

HISTORY STUDENT TIMES

HISTORY IN THE MEDIA

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HIST

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Left to Right: an old camera advert; artwork on the Berlin wall, credits of a black and white film

Issue 3: History in the Media

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hello and welcome to the final issue of the History Student Times for this academic year. After the hype of awards season, this issue considers the use of history within the media, ranging from films, to songs, to newspapers. Our writers consider the portrayal of history in Hollywood, alongside the phenomenon of 'pop history' and pinning down some of the best historical songs. There are also updates from the department, and features such as how to explore the culture within your history and the experiences of a study abroad student.

As my last issue of editor, I hope you have all enjoyed the History Student Times this year, and a massive thank you to everyone who has been involved!

Lizzie Scourfield
Editor



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LETTER FROM THE HISTORY SOCIETY

Hi all,

Amongst the exam results, first few weeks of 'I don't have any work' and now the stress of week 8 looming HistSoc has been very busy as always making sure we give you guys great nights and huge expectation for what else we have in store before the summer comes round!

I'm so proud of the committee for pulling off such a successful weekend in Berlin – needless to say it was a fun whirlwind of a weekend that ended far too quickly and had far too little sleep – I hope you 57 people enjoyed it as much as I did! We're already throwing ideas around for where we want to go next year after this trip worked so well.

Once again we wouldn't let the weather stop us, this time not floods but snow, and we threw another social with copious amounts of free drinks for our members at Faversham. It was so good to see so many new faces as well as you reliable oldies! Tickets are selling fast for our next social at Lipstick jungle at Warehouse, when this goes to print

I hope I can say it was another successful huge night which you all enjoyed!

We're laying the ground work for our summer ball we're going to hold before we all break up for summer; bigger than our BBQ last year and what we hope will be a great blow out after such a successful year for us.

For all you budding sportsmen out there we're arranging a mixed netball tournament just for fun which we hope will be another great way for people to meet and just have a laugh (and ending up in the old bar afterwards).

Deloitte are going to be making appearances this term in the department, your eyes peeled for updates about this!

Finally, it's that time of year (where on earth did the time go?!) that we're making plans for our handover at our AGM after Easter. We've spent a lot of time rewriting our constitution now we've grown so much this year and are having a huge revamp of the committee –



HistSoc in Berlin

more to be revealed in the next few weeks! This is your chance to get involved in the committee and have a say in how the society is run next year. I would encourage you all to firstly voice your opinion on the new ideas in the constitution and also run for a position on the committee. It's an absolute blast!

Remember, it's never too late to get involved! We've got the option on our page on the union website to buy 2nd semester membership for £8 and don't be afraid to come and introduce yourself at the next social – we're not scary, honest!

See you at the next social,

Cat (president) x

HISTSOC NETBALL

Here at HistSoc Netball we've started the season positively- we've bought new bibs, a new ball and have found new determination to win.

Last season we enjoyed the majority of our victories in the seeding tournament, and in our first match against Psychology. But we faced heavy defeats against the Leeds Netball Development teams losing by as much as 24 goals in some matches. But in 2013 we've really gelled as a team and turned it around.

We fought our way into division one in the seeding tournament, winning all but one match. From then on we've won two out of three matches, our only defeat being a dignified one against Medics, losing by a slim two goals. Our defensive players were tried and tested in this game, during which consistent interceptions won Cat Poole player of the match.

In our next match against Maths we fought hard coming back to win 17-14 after losing 13-9 by the third quarter. Eva Gilder won player of the match for her vital

interceptions and spatial awareness throughout the game.

Our most recent match was against Modern Languages, which further confirmed our ability to make great comebacks under pressure. By halftime we were losing 15-8, scoring an impressive 9 goals and only conceding 2 in the third quarter to pull the score line back to 17-17, to win 21-19 by the final whistle. Player of the match went to our vital wing Zoe Miller who showed composure and consistency during both attacking and defensive

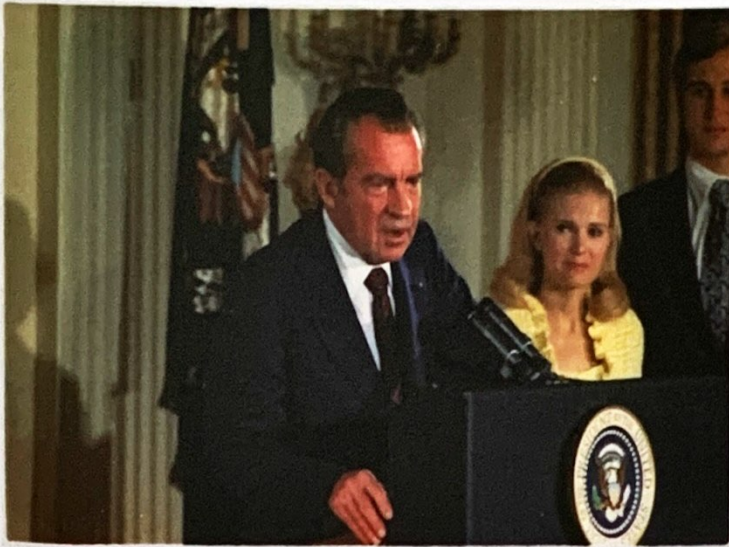
play.

Special mention goes to our shooter Hayley Booth whose adaptability and movement in the shooting circle improves with every game.

HistSoc Netball is a friendly team always welcoming new players. Join the Facebook page for updates about training, matches, and socials.

I'd like to say congratulations to the girls for their great gains made this season- keep up the good work, and bring it on!

-Eveie Robinson



Richard Nixon giving his resignation speech

WHAT IF... CARL BERNSTEIN AND BOB WOODWARD HAD NOT FOLLOWED THE MONEY?

On the 17th June 1972 a group of five men were apprehended for burglary and attempting to intercept telephone lines and other methods of communication within the Democratic Party's National Committee offices in the Watergate building. This burglary was to become the first stage in the Watergate scandal, which eventually led to Richard Nixon's resignation in 1972. The story was initially covered by two young journalists at the Washington Post, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, and their findings directly resulted in the unravelling of this story of corruption.

So what if Bernstein and Woodward had not kept digging? Would the events of Watergate have just faded away and would President Nixon have remained in power?

It has been suggested that without the investigative journalism of the two Washington Post journalists the events would have carried out in much the same way; the scandal of Watergate would have been revealed, and Nixon thus forced out of office. This view stems from the idea that the role of the investigative journalism of Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward has been mythicized in their book and film adaptation 'All the President's Men', a fact that even Bernstein himself acknowledges. 'Follow the money' is a line which was popularised in the 1976 film and is the advice that Bernstein and Woodward received from their informer 'Deep Throat', advice which allowed them to uncover the undeclared election contributions that implicated the government's involvement. However this scene is purely fictional, a fabrication of the film's director, William Goldman and the identity of the true informant was FBI director Mark Felt.

However, if the Washington Post had not kept the Watergate story at the forefront of national thought it is uncertain whether the FBI or the Senate would have continued the

investigation as it was initially unclear whether the possibility of crimes outside of the break-in itself would be explored. It was Woodward and Bernstein's work which shaped the way the Watergate investigation unfolded. Within this interpretation the sequence of events could have been very different; the corrupt nature of the Watergate scandal may not have been exposed and Nixon may have remained in office, retaining a much more positive legacy than he did in the aftermath of the scandal.

Prior to the Watergate scandal, under the Johnson administration and with the Vietnam War claiming so many American lives, there was already increasing scepticism towards the government and presidency as a result of the media's increasing criticism of the political establishment. However, if the Washington Post had not delved down the rabbit hole of corruption which was Watergate, then this new era of political scepticism may not have solidified in American culture. This was because Nixon would never have been presented as a complete contradiction to the idea that the President was above crime and corruption, with the best interests of the American people in mind.

So, what if these two Washington Post journalists had not seen any significance in the burglary of 1972? The Watergate scandal may not have been at the forefront of national view. Nixon may have remained in office and American media may not have become as sceptical and critical of the government and president as it is now if the Washington Post had not solidified the changing nature of the media that the coverage of the Vietnam War set in process.

"I AM NOT A CROOK" - RICHARD NIXON

Richard Nixon's famous denial of his involvement in the scandal in a question and answer session before 400 Associated Press managing editors at their conference in Orlando.

Time magazine included the quote in their 'top 10 Unfortunate Political One-Liners', concluding simply that "Thing is, he was".

-Hannah Conway

INTERVIEW: DR. WILL JACKSON,

LECTURER IN IMPERIAL HISTORY

-FREYA POTTER

Freya Potter: Why did you choose to focus on imperial history?

Will Jackson: I was interested in Imperial and African history when I was an Undergraduate. But I often tend to think that what you end up doing, focusing on and identifying with, it's a question of other stuff dropping away and seeing what is left.

FP: Why are you particularly interested in social history and mental illness?

WJ: I was working on Kenya and White Settlers, I started off reading a lot of their memoirs and I just didn't believe them. I really wanted to understand what it was like to be a White Settler and as I read I felt like it was all people writing in a certain performative way. I had to think about where I would find alternative testimonies. I then went to Kenya to do archival research and was aware there was a mental hospital that had been founded in 1910, so then I wondered about whether I would be able to access some of their case rec-

ords. But it came initially from a place of scepticism for the visible, more published sources.

FP: You were looking for something more authentic?

WJ: Yes more authentic, but with the full awareness that the authentic is a problematic thing anyway. Authenticity is a dangerous thing to look for. I think you need to be fired by a desire to find something, but at the same time be aware of the naivety or the ambition or the problematic nature of your desire to find whatever it is that you're looking for.

"I don't like the idea of legacy because it implies that the thing itself is over and we're living with the after effects. I don't think it's over."

FP: Are you researching anything currently?

WJ: I had this idea about "Going Native" which is a term that you get a lot in colonial writing about white people in the Empire taking on other cultures. It can be entirely banal or it can be about intermarrying or having sexual relations with an indigenous person and having offspring. But I'm getting more interested now in writing an emotional history of Empire. I'm interested in settler's fears of insurrection and the way they obsess about native uprisings and revenge, and trying to get at the lived experience

FP: What do you think is the legacy of the British Empire?

WJ: Part of the legacy of the British Empire today is that we keep having these conversations. Often it seems to have a certain moral component; was it a force for good or a force for bad? I don't like the idea of legacy because it implies that the thing itself is over and we're living with the after effects. I don't think it's over. We're only just beginning to critically open up to the various different ways in



Dr. Will Jackson

which we assume a certain normality or a pride of place to our lives, our experiences and our identities, and when I say 'our' and 'we' I'm talking about the British people.

FP: David Cameron has been called in the press "a Primark Churchill dreaming of his own private Falklands War" for his involvement in Mali and Algeria, what do you think of this?

WJ: I love that phrase "a Primark Churchill". It may be that politicians will always be pompous and self aggrandizing and talk about their country in rather virtuous terms. That might not necessarily be a legacy of Empire but in light of the history of the British Empire, you can't take them apart and suddenly it takes on this unmistakable character of imperialism. I'm just amazed that David Cameron can say the things that he says and the whole world isn't rolling around in fits of anger and

has a duty to intervene in its former Empire?

WJ: No I don't think it has a duty, I think that the idea of duty is very powerful because it has this moral dimension to it. It depends on what kind of intervention, I tend to stand at the side of these arguments but I can't see that there is a duty to intervene. I'm even sceptical about non-governmental organisations and individuals who will feel like they've got some kind of desire or need or duty to make a difference. The Nation State is self serving and self interested. I know talking to people in Kenya, things like the BBC world service has been enjoyed and identified as a positive involvement in a much less problematic way than Governmental or even non-governmental involvement.

FP: Why do you like to use film and literature in your teaching and how do you think this can help historians?

mirth, because that's what I feel all the time.

FP: Do you think that Britain

WJ: One reason is when you read literature or watch film it engages parts of you that maybe don't get engaged when you read academic work or official more bureaucratic sources. In a way that's far more demanding of a reader or a viewer than a more partial engagement. I think it can arouse conflict and confusion, which can be very creative.

FP: Do you think objectivity is possible and something historians should aim for, or is it better to be more subjective and passionate?

WJ: No, I think what you want to do is fiercely try to be objective, but with an equally fierce awareness of the impossibility of being objective, and hold some kind of tension.

FP: What advice would you give to Undergraduate historians?

WJ: One of the things I worry about with the University, partly because it's become so corporatized is that there's less space given to thinking. My advice would be to allow yourself to think. It can very confusing and conflicted but it can also be incredibly transportive.

HAS HOLLYWOOD RUINED HISTORY?

Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter: A film about the 16th President of the United States, a man who signed the Emancipation Proclamation, who lead his country by day and supposedly slew vampires by night. Is this really the state of history nowadays, that someone can seriously create a film suggesting such an absurd idea? I understand that this film is a mindless action movie, not to be taken seriously as historical evidence. However, does that apply to all films? Is there any credence in including films in historiography?

There are advantages for film makers of using historical periods and figures for film. Socio-historical contexts can easily be used to create a true escapist feel or draw analogies with modern day events. However, the problem is that the film industry has no interest in actively promoting areas of history and always uses the same figures. This can be seen by the fact that, according to trivia website corsinet.com, Napoleon Bonaparte has been portrayed in 194 movies, Jesus Christ in 152, and Abraham Lincoln in 137 – although only one of those mentions his apparent ability to hunt the un-dead.

Even the films which do explore these kinds of figures have some grave historical inaccuracies. *Braveheart*, for example, contained many deviations from what actually happened in the struggle for Scottish independence. William Wallace and Edward Longshanks did not die at the same time. Longshanks actually outlived Wallace by two years, dying in 1307.

The idea that Edward III was the son of Wallace is flawed too, as he was born in 1312, seven years after Wallace's death. These examples show how the film industry merely fabricates the facts to make a better story.

The biggest problem with how the film industry treats history is the simplistic and definitive feel that it is given. Historical films are given the stereotypical Hollywood gloss of good Vs. evil, and people usually leave the cinema feeling that the right side won. These films are also usually marketed as conclusive documentation of what happened, so therefore there is no need to think about *that* part of history again. There are very few examples of a balanced representation of figures or events.

However, perhaps this does something to aid history. As long as people are aware of the Hollywood bias in cinema, it can help to stimulate historical debate. Additionally, as I have learnt after years of history teachers trying to make the subject "interesting", films can be used as a starting point for discussion on the historical era. They can make us question what the actual situation was like for those people in the past, whether the issues they had to face were really as black and white as they are made out to be. As well as this, the medium of film itself should not be ignored as one of the primary means of democratising history outside of academic circles. Much like the printing press in the early sixteenth century, history films can be seen as a way of propagating knowledge to the "masses".

Also, historical films are a useful medi-

um for understanding the social context of certain periods. *Saving Private Ryan*, although inaccurate concerning the level of involvement by American troops at the D-day landings, is not only an excellent film but also provides an idea as to how traumatising the battles of the Second World War were. This is also the case for films like *Defiance*, showing Jewish resistance under Nazis rule, and, *Platoon*, giving an insight into the Vietnam War. Perhaps this is where the main advantage of historical films lies; not in displaying facts and figures, but aiding historians' interpretations of life in epochs we are so distanced from.

Although nowadays there can be some infuriating examples in the film industry of clear abuse towards history, these are not necessarily destructive for historians. On the contrary, they can be a catalyst for debate that can easily spread to the everyday person – perhaps this is more suitable for the "Google-age" society that can find out historical facts at the click of a button. That is not to say the academic's role is redundant, historians are still needed to analyse and scrutinise films and stop the ever-present risk of complacency. Historical study needed now more than ever to ensure future generations see Abraham Lincoln for what he was; the renowned President who signed the Emancipation Proclamation, not a night-time hunter of the un-dead...

There is, however, hope. The recent film *Lincoln* (2012), directed by Steven Spielberg, provides a much more historically accurate account of events surrounding the American Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation. Perhaps, most importantly, Spielberg's *Lincoln*, unlike the vampire-hunting replica, has been nominated for twelve Oscars and ten BAFTA's, showing the Hollywood gloss is far from necessary.

-BEN KAVANAGH

HISTORY IN THE SINGING: TOP TEN SONGS ABOUT HISTORY

-BECKY HIGGINS

History doesn't have to be all about textbooks and primary sources; you can also pop on the headphones and listen to some rock music. From the Spanish Civil War to the assassination of JFK, artists bring history to life by commemorating both victorious and tragic events in their music. Here I have rounded up ten of the best historically-inspired songs, so that even if you are not particularly interested in the subject, you will be familiar with the meaning behind a few of Bob Marley's and The Rolling Stones' biggest hits.

10. Alexander the Great (1986) Iron Maiden

One of many historically-themed songs written by the heavy metal band, this epic chronicles the life of the Great Macedonian King, highlighting his many achievements from conquering the Persian Empire to founding the city of Alexandria in Egypt in 331 B.C, up until his unexpected death of fever in Babylon at the age of 33.

9. Enola Gay (1980) Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark

Inspired by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima near the end of World War II, OMD's lyrics refer to both 'Enola Gay' and 'Little Boy'; the aircraft and nuclear weapon used in the bombing. Writer Andy McCluskey stated the song conveys "an ambivalence about whether it was the right or wrong thing to do".

8. Spanish Bombs (1979) The Clash

Focusing on the Spanish Civil War, the punk-rock band praise the heroism of the Republicans and reference locations and peo-

ple associated with the event; Federico Garcia Lorca (referred to in the song as Federico Lorca) was a Spanish poet killed by firing squad during the war, and Andalucía was the first region to be overtaken by Franco's Nationalists in 1936.

7. Sunday Bloody Sunday (1983) U2

This haunting song remembers the 1972 massacre of civil rights protestors in the Northern Irish town of Derry that has become widely known as 'Bloody Sunday'. Twenty-six unarmed marchers were shot by British troops, resulting in fourteen deaths. Bono later said that "love is... the central theme" of the song.

6. Wind of Change (1990) Scorpions

Written by vocalist Klaus Meine after a visit to Moscow, the song refers to the changing world of the late 1980's which saw the fall of Communism and the end of the Cold War. It has become one of the best-selling singles of all time with over 14 million sales.

5. The Rising (2002) Bruce Springsteen

Winning two Grammy awards, this track follows a New York City Fire-fighter climbing the World Trade Center after the towers were hit by hijacked planes during the 9/11 attacks. Whilst it depicts the desperate situation the man finds himself in, the upbeat chorus represents the rising out of the darkness in the wake of the violence; the worst to hit America since Pearl Harbour in 1941.

4. Buffalo Soldier (1983) Bob Marley

This song was written by Bob Marley during his final recording sessions in 1980. One of his best known songs, the title and lyrics refer to the black cavalry US soldiers that fought in the Indian wars during the 1860's. He speaks of them being "stolen from Africa, brought to America" and recasts their fight for survival as a symbol of black resistance.

3. Suffer Little Children (1984) The Smiths

This song is based on the Moors Murders that took place in Manchester between 1963 and 1965. The five victims (three of them mentioned by name in the song) were just a few years older than Morrissey at the time of their deaths. Seen as very controversial, stores stopped selling the single after claims the woman on the single cover was meant to resemble killer Myra Hindley.

2. 19 (1985) Paul Hardcastle

At the top of the charts for five weeks, Hardcastle's anti-war anthem focuses on America's involvement in the Vietnam War ("the longest war in American history") and in particular the soldiers who served in it; the title referred to the average age of the men who fought.

1. Sympathy for the Devil (1968) The Rolling Stones

None of the other songs include quite as many events as this; the atrocities referenced span from the trial and death of Jesus Christ up until the assassination of both of the Kennedy brothers. It was placed at #32 in the Rolling Stone magazines' 'The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time'.

'POP HISTORY': USEFUL SOURCES

OR GUILTY PLEASURES? -Freya Potter

The merits of popular history television programs and documentaries can be a divisive debate among historians. Some argue that programs are sensationalized and over simplified, whereas others love nothing more than spending a Saturday afternoon with Tony Robinson and the Time Team marathon. I'm unashamedly the latter, although for me it's all about Phil Harding and his denim hot-pants.

Surely a desire to study history at an academic level must stem initially from a general interest in all things historical, so why wouldn't historians enjoy history programs aimed at the general public? More importantly, can they be helpful? Sir Keith Thomas claims that popular history programs damage and undermine serious scholarship, but is this an outdated and snobbish view to take?

As Undergraduates who are made to take the sweeping first year modules we know that an in-depth knowledge of the last 2000 years is unattainable, and practically impossible to achieve to an academic level. Fairly quickly it becomes apparent which period or type of history you most enjoy, and the rest unfortunately has to be abandoned. Television programs provide us with the perfect way to stay engaged with history in which we don't have more than an hour or so to indulge.

It is interesting to compare the ways in which different television operators present their historical content. The BBC tends to produce reliably uncontroversial and unbiased programs, whereas Channel 4 on the other hand aims to entice viewers with more provocative titles such as 'Sex and the Swastika'. Such pro-

grams are criticised for being too sensationalized, but perhaps what people mean when they say that is, it's not boring. It's amazing how some academic historians manage to make even the most amazing episodes seem dull.

Fictional historical programs can also be useful because they help the historian to envisage the event or period more clearly. 'Call the Midwife' is based on memoirs of a nurse in the 1950s West End and is of course romanticised, but at the same time can also be taken as a valid historical representation of the time. The line should be drawn however, at sexed up dramas such as 'The Tudors': when a program merges two historical figures and expects no one to care, any pretence of watching for academic purposes has to be thoroughly abandoned.

Another criticism often aimed at history programs is that they're too sweeping and lack nuance. The BBC's ambitious 'A History of the World' was criticised for its generalisations, but general histories can be valuable, especially to undergraduates. Many students express the concern that the lack of chronological history taught in schools means too often pupils are stuck studying the same event, year on year. The danger being that we then lack a sense of awareness of the continuity and pro-



The real Henry VIII and Jonathan Rhys Meyer's highly flattering interpretation from the BBC's 'The Tudors'.

gression of world history. Such context is vital to writing good academic history. Programs which cover vast spaces of time but then focus in on specific events expose viewers to many different periods providing a inspiration for further investigation.

Perhaps what makes a useful history program for the historian depends on the presenter. Mary Beard is an eminent scholar of ancient Rome and no doubt her books are brilliant, but how many students have the time to read extra academic history just for fun in term time? A program like 'Meet the Romans' on the BBC written by an academic such as Beard provides an enjoyable and accessible gateway into her credible historiography. Her vast historical knowledge still comes across to the viewer, but without the serious overtones of academia which can too often stifle a passing interest in a subject.

For those historians who still prefer more high-brow hi-tech history, the discussions between researching academics on radio programs such as 'In Our Time' might appeal more as they avoid the pitfalls of narrative and romanticised history.

In my opinion more history can never harm the historian, so long as they take pop history shows with a pinch of salt. At the very least they show that history doesn't have to be a stuffy highbrow institutionalised subject, but that it can be exciting and entertaining too. If it exposes students to periods and issues they previously might not have considered then it certainly is a valuable guilty pleasure.

No Patriotism in the British Film Industry? It's everywhere...

You can be assured that after leaving a viewing of Steven Spielberg's latest historical drama, *Lincoln*, there'll be an overall atmosphere of appreciation, fuelled mostly by Daniel Day-Lewis' more than assured performance and not quite drained by the seemingly endless motivational speeches. You can also be assured however, that the atmosphere when leaving an American cinema will be very, very different. An American will leave the cinema feeling he can puff his chest out that little bit more, wave his flag with that little extra vigour, for he is from that same piece of land as the great man that was Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln is a biopic that you can add to the ever-growing list of films that offers a 'Hollywoodisation' of history, where historiography comes second to dramatisation. Spielberg gives the audience what they want, an American idol placed on an ever-rising pedestal, fuel for their patriotic nature. And this begs a very simple question: why don't we do the same?

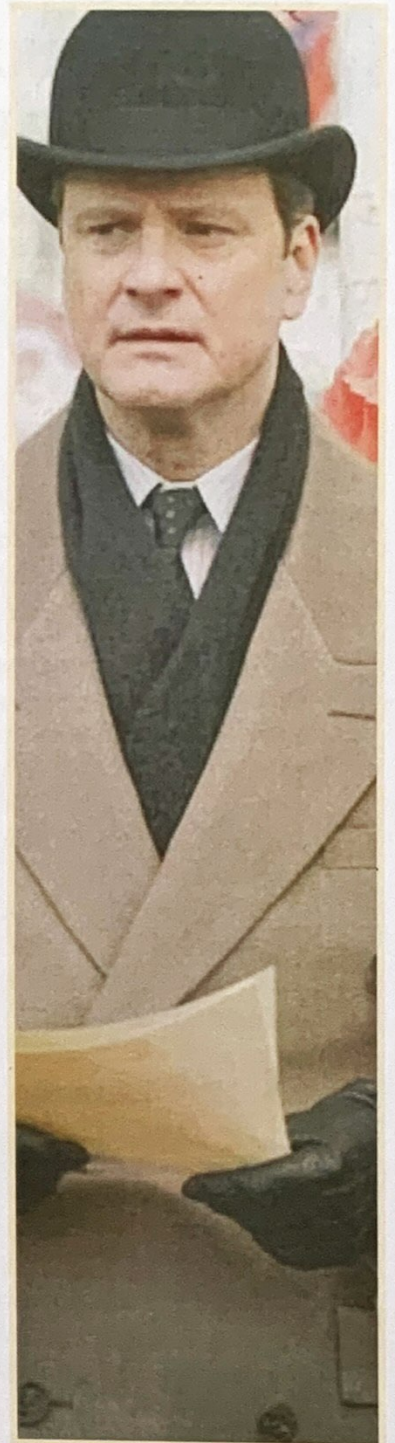
Hollywood is full of them, from the glorification of their war soldiers such as *Pearl Harbour*, to even *Mississippi Burning*, which, set during the racially tumultuous 1960s, concentrates on the FBI's efforts to fight racism, leaving the black population to remain silent bystanders. Directors have just as much (much more without sounding overtly proud) British history to take a stab at celebrating. The returning soldiers from the Falkland Islands joked that they would make films about them, yet no such film exists. Neither does a Churchill biopic or an epic war drama depicting Waterloo.

The British simply do not make the self congratulatory cinema that Americans do. We like to think of ourselves as above it, still shrouded with that certain British politeness that separates us from those brash, loud-mouthed red-

necks across the pond. Of course this is all nonsense; British cinema can be just as patriotic, just as self flattering. But it is a very different type of patriotism, a much more succinct appraisal that you have to look hard for to find, but when you do, you'll never fail to miss it.

It must be admitted that a glorification of our political figures in the same vein as *Lincoln* wouldn't work on this side of the Atlantic. We tend to playfully mock our political figures rather than revere them (a brief comparison between the popularity of Obama and Cameron more than proves this). When our famous faces are portrayed, i.e. George VI in *The King's Speech* or Margaret Thatcher in *The Iron Lady*, they are humanised as the bumbling Englishman or a poorly old woman suffering with dementia. Our patriotism is to be found in unexpected places, when history is portrayed through its social background, when the average Brit fights against the restraints of this context and wins; that is when we leave the cinema happy.

Whether it is our comedies (*The Full Monty*) or our drama (*Billy Elliot*), our cinema is littered with stories of working-class average Brits triumphing against the social restraints dictated by history. Even when portraying the Second World War, where our contribution abroad matches that of our American counterparts, we take more pride in the war effort, the 'People's War', and make *Goodnight Mr. Tom* rather than *Saving Private Ryan*. This may not be the so-called vulgar patriotism of America, but its patriotism nonetheless. We take pride in ourselves, as citizens who truly encompass what it is to be British, and who we believe shape the nation. And in our cinema, when you really think about it, it's everywhere.



Colin Firth as George VI in 'The King's Speech'

-Jonathan Mitchell

'BLACK ART', 'RED STAMPS' AND *THE NORTHERN STAR*: WORKING CLASS NEWSPAPERS IN THE TIME OF THE CHARTISTS

-Jenny Lamb

In 1815, the Conservative government of the Earl of Liverpool imposed a Stamp Tax on newspapers, raising the average price of a paper from 4d to 7d. Liverpool's ministry was characterised by repressive legislation, such as the temporary removal of the writ of habeas corpus in cases of suspected treason, in an attempt to suppress growing radicalism in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars.

In the case of the newspaper tax, the increase in price made a commodity of knowledge and its ownership exclusively the prerogative of the well-heeled. The labouring classes were indirectly excluded from the spheres of contemporary politics and debate. Liverpool's government had identified the working class as a hive of dangerous radical thinkers, and exploited their vulnerable financial position to silence them in one easy sweep.

At least, this was the intention.

The result of the 'tax on knowledge' was, instead, a flurry of 'unstamped' papers. Their content: the week's political activity from the point of view of the far left, invitations to hear socialist speakers, book reviews, satirical cartoons and, perhaps most importantly of all, letters penned by the ordinary working people, whose words were always insightful, eloquent and informed. In a letter to *The Poor Man's Guardian* in 1831, a reader known only as 'a Friend to Liberty' condemns the way politicians sought to marginalize the working class by exploiting their poverty:



'Of all the taxes levied (or attempted to be levied) upon the poor man, the most odious and the most inexcusable is the tax upon political knowledge. You may have "religious knowledge" and all sorts of romantic and idle stories "dirt cheap" but if you wish to know anything about the pickpocket machinery which robs the poor man of eight shillings out of every thirteen which he spends; then the Aristocrats say "You shall know nothing about our black art, our dirty works and our swindling schemes, unless you pay us four pence for a red mark which we put on the paper."' Moralising religious parables and escapist fiction held no appeal for the working man, who would no longer be pacified and patronised.

By attempting to cordon-off politics from the working class, the government had, instead, provoked the spread of Chartist ideology. Not only that, but they had provided a platform for the working class to exercise their political voices and prove to their middle and upper class counterparts that they were not lacking in ability, only in opportunity, which was so often denied them.

In the wake of the draconian legislation of subsequent years, namely the hated Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, the Chartist

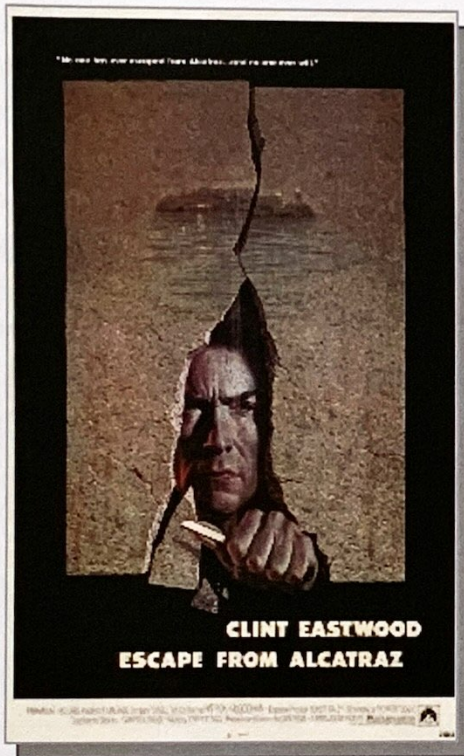
movement gained momentum, and found an ally in the form of Feargus O'Connor and his Leeds-based radical paper, *The Northern Star*. O'Connor called for 'a press for the representation of the Labouring Classes, whose interests from time immemorial have been shamelessly neglected'. *The Northern Star's* success was immediate; within a year it had become the most widely circulated local paper in Britain. Through the medium of this paper, the working class could finally be confident of what O'Connor described as the 'growing intelligence, awakening spirit, moral force, and cool determination of the people'.

Historians see patterns weaved through time. We look to history for lessons to apply in the current political climate in the hope that mistakes will not be repeated, and if they are, to ensure that we have the antidote ready. The climbing tuition fees of today echo the 1815 'tax on knowledge'; perhaps it is time for us to take a leaf out of the *Northern Star*, and wage a paper war against those who are monopolising knowledge.



FILM REVIEW: ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ -ROB TIDBALL

“If you disobey the rules of society, they send you to prison; if you disobey the rules of the prison, they send you to US”



The June 1962 Alcatraz escape attempt was the only successful breakout in the history of the infamous prison, and it was only considered successful because the bodies of the former inmates were never found. The 1979 dramatic recreation of this true story shows the resourcefulness of human nature but also the vindictiveness and petty spite of officials such as the warden and some of the prison guards. The film's definite bias towards the escapees is understandable from a Hollywood perspective, but the portrayal of hardened criminals as innocent victims and the prison authorities as their cruel masters did seem slightly unfair in my eyes.

The supposed impregnability of the prison is asserted from the very start as Frank Morris (Clint Eastwood) is led through the rigours of entry into prison then greeted with, "Welcome to Alcatraz". Once there he is reunited with his friends the Anglin brothers (Jack Thibeuau and Fred Ward) and they proceed to plan their escape, with Morris' cell neighbour Charley Butts (Larry Hankin). The name Charley Butts is fictional but based on the real inmate Allen West who was unable to escape with the others as he was unable to dig his tunnel in time.

For their intricate escape the prisoners used stolen spoons from the cafeteria and an improvised drill scavenged from a desk fan to dig a tunnel from their cells into a maintenance corridor. They constructed papier-mâché heads complete with human hair from the barbers so that the guards would think that they were asleep whilst they escaped at night. They also made false cardboard grills to disguise the entrance to their tunnels and masked the sound of the digging by playing the accordion. They were able to access the prison roof through the maintenance tunnel then clamber down to the shoreline. This section of the film was done without stunt doubles and due to the typically fierce San Francisco weather the cast were frequently in danger of falling to their deaths. When they reached the sea they inflated makeshift lifejackets and a raft constructed from stolen raincoats.

When their departure was finally noticed by the prison staff, a frantic man-hunt began which, to this day, has not been completed. The FBI continue to have an open case file on the three missing fugitives. Pieces of their raft and lifejackets washed up on Angel Island, yet no bodies were found. The film strongly suggests that the prisoners escaped, but this is far from certain. 2012 marked the 50th anniversary of the escape and saw thousands of tourists flock to the island due to the urban legend that the three former inmates would return to 'The Rock' for the first time in fifty years. Unsurprisingly they failed to appear, but the publicity of this event shows that the escape had a far greater impact on popular culture than could be imagined at the time and was credited by many as the reason for the prison's closure the year after the breakout.

IHP: ICH BIN EIN... YORKSHIREMAN? -Alex Shaw

Last summer, I was in Berlin. Stood on the tarmac of Gatow airfield, one of the places to which British and American aircraft delivered vital supplies (and a camel) to West Berlin during the airlift of 1948-9. Wandering between the last few remnants of the infamous wall, alongside buildings pockmarked with the bullet holes of 1945, and with the monumental communist *Fernsehturm* (TV tower) dominating the skyline, I knew that I had arrived at the frontline of the Cold War. For anyone less certain of that fact, the two short-ish Germans dressed in US Military Police uniforms outside the replica Checkpoint Charlie, cheekily charging a few euros for photography, must surely have been a giveaway. I'm not ashamed to admit that I skipped the nightlife in favour of the old Stasi headquarters, a part-demolished wartime Flak-tower (the greatest testament to De-Nazification left in the capital) and, perhaps best of all, DDR schnitzel. Yes, that's right. Aside from different currencies, governments, armies and football teams, East and West Germany had different schnitzels (i.e. meat coated in breadcrumbs). In the West, a thin cut of veal or pork; in the Communist East, a thick disc of tightly-packed *bockwurst* style sausage meat, often accompanied by a slightly peppery tomato sauce. I don't care what people say, leaving aside the secret police and lack of political freedoms and judging based

on schnitzel alone, I'd cross the Wall into the DDR any day. Plus you can't beat the cheerful, yet tacky and garish, brightly-coloured kitchen utensils. I bought a red and blue plastic collapsible cup. It works.

Berlin was certainly an experience, and there's far more of its Cold War heritage left than in the rest of Eastern Europe. Everyone goes to Checkpoint Charlie (or the replica at least, the real deal is kept in the Allied Museum on Clayallee), but that's truly just the tip of the iceberg. Going out into the East, it can be like travelling through time, with much of the architecture still the way it was during the DDR-era. On Alexanderplatz in particular, in the shadow of the sci-fi looking *Fernsehturm*, all you can see are Soviet-style shopping blocks. Greyish-beige and uniform, but, in their own way, strangely appealing. Perhaps that's just my outlook on things, but it can definitely be said that '*ostalgie*', or nostalgia for East Germany, is still prominent. There's an interesting DDR Museum, plenty of old-style restaurants, and features such as the Marx-Engels forum and Stasi complex have been turned into memorials for the city's troubled past. Even Ampelmann has made a comeback by popular demand, another quaint feature of everyday life behind the Iron Curtain. Ampelmann is the DDR's traffic light man, fatter than the bloke we're used to, and with a bowler hat. The logic was that

his extra width makes him more visible, and the hat makes him appealing to children, in the hope that they'll obey his instructions. There's certainly some logic there. In the West, the modern world has made a greater impact in removing the Cold War feel of the city, but oddities like the Berlin Airlift aircraft suspended from a building serve as poignant reminders of just what it meant to be on the frontline of the superpower struggle.

A few days later, I landed in a decidedly dismal Manchester and took a crowded train back over the Pennines into the civilised world of Yorkshire. That's when I got thinking about this article, for I'm sure those of you who have come to Leeds from such foreign lands as Liverpool probably think us Yorkshirefolk a bunch of country bumpkins, living our lives in a pleasant little region that has never been of any significance whatsoever. After all, Kennedy didn't stop off on his way back from Berlin to proclaim "Ich bin ein Yorkshireman", did he? (Incidentally, when people show off by reminding you that Berliner is German for doughnut, and therefore Kennedy proclaimed to be a doughnut in front of crowds of Berlin-dwellers, they're actually wrong. Probably due to the possibility of this situation arising, doughnuts are known by a completely different German word within Berlin itself as to the rest of the

country). But, in fact, that's not the case. In some ways, Yorkshire too was a sort of frontline in the Cold War period, and to this day is littered with monuments to that history, just as is Berlin.

At the height of the Cold War, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Yorkshire was truly the nuclear frontline of the West. As part of the Eastern England defence region which also incorporated Lincolnshire and East Anglia, Yorkshire would have been the first place in the world to 'go nuclear' if negotiations had broken down. To the south of Leeds, the racing town of Doncaster was one of a few V-bomber bases, from which Vulcan and Victor aircraft were poised at 15, and some even on 2, minutes readiness during the crisis, waiting for the order to deliver their nuclear payload. Due to the problem of distance, these aircraft would have led the first wave alongside American bombers based in UK bases before the bulk of Strategic Air Command had even crossed the Atlantic. In 1962, Britain's bombers could deliver 230 MT of thermonuclear weapons, roughly comparable to the Soviet nuclear bomber force, and during those days of crisis, these Yorkshire and Lincolnshire warriors were armed and ready. Sadly, only one Victor bomber today resides in our county just north of York, and no Vulcans.

If we go to North and East Yorkshire, we find ourselves in the heart of Britain's surface-launched nuclear deterrent: the intermediate range Thor missiles, operated on a dual-key basis with the Americans. Of the twenty

Thor bases, five were in Yorkshire, constituting fifteen missiles, each with a 1.44 MT nuclear warhead, equivalent to roughly 90 Hiroshima bombs. Each of these missile sites, raised to a similar level of alert to the bombers during the critical weekend of 27-28 October 1962, was guarded by a defensive ring of Bloodhound surface-to-air missiles, designed to obliterate a Soviet first strike and enable Britain's retaliation to go ahead. Sadly, all that remains of these sites lies on private land, not open to the public, but English Heritage recently began declaring selected Thor launch platforms as protected.

During the 1950s and 1960s, an extensive network of nuclear bunkers was created across Britain, fulfilling a range of roles from radar control to monitoring the course and effects of a nuclear war in the hope of coordinating some sort of Civil Defence recovery. Although these networks were everywhere, it is here in God's Own County that their legacy is best preserved. In my own city of York, one of the most unusual tourist attractions is the former headquarters of number 20 Group Royal Observer Corps, responsible for monitoring a nuclear attack on the whole region, including Leeds. A truly unique attraction, it is well worth a visit, even though English Heritage have inflated the entry fee since I last went. In the surrounding countryside, there are two restored three-man Observer Corps bunkers which are opened up on selected days. These were outfitted with equipment with such ominous names as the Bomb Power Indicator and Ground Zero Reader, and provided the data



Entrance to York Cold War bunker

which was transmitted to the York headquarters for evaluation – data which would have been of vital importance to the survival of the nation. Further east, just north of Hull, one of the largest surviving Cold War bunkers is open to the public – the radar site at RAF Holmpton, part of a chain crucial in giving the four-minute warning necessary to get Doncaster's nuclear bombers into the air.

OK, so perhaps I am stretching the truth to equate Yorkshire to Berlin as a front line of the Cold War, but as far as Britain's Cold War is concerned, it isn't too much of an exaggeration. To this day, visitor attractions remain as testament to our region's nuclear history, though sadly no Thors, no Vulcans, and only one Victor bomber remain in God's Own County, once home to a reasonable proportion of our nuclear deterrence. Thankfully, these weapons never had to be used, because if a hot war situation had arisen, then the Soviet air force would have considered obliterating Yorkshire a top priority in a first-strike scenario. Although impressive, I doubt our defences would have done much more than fend them off just long enough to get some of our own weapons in the air ready to take the war back to Moscow.

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME CULTURE WITH THAT?

-GRACE VOGIATZIS

If you feel like you want a taste of history beyond your books, to get more into the feel of a period or place, or to just feel smug whilst taking a "study enhancing" break, here are some suggestions for you:

SOVIET HISTORY:

Watch...

how about the critically acclaimed film 'The Lives of Others', a psychological political thriller about surveillance, repression and the freedom of individuals under the east German government in the 1980's. Or, for a more humorous look at the East German transition out of soviet rule, try the very poignant and funny 'Goodbye Lenin'.

Read...

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is a classic about life during the Terrors of Stalinist Russia, or for a wonderfully bizarre look at political opinions on communism and capitalism from within the Czech soviet regime, you could try Karel Capek's allegorical tale of *The War with the Newts*.

See...

'The master and Margarita', adapted from the novel by Bulgarkhov at the Barbican in London. The play mixes the magical, political and philosophical in this allegorical portrayal of disappearances and the menacing forces at work in Stalinist Russia.

Eat...

for a highly stereotypical taste of Russia, eat Borsht and drink vodka (responsibly).

AFRICAN STUDIES:

Watch...

Hotel Rwanda, Blood diamond, and Last King of Scotland are all popular choices, but if you wanted some options from off the beaten track why not have a look at 'Zulu love letter' and 'In My Country' which both look at post Apartheid issues in South Africa, or tense Rwandan drama 'Grey Matter', which deals with the traumatic legacy of the 1994 genocide.

Read...

Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad is valuable for looking at the historic development of racism in relation to Africa. For more modern view of women and cultural change, set in Rhodesia, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous conditions* is a very good read. The more abstract *A song for night*, and *Beasts of No Nation* are both very powerful accounts of the trauma's of civil wars, and the harrowing experiences of child soldiers.

Listen to...

Fan of world music? Been meaning to dust off your a-level French? Well, if you're feeling adventurous how about having a listen to some of Africa's rap artists? You can find most of them on youtube, some of the more socio-politically concerned include Daara J from Senegal, or Yeleen from Burkina Faso.

Eat...

African cuisine gets overlooked somewhat, but how about trying out some of the Moorish or Moroccan restaurants around Leeds?

STUDYING ABROAD

—Erin Rooney (McMaster University, Ontario)

As I packed my bags last August the night before flying to Canada to start my year abroad I really had no idea what to expect when I landed. Without fail almost every study abroad poster I'd ever seen seemed to convince me that my year would be one long photo montage of me and my new international friends jumping joyfully in the air in front of tourist spots and beaches. And while that did seem like a pretty great way to spend the year I had a hunch there might be more to it than that.

After living in Canada for 6 months now, I can safely say that any expectations I could have had for this year could never have matched the experiences I've actually had. Despite being the proud owner of a Bronze D of E certificate, dated 2006, I could never have predicted that I'd spend a beautiful snowy November weekend camping by the lakes in Algonquin National Park—only to wake up to find my sleeping bag completely frozen to the inside of the tent. And would I ever have guessed that getting into a club in my first few weeks would depend entirely on my ability to say 'tartar sauce' to prove my English ID? Probably not. Or that reactions to my accent would

range from 'You sound like Lindsay Lohan in the Parent Trap' (a compliment? I'm still not convinced) to the most commonly repeated question 'Are you Australian?' My time being an exchange student has at times been unexpected or even a little surreal but it has definitely never been boring.

Doing a year abroad whilst studying history might not seem like the most obvious choice, especially if you go to an English speaking country as I did. In fact the first time I met my new landlord and told him that I had come on exchange to Canada to study History, he actually laughed at me and asked 'Why? We're new compared to you guys, we don't have any!' Exactly the reassuring start I wanted, 6 hours after arriving into the country! But going to university in Canada has been one of the best things I've ever done. From keggers with red cups to 'school spirit' at a football game—imagine Varsity but swap the streakers and chants dising Leeds Met, for cheerleaders with pom poms, a serious commitment to face paint and a whole lot of enthusiastic singing—this year has been a completely different university experience to what I'm used to in

Leeds. I've been able to travel to new cities across America and Canada and have made friends from all over the world. So whether you're considering studying abroad to relive the good old freedom days of first year, put off graduating one more blissful year or have an adventure somewhere entirely new, a year abroad is definitely worth it. I know that next year when I'm in dissertation panic in the library (even though I won't be waking up to temperatures of -17 every day) I'll be thinking back to that night in August when I packed my bags and wishing I could relive the whole year again.



DEBATE: IS SOCIAL MEDIA GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

YES

Lizzie Scourfield

Within the last few years the growth of social media in our everyday lives has been inescapable. No longer will a batch of freshly baked goods go un-instagrammed, a great event not be checked in, or a witty phrase be seen without the oh-so-important hashtag in front of it. It's official, it's everywhere.

Is this a good thing? There are certainly the flaws of social media, ranging from the mundane issue of those writing statuses about what they had for breakfast (#noonecares), to the serious and real implications of the power of the press on the internet and twitter scandals. So much so it would be easy to suggest that the heyday of social media is coming to an end. But I disagree.

The developments of these websites are only just beginning to utilise and harness the power of the internet in an effective and useful way. Businesses can now fully understand the positive impact the use of websites such as Facebook can have for their companies, allowing consumers to engage in a way that wasn't previously available. Obama, for example, holds the record for number of re-tweets surpassing a staggering 800,000 for 'Four More Years', capturing our attention in a new domain, and engaging with people on a new personal level for a president.

Websites such as twitter give job-seekers another platform to present their employability. In this expansion of social media and technology into our everyday lives, information and content becomes accessible more quickly and easily. Between 2010 and 2012 smartphone ownership rose from 20% to over 50%, and it doesn't look like it's going to stop growing yet. Yes, there is the potential to 'over-share' information, but the more incorporated this becomes into our lives, the less incentive there will be to post personal details, but rather utilise these platforms more pragmatically.

Furthermore, the popularity and expansion of these websites seems to indicate a step away from the MySpace era of 'about me', and towards connection with other people. Celebrities frequently endorse charities and good causes through social media. One example of the kindness of strangers is the story of Paul Smith, a man who set to travel the world through the help twitter. Through the spontaneity and kindness of strangers from the internet alone he travelled from Newcastle to New Zealand in 30 days. If for once the internet is beginning to show us the best, rather than the worst, of humanity, I like to think it's going in the right direction.

NO

Becky Higgins

A recent article in the New York Times caught my eye. The journalist was describing a dinner party he hosted for his closest friends; midway through which he received a text. "Hey, seen that you're having a dinner party. OK if I stop by?" Initially confused by how this person knew of his gathering, he later found out that during the course of the meal his friends had uploaded seven pictures to Facebook, six to Instagram and 'tweeted' about the event nine times. The collective follower counts of his friends meant his dinner party had potentially been viewed by over 3 million people. Unless you've been living in a cave for the past decade, it's impossible to escape the power of social media.

Facebook. Twitter. Instagram. Just three of the thousands of opportunities now afforded to normally sane, intelligent people to expose the lives of themselves, their family and their friends to millions of strangers on a daily basis, many times losing their judgement and credibility in the process.

I'm not disputing that social media is extremely useful in many ways. Young entrepreneurs can market their products on a global scale with a couple of clicks. Children can access important educational tools in seconds. Students can watch videos of water-skiing squirrels on YouTube instead of writing their essays.

However, social media has many disadvantages, which leads me to believe that maybe it is going in the wrong direction. It seems ironic that as social media pushes your virtual friend count higher and higher; in reality our culture as a whole becomes more isolated. The ease of conversing with people behind the comfort of a screen means that the prospect of face-to-face interaction is almost less appealing. Not only that, but as social media affords us more access to the lives of celebrities, it is more and more common that politicians and celebrities become embroiled in scandals that damage their reputations (Charlie Sheen, Prince Harry anyone?).

Issues like hacking and privacy aside, it is true that social media comes at a price. And maybe we'd all benefit from turning off our phones and logging out of Facebook more often, to enjoy the real world with our real friends.

HIST-BUSTERS

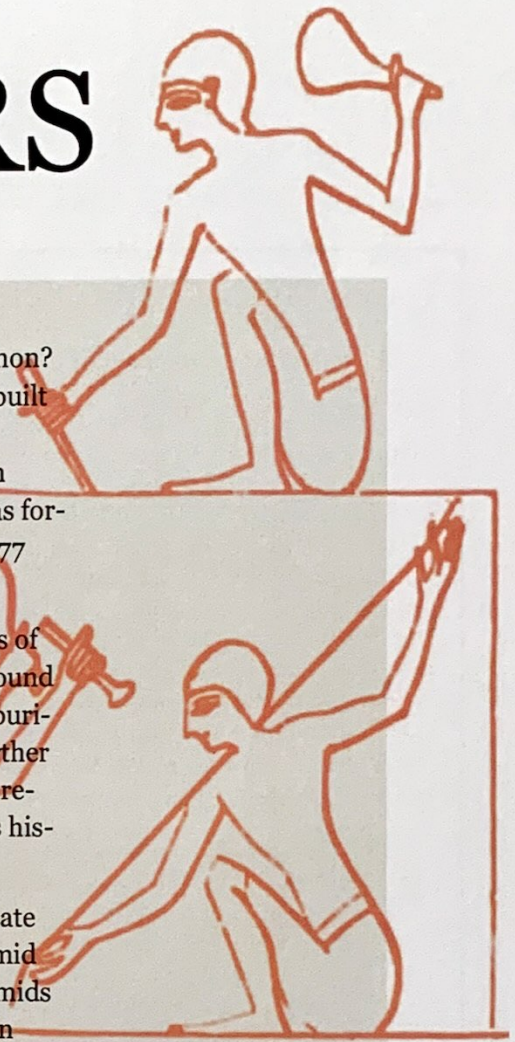
-David Tomlinson

Myth: The Jews built the Pyramids

What do Family Guy, Charlton Heston and DreamWorks all have in common? At one time or another, they have all perpetuated the myth that the Jews built the pyramids of Egypt. Popular culture has a shocking ability to blur the boundaries between pseudo-history and real history, so much so that even highly-educated, influential people have been drawn into the myth such as former Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin who on a visit to Cairo in 1977 and claimed, "we built the pyramids".

In fact, archaeological evidence found in the 1990s shows that the builders of these ancient wonders were not slaves at all. Tombs of the workers were found near the base of the pyramids which indicated they were given honoured burials and provided with meat and beer for their journey for the afterlife. Further archaeological evidence suggests the workers were well fed, well paid and received the best medical care all provided by the Pharaoh. All of this makes historians pretty certain that slaves did not build the pyramids.

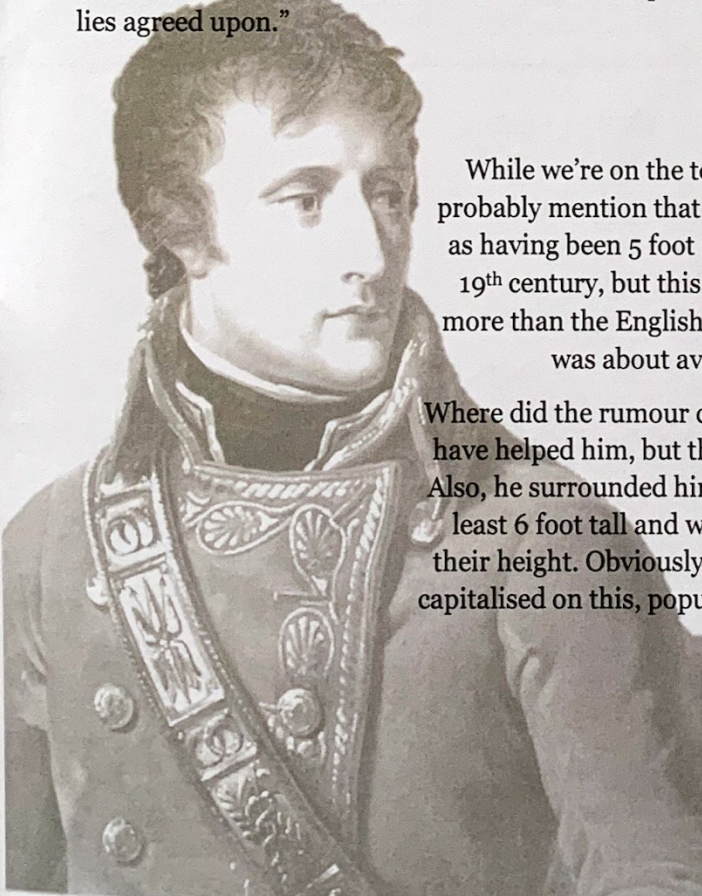
There are also no historical records or archaeological findings which indicate that the Jews were in Egypt until almost 2,000 years after the Great Pyramid received its capstone. So why does everyone think that they built the pyramids then? Well, the story originated from "the Father of History", Herodotus in about 450BC who presumably just made it up. His less flattering but more accurate moniker is "the Father of Lies" and, as Napoleon said, "History is a set of lies agreed upon."



Myth: Napoleon was short

While we're on the topic of the world's most famous fun-size general, I should probably mention that he wasn't actually that short. His height is variously cited as having been 5 foot 2 inches, which would have been pretty short even for the 19th century, but this was in the French standard. The French inch was slightly more than the English inch, so Napoleon would have been about 5 foot 7, which was about average for the time and taller than the Duke of Wellington.

Where did the rumour come from then? His nickname of "*le petit corporal*" can't have helped him, but this was more a term of affection used by the French army. Also, he surrounded himself with his elite, the Imperial Guards, who had to be at least 6 foot tall and wore huge bearskin caps which added an extra 18 inches to their height. Obviously they all would have dwarfed him and British propaganda capitalised on this, popularising the familiar image of the tiny tyrant with an inferiority complex.



PUZZLES

-Aimie Hennah & Lotty Thompson

Forrest Gump does American History

Can you guess the historical moment Forrest is reminiscing about from the clues given?

1.



Lieutenant Dan - 'Two standing orders in this platoon one, take good care of your feet two, try not to do anything stupid, like gettin' yourself killed.'

2.



President Nixon - 'I know of a much nicer hotel. It's brand-new. Very modern. I'll have my people take care of it for you.'

Who said what?

"The death of one man is a tragedy. The death of millions is a statistic."

Elizabeth I

"I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too."

Albert Einstein

"I may be drunk, Miss, but in the morning I will be sober and you will still be ugly."

William Shakespeare

"The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination"

Charles Darwin

"A fool thinks himself to be wise, but a wise man knows himself to be a fool."

Winston Churchill

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

Joseph Stalin

GUESS THE HISTORICAL FIGURE:

1.



2.



3.



HST