

HIST

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



HISTORY STUDENT TIMES

Issue 2 2017/18

Killers and Cannibals



Contents

2 *Letter from the Editor*

Steph Bennett

3

The Red Guard: Villains or Victims?

Rosie Plummer

4-5

Dark Lessons: Cannibalism in 'Hansel and Gretel'

Natalie Jones

6-7 *Classical Corner*

Was Emperor Claudius poisoned?

Matthias Jarosz

8-9

Dahmer and Bundy: America's most notorious

Steph Bennett

0

Cannibalism: Survival of the Fittest?

Yasmin Neal

10

Brady and Hindley: The Moors Murders

Steph Bennett

14-15

Obama in a Post-racial state

Emily Whitaker

12-13

The Kray Twins

Katrina Richardson

14-15

Obama in a Post-racial state

Emily Whitaker

16

Cannibalism vs Cultural relativism: is cannibalism immoral?

23 *Letter from History Society*

Alexa Clark

Letter From the Editor

Welcome to Issue 2!

With famous names like The Yorkshire Ripper and the death of notorious Ian Brady just last year, I thought it would be both interesting and important to discuss some of the world's most serious and grotesque crimes to date. My wonderful writers explored the theme 'Killers and Cannibals' to its limit and I'd like to thank everyone who contributed profusely.

From the Kray Twins to Hansel and Gretel, there are numerous pieces within that will definitely pique your interest. It's been a joy to work with everyone once more and I look forward to the final issue.

Steph

Safi Bugel

Issue 3 Editorial Team

Emily Whitaker

Alexa Clark

The Red Guard: Villains or victims?

Rosie Plummer

In the Cultural Revolution; between 1966 and 1976, Chinese students were responsible for the deaths of up to two million people, in one of the bloodiest periods in modern Chinese history.

Violence under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the 20th century was common, with historian Frank Dikotter estimating that over 5 million died within the first decade of the party's rule. Brutality was openly encouraged by Mao Zedong throughout his rule, as he felt that willingness to engage in conflict in the name of Marxism was the mark of a true revolutionary. However, what is especially interesting about the Cultural Revolution, is that it was not Mao or the party directly creating bloodshed themselves, but rather it was students who carried out the cruelty.

Groups of 'Red Guards' formed in schools and Universities throughout 1966, after Mao declared that it was 'right to rebel'. Verbal denouncement against those in authority quickly turned into physical abuse. Teachers and professors were the initial targets of the Red Guard, but many students also turned on local party members, and some even denounced their own parents. These denunciations were generally accompanied by beatings and public humiliations, some of which resulted in the death of the accused, with many committing suicide as a result of their trauma at the hands of the Red Guard. Most students in urban areas became caught up in the violence, after all, those unwilling to join in were at risk of being denounced as 'counter-revolutionaries' themselves. As the violence escalated, the Red Guard split into rival factions and began to fight amongst one another over who was the most 'revolutionary'. This in-fighting led to deaths of children as young as 12, in defence of Mao's name, with over 1,000 people being killed in each month in Beijing in the summer of 1966.

The CCP within China has done their best to repress the memory of this era, officially blaming the whole

episode on Mao's wife and dismissing it as a 'grave blunder', without issuing any real apology to the Chinese people. This repression of memory has left both the families of Red Guard's and their victims, with little space to express their trauma. Tragic accounts such as that by Ms Wang reveal the confusion surrounding this period. Ms Wang's brother died in in-faction Red Guard fighting and was initially awarded martyr status, but months later the government denounced him and his comrades as savages. The CCP even destroyed Red Guard graveyards, leaving many with no space to mourn their loved ones. Although in recent years there has been some tentative reopening of graveyards to the public, the Cultural Revolution itself still lacks an official history, allowing the CCP to propagate the narrative that they are the saviours, rather than the persecutors of the Chinese people.

The Red Guard committed horrific atrocities, against both elites and other rival Red Guard factions. It is undeniable that these people were killers, however, my own interest in them stems from their relative normality before the Cultural Revolution. The Red Guard was made up of ordinary students, who became drawn into the cult of personality surrounding Chairman Mao. While it is important to mourn their victims, it is also vital to acknowledge that many of the Red Guards themselves died defending a party which was soon to utterly denounce them, in order to purify its own history. The Red Guard believed that they were doing the party's bidding, which raises interesting questions about who was truly responsible for the deaths in the Cultural Revolution. Were these students really 'savages', or were they themselves victims of the party? As long as the CCP continues to suppress the public memory of the Cultural Revolution, we are unlikely to find any real explanations about these students who were willing to murder, in the name of revolution.

Dark Lessons: Cannibalism in 'Hansel and Gretel'

Natalie Jones

Popular modern fairy tales have been evolving over centuries and through multiple cultures. Tales usually originated in peasant communities from the middle ages. They were more than adventures that excite the imagination, as they incorporated violence to represent the fears and desires of humankind. For instance, repeated famines were exacerbating for peasant communities in medieval times, forcing many into cannibalism, which some fairy tales reflect. Yet, these tales have evolved from dark symbolic expositions to more palatable tales of morality, as they reflect contemporary social standards. 'Hansel and Gretel' illustrates this process.

The tale of 'Hansel and Gretel' was first published in 1812 by the Brothers Grimm, but the tale likely originated in the medieval period of the Great Famine (1315-1321). During the Great Famine, peasants' desperation led to the abandoning of children, and even cannibalism. This is reflected in the tale when the parents abandon the children to avoid hunger and they are subsequently kidnapped by a cannibalistic witch, who lures the children into a house constructed of confectionary. Therefore, the tale offers an insight into the turmoil of peasant communities where it was derived. However, even

through the evolution of the tale, cannibalism has remained central to its plot. The cannibalism remains integral as it acts to implant fear in the reader. Yet, the evolution of the tale shows the evolution of the meaning and importance of the cannibal figure.

Although cannibalism plays an integral part in many stories, it has become considerably more muted over the years, as it is taboo in most cultures. Yet, if cannibalism is so widely abhorred, why does it feature so frequently in tales? Firstly, the cruelty in tales has become normalised due to people growing up with the tales from childhood. This means that themes such as cannibalism no longer seem extraordinary. Secondly, cannibalism is an excuse to kill the evil figure, so it must retain its status as a cannibal in order to remain functional. Yet most of all, the issues dealt with in tales serve as a comparison to ordinary life, and often offer the desired resolution. Yes, they were more literal comparisons to problems with famine and cannibalism in the Middle Ages, but the metaphorical importance of the cannibalistic figure remains relevant. As Marina Warner states, the imagery of forbidden ingestion masks other powerful longings and fears. Usually, cannibalism is tied to fears of being swallowed up by some-



thing, in other words, a loss of identity. So, cannibalism is not just about hunger or fear, but control. The cannibal character serves as a signifier of death or danger, for instance, Max Luthi argues that “the



witch in ‘Hansel and Gretel’ is not a person, but a mere figure, a personification of evil”. So, these fairy tales combine legend with social patterns to define ‘the forbidden and the alluring’ and ‘who we are and what we want’.

In ‘Hansel and Gretel’, food is central to the plot as there is a prominent lack of and desire for it. But cannibalism in the story goes beyond just a physical level, as the children are threatened by being eaten after indulging their glutinous temptation. Hence, cannibalism is a punishment for their lack of restraint. The children were supposed to find their own way and become independent as their parents could not provide for them. Yet, they were easily seduced by the witch’s trap as children are more inclined to act on their prime impulses. Hence, the evil figure is a manifestation of the children’s fear which arose as a result of their dependence. The witch is a part of their subconscious, as is the urge to succumb to temptation, and this impacts their projection of the world they live in. Moreover, the cannibalism in the tale represents the dark side of humanity. This may be seen to reflect a subconscious fear of human-kind of being capable of such terrible

acts, or of sharing the same potential as ‘savage’ communities, as cannibalism is something that European countries try to suppress along with other ‘undesirable behaviours’. Yet, metaphorically cannibalism is part of human nature, as it represents selfishness and fear. Food in the tale represents all common necessities in life, as

being able to provide for oneself helps gain a sense of control. Therefore, the tales help recognise tendencies towards this kind of behaviour and deal with them through stories we can relate to.

As Sheldon Cashdan argues, tales such as ‘Hansel and Gretel’ help children resolve real-life issues through subconscious projections onto the characters. The functionality of cannibalism is that its roots stem from fear. These fears transform into emotion. Yet, the happy ending of these tales reassures us that it is possible to overcome these fears. Overall, the cannibalistic tendencies in fairy tales provide us with what may be considered as dark, but valuable lessons

Classical Corner

Was Emperor Claudius poisoned?

Matthias Jarosz

Claudius began to die before dessert. Guests present at the imperial banquet on the 13th October 54 AD watched helplessly as the Emperor became lethargic and then contorted with excruciating pains. Claudius probably died in agony that same night. His body lay buried under a mound of bedclothes while his death was hidden for a whole two days to ensure that the accession of his stepson Nero occurred without incident.

The death of Emperor Claudius remains one of the enduring mysteries of antiquity. Historians like Barbara Levick tend to assume that Claudius was poisoned. They often cite the account of Tacitus, the greatest of the Roman historians. His work affords us a penetrating stare into the politics of the Early Principate. This is in part because of the cynicism which drips from the pages of *The Annals* as Tacitus seeks to disentangle the webs of intrigue and disinformation which were woven around the Imperial court.

Yet Tacitus also has a tendency to jump at shadows where perhaps none existed. The Emperor died behind the closed doors of the imperial palace, the events within which we (much like Tacitus) can only guess at. Yet Nero evidently stood to gain from his father's death and Tacitus certainly did not believe in fortuitous coincidences. Consequently, he perceived an elaborate conspiracy in the absence of alternative evidence.

Allegedly Claudius was poisoned on the instigation of his wife Agrippina who needed to assure that her son, Nero, succeeded the ailing emperor instead of

his own immature offspring Britannicus. At the time all meals served to the Emperor were tasted for poison by the freedman Halotus. Consequently, the Emperor's taster had to be brought into the conspiracy alongside his personal physician Xenophon of Cos to ensure that the poison was delivered discretely via a plate of mushrooms. When these failed to kill Claudius it was Xenophon who would force a poisoned feather down his throat, on the pretext of making him vomit, thereby succeeding where Halotus had failed.

Poison, therefore, offered Tacitus an explanation for the unexplained deaths of numerous members of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty. Poison is

after all designed to be undetectable and this was especially true in Ancient Rome where toxicology was primitive. Thus, the theory that Claudius was poisoned can neither be proved nor disproved.

Instead, we are forced to consider the relative plausibility of the supposed murder.

Let us first appreciate that the accession of Nero was already secured prior to the death of Claudius. Agrippina enjoyed significant influence within the Imperial court following her marriage to the Emperor in 49 AD. This is evident in the meteoric promotion of her son Nero within the succession after his adoption as Claudius's son. By contrast, Claudius's own offspring Britannicus had been effectively sidelined as a potential heir after the execution of his mother Messalina in 48 AD.

With Nero's path to power seemingly assured Ag-



rippina's involvement in the murder of her husband appears dubious in the absence of a credible motive.

Furthermore, it is a truth universally acknowledged that the size of conspiracy correlates negatively with its chances of survival. Could imperial freedmen like Halotus who owed their liberty to the Emperor really be relied upon to murder Claudius when their survival was contingent upon his own? Tacitus's bases his case for Halotus involvement on the assumption that the imperial taster would not have survived the Emperor's death unless he was complicit in the poisoning. Yet one might just as easily argue that Halotus survived precisely because no suspicion of poisoning lingered around Claudius's death at the time.

In turn, the fingering of Xenophon of Cos by Tacitus merely indicates the traditional Roman suspicion of physicians. Roman society made little distinction between the primitive quacks who hawked herbal remedies and trained professionals. Furthermore, the difference between poisons and remedies was largely one of dosage, with both substances often derived from the same potentially lethal source. As a result, many deaths occurred due to mistaken prescriptions resulting from the inexperience of the practitioner rather than the murderous intent attributed to Xenophon by Tacitus.

The Emperor's dying symptoms of abdominal pain and bloody diarrhoea are instead more suggestive of mushroom poisoning. We know that Claudius was particularly fond of mushrooms. It is worth considering then that the Emperor may well have been poisoned but through the accidental ingestion of naturally poisonous mushrooms which were mistakenly served to him. These need not necessarily have been a lethal species such as the Deathcap. Rather for a man aged 68, with prior medical conditions such as dystonia, the ingestion of even a mildly toxic specimen could have been enough to exacerbate his existing ailments and result in a painful death.

The question of whether or not Claudius was intentionally poisoned is an important one. However, it is ultimately less informative than the question which asks why historians like Tacitus thought Claudius had been deliberately poisoned in the first place.

Essentially, Tacitus overstates the political significance of poisoning. According to *The Annales*, the Julio-Claudians dynasty had a far higher poisoning rate than the subsequent Flavian and 'Adoptive' reigns,

with at least 6 members of the imperial family having been allegedly poisoned. This is unfeasibly high.

The poisoning rate is instead a literary device which reflects Tacitus's own belief in the wider degeneration of traditional values between 14 – 68 AD. Where Romans had died valiantly on the battlefield in the Republic by contrast their imperial counterparts like Claudius died ingloriously in bed, the subject of intrigues and betrayal. As such the poisoning of Emperor Claudius represents Tacitus's perception of political discord under the Julio-Claudians rather than its actual existence.



Dahmer and Bundy: America's most notorious

Steph Bennett

While Jeffrey Dahmer and Ted Bundy are not exactly household names in Britain, they are recognisable and almost synonymous with extreme, vicious murder. All serial killers are just that, killers, but Dahmer and Bundy are perhaps the most infamous because of their obsession with their victims' bodies after death. It is with a particularly grotesque sort of fascination that we watch documentaries based on killer's crimes and delve a little further into their madness. However, unlike most, with Dahmer and Bundy there were also elements of necrophilia and sexual trophies.

Jeffrey Dahmer murdered seventeen men between 1978 and 1991. He sought his victims at a range of locations, from gay bars to bus stops, but preferred African-American men. Before strangling them to death, Dahmer would lure men back to his house with the enticement of money or sex, before slipping them drugs in a glass of alcohol. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of

Dahmer's ritual is the sexual acts that he would perform with the corpses, before dismembering them and keeping certain parts as trophies for later sexual use, often skulls and the genitals.



There was also evidence of cannibalism and preservation of the corpse after dismemberment. After the murder of Ernest Miller in 1990, Dahmer kept the dance student's heart, biceps and parts of his legs in a freezer before consuming him. Even more disturbing was that many of the victims killed in 1991 were found with holes bored into their skulls, where Dahmer

had injected hydrochloric acid or boiling water straight into the brain in an attempt to make them more docile and sedentary. Somewhat ironically, they often died, despite this not being Dahmer's intention. Errol Lindsey was the first to undergo what Dahmer referred to as his 'drilling technique'.

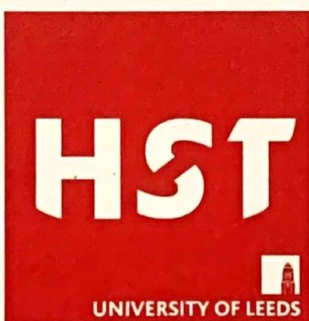
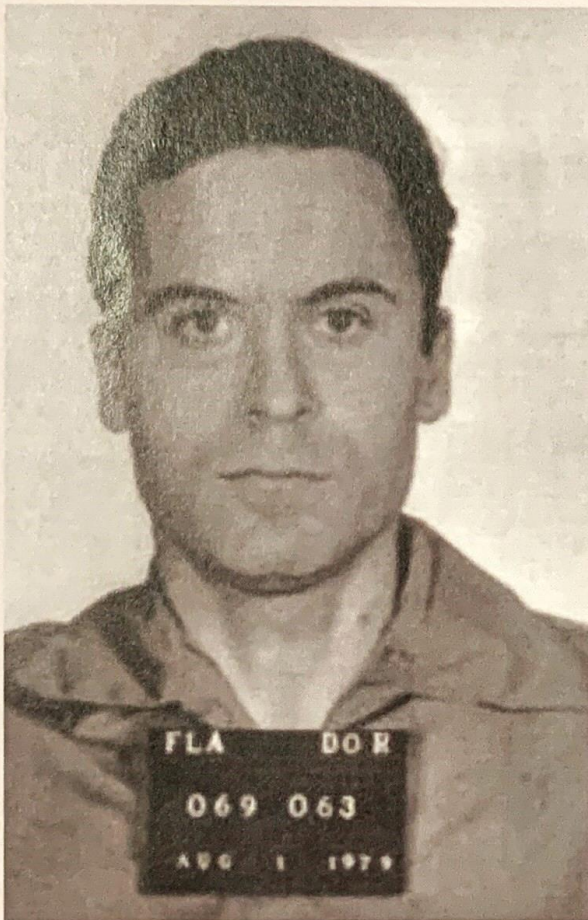
Dahmer was beaten to death in 1994 by a fellow inmate.

Likewise, the infamous Ted Bundy admitted to killing thirty-six women across the United States in the 1970s. However, some have argued that Bundy's death toll likely far exceeds this total, which is almost paltry next to the potential murders of over one hundred women. Although Bundy's exact start date is uncertain, it is believed to be around 1974 due to an emerging pattern of missing women with similar characteristics: young and dark-haired. He often lured them closer by pretending to be injured before striking.

It wasn't until 1975 that one of Bundy's victims, Carol DaRonch, managed to escape and Bundy served his first fifteen-year prison sentence. Bundy

managed to escape from police custody numerous times. It wasn't until January 1978 that the police noticed his disappearance, when it was already too late. He attacked four girls who attended Florida State University, and killed two of them. His last victim, Kimberly Leach, was murdered in February 1978 and was only twelve years old.

While he was standing trial 1979, Bundy developed a certain charisma and charm that raised his popularity. He was finally executed by electrocution ten years later in January 1989. Shortly before his execution, Bundy confessed to thirty homicides committed across seven states between 1974 and 1978. With a new adaptation of Bundy's life to be portrayed by Zac Efron in the coming months, it remains to be seen if a serial rapist and killer like Bundy will be romanticised, as has often been the unfortunate case with such adaptations.



Don't forget to visit the blog for more articles, study abroad posts, and HistSoc's Primary Sauce!

historystudenttimes.wordpress.com

Cannibalism: Survival of the fittest?

Yasmin Neal

Cannibalism is arguably one of the most controversial subjects remaining in western society. While technically the act of cannibalism is not illegal, the way the law is written makes it basically impossible to engage in such activities without breaking some form of legislation whether that is murder, preventing a lawful burial or one of another variety. As a society, our morality is primarily defined by its legal system, one that is compatible with Christian belief, therefore why is it cannibalism is so taboo? Throughout history, in extreme circumstances, humans have resorted to cannibalism to survive, but is it okay to resort to such measures in time of necessity?

An example of this in the 19th-century English criminal case *Regina v Dudley and Stephens*. After the crew survived a shipwreck and were in a perilous situation with no rations, the cabin boy became extremely ill when Dudley and Stephens made the decision to kill him and use his body to preserve themselves until they were rescued a week later. Although the cabin boy was near death anyway, Dudley and Stephens were sentenced to death. Yet, the third man was not charged even though he also ate the boy's body. This, therefore, suggests that cannibalism itself was not actually the issue as the dire nature of the situation was not something that was disputed, the situation was severe enough to resort to survival cannibalism, it was the act of murder which was condemned despite cannibalism being considered a greater taboo than murder in modern society.

One of the most well-renowned cases of cannibalism in modern history is that of the 1972 Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571 plane crash, which saw 45 people become stranded in the Andes for 72 days. After trying to survive on the minimal rations they had until they assumed rescue would arrive, it soon became clear they would need to actively seek help themselves instead. Due to the harsh climate and the physical demands that would be needed to make the journey, it became even more evident

that food was increasingly necessary. While originally trying to eat parts of the aeroplane such as cotton, the survivors eventually turned to cannibalism as a last resort. Although some of the survivors initially refused, they all accepted the reality of the situation even rationalising their actions as equivalent to Holy Communion or Bible passages.

When they returned home, the public was shocked when the true nature of how they survived emerged. This raised huge moral questions resulting in society asking, was this okay? The individuals had already been dead, and the survivors themselves such as Canessa were willing for their own bodies to be used for food if they died before being saved. There were no sadistic motives, only the will to survive. Humans have an undeniable survival instinct which overrides everything when necessary, therefore would it have been more inhuman to go against this. On some level, it is questionable if it is really that different to organ donation, using the organs of the recently deceased to help someone who could be saved. This is not a crime and is generally perceived as a way to turn the sad nature of death into something positive.

While cannibalism for the purposes of sexual gratification or to fulfil some morbid curiosity is undeniably wrong, the same blind outlook should not be forced upon those who reluctantly resort to such measures in life or death situations. The act of cannibalism is therefore not one that can always be neatly characterised as right or wrong.

The Kray Twins

Katrina Richardson

Ronald and Reginald Kray were the infamous London gangsters of the 1950s and 1960s. Under the veneer of respectability and charisma that was afforded to them by their expensive suits and East end manners, the twins were ruthless crime lords. During their high of influence in London, the Kray name alone was enough to terrify most people who came across it. The twins were practically inseparable since birth and throughout their lifetime honed a bond between them that was often akin to telepathy. During their early youth, the twins were hopeful professional boxers, but they soon retired. Instead of committing themselves to the gangster business and the creation their gang, The Firm. Despite their apparent intimacy and intense proximity, the twins deviated substantially in their criminal careers. Whilst they both were convicted of murder the two crimes were separate occasions and different in circumstances.

Ronnie

Ronnie was the first of the twins to claim a murder victim. In March 1966 Ronnie murdered George Cornell, a member of rival gang the Richardsons.

The murder took place at around 8.30pm on the 9th March in the Bling Beggars pub in the East End of London. Within the vicious rivalries and fiercely defended territories in the East End gangland, the Blind Beggar was one of the few neutral pubs where gangsters from multiple gangs would go to drink. It has been reported that prior to the murder the

pub was fairly quiet and relaxed with only a few gangsters having a few drinks and George Cornell was among these men. Ronnie Kray was elsewhere drinking with members of the Firm, however, when he heard that Cornell was in the Blind Beggar he charged over to the pub. Without saying a word Ronnie prowled into the pub and pulled out his 9mm automatic. Ronnie shot Cornell straight through the forehead from a distance of about 6 feet. The bullet entered Cornell's head and reportedly flew out the other side of his head ricocheting into the wall of the pub damaging the wallpaper. The police were soon on the case and Ronnie quickly fled the scene. Some witnesses say that Cornell was still alive when the police arrived a mere 5-10 minutes later, however, he soon died despite attempts at saving him.

Whilst the actual events of the murder are more or less undisputed Ronnie's motivation for the murder is more unclear. Some reports claim that Ronnie was getting revenge for an offensive comment made previously by Cornell, others note the major gang clash that had happened the previous night and point to Cornell's murder as Ronnie's retribution for the death of a Firm member.

Reggie

The murder committed by Reggie is often seen as the act that started the eventual downfall of the Kray twins. Ultimately it was the murder of Jack 'the Hat' McVitie that brought the arrest of both brothers and many of other members of the Firm.

McVitie was known for being a hitman and drug dealer before his association with the twins in the 1960s and in the years leading up to his murder he was a close associate of the twins. However he soon became a large problem for the twins, McVitie was notorious for being aggressive and drunk in public and consequently was beginning to become an embarrassment for the twins. In 1967 the twins gave McVitie a contract to kill their business manager Leslie Payne, however, when he failed to complete this task the twins turned violent, deciding that he was a problem that needed a permanent solution.

McVitie was invited to a private party in which both the twins and a few other members of the firm was in attendance. First Ronnie started shouting at McVitie, but eventually, it was Reggie who went in for the kill. As a first resort Reggie pulled a gun on McVitie, however, the gun jammed and instead, he resorted to using a carvery knife that happened to be in the room. It has been reported that Reggie initially stabbed McVitie in the face, then repeatedly in the chest and the throat. McVitie died almost instantly. McVitie's body was swiftly moved from the scene and disposed of. The body has never actually been found, however, the police managed to piece together the events of the crime using various witnesses.

Both the twins were arrested in May 1968 and were sentenced to life imprisonment in 1969. Ronnie was classified as criminally insane and sent to Broadmoor, whereas Reggie was sent to Wayland Prison.



President Obama in a Post Racial State

Emily Whitaker

‘The Past isn’t dead and buried – in fact, it isn’t even the past.’

Being the first black president of the United States, Barack Obama is often viewed as marking the defeat of Jim Crow. But, to what extent did his presidency create a post-racial state within America?

Post-racial politics and the extent to which America now lives within a colour blind society is a debate that continues

in the political climate of America today.

With Barack Obama’s presidency, an African American retaining one of the most powerful positions in the United States for two terms, many

individuals are prone to believe that America is freed from the past of Jim Crow. Yet, when Donald Trump tweeted on the 17th January 2018 that unemployment for Black Americans is the lowest ever recorded, the facts seem to point otherwise. This is further supported by the 2016 Pew Research study in America, a survey of 3,769 people which shows how the median income for black households is around \$30,000 less than those of white households, with black families twice as likely as whites to live in poverty.

Such disparities between the black and white American population cannot be dismissed, yet the cause of such differences remains up for debate. For black Americans, the past history of racial discrimination, limiting educational achievements, higher paid jobs and lawful rights for retaining property and housing are regarded as the cause of

this difference by 70% of black Americans, compared to 36% of white Americans. The wide gap in this difference, therefore, is further reflective of the difference between black and white opinions upon a post-racial state. Do Americans believe their society is colour blind, with black individuals to fault for their own lack of achievements? Or is this society in need of reform to aid black individual achievement against the background of a divisive past?

The answers to these questions remain unresolved,

with evidence produced by intellectuals and historians that question racial divides through history, race, and class. What interests me, however, is the way in which Barack Obama navigated these divisive opinions across his campaign and presidency, questioning the impact on whether



Obama’s own race hindered his efforts to discuss these racial politics.

On the 18th March 2008, Obama presented his famous speech ‘A More Perfect Union’ in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This speech was given in response to media coverage of Jeremiah Wright’s controversial comments about the racial state of America, as seen below.

‘The government gives them [African Americans] the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing ‘God Bless America.’ No, no, no, God damn America, that’s in the Bible for killing innocent people. God damn America for treating our citizens as less than human. God damn America for as long as she acts like she is God and she is supreme.”

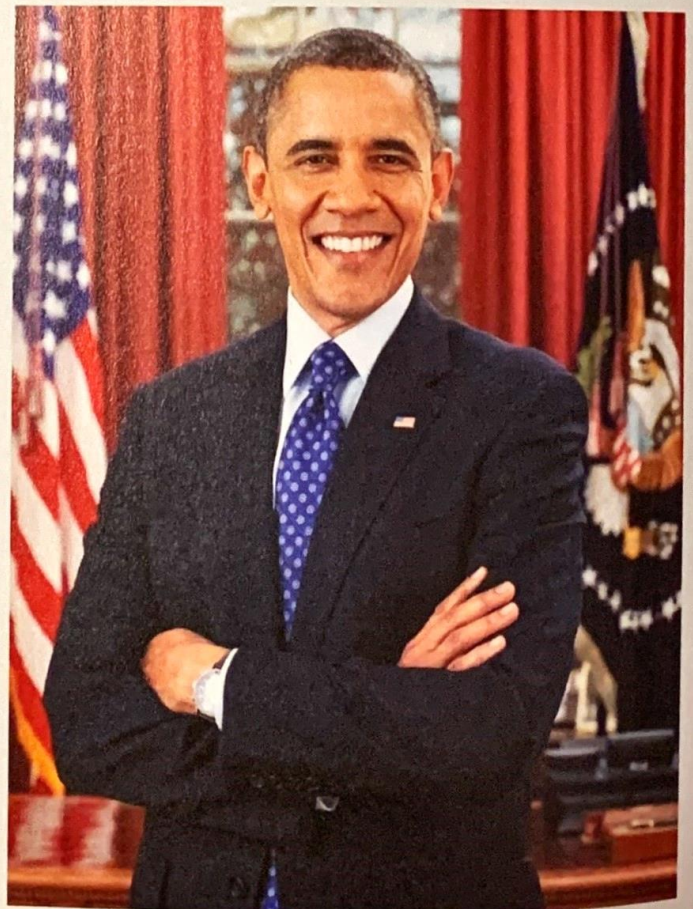
Associated with Jeremiah Wright, Obama decided to respond to these claims in his 'Perfect Union' speech in which he navigated the field of post-racial politics with differing effects. To Thomas Sugrue, this speech is regarded as a 'savvy and astute' presentation of political differences. He makes this claim considering that Obama manages to unite listeners through his hybridity, validating both the bitterness and scepticism of black Americans who remain angered by discrimination, whilst also acknowledging white anger to affirmative action. Having understood these opinions regarding race, Obama then discusses the benefits of a mixed culture, 'the men and women of every color and creed who serve together, and fight together, and bleed together under the same proud flag', calling for 'A More Perfect Union', a union which all Americans desire. By aiding all lower classes, with educations, jobs, housing and healthcare, Obama posits the idea that America can move on from the past and become a post-racial state.

Yet, Obama's speech has also gained criticism from historians Ebony Utley and Amy Heyse. In their description of this speech, Obama employed a master strategy of identification as he built common ground between individuals in order to reduce the division amongst them. This is seen by the fact Obama both recognised the harmful effects of Wright's comments to be 'wrong and divisive at a time we need unity', before aligning him with the Obama family, 'a man I could disown no more than my black community or my white Grandmother'. Furthermore, Obama then aligns Wright with the American Civil Rights movement, a 'past that isn't even past', a history which explains the wealth and income gap between black and white Americans in 2008 when addressing this speech.

Having done so, however, Obama then subtly recreates a post-racial state once more, a country in which these racial issues will be easily overcome, for 'this is the reality in which Reverend Wright grew up'. Utley and Heyse criticise Obama for positioning racial discrimination in the past of the civil rights movement, rather than acknowledging its presence in Obamas generation at the time. Obama's ending remarks, in which he specifically depicts a black man who regarded his work in the Chicago community organizers as being 'for Ashley', a younger white girl with the same aims, have been further criticised. Although this message of unity creates optimism for the future, it sanitizes a past history in which black men

were murdered for the rape of white women, as seen by the Atlanta Race Riot 1906 in which 25 men were killed for false allegations of rape. Utley and Heyse argue that failing to discuss the reality of this racial past thereby limited Obama's presentation of America in its current state, which is arguably not post-racial considering the remaining facts that show vast differences between the black and white communities. Sanitizing black history, and failing to express the true extent of its impact upon the present state by suggesting this was a generation of the past in which Jeremiah Wright lived, is suggested to limit his potential to change the state to become post-racial in the future.

Obama's post-racial state, therefore, has been both a success and a failure. By promoting the unity of America, Obama has been able to discuss race in a way which appeals to both the black and white communities, educating Americans of racial inequalities. Yet, in doing so, he has also been criticised for his white appropriation and sanitized version of this history which may hinder the change of racial inequality in the future. With Thomas Sugrue's analysis of Obama as the most influential historian of race and civil rights, it thereby remains a current debate with the extent to which history continues to hinder the present racial status of America, and the extent to which the past is not even our past, with facts depicting a continuing disparity even in 2018.



Cannibalism versus Cultural Relativism: Is Cannibalism Immoral?

Natalie Jones

Cannibalism is a highly controversial practise and has come under great scrutiny as Western civilisation has developed. Yet, with the introduction of the idea of cultural relativism, the topic has become increasingly volatile. Disgust at cannibalism has never been a universal sentiment, however with a growth in awareness of the concept of cultural relativism, its practise has been perceived with greater prudence and understanding.

So, we may ask ourselves, what is cultural relativism? It is the view that all beliefs, customs and ethics are relative to the individual within their own social context. In other words, right and wrong are culture-specific. What may be considered moral in one society, may be immoral in another, irrespective of the dominance of any one culture. Hence, there is no universal standard of morality, meaning no one really has the right to criticise another's societal customs. The concept states that there is nothing inherently wrong with any culture's customs; they are simply culturally distinctive.

In light of this, it can be seen that Western civilisation has seriously over-simplified cannibalism by assuming that it is always an aggressive and degrading act. We have prevented ourselves from realising that cannibalism can have positive meanings and motives that are not dissimilar from our own experiences. This is perhaps due to the fact that practises such as cannibalism were used as an example of the distance between the 'civilised' from the 'savage', in order to justify colonialism. In Western imagination, civilisation protects us from the anarchy that cannibalism represents. Yet, cannibalism is practised for a variety of reasons other than the preference of human flesh as an article of food. For instance, love and respect, hate and anger and in the case of

New Zealand's Maori tribe, as revenge on prisoners of war and to saturate the enemy with their valour.

Despite this, the morality of cannibalism, irrespective of context is still hotly debated. A court case in Germany in the early 2000's placed a man on trial who had killed and consumed a voluntary victim. The cannibal's defence lawyers argued that because the victim was consenting, it was not immoral. Yet, the German courts convicted the man and jailed him for 8-12 years. The prosecution argued that despite the mutual consent, what was done was still immoral, and neither consent nor any other context can make something immoral, moral. It has previously been proposed that supposedly immoral activity should be legalised on the basis that it should only affect those who consent to it. Yet, this consent does not make it moral, even in cases where a majority are in favour. For instance, if the Jews had consented to the gas chambers in the Holocaust of World War Two, it would not have made what was done moral. So, sometimes opinion matters, but not when it comes to constituting what is right and what is wrong.

Overall, the morality of cannibalism is a highly controversial topic. It seems that its acceptance is dependent on the customs of the culture. Yet, with an increasing number of campaigns and legalisation of ethically ambiguous causes like abortion and euthanasia, we are at risk of ethical confusion. Therefore, we must rule out cases based on opinion and consent, as those same people may be campaigning for legalised cannibalism, otherwise we will have the question of where to draw the line.

History Society Letter



Hello Historians!

We hope you had a fabulous Christmas break and that exam period / start of semester two hasn't been too stressful!

First of all, HistSoc would love to say a massive thank you to all of you who made the Christmas Ball such an amazing night to end semester one on a high! Everyone looked fabulous in their tuxes and ballgowns, and I'm sure the Photo Booth and pop-corn machine were enjoyed by many! Of course, a huge thank you also has to go to our fabulous Social (Ball) Sec James Beetham; without all of his hard work the night simply wouldn't have happened!

We would also like to thank everyone who recently joined us for our Semester Two GIAG, HistSoc Does Bingo! It was certainly a very impressive turnout - we hope that everyone enjoyed it as much as we did and that the winners are enjoying their various prizes!



Now for some upcoming news:

Our trip to Prague is coming up soon on 17th March! Thank you to everyone who has got the rest of the balance paid in time for the deadline - you have taken a weight off of Perri's shoulders for sure! She is currently planning a fabulous itinerary of things for us all to do to make the most of our time out there (both day and night), so keep your eyes peeled for more information coming very soon!

You may also want to keep your ears to the ground for information about the elections for next year's HistSoc Committee! Somehow, the time is nearly upon us again and we are holding our Prospective Committee Meeting on Thursday 22nd February from 5-6pm in Michael Sadler LG.15. This is open to anyone who wants to find out about the specific roles available to run for and to ask general questions about what it is like to be on committee. So please do come along, not matter what year group you're from and even if you have the slightest interest - I promise we don't bite!

Finally, in true HistSoc style we have another amazing social coming your way soon, so make sure you're checking our Facebook Group for regular updates if you don't want to miss out (why would you?!).

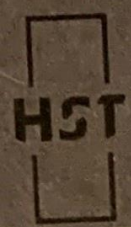
That's all from me, my fellow historians,

Alexa Clark (Academic Sec)

Front Cover Illustration:

Ian Brady [Public domain], via The Sun Newspaper, <<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3568406/ian-brady-dead-79-moors-murderer/>>. All others attributed throughout.

Graphics by Alex Millington.



HISTORY STUDENT TIMES

ISSUE 2