Diacritics*, 32 (2002), p. 33.

⁷¹ Oxford English Dictionaries, <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/conciliation>>

⁷² TNA: CAB 129/121/27, p. 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain & France*, p. 45

⁷⁶ Clarke et al., 'Critique of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration', p. 3.

for both conciliation workers and complainants to not experience emotional reactions to the system in which they were mired. This is especially true as emotions are, among many other things, 'evaluative judgements and ideological discourses reinforcing power relationships' and 'responses to the perception of value... an intrinsic part of [the Conciliation Committee's] reasoning and ethical life'.⁷⁷ Admittedly, examples of these emotional reactions to a complaint were rare in my cursory look at the Race Relations Board archives: many of the records had succeeded in obscuring the emotional aspects of the complaints procedure, as in the records of police brutality. However, there was one particularly striking exception contained in the unusually thick (fifty pages compared to the usual three or four) file concerning Mr Jack Johnson and his persistent complaints against the Handsworth Employment Exchange.

'Mr Johnson has a most forceful, indeed dominant personality which is rather overbearing... although I told him we must stick to basic details in his saga, he *insisted* that all details be noted... my impression is that his manner is the root of his troubles not the colour of his skin' wrote Audrey Skelton on 4th May 1967 as an addendum to the complaint Johnson made regarding his treatment by the Handsworth Employment Exchange.⁷⁸ 'Mr Johnson's main complaint is that he is being victimised by the labour exchanges, and that they keep passing on untrue or detrimental information to prospective employers, resulting in his being unable to find suitable work'.⁷⁹ On 2 June, Arthur McHugh, Conciliation Officer, sent Johnson a letter: 'the decision of the committee was that your complaint fell outside of their terms of reference'; he did not give a reason why.⁸⁰ Johnson refused to be ignored. He continued to visit the office in Handsworth, wrote to other Conciliation Committees in London and, amid aspersions cast upon his sanity, filed several further complaints against the Department of Employment and Productivity, the Department of Social Security and finally the Conciliation Office at Handsworth itself. On 25 July 1969, Johnson appeared at the Conciliation Committee's offices 'without an appointment' after being denied access to his benefits.⁸¹ According to McHugh, he was 'shouting, swearing and refusing to sit down or talk quietly... he continued to rage at me about 'injustice' and 'the colour bar'... we had great difficulty getting rid of him'.⁸² The final page in the file on his case is headed 'SUMMARY' and concludes: '[Johnson's] manner, attitude and obstructive behaviour created difficulties and restricted the choice of employers to whom he could be submitted. Complainant informed discrimination unlikely'.⁸³

The construal of a black man who dared to invoke the colour bar as unpleasant, unhinged and unworthy of assistance is entirely in keeping with both the British colonial mentality that designated black men as 'savages' and with British Race Relations' related obsession with promoting integration and individualisation over justice. Johnson did not act in the 'spirit of compromise'.⁸⁴ He refused to edit his story and insisted that his difficulties in finding appropriate employment were the Race Relations Board's business. He was therefore marked as one who was attempting to 'exploit the race relations act' and, therefore, worthy of 'exclusion from the discussion'.⁸⁵ Presumably, this is why Johnson's behaviour is so frequently referred to in the record of his case: his demanding, uncompromising personality was genuinely considered evidence that he should not be helped or heard out. Quite apart from it being

⁷⁷ A. Hall, 'These People Could Be Anyone' Fear, Contempt (and Empathy) in a British Immigration Removal Centre', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36 (July 2010), pp. 885-886.

⁷⁸ TNA: CR 2/1753 (other reference: RRB BH/68/6), p. 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Hepple, 'Race Relations', p. 311.

⁸⁵ Clarke et al., 'Critique of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration', p. 3.

singularly unprofessional to mark an individual out because they are not likable, it is quite impossible to imagine a white man being denied a good job for the reasons given by the Handworth Committee. Evelyn Baring, '(also known as "Over-Baring")' the 1st Consul General of Egypt immediately springs to mind.⁸⁶

Conclusion

'Intended as an attempt to pick off the extremists [sic] on both sides' the early Race Relations Acts were tools to quell not only what the predominantly white Government deemed the worst acts of racism but also to damp down potential 'extremist' Black Power movements.⁸⁷ They failed on both counts: violent attacks continued unabated and many went uncondemned and unchallenged by the terms of the Race Relations Acts. Black people in Britain continued to organise for and by themselves, despite being both directly and indirectly victimised by the laws that were supposed to protect them.

'The *imperial assumptions* of the race relations narrative [were] woven through a reinvention of British nationalism which occurs in the 'common sense' of the post-war/post-colonial period' (my italics).⁸⁸ The Race Relations Acts were part of a neo-colonial project with no interest in actually eliminating discrimination and symptomatic of a political culture in which winning votes was more important than enacting change. When 'a third liberal response to cultural differences' emerged in the 1970s in the form of 'multiculturalism', 'the background of the legislatively inflected evolution of 'race relations' lent the discourses the early Acts espoused an insidious power that stilted the development of radical anti-racism.⁸⁹ 'The race relations narrative promotes the idea... [of] an indigenously liberal and tolerant British nation which is intrinsically uninformed by historical racist processes'.⁹⁰ This dangerous narrative, along with many of the other conditions that limited the original Race Relations Act, survive today; particularly in popular discourse about race and racism.

⁸⁶ E. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1991), p. 35.

⁸⁷ C. Holmes, 'Violence and Race Relations in Britain, 1953-1968' *Phylon*, 36 (1975), p. 119.

⁸⁸ B. Hesse, *Un/settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, 'transruptions'* (London, 2000), p. 12

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

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The End of the Irish Poor Law? Welfare and Healthcare Reform in Revolutionary and Independent Ireland by Donnacha Seán Lucey. Manchester University Press, 2015, 218 pp. ISBN: 978 0 7190 8757 8, Hardback, £70.00.

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In this monograph, Donnacha Seán Lucey tackles Irish welfare policy and administration in a transitional period, examining the reform of the poor law during the Irish revolution and the early years of independence. He argues that ideas of respectability and divisions between deserving and undeserving poor endured in the Free State, despite revolutionary criticisms of the 'British' poor law. Portraying welfare policies as often coercive and controlling, Lucey also attempts to show that such harsh social attitudes were not always dominant, and that recipients of public assistance were often active agents within welfare systems. Although these latter attempts are not always successful, this remains a useful addition to scholarship on Irish poverty and welfare.

This is a regional study, focusing on county Kerry and Cork city. Lucey's source base incorporates both national and local records, most significantly those of the South Cork and Kerry boards of public assistance, and the Commission on the Relief of the Sick and Destitute Poor and the Insane Poor, which was held in 1925-26 and reported in 1927. However, he uses the 1927 Relief Commission on particular issues as a jumping-off point into his case studies, exploring the extent to which the evidence provided to, and recommendations given by, the Commission matched welfare administration in Kerry and Cork. This is not necessarily a criticism. Lucey argues that "regionalised poor law regimes necessitate in-depth local examinations", which is certainly a strategy widely pursued by poor law scholars, although therefore not as innovative an approach as the author tries to suggest (p. 8).

The book begins with an exploration of the ways in which revolutionary politics and social attitudes influenced relief policies, and the following chapters examine how these policies developed during the Free State. Lucey demonstrates the longevity of moralistic attitudes towards paupers among republican welfare reformers, who were often as unsympathetic towards those perceived as undeserving as the poor law could be. He convincingly argues that the abolition in the 1920s of the workhouse test and a new emphasis on outdoor relief (renamed 'home assistance') for the able-bodied could have transformed the poor law into a system rooted in support rather than deterrence, but this opportunity was largely missed, as a variety of measures included in home assistance policy continued to foreground deterrence and the concept of less eligibility.

The most absorbing section of the book is the chapter on unmarried mothers and institutionalisation. This topic has a rather urgent contemporary relevance, given the 2013 McAleese report on the treatment of women in Magdalene Laundries. Indeed, this relevance has only increased since the book's publication; in March 2017 a mass grave containing the bodies of young children was uncovered on the site of a former mother and baby home in Tuam, county Galway. This confirmed the suspicions of local historian Catherine Corless, whose research prompted a government inquiry began in 2014, while Lucey was writing this book. This chapter examines the strategies of welfare authorities in dealing with unmarried mothers in the 1920s and 1930s, focusing particularly on county homes (formerly workhouses) and religiously run voluntary mother and baby homes. Lucey's approach is cautious, acknowledging that accessibility problems regarding records held by religious orders makes

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drawing conclusions on these institutions difficult, and that more witness testimony is needed. He also recognises that his particular source base, generated by and from the perspective of central and local authorities, rarely features the voices of institutionalised women themselves. Despite these limitations, the chapter does shed light on the institutional systems developed for unmarried mothers, showing that mother and baby homes proliferated instead of the nationally integrated and financed network of local authority institutions that was recommended by the 1927 Relief Commission, and that 'both central and local government were widely involved in the committal of women' into these homes. County homes are presented as more flexible institutions, with Lucey making a clear effort to demonstrate that although women had little control over their committal to or removal from mother and baby homes, there was more opportunity for inmate agency in county homes, where "notions of victimhood were not always applicable" (p. 106). This is a welcome adjustment away from the assumption of female passivity in these scenarios, although the focus is largely on inmates' sexual behaviour, provoking the question of whether there was much room for manoeuvre in other areas of life in county homes.

Ideas of agency and influence among the poor are more convincing in relation to child welfare, where the examples provided of families threatening to commit children to county homes if they did not receive a boarding-out allowance suggest that relief provision could be negotiated between recipient and official. Lucey also highlights evidence of flexibility or of resistance to harsh social attitudes, in relation to other areas of welfare provision. The punitive welfare policies of republicans in Cork were contested, and the Kerry authorities were often willing to side-step conceptions of 'ideal' family conditions in order to board out children, rather than commit them to industrial schools or have them languishing in county homes. Such flexibility can even be perceived in the case of unmarried mothers – despite the central authorities' attitude that such women should be passed on to specialised institutions rather than remain in county homes, this only occurred in a minority of cases, with most remaining in the former workhouses.

This study contains much that is interesting and valuable, and although certainly somewhat local in scope, provides a solid baseline for further work on this period in other parts of Ireland. If Lucey's arguments were to be tested in other localities, a more comprehensive picture of welfare reform in revolutionary and Free State Ireland could be developed

Republic of Taste: Art, Politics, and Everyday Life in Early America by Catherine E. Kelly.
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, 296 pp. ISBN: 978 0 8122 4823 4, Hardback, £43.00.

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Visual and cultural history is making a comeback in early American studies. With Zara Anishanslin's *Portrait of a Woman in Silk: Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World* (2016) and Catherine E. Kelly's *Republic of Taste: Art, Politics, and Everyday Life in Early America* (2016) published by competing academic presses in the same year, it seems that historians' thirst for understanding the origins of America's aesthetic consumer culture has yet to be quenched. Catherine E. Kelly offers an impressively tall glass of water to her readers in this effort.

Kelly seeks to trace "the history of the American republic of taste" (p. 11). She defines the "republic of taste" as a shared aesthetic affinity for the "material, visual, literary, and political cultures" of Anglo-Americans during the early national period (1780s - 1820s) (p. 2). She argues that taste became imbued with "explicitly republican significance" after the Revolution, as Americans questioned the ways taste could reveal the potential for citizenship, power, and authority (p. 4). Having good taste, refined manners, and a sophisticated appreciation of literature, art, and writing "advanced the public good": it encouraged virtue, elected high-minded government officials, and revealed Americans' love for their country (pp. 3-5).

The early Republic strove to fashion an American identity for itself after the Revolutionary War. Kelly immerses her reader in a world where middling and elite Anglo-Americans took on this mission with fervor. She profiles "aesthetic entrepreneurs," such as painters, art teachers, and museum operators (p. 11) who took advantage of Americans' desire for refinement—sometimes at risk of ruin.

Kelly unpacks the forms of looking, reading, and writing that defined republicanism. She traces the way in which George Washington fashioned himself to the tastes of his constituents and how they, in turn, fashioned him to their tastes after his passing. Kelly unveils a nation where children learned democratic principles not only from their schooling, but also from the way they expressed patriotism; like when they welcomed back the Marquis de Lafayette in 1824 with hatbands, pocket watches, and medallions emblazoned with the beloved war hero's likeness (p. 239). By taking us into museums, galleries, and academies, Kelly shows how the material objects that filled these spaces dictated ideas about race, class, virtue, and citizenship. The result is an argument about identity: as newly-minted Anglo-American citizens tried to fashion a national culture distinct from Britain, their lust for new objects and institutions unintentionally created a "solvent of commodification", thereby dissolving "fantasies about American exceptionalism" (p. 12).

Kelly is most effective when she focuses on the objects that serve as metonyms for the republic of taste. Her chapter 'Picturing Race' is one of her strongest; in which she analyzes how white artists painted the visages of white versus black people in portraits. She shows that even the especially skilled painter "stumbled over the portrayal of nonwhite skin" (p. 103). Artists would often exaggerate the thickness of black sitters' lips and would over-darken the color of their skin. Kelly details painting manuals that instructed novice artists in the correct color choice for a white sitter's face; pick the wrong color, they warned, and the offending artist could accidentally paint her subject "more hideous than a negress" (pp.

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109 - 111). Kelly explains how ivory, the material used to create the popular miniatures of the day, cemented “luminous, transparent flesh” - or, whiteness - as the skin color of Republican virtue and taste (p. 109).

Kelly draws the majority of her source material from Americans living in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. She rarely examines sites of culture in agrarian areas or in states south of Virginia. It is true that the majority of her “culture vultures” lived in the larger mid-Atlantic and east coast cities during the early Republic, so her geographical emphasis is appropriate (p. 93). But such near-omission leaves the reader wondering what the vast majority of Americans - who lived in rural areas during her time-frame - thought about east coast culture and their own culture. What did the “republic of taste” mean to them?

While Kelly uses the word ‘republic’ to describe this culture-minded middling and elite group of white Anglo-Americans, what she is really describing is a class-based club. The privileged, who could partake in the republic of taste, enjoyed doing so, not only because they believed it made them better citizens, but also because they were part of the minority able to partake. Much of the fun of being a member of Kelly’s “republic of taste” came from gleefully knowing others would never get in: very few dockhands or seamstresses could gain access to schools, museums, or galleries. Even fictional characters at the time knew what sort of attractions separated the refined from the rest. On the very first page of *Republic of Taste*, Kelly features a line from Lucy Sumner, an elite New Englander in Hannah Webster Foster’s famed novel *The Coquette* (1797). Lucy detests the traveling circus in her city. Not only is it “risqué,” it also attracts “far more patronage” of a lower lot than a woman of her standing “thought proper”.¹

But doesn’t the cultural capital of the ‘in’ group become less powerful when too many people get let in? Kelly does not sufficiently answer this question. While she takes care to explain how aesthetic institutions and goods became increasingly available to the lower classes in the nineteenth century, she does not analyze whether this change hardened or softened class distinctions. Richard Bushman explored this argument twenty-five years ago in *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (1992). He argued that a middle-class “vernacular gentility” (or, in Kelly’s terms, “republic of taste”) created a “standard for exclusion” by 1850: the middle class reasoned that anyone could achieve refinement regardless of income level, so relegated those who refused to refine themselves to the unrespectable lower orders.²

Kelly’s *Republic of Taste* reveals the irony of Americans’ drive for cultural identity. While aesthetic zeal certainly granted early citizens a “vocabulary for articulating political difference” among themselves and between nations, a definite “American identity” could never be formed (p. 244). Americans never fully cut ties with European culture, nor could different genders, classes, and races in a country ever choose one style, aesthetic, or taste. Kelly convincingly demonstrates that the “republic of taste” was never a stable category, but an “ongoing project” that rages on today (p. 244).

¹ H. Webster Foster, *The Coquette*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson (New York, 1986), p. 113.

² R. L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York, 1992), p. xv.

Byzantium, 1180-1204: 'The Sad Quarter of a Century'? ed. by Alicia Simpson. National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2015, 282 pp. ISBN: 978 960 9538 37 4, Paperback.

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It is easy to conceive of the quarter century following Manuel's death as a miserably unsuccessful time for the Byzantine state. Cilicia, Antioch, and Serbia ceased to pay allegiance to the Emperor. The Bulgarian Empire was resurrected. Time and again provincial magnates raised the banner of rebellion. The emperors sometimes had to resort to desperate means to neutralize them. The traditional consensus is that these failures were chiefly attributable to the incompetence of central authority. However, in the past three decades the conventional interpretation has been called into question by scholars such as Savvas Neocleous, Michael Hendy, and Michael Angold. They consider that the central government performed better than we give it credit for. The current book is the second one to make a serious effort to 'rehabilitate' the government (the first one was C. Brand's *Byzantium Confronts the West, 1180-1204*). It also asks whether the misfortunes of the period 1180-1204 were as serious as we have made them out to be.

The editor has sensibly arranged the contributions into several thematic groups. Broadly speaking, Section 1 focuses on foreign policy, Section 2 on internal policy, Section 3 on economic questions – how well the Angeloi handled their financial resources and private investment in trade – and Section 4 on some of the Constantinopolitan religious architecture that existed during the period 1180-1204.

Chapter 1 falls outside the above arrangement, as its purpose is to summarize the historiography. It competently covers four major historiographical topics: Byzantium's alliances with East and West, the Byzantine retreat from the northern Balkans, the breakdown of the Komnenian system of government, and pronoia grants (notably its link to the failures of the army between 1180 and 1204). Unfortunately, it also suffers from several egregious problems. Simpson ignores the theatres of war outside the northern Balkans and Brand's book and leaves out two historiographical topics that feature in the book's other contributions. On the other hand, the topic of pronoia grants is not featured in any other contribution. The German-Byzantine relationship is addressed in Chapter 4, but regrettably not the one with Saladin.

The main body's first contribution evaluates the legacy of the Angeloi in the north-eastern Balkans. Stankovic argues the Angeloi strengthened Byzantine influence in Serbia and Bulgaria by shrewdly applying the Hungarian model of including the most prominent members of the local ruling families into the imperial household. By doing so, they won the loyalty of the locals and the ruling families to the Byzantine emperor. Thus they actually surpassed the achievements of Manuel I. I give the chapter credit for its boldness. However, it is painfully unconvincing. For one thing, Stankovic all but ignores Bulgaria.¹ For another, I do not see how the Serbian ruling families showed more loyalty to the Angeloi than they had to the Komnenoi. Early in Androniko's reign the two main Serbian polities (Serbia and Diokleia) emancipated themselves from Byzantine overlordship. They never reverted to the previous

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¹ The term 'Bulgaria' is mentioned three times in the entire contribution.

state of affairs, though Isaac Angelos did succeed in creating a lasting peace between himself Stefan Nemanja in 1190 by marrying his daughter to Nemanja's son. And what should we make of the fact that when the grand Serbian *zupan* sought a royal crown, in 1198, he turned to Rome rather than Constantinople? This hardly strikes me as evidence of loyalty or authority. Stankovic would have done better to anchor his defence of the Angeloi (at least in part) on the premise that they inherited an unstable situation, as Fine does in *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth century to the Ottoman conquest*.

From Europe, we move to Asia. In Chapter 2, Korobeinikov argues Byzantium did not suffer substantial territorial losses in Anatolia, and the Byzantine-Turkish border remained stable. He uses the history of the strategic centre of Laodikeia (between 1174 and 1204) as his chief case study. Korobeinikov's command of the literary source is excellent. He taps into documents and perspectives from all the relevant contemporary ethnic groups, be they Latin, Turkish, Greek, or Arabic, and abundantly cross-checks them. This makes the author's narrative of Laodikeia's existence a pleasure to read. That being said, Korobeinikov's main propositions do not hold much weight. For one thing, Choniates mentions that the Seljuks had annexed Lykaonia, Pamphylia, and Kotyaeion by 1195. For another, the plundering of Lydia in 1188-1189, the ravaging of Laodikeia's environs and Chonai in 1191, and the ravaging of the Maeander valley in 1195 and 1200 are not indicative of a stable border. Equally problematic is Chapter 4. Lounghis asserts that the German-Byzantine alliance remained alive and well until the end of Isaac II's reign. There was certainly – at the very least – a workable relationship between the Byzantines and Germans in the 1180s. However, Lounghis passes over the reign of Alexios III (during which Henry VI threatened to invade the Empire if he was not paid 5,000 pounds of gold). Also, Lounghis does not criticize Isaac for endangering the 'alliance' through his incompetent double-dealing or his failure to profit from the Germans' passage through the Sultanate of Rum.

A recurring theme in Chapters 2-4 is the post-1180 emperors' crippling lack credibility with their subjects. For example, Isaac could not dissuade Alexios Branas (whom he had tasked with suppressing the Bulgarian rebellion) or Mangaphas from rebelling, and Alexios failed to obtain the consent of his subjects' representatives to collect the aforementioned 5,000 pounds of gold. According to the author of Chapter 5 (Kyritses), this problem was the reason why Manuel's successors did not continue his tradition of making decisions via consultation. The rulers could not convince the councils (of aristocrats, senators, and churchmen) they summoned to support their plans, so they had no choice but to rule by decree.²

I will pass over Chapter 6 for the time being and move to Chapter 7. Anagnostakis argues that the centrifugal behaviour of the Peloponnese and Hellas in the decade before 1204 was not due solely to the weakening of central authority, but also to the disruptive influence of the rebellion of Chrysos and Kammytzes (which were themselves made possible by the rise of the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire). It is a cogent argument, given the narrow separation in time between the aforementioned rebellion and that of Leo Sgouros. But Anagnostakis lets the central government off too lightly: he does not ask whether the latter institution was largely to blame for the seditious acts of the Vlach-Bulgarians and Chrysos and Kammytzes.

This brings us to the economic section. Chapter's 8 overall point seems to be ordinary subjects suffered to an unprecedented extent from the financial policies of the Angeloi and their entourages. Not only did the Angeloi tax as oppressively and inefficiently as the Komnenoi, but they fell victim to love of luxury and corruption. And yet, though this behaviour contributed powerfully to the proliferation of revolts under the Angeloi, they in no way brought the Empire near collapse. For the tax mechanism never

² The only exception was Andronikos, under whose reign all state decisions were apparently taken by councils.

failed, except in the provinces which attempted to break away. There was never a major financial crisis, though the *stamenon* and *trikephalon* were heavily debased.

Chapters 9 and 10 are extensions of Smyrlis' contribution. Papadopoulou elaborates on the theme of monetary decline. He demonstrates that the production output of precious metals decreased after Manuel's death. Not only did the mint in Thessaloniki cease to operate for both gold and silver, but the number of *officinae* in the Constantinopolitan mint shrank from 2 to 1 during the reign of Alexios Angelos. Concurrently, the silver and base metal currencies experienced severe debasement. Indeed, the ratio of the *hyperpyron* to the electrum *aspron trachy* and *stamenon*, which was 1:3:60 in 1167, changed to 1:4:120 by 1190 and 1/4/176/184 by 1199. With regard to numismatic circulation, regional studies from Athens, Corinth, and Epirus (for the period 1081-1204) are provided. Papadopoulou's commentaries on the various evolutions of the trends – notably the almost complete absence of finds from Corinth for the reign of Alexios Angelos – are thoughtful but appropriately cautious. What is missing is other regional case studies. Papadopoulou compares circulation levels in Athens and Corinth to the "average for the empire", but does not explain how he obtained that average. Nevertheless, Papadopoulou is right to conclude that the peripheral economy was shrinking at the end of the twelfth century. And this would potentially have had dramatic consequences. Consider: if a family had been earning just enough to survive, how would it have coped with the debasement of the *stamenon* by 53 per cent (relative to the *hyperpyron*) between 1190 and 1199? While we have reason to think that the economy was overwhelmingly based on barter in the provinces, the reverse was true in Constantinople.

Magdalino investigates whether the aristocracy gained its wealth solely through corrupt practices or through more legitimate means. While conceding that they engaged in shady activities – diverting tax revenues, he notes that court officials sold the title of *sebastos* to money-changers and silk merchants (during the reign of Alexios III) and may have invested in naval commerce. Magdalino's interpretation on the aristocracy's commercial investments strikes me as somewhat inaccurate. He draws upon an incident in 1192 which Venetian vessels carrying cargo from Egypt to Constantinople were attacked by Genoese and Pisan raiders. The total value of the lost goods was huge, indicating that they were intended for redistribution. But this does not necessarily mean that aristocrats had invested in the ship owners' transactions. They could have been importing luxury commodities from Egypt. The emphasis on commerce is a fitting prelude to Chapters 11 and 12, in which Gerolymatou and Merianos makes the case that the socio-economic influence of merchants in Constantinople grew stronger after 1180. To their credit, I was left in little doubt that the Constantinopolitan merchants had considerable influence with the emperor, given that in the affair of the Genoese-Pisan attack the merchants were able to compel Isaac II to take measures to compensate the victims.³ But Gerolymatou and Merianos are less successful in proving that merchants were becoming more influential. Their evidence is confined to twelve references to the term *megalemporos* (great merchant) in twelfth century Byzantine sources, only three of which are posterior to 1180.

There are some remarkable pieces of scholarship in this book. Particularly worth mentioning is Chapter 8, which confirms the moral decay and oppressiveness of the Angeloi's fiscal policy while asserting that ordinary subjects were not hugely better off under the Komnenoi. In fact, Section 3 is the one that accomplishes the most. For its part, Section 1 fails to adequately address the ideas that contradict its arguments, and Sections 2 and 4 too often stray away from the book's main question. For instance, what purpose does Chapter 6 ('The anatomy of a failed coup : the abortive uprising of John the Fat') serve? Likewise, what does Chapter 14 ('A gem of Artistic Ekphrasis: Nicholas Mesarites' Description of the Mosaics in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople') have to do with the sad events of the period

³ Working in tandem with the people.

1180-1204? Nevertheless, overall *Byzantium, 1180-1204* brings us closer to giving the period 1180-1204 – and the regimes who held power during those years – a fair appraisal. It suggests that despite the long list of military defeats which the Empire's many enemies inflicted, the economy did not suffer hugely, merchants in Constantinople had considerable leverage with the emperor, and the Byzantine state and its German counterpart had a working relationship until 1195. I believe objectives for further research should include assessing the connection between the Angeloi's fiscal policies and their revolts, how stable the Western Anatolian border was (outside the Theme of Laodikeia), non-monetary benchmarks of economic prosperity (such as pottery), and visiting in much more detail the emperors' diplomatic competences.

Beyond the Northlands: Viking Voyages and the Old Norse Sagas by Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough. Oxford University Press, 2016, 317 pp. ISBN: 978 0 19 870124 8, Hardback, £25.00.

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120 years ago, William Collingwood set out on a pilgrimage to the farms featured in Iceland's family sagas. His beautifully illustrated book was published in 1899. Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough's *Beyond the Northlands* is a fantastic overview of the Icelandic sagas and the Viking Age, the form of which is best described as a latter-day version of William Collingwood's famous pilgrimage to the saga-steeds of Iceland. Yet, *Beyond the Northlands* is far more ambitious in its scope than Collingwood ever was, as Barraclough systematically covers the whole of the Norse world, chapter-by-chapter.

Barraclough begins with two chapters in lieu of an introduction. The first, a summary of the occidental view of the 'Viking' Other in the Middle Ages, before transitioning into an exposition of the popular stereotypes and counter-stereotypes circulating in Britain today (pp. 11-13). Barraclough then goes on to provide brief histories of the terminology used to describe the Viking Age raiders from Scandinavia and the ways in which the term 'Viking' has been misused and appropriated since the early nineteenth century (pp. 13-22). She argues that this has all resulted in an orientalist mythology building up around the Viking Age leading to a poor understanding of the Viking phenomenon. The alternative, she suggests, is looking to the Icelandic sagas; thereby justifying her second chapter, which covers issues such as the history of Iceland and its role in producing the Norse side of the story (pp. 22-37). This decision to foreground Iceland is very satisfying to see as, too often, the island, which played such a crucial role in producing primary sources, is overlooked. Barraclough's haphazard collection of origins for the sagas, though undoubtedly an attempt to avoid the saga origins debate, reflects the present state of scholarship: thoroughly undecided, and with a balance struck between the somewhat contradictory views of the sagas as either literary constructions, or the culmination of tradition in historical writing (p. 31).

Barraclough then frames the main body of the book using the four points of the compass with three chapters at each point: first North, then West, East, and finally South. This structure is, for the most part, effective, and fortunately it does not have the expected side-effect of geographically isolating her subjects, as she covers in great detail such well-travelled figures as Gudrid (pp. 136, 234), Harald Hardrada (pp. 188-189, 242-256, 280), and Audun with his polar bear (pp. 119-120). *Beyond the Northlands* is littered with references to popular culture, imitating Carlyne Larrington's highly successful use of the pop culture phenomenon *Game of Thrones* to frame northern history in *Winter is Coming* (2016). Barraclough does this for a different end than Larrington, however, who was ultimately attempting to get at the historical roots of the *Game of Thrones* franchise. Barraclough's inclusion of illustrations from *Asterix*, *Noggin the Nog*, and invocation of names such as Hans Christian Anderson, C. S. Lewis, and Phillip Pullman, is an effective reminder of her aim to decolonise our minds of our romantic or stereotypical views of the Norse world (pp. 42-43, 58).

Barraclough ends her book in much the same way as Mikhail Steblin-Kamenskij ends his *Saga Mind* (1973) – an epilogue in which the reader is transported to the present day and the reality of modern perceptions of the Norsemen are juxtaposed with the reality the historian claims to have exposed over

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the course of their book (pp. 277-280). This similarity is something of a metaphor for the major issue with *Beyond the Northlands* as, though highly readable, Barraclough does not bring a particularly new interpretation to the material. With some minor variations, the same content is covered by Robert Ferguson (2009), Anders Winroth (2012 & 2014), John Haywood (2015), and Sverre Bagge (2016); though to the credit of these scholars (barring Haywood), they have framed this content in such a way as to press forward scholarly debate. Haywood, although not advancing debate, does put forward the same sort of outlook as *Beyond the Northlands*: of changing attitudes to the Vikings over time and the perspectives that have come with these shifts. Unlike Barraclough who focuses on the importance of the voyage (both peaceful and violent), Haywood embraces the stereotypically violent side of the Norse voyages, focusing inordinately on that aspect of the Viking Other. This reveals the great strength of *Beyond the Northlands*. Barraclough's fusion of narrative, recent scholarship, personal travel and landscape – an experiential voyage around the Viking world that takes the Norse on their own terms – is what makes this book a fantastic addition to scholarship. As stated at the outset, *Beyond the Northlands* is a pilgrimage, but on a far grander scale.