

# JCPCP

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# The Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy

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JCPCP is a peer-reviewed journal which values personal experience above professional boundaries and doctrinal jargon. It provides a forum for ideas, experience and views of people working in the psychological world and those who use psychotherapy or receive psychiatric services. The journal encourages a critical, reflexive view of psychology and counselling and is a constant challenge to orthodoxy. Our contributors reflect on their work and experiences in therapy, in relationships and in institutions. The journal embraces philosophical, radical and scientific perspectives in its analysis of psychological, psychiatric and psychotherapeutic systems. With a following wind, it will sometimes make you laugh out loud.

### **Contributions**

Critiques, in the form of short articles and letters on any aspect of psychological or psychotherapeutic theory or practice, are always welcome. They will be peer reviewed.

Articles should not normally exceed 4000 words. Brief author details, key words and a 25-word summary should be included. Full guidelines are available from the Editor. Please submit material to the Editor via email; also include tel/fax and email addresses where possible.

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# Wars With and Without Bullets: a special issue of *The Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy*

Editorial by guest editor David Fryer

It is impossible to hear the phrase ‘the war without bullets’ without thinking of the extraordinary Scottish activist-scholar, Cathy McCormack. This Special Issue has been edited to celebrate Cathy’s work, its many impacts, to work to which it has led, does lead, will lead and work in similar traditions.

Cathy is an activist, author, blogger, broadcaster, film maker, popular educator and teacher. Cathy will come to be known as one of the finest Scots of her generation. Derek Malcolm was spot on in his Foreword to *The Wee Yellow Butterfly* (McCormack, 2009: 8), when he described Cathy McCormack as ‘a marker for our times... a woman with a passion, with an ingrained sense of justice... a carrier of humanity... a bearer of standards of decency... a doer and a thinker’.

I have the privilege of knowing Cathy personally in many of these roles. I had already heard of Cathy through Mark Wilson, community psychologist at Easterhouse Child-Centred Project, but first met Cathy in person when she and fellow activists from Easterhouse, attended and dominated discussion at one of a series of ‘bru’ seminars about unemployment that I convened at Stirling University. Since that meeting, Cathy and I have: written and published together; taught undergraduate psychologists and clinical psychologists in training together; presented together at international academic conferences; we have appeared together on a panel at the Edinburgh Radical Book Festival; I screened Cathy’s movie, *At the Sharp End of the Knife*, at the MacRobert Cinema as a Stirling University event and where she

engaged in post-screening discussion with the audience; I appeared as a guest in one of a series of popular radio broadcasts Cathy recorded. I have also the privilege of counting Cathy amongst my personal and family friends.

**Cathy McCormack in print, online, on film**, by Cathy McCormack, as complete a record of Cathy McCormack's outputs in print, on-line and on film as we could find follows this brief *Editorial*.

**The War without Bullets: Socio-Structural Violence from a Critical Standpoint**, by David Fryer and Cathy McCormack, follows *Cathy McCormack in print, online, on film*. A version of this paper was first presented as an invited contribution to an International Symposium on Community Psychology and Violence at 3iccp Puebla 3 to 5 June 2010. It was subsequently published in *International Community Psychology: Community Approaches to Contemporary Social Problems* (vol 1) pp213–232 edited by Eduardo Almeida. It was republished in *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice* (vol 3), Issue 1. It is republished here with the kind permission of the editors of the above publications: Eduardo Almeida and Scott Wituk respectively and has been updated for this Special Issue.

**Blogs to God** by Cathy McCormack follows *The War without Bullets*. *Blogs to God* are previously unpublished other than as personal blogs.

**Psychological tyranny masquerading as welfare reform** by Mo Stewart follows. Mo is a former healthcare professional and a disabled veteran of the Women's Royal Air Force medical branch who, since 2009, has worked voluntarily as an independent disability studies researcher gaining widespread critical acclaim for her work.

**A war without bullets – psychology's role in disarming the workforce and weaponizing the industrial-medical complex** is by Paul Duckett. Paul has contributed to critical community psychology for the past 25 years, focusing on disability and mental health.

**Psychology, history and war: Two examples of academic discourses that fail to oppose war and militarism** is by Jim Orford, a longstanding, internationally recognised researcher and writer in the fields of addiction and community psychology. He is now Emeritus Professor of Clinical & Community Psychology at the University of Birmingham, England.

**Malaya: A soldier's tale** is by father and son, Doug Newnes and Craig Newnes. Doug Newnes was a regular soldier who served from 1948–1951 in the Scots Guards during the Malaysian Emergency. Craig Newnes is an author, musician and retired Consulting Critical Psychologist. Doug's story, faithfully recorded by his son, Craig, was told through a series of discussions poring over a faded photo album. Doug died shortly after telling his story.

Published in full for the first time, **A Letter to Nelson Mandela**, written by Cathy McCormack follows. Written in 1996, this letter is still frighteningly relevant almost a quarter of century later.

**Viva Viva Cathy McCormack** written by Dan Glass, follows *A Letter to Nelson Mandela* and completes this Special Issue. Dan is a healthcare and human rights award-winning activist, performer, writer and agitator from the Training for Transformation educational programme born out of the Anti-Apartheid movement. Dan won Attitude Magazine's campaigning role models for LGBTQI youth and was named Guardian 'UK youth climate leader' and 2017 'Activist of the Year' with the 'Sexual Freedom Awards'. As an activist directly influenced by Cathy, Dan pays personal tribute to fellow activist and mentor Cathy McCormack.

**David Fryer**



# Cathy McCormack in print, online, on film

Cathy McCormack

## Books

McCormack C (2009). *The Wee Yellow Butterfly*. Edinburgh: Argyll Publishing.

## Journal papers

Fryer D, McCormack C (2012). The war without bullets: socio-structural violence from a critical standpoint. *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice* 3(1): 87–92.

Fryer D, McCormack C (2013). Psychology and Poverty Reduction. *The Australian Community Psychologist* 25(1): 7–12.

Lloyd EL, McCormack C, McKeever M, Syme M. (2008). The effect of improving the quality of cold housing on blood pressure and general health: a research note. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 62(9): 793–797.

McCormack C (1988). A letter from a Housing Scheme. *Scottish Child* November: 18–19.

McCormack C (1993). From the fourth world to the third world. *Community Development Journal* 28(3): 207–209.

McCormack C (1999). War without bullets, an article written for SEAD (*Scottish Education and Action*) magazine. [Online.] <http://www.sead.org.uk/about/30-years-of-action/cathy-mccormack>

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McCormack C (2011). The world war against the poor: a letter from Easterhouse. *Coracle: the magazine of the Iona community* 4(47): 2–4.

McCormack C (2011). Survival of the fittest. *Magnet Magazine* Spring: 19–20.

McCormack C (2013). The price of economic barbarism: An uncomfortable truth. *The Australian Community Psychologist* 25(1): 60–71.

### Book chapters

Fryer D, McCormack C (2011). The war without bullets: socio-structural violence from a critical standpoint. In: Almeida E (ed). *International Community Psychology: community approaches to contemporary social problems* (vol 1). Puebla, Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana Press(pp 213–232).

Jones J, McCormack C (2016). Socio-structural violence against the poor. In: Smith KE, Hill S, Bambra C (eds). *Health Inequalities: critical perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (pp238–251).

Martin H, McCormack C (1999). Making connections: learning through struggle. In: Crowther J, Martin I, Shaw M (eds.) *Popular Education and Social Movements in Scotland Today*. London: NIACE (pp253–262)

### Films

*At the Sharp End of the Knife* featuring Cathy McCormack. Co-production: true tv and Stonehouse Productions, South Africa. Original Broadcast BBC World and RUV Netherlands. 52 minute and 72-minute feature length doc versions available from <http://truetvandfilm.co.uk/shop/>

### Blogs

<https://cathysblogstogod.com/about/>

### Broadcasts on Mixcloud

Cathy McCormack's conversation with Margaret Lynch: <https://www.mixcloud.com/CathyMcCormack/interview-with-margaret-lynch/>

Cathy McCormack's conversation with Dr Liam Kane: <https://www.mixcloud.com/CathyMcCormack/cathy-mccormacks-conversation-with-dr-liam-kane/>

Cathy McCormack's conversation with David Fryer: <https://www.mixcloud.com/CathyMcCormack/cathy-mccormack-interviews-david-fryer-ep2/>

Cathy McCormack's conversation with Dan Glass: <https://www.mixcloud.com/CathyMcCormack/cathy-mccormack-interviews-dan-glass-ep1/>

### **Cathy McCormack on YouTube**

Cathy McCormack: *War Without Bullets*. United Nations 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHGujyyiBX0>

Cathy McCormack *Evening calls* broadcast in 1993 on Scottish Television in the 'thought for the day' series: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAPY3yqbjdQ>

Cathy McCormack - *How can we achieve change?* Church Action on Poverty Annual Conference 2009: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nmMHhKM9WE>

Cathy McCormack at the Women's International Group (Royston Wardieburn Community Centre, Edinburgh) Community Action Event on Welfare Reform and the Bedroom Tax: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0JaEFegZD0>

### **Unpublished reports**

McCormack C (2012). *The price of economic barbarism: an uncomfortable truth*. Report by Commissioner on the Church of Scotland Special Commission on the Purposes of Economic Activity. Edinburgh: Church of Scotland.

# The War without Bullets<sup>1</sup>: socio-structural violence from a critical standpoint

David Fryer, Cathy McCormack

**SUMMARY:** How should socio-structural violence should be understood and how should that understanding should be progressively deployed? This article describes the collaboration, for over a quarter of a century, between Cathy McCormack and David Fryer. They have attempted to work in mutually supportive and mutually stimulating, if sometimes separate and parallel, ways, as community activist and community psychologist respectively, to address these questions, focusing in complementary ways, on interconnections between material poverty, societal inequality, socio-economic policy and psycho-social destruction in attempts to understand and contest socio-structural violence.

**KEY WORDS:** community activism, radical scholarship, praxis

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1. A version of this paper was first presented as an invited contribution to an International Symposium on Community Psychology and Violence at *ziccp Puebla June 3-5 2010*. It was subsequently published in *International Community Psychology: Community Approaches to Contemporary Social Problems*. Vol.1, pages 213-232 edited by Eduardo Almeida. It was republished in *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice* Vol 3, Issue 1. It is republished here with the kind permission of the editors of the above publications: Eduardo Almeida and Scott Wituk respectively and has been amended and updated for this publication.

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David Fryer tries to engage in effective critical resistance to neoliberal capitalism whilst avoiding meta-theoretical incoherence. He is Professor Extraordinarius, Institute for Social and Health Sciences and Medical Research Council-University of South Africa Safety and Peace Promotion Research Unit, University of South Africa (2016-2019) and Honorary Research Associate Professor, School of Education, University of Queensland (2018-2021). Email: d.fryer@uq.edu.au

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'Have we ever seriously asked what psychosocial processes look like from the point of view of the dominated instead of from that of the dominator?' (Ignacio Martin-Baro in Aron and Corne, 1994:28)

'the vagaries of modern life are undoing and remaking people's lives in new and ominous ways. The subjects of our study struggle with the possibilities and dangers of economic globalisation, the threat of endless violence and insecurity, and the new infrastructures and forms of political domination and resistance that lie in the shadows of grand claims of democratization and reform.' (Biehl, Good and Kleinman, 2007: 1)

The standpoint from which this paper is written is fundamentally one of community praxis, a standpoint from which we seek to understand and contest both how societal constructions (such as unemployment, psychologically toxic labour market entrapment, poverty, inequality, disabling practices, psy-pharmacology, gendered, heterosexist and racist oppression, etc.) immiserate, destroy and obliterate and to understand and challenge oppressive forms of psychology; to deconstruct, de-legitimise and de-ideologise the socio-political processes through which oppressive 'psy' claims are given the status of 'knowledge' or 'truth'; to render transparent and accountable the subjective, material, institutional, societal, political and ideological 'psy' interests served by what is, and what is not, thought, said and done by all relevant subjects; to engage in progressive social action interconnected to and simultaneous with emancipatory power- knowledge construction and legitimation and profound radical reflexivity, and to facilitate emancipatory process and outcome through progressive redistribution of social power, rather than collude with, or contribute to, reactionary notions of power as the property of an individual.

As a community activist, informed by her reading of popular education, community activism and radical politics, Cathy has – for well over three decades – witnessed each and every day a 'war without bullets' being waged remorselessly against herself and other structurally oppressed people: the poor, the ill, the unemployed, the disabled, the stigmatised, the marginalised and the simply different (Jones and McCormack, 2016).

Cathy lives in one of the most notorious public housing schemes in Europe (Easterhouse, Glasgow) which is characterised by what the Establishment has long positioned as self-inflicted pathogenic life-style choices and intra-community violence. We both prefer to draw attention to socio-structural, political, ideological and psychological violence directed at the people of Easterhouse by the Establishment, by means of policies which manufacture unemployment, precarity, inequality, material poverty, socio-economic apartheid, ghetto township status, and pathogenic housing etc. and epistemically violent knowledges which position

the consequences of socio-structural violence as the fault of those at whom the violence is directed. See also: Schrecker and Bamba (2015):

Cathy has facilitated tenants' group activism, promoted popular education, deployed the theatre of the oppressed, collaborated in award-winning documentary cinema, accepted international speaking engagements, lobbied at the highest levels including at the United Nations and written powerful accessible prose exposing and contesting socio-structural violence.

Cathy's struggle began in 1985 when she had felt so powerless to change the cruel reality facing her children and other people in her own community that she became more afraid of living than of dying. Although her children were bouncing with health when they were born, as soon as Cathy brought them home from hospital to her freezing-cold damp flat, her life became a constant battle for survival between her family and the fungus family. Then, when Britain was changed from an industrial to a money-market economy, Cathy's family were among the millions of working people deemed surplus to the requirements of capitalism who were thrown onto the unemployed-scrap-heap and forced to subsist on welfare. Whilst Mrs. Thatcher kept talking about individual choice, the real choice Cathy had to make was between feeding her hungry children or feeding her hungry fuel meter.

When Cathy joined her community's fight for justice, she started to witness human suffering and hardship on a scale which she never thought she would see in her lifetime, except perhaps in time of war. Then she realised that there actually really was a war going on only this war was not being fought with tanks, bombs or bullets: this war without bullets was a social, economic, psychological and propaganda war against the poor: a brief case war; a war without bullets.

As a research psychologist, informed by his reading of critical theory, community psychology and emancipatory pedagogy, David has – for well over three decades – documented the everyday socio-structural violence which is unemployment and its roles in socially constituting misery, injustice and the destruction of individuals, families and communities. David has drawn attention to the gigantic numbers of people, globally, destructively caught up in unemployment, to the continued deleterious impact of unemployment even after re-employment, to the psychologically corrosive impact of the anticipation of unemployment, to the toxicity of unemployment for family members of unemployed people including their babies and children, to the oppressive impact of unemployment even on non-unemployed people in communities blighted by mass unemployment and to how participation in the so-called flexible labour market, with its generation of precarious temporary, part-time, insecure, non-unionised, psychologically destructive sub-employment, is for many as psychologically toxic as unemployment (Fryer, 2019).

Moreover, David has argued that the tsunami of misery, maiming and mortality which is the war without bullets has continued throughout New Labour as well as Conservative government administrations and has been used as an instrument of economic and social control to control inflation - economists even have an acronym, NAIRU (Non Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment) referring to the level of unemployment necessary to control inflation – and to discipline the working poor and that mass unemployment serves the interests of the status quo in a range of ways because unemployment is constructed to be a condition so undesirable that no-one wishes to become unemployed and which all unemployed people wish to leave as soon as possible. Mass, involuntary, unemployment socially constituted to be personally and socially destructive, guarantees there are potential workers willing to do the most boring, dead end, underpaid, temporary, insecure, unpleasant jobs (ie., the ones being created in the so-called flexible labour market), functioning effectively as an incomes policy because it guarantees that there are unemployed people competing for the jobs of the employed, thus facilitating employers in reducing wages and working conditions. Unemployment serves the interests of the status quo better to the extent that: there are far fewer jobs than potential workers seeking them; unemployed people are poverty stricken and have to go through intrusive and degrading rituals to get the pittance they get to stand a chance of keeping healthy enough to compete for work but not comfortable enough to have a viable alternative life style; unemployment is a stigmatised condition with orchestrated campaigns by the media and politicians reinforcing the view that unemployed people are feckless, anti-social idlers living a life of luxury at taxpayers' expense, fraudulently claiming income and two-timing the system; unemployed people are associated with criminality through media reports of mentioning whenever criminals were unemployed; and crucially in connection with the psychological war without bullets, that unemployment is demonstrated to 'cause' mental ill health whilst mental illness is simultaneously socially constructed as frightening, dangerous and deviant and whilst psychologists promote 'employability', active labour market policies and individualistic cognitive interventions to 'solve' unemployment.

Catastrophic as the pogrom on the poor achieved through neo-liberal Capitalist labour markets is, David has argued that the pathogenic labour market characteristic of contemporary post-industrial societies is only one of many powerful mechanisms through which 'class-cleansing' socio-structural violence is accomplished under Capitalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Other mechanisms include: manufactured poverty and inequality; disabling practices; class, heteronormative, male, white and colonizer privilege.

Cathy's rhetoric and David's rhetoric are sometimes far apart in style but are essentially in agreement.

For example, whilst Cathy observes that few of her class mates from primary school are still alive, David draws attention to the Final Report of the World Health Organisation Commission on Social Determinants of Health (WHO, 2008), which makes it clear (in table 2.1) that for men life expectancy in one of the poorer parts of Glasgow (where Cathy lives) is at 54 years nearly three decades shorter than life expectancy in one of the richer areas of Glasgow only a few kilometers away.

Whilst Cathy writes that ‘the wealth in this country is not trickling down from the rich but gushing up from the poor sods like us’ (McCormack, 2009: 52), David quotes Iris Marion Young (1988: 272) that: ‘The injustice of class division does not consist only in the fact that some people have great wealth whilst most people have little and some are severely deprived. The theory of exploitation shows that this relation of power and inequality is produced and reproduced through *a systematic process in which the energies of the have-nots are continuously expended to maintain and augment the power, status and wealth of the haves*’ (our italics).

Whilst Cathy writes: ‘our children ... see that the people with the knowledge are the cause of their frustrations’ (McCormack, 2009: 132), David argues that psychology (and the associated wider and deeper set of knowledges, practices, technical processes and discourses which constitute the ‘psy-complex’) is increasingly clearly part of the problem and that, despite rhetorics of social justice, empowerment etc., community psychology is as ideologically problematic as any other manifestation of ‘psy’ (Fryer and Fox, 2015).

Whilst Cathy (along with allies) ‘began a popular education group in Easterhouse, the Popular Democracy Education Resource Centre’, and became involved in setting up the Scottish Popular Education Forum whose ‘aim was to bring about social change using popular education and try to build a social movement’ (McCormack, 2009: 137), David has argued for the merits of ‘un-teaching’, critical pedagogy and praxis (Fryer and Fox, 2018).

Positioning the carnage in our communities as a war without bullets may suggest the posing of new questions and answers:

Q: *Who are the ‘enemy’ against which the war without bullets is waged?*

A: The dead, maimed, wounded and traumatised are disproportionately amongst the most powerless who as non-producers and non-consumers within a Capitalist frame of reference are surplus to contemporary market requirements. Mortality, morbidity and misery are greater the lower down the social power hierarchy one goes and however one constructs it: by occupational status; relative wealth; the social economy of inequality; coloniser / white / male / class / embodied privilege, and so on and so forth.



Q: *What are the means of waging war deployed by those waging the war without bullets?*

A: The 'Weapons of Mass Demoralisation' (WMD) deployed include apparatuses which constitute misery, morbidity and mortality: relative poverty; inadequate share of social resources; unemployment; precarious (insecure, unsatisfying, poorly paid, poor quality, stressful) employment; punitive 'welfare' systems; deficient housing; social apartheid and mis-education for critical illiteracy.

Q: *What is the scale of the war without bullets?*

A: All out - the chances of surviving the toxic policies and practices associated with the neoliberal form of capitalism are as great as those of walking blindfold through in a mine field while being strafed from all sides.

Q: *What is the goal of the war without bullets?*

A: Full spectrum dominance through full spectrum governmentality. The phrase 'full spectrum dominance' was first found distributed through United States Department of Defense documents but they are now difficult to find, at least on the internet. The phrase is most fully explicated in the book: 'Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order' (Engdahl, 2009) but has been communicated in brief in a review by Lendman (2009): 'DOD Joint Vision 2020'... called for 'full spectrum dominance' over all land, surface and sub-surface sea, air, space, *electromagnetic spectrum and information systems*' and '*a vast array of psychological and economic warfare techniques*'. According to Lendman (2009) apart from the wars-with-bullets military implications, full spectrum dominance aspires to '*consolidate power, destroy civil liberties and human rights, and wage permanent wars against invented enemies for global dominance over world markets, resources, and cheap labor – at the expense of democratic freedoms and social justice*' ie., wage wars without bullets. Globally full spectrum dominance involves deploying "free market' hokum, mass privatizations, ending the public sphere, unrestricted access for foreign corporations unencumbered by pesky regulations, deep social service cuts, loss of job security, poverty wages, repressive laws, and entire economies transformed to benefit a powerful corporate ruling class partnered with corrupted political elites.' (Lendman, 2009).

Q: *What are weapons of resistance?*

A: Critique; activism; answering back; collective resistance; critical pedagogy; popular education; subversion; solidarity; praxis.

Q: *From whom can we learn - where has resistance been effective?*

A: De-colonisers<sup>2</sup>, emancipatory disability activists, community activists; critical theorists; feminists; queer theorists; trades unionists; anti-capitalists; anti-globalisation activists; popular educators; progressive journalists; anti-imperial intellectuals . . . anyone who is not compliant in the face of the war without bullets.

Q: *Who is waging the war without bullets?*

A: The war without bullets is not just a civil war of the 'higher' classes against the 'lower' or a war of the 'State' against sub-groups of its citizens, a war without bullets, a briefcase war, involves people relaying structural oppression in practice and in theory. These include: academics; bureaucrats; commentators; counsellors; journalists; lecturers; policy makers; politicians; psychiatrists; psychologists; researchers; social workers; street level bureaucrats; teachers; therapists etc. However, as Agemben (2011, 45) put it: "Those who are separated from what they can do, can, however, still resist; they can still not do". See also: Fryer, D. (2018).

However, from the critical standpoint from which we write, it is essential not to default back to psychologism or individualism by positioning the war without bullets as being intentionally waged by malevolent individual agents. As Young (1988: 272) put it: "oppression" designates the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because a tyrannical power intends to keep them down, but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society.' From our standpoint, it is essential to work collectively with others, to uncover the apparatuses, in the Foucauldian sense, composed of interconnections of discourses, institutions,

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2. 'Many indigenous communities continue to live within political and social conditions that perpetuate extreme levels of poverty, chronic ill health and poor educational opportunities. Their children may be removed forcibly from their care, 'adopted' or institutionalized. The adults may be as addicted to alcohol as their children are to glue, they may live in destructive relationships which are formed and shaped by their impoverished material conditions and structured by politically oppressive regimes. While they live like this, they are constantly fed messages about their worthlessness, laziness, dependence and lack of higher order human qualities. This applies as much to indigenous communities in First World nations as it does to indigenous communities in developing countries. Within these sorts of social realities, questions of imperialism and the effects of colonization may seem to be merely academic; sheer physical survival is far more pressing. The problem is that constant efforts by governments, states, societies and institutions to deny the historical formations of such conditions have simultaneously denied our claims to humanity, to having a history, and to all sense of hope. To acquiesce is to lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us. To resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve what we were and remake ourselves. The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices – all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope' (Smith, 1999: 4)

scientific statements, regulations, practices etc., which constitute 'chronic socio-structural violence' and through which the ongoing transfer of powers from have-nots to haves, from poor to rich, from lower class to middle is accomplished in neo-liberal capitalist societies.

Some of the most sophisticated, recent work on subjectivity has been done by anthropologists and ethnographers like Biehl (2005) who are extending and deepening our understanding of the process of subjectification, the genealogy of the subject, by painstaking investigation into 'the ways in which inner processes are reshaped amid economic and political reforms, violence, and social suffering' (Biehl, Good and Kleinman, 2007). From this perspective, the 'subjectivity of the unemployed' is both the means and the outcome of the construction, regulation and destruction of the unemployed person, accomplished through apparatuses (in the Foucauldian sense) of interlocking discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements (including – of course – ones produced by community psychologists), philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions functioning to produce governmentality working in the interests of the neo-liberal social order. Rather than agency being positioned as restricted by depowering contextual structures, agency restriction is now positioned as a dynamic manifestation of violent auto-subjugation through the infolding of discursive exteriority. See also: Biehl and Petryna (2013) and Fassin (2018).

The contemporary world is replete with problematic subjectification, the psychological war without bullets, and unless there is effective critical resistance, things will go swiftly from bad to worse. The question for us is not whether socio-structural violence characterises contemporary Western societies but through which apparatuses socio-structural violence is achieved in particular domains, its roles in those domains in rendering people governable through processes of violent subjectification and how it is to be effectively resisted.

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# Blogs to God

Cathy McCormack

**SUMMARY:** In this article, five of Cathy McCormack's messages to God, a letter written in 1988, May 2013 and blogs written in December 2013, June 2014 and June 2015, previously available other than on Cathy's blog site, are published for the first time.

**KEY WORDS:** austerity, benefit sanctions, food banks, housing benefit, humanitarian crisis, privatization of the NHS, whistle-blowing, World War 3

## Cathy's first letter to God (1988)

I see how the Earth is being reclaimed because the immoral structures that create poverty and oppress your people are the very same structures that are creating climate-change and destroying our whole eco-system in the process.

<https://cathysblogstogod.com/2013/07/05/my-first-letter-to-god-on-britains-war-on-the-poor-1988/>

Dear God,

I don't know how I am ever going to post this letter to you. I used to go to your house every Sunday but now you never seem to be in, have you changed to a new address? I am really frightened. You see God, I had often listened to my ma and da's account of the second world war and I prayed to you many times that there would never be another. I grew up thinking that the only real threat to our lives was a nuclear war. How silly of me, I was so naive then.

It came as such a shock to me then. When I first had to accept world war three had begun. My first thoughts were for my children, what would happen to them?

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I wanted to run – but where to God? There was no escape! Somehow everything seems so unreal. All around there is this uneasy calm. I still sit glued to the TV eagerly awaiting the official announcement to come, but always in vain. Oh, there are reports of the wars that are going on all over the world. But God there is never any mention of the war here in Britain – right on our own doorstep. Why are they all pretending? I was beginning to think I was just having some kind of nightmare till the sirens went off – the cries of my children they were cold and hungry.

People are walking all over the battlefields, the casualties are everywhere to be seen. Your children are dying before they even get a chance to know you and the death toll rising every day. The hospitals are jam-packed just like the prisons. Your people young and old have to sleep in the streets beside the rubbish.

But God there are no soldiers to be seen, no tanks, and no bombs are being dropped. There is something wrong God. People are walking about with a blank look on their faces, it's as though they can't see. A look of terror even – but God, who could be terrorizing and killing the people? The cowards, where were they hiding God?

When the penny finally dropped, God, I felt so powerless. There was nothing I could do to stop them. They had all the ammunition on their side – power, money, knowledge, the law, the media and most of the people in the churches, and all under the banner of democracy and respectability. All I had on my side was faith in you God.

My husband thought I had gone mad, so did others when I talk of this war, God. But they can't be blamed. The powers that be have done such a good job at deceiving people, lying to them, suppressing the truth, that when people like myself actually speak the truth, we are looked upon with suspicion and regarded as trouble-makers, rebels or simpletons. Things are so bad God, that there are many people in Britain today who think that our Prime Minister is a very courageous woman because she sticks to an idea in politics which she thinks is the right idea and a true idea when poverty, deprivation, brutality, cruelty are increasing all around us. They keep telling us that we need to create more wealth. Yet the wealthier a place we become, the more frightening a place it becomes to live in. Human life means nothing now God, unless of course you are rich and famous, an MP or a member of the Royal family. Animals and property are more protected and respected in the courts than most of your people. The courageous people who have to live and bear the consequences of her good ideas are regarded as scroungers even though money and resources to meet the needs of all your people has never been a problem except in how they are distributed. I guess it is true what my friend Jeremy Seabrook said, money alone cannot cure what other people's faith and greed for money has caused. Because as faith in money grows, faith in each other and humanity goes out the window.

You gave them life God; they have no right to take it away, to play God! They even have the cheek to blame it on you God. They blame everything on you. Every time there is a major disaster they all flock to their churches to pay respect for the dead they killed in search of their profits. History has shown that when self-interest comes in regarding a nation, or a world, so does ruin. My spirit enabled me to see God that the day of reckoning had come and that the Earth was being reclaimed. Is this true God?

Loads of love  
Cathy xxxx

### Cathy's first blog to God (May 2013)

<https://cathysblogstogod.com/2013/05/07/the-war-against-the-poor-in-britain/>

Hi God,  
It's me again!

I am really sorry to bother you again. God. But I am bursting to tell you all the stuff that has been going on behind your back since I first wrote to you back in 1988. Oh God do you still remember? Remember me telling you of the war that was going on against the poor and unemployed in our working-class communities? Do you remember me telling you, God, how the people in my community were being killed and terrorised but that there were no soldiers to be seen, no tanks, no bombs being dropped? And so, then I asked you God, who could be terrorising and killing the people? I called them cowards, and I asked you where they could all be hiding? Well God, the good news is that when my letter to you was published, people – both rich and poor in Scotland – started to ask themselves the very same question. This enabled me to travel all over the world in search of the truth. Aye it's true God! Well Cathy has come back home, God, and I have some really big stories to tell you! Guess what, God, not only have I discovered where all the cowards are hiding and hanging out with their rich cronies; but all that stuff I wrote to you then is child's play compared to what is happening now. So God, you better start to get a grip because the war against the poor has intensified under my new Coalition Government who now regard the sick, disabled and even the terminally ill as easy targets. Aye God, Maggie's wains have all grown up. They are the ones in Government now, so no surprise there God, that they are determined to finish off what their hero started. Aye God, and get a load of this, they are mostly millionaires and have even turned our Parliament into a Financial Management Institution to service all their rich and élite cronies. Do you also remember me telling you,

God, how World War Three had already begun? Well I was right God! Only this is a war without bullets! It's true God, no joking! When I was invited to speak at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development away back in 1994, the then Secretary General of the UN, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said that what the world was experiencing was 'social and economic Darwinism'. I nearly fell off my chair when the Cuban Ambassador referred to this global market economy as a 'social and economic time-bomb that would explode in our faces'! Oh God, it was such a relief to get confirmation that a war without bullets was being fought – but with briefcases instead of guns. Aye God, a global market economy which the bankers and the politicians still keep referring to as being 'free' but in reality has enslaved humanity in a race towards human, social, economic and environmental destruction. But the best laugh God, is our Prime Minister, David Cameron whose government has launched a worse propaganda hate campaign against the poor, unemployed and single parents than Maggie Thatcher did. He has the cheek to keep insisting that Britain is a Christian society! Oh God, how on earth can we claim to be a Christian society when we are facing the biggest social, economic and humanitarian crisis since World War Two? And when our government are so addicted to power and greed that they are even prepared to steal their own children's future for the sake of a quick fix on the stock market? Seriously God, I really do feel sorry for you sometimes because you're starting to get a worse reputation than the poor and unemployed! But please don't get too down-hearted God, because at least your troops all over the world are still out there fighting on the front line trying to stop these unrelenting barbaric attacks by our governments and their allies on your most defenceless and vulnerable people. Oh, I know God, I told you about all the brutality and cruelty that was going on in the 1980s. But at least under Thatcher we always had some kind of food on the table. But God, my neighbour can only find part-time work as a cleaner. It nearly broke my heart when she chapped on my door the other day and asked to borrow 12p to make up the money to buy her son a pot noddle for his supper! Come on God, does that not really take the biscuit? Anyhow God, I still have millions to tell you – what the cowards and their allies are up to – and who are still camouflaging themselves under the banner of democracy and respectability. But God, people don't write letters any more they just Blog. So God, I am just going to have to Blog to you. I will try and Blog you on a regular basis to keep you posted on all the current developments of what the cowards are up to in their war against your people. But God, I need to warn you now that you are going to have to keep your wits about you. Talking about wits, I nearly forgot to tell you, remember all that stuff I mentioned to you about Mrs. Thatcher? Well it seems that she was suffering from senile dementia and has died. Now, God, please don't get me wrong, I would never wish that affliction on anyone and I know God that you will never forget my first



letter to you. But before I start blogging to you, can you refresh your memory and read what I wrote to you in 1988, please? A lot of bad stuff has happened since then. To make it easier for you God, I'll post some extracts from my original letter in my next Blog to you.

Loads of love  
Cathy xxxx

### **Cathy's second blog to God (December 2013)**

<https://cathysblogstogod.com/2013/12/19/government-terrorising-the-poor-and-unemployed-this-christmas/>

Oh Dear God,

Christmas is meant to be a time for peace and goodwill but thousands of men, women and children in the U.K. are facing starvation, social cleansing and homelessness. An estimated 600,000 people have had their benefits sanctioned which includes, job seekers, the sick, disabled, mentally ill and even the dying. Now it has been announced that half a million families already have to go to food banks to feed their children. Then I learned that a Tory Council sent out a humiliating Christmas card to the people they made poor telling them not to indulge at Christmas and ending with a stark warning to 'Pay your Rent'!

Oh God, I know I told you of how the people in working class communities were being killed and terrorised under the Thatcher Regime in my first letter to you way back in 1988. But never God did I ever expect to witness the extent of this human suffering and hardship since this war against the poor and working classes intensified under our Coalition Government, creating the biggest public health and humanitarian crisis since the end of world war two.

But the tragedy is that the majority of people in Britain have been conned into thinking that this war, which is all being waged under the camouflage of their 'Welfare Reforms' and 'austerity cuts', is all about saving the tax payers' money when in reality it is really costing the tax payers extra billions. Aye God, the government have already given private companies billions to intimidate and humiliate the unemployed the sick and even dying and support them into to work that does not even exist.

But God, the worst has yet to come as Owen Jones, author of the 'The Demonization of the Working Classes', revealed that they are even stealing £12 billion from housing benefit from the poor and working poor alike and to use this £12 billion to subsidise their 'help to buy scheme' for the rich and middle-classes,

even though they have already been warned that this will inflate house prices even more and create a housing bubble crash. And when the interest rates rise and the people who can no longer afford to pay their mortgage will have their homes stolen it opens up the real possibility that Britain will need to create 'tent cities' just like in America.

Even more terrifying God is that the government is giving more billions to these private companies to support George Osborne's mass welfare-to-work scheme which was created by Bill Clinton and which will force people who claim welfare to work for nothing and also inflate the slave labour which is already going on in this country. Even more shocking, however, is that leading charities like the Salvation Army and these welfare-to-work-companies have already got their snouts-in-the trough and are all scrambling to profit from this mass exploitation. And big corporate companies like Asda, whose low wages are already supplemented by state benefits and allowed to make obscene profits at the tax payers expense, will profit even more by this new free labour.

Sadly the majority of the people in my country actually support these crimes against humanity because they cannot tell fact from fiction as they have been so brainwashed by all the political lies, spin and propaganda pursued by the tabloid press, much of it owned by multi-billionaires and our government's cronies at the BBC. Aye God it's true and the other 'pimps of poverty' at the BBC. are as guilty as sin; instead of informing the public of the real facts they continue to make programmes that exploit the poor and most vulnerable which feeds these hate crimes and massive public hysteria and which 'pits' the working poor against the poor and unemployed. And as the richest billionaire of all, Warren Buffett, was quoted as saying, 'If there is a class war then we are the ones who are winning.'

The true fact is that these 'welfare reforms' have got absolutely nothing to do with trying to save the tax payers' money but a deliberate strategy started by both the Reagan and Thatcher regimes to completely dismantle the 'Welfare State' and completely privatise the NHS in Britain and continue to provide more rich pickings for their cronies.

Aye God, and as you already know, the unemployed are not lazy scroungers as I fully explained in the article I wrote when the Church of Scotland Assembly appointed me as one of their 14 Commissioners to report back on the 'purposes of economic activity'. I was able to report on how unemployment is a deliberate tool of the money market economy created to keep down the price of inflation and provide a pool of potential workers to do the most boring, dirty, dead end, menial, underpaid, temporary, insecure, stressful jobs. And also to provide competition for jobs from unemployed people allowing employers to drive down wages and working conditions, but most heart breaking is that unemployment is

meant to be both painful and hurtful. Aye, God my article, 'The price of economic barbarism: an uncomfortable truth' really does explain the real insanity of my children's reality.

And as one of our great spiritual leaders Nelson Mandela said, that the first casualty of any war is not people but the truth.

And so, God this Christmas I would like to thank you so much for all the world's great whistle blowers and bloggers and in particular Johnny Void who really keeps his eye on the ball and informs the British public every day of all the goings on of our government, who are not only morally and spiritually corrupt but also politically insane, through his blog.

Merry Christmas God

Loads and loads of love

Cathy xxxx

### **Cathy's third blog to God (June 2014)**

<https://cathysblogstogod.com/2014/06/07/promise-not-to-laugh-the-british-prime-minister-david-cameron-claims-that-this-war-on-the-poor-was-inspired-by-both-god-and-jesus/>

Oh Dear God,

Promise not to laugh! But will you ever believe what is going on behind your back now! Remember in my last blog I told you all that stuff of how the Cameron Regime had enlisted the help of private companies in their 'war on the poor' and paid them billions of the tax payer's money to terrorise and humiliate the most defenceless people in my society and to force them to work for nothing in their modern-day slave trade? Well, the cowards have given these private companies even more billions, even though some are under criminal investigation to continue with their hate crimes. And now over a million hungry families in Britain are dependent on food banks! But guess what God? Both you and Jesus are getting the blame for all of this! Hands up God, no joking!

Aye God, I am afraid it's true. In his Easter reception in Downing Street David Cameron claimed that divine inspiration was at work when it came to drafting a key concept for Conservative Party Policy. And that he was simply doing your work when he launched the 'Big Society' initiative of volunteering and civic responsibility. He claimed it was invented by Jesus over 2,000 years ago! Oh God, is he actually comparing the food banks with the parable of the loaves and fishes? But I couldn't stop laughing when I read that he told his three children Nancy,

Arthur and Florence, of how the real message of Easter was not all about chocolate eggs! And was also quoted as saying that ‘The heart of Christianity is to ‘love thy neighbour’? Oh God is it any wonder that you have got such a bad name!

Oh, I know God, all of this is no laughing matter but see, when the Bishop of Oxford and the Reverend Keith Hebden attempted to present an open letter to David Cameron, which called on the three party leaders to work with the parliamentary inquiry into food poverty and to implement its recommendations, his constituency office called the police for protection! The letter was signed by 42 Anglian bishops and 600 clerics as part of the End Hunger Fast campaign.

Oh well God I suppose Cameron is following the teachings of his leader, the late Maggie Thatcher, who rewrote her own version of the Sermon that Jesus gave on the mountain that she delivered in her address to the Church of Scotland Assembly way back in 1988. Aye God, remember her world famous ‘Sermon on the Mound’, ‘there is no such thing as a society’ statement? Aye she also said, “Any set of social and economic arrangement which is not founded on individual responsibility will do nothing but harm. We are all responsible for own actions. We cannot blame society if we disobey the laws. We simply can’t delegate the exercise of mercy and generosity to others..”

Oh God, if the Cameron Regime and their cronies can laugh all the way to the bank then surely you can have a good laugh too, now that he has tried to give both you and Jesus a worse reputation than the poor and unemployed!

Lots of love

Cathy xxxx

### **Cathy’s fourth blog to God (June 2015)**

<https://cathysblogstogod.com/2015/06/10/the-poor-are-about-to-be-crucified-again-now-that-thatchers-disciples-are-back-in-government-so-im-announcing-world-war-3-their-war-against-the-poor/>

Oh Dear God,

Really sorry that I have not been back in touch but all merry hell has broken loose since I blogged to you last Easter. I just wish you were on Skype God as it takes so long to write these blogs. But you will never believe in a month of Sundays what has being going on behind your back now! Remember in my last blog I told you of how Prime Minister David Cameron claimed that both he and the Conservative Party were doing the work of both you and Jesus in their war against the poor. Well get a load of this; now both he and his regime must

all think that they are Jesus Christ reincarnated! Aye God its true hands up no joking! Remember too I told you of how my children's coalition government had spent billions of the tax payers' money to these private multinational corporate gangsters like Atos and G4 to both terrorise and humiliate the involuntary unemployed, the sick, disabled and dying and force them to work for nothing in their modern-day chain gangs? Well the cowards have also been terrorising the terminally-ill while they lay dying on their death beds by telling them that if they do not get up a walk and find a job then they will lose their rights to benefits? Oh, I know that they are all spiritually bankrupt and politically insane! But does this not defy any sense of belief!

But hey God there is even worse to come! Britain recently had another general election and guesses what? The late Maggie Thatcher's disciples were voted back into government and have now been given free rein to finish off the job that their hero started! Maggie must surely be dancing on her own grave because not even she had such courage to go that step too far. Now another generation of the working-classes and teenagers are about to have their lives wiped-out in this 'War without Bullets' which I first mentioned in my letter to you away back in 1988. Oh, I know there are no signs of tanks or bombs being dropped even though the death toll is rising every day but they still have all the ammunition on their side; power, money, the banks, the law, and the media, and the people in your churches who claim to know you and all still under the banner of democracy and respectability. Oh, I guess at least people know now where all the financial cowards who have been robbing, terrorising and killing your people are hiding.

But God, see the real insanity in this is people all over the world have been commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of World War 2 this year yet the majority of the people in my own country can't see that World War 3 is in full swing and right on their very own doorstep! And so, nothing seems to have really changed since the time of Jesus except that the rich and powerful are also destroying the lungs of the earth in the process in the worship of their money market god.

Anyhow another Easter has come and gone and all the chocolate eggs have been gobbled back up again and still no sign of Jesus. Oh, I know that Jesus is never coming back to try and sort this lot out. But it would be really wonderful if he could and work another one of his miracles that would enable all the sighted people who have been blinded by fear and all the lies, spin and propaganda to open their eyes and see what the cowards have been up to behind their backs - and right under their very noses. But hey enough for now God as I feel that both You and Mother Earth must already be cracking-up.

Oh, I nearly forgot to tell you my wee bit of good-news! Do you remember that 5-minute video that I wrote and presented for the United Nations 20 years

ago when I announced World War 3? Well, guess what it has come back to life by popular demand. Aye God and you can watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHGujyyiBX0>

Lots and lots of love!

Cathy xxxx

# Psychological Tyranny Masquerading as Welfare Reform

Mo Stewart

**SUMMARY:** Influenced by corporate America with an alternative agenda, the ongoing welfare reforms have created preventable harm and psychological tyranny for those too ill to work

**KEY WORDS:** work capability assessment, employment and support allowance

Introduced by the New Labour government, the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) long-term sickness and disability benefit was adopted in the UK by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in October 2008. Since then, a great deal has been researched and written about the identified preventable harm created by the introduction of the work capability assessment (WCA), as used by the DWP to assess ESA claimants and to restrict access to the benefit (W&P 2014, Garthwaite 2014, Warren et al 2014, Ryan 2015, Barr et al 2015, Patrick 2016, Stewart 2016, Geiger 2017).

No other academic since Rutherford (2007; 2008; 2011) has identified the influence of a corporate American healthcare insurance giant with future UK welfare reforms since 1992 (Stewart, 2016). This American corporate influence with future UK social welfare policies enabled the DWP to introduce the WCA by adopting the fatally flawed biopsychosocial (BPS) assessment (Stewart, 2018a), as recommended by DWP commissioned research (Waddell and Aylward, 2005) when funded by the same American corporate giant when known as

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UnumProvident<sup>TM</sup> Insurance. As a consequence, the WCA is linked to adverse trends in public mental health for claimants of the ESA (Barr et al, op cit; Pring 2017a, Pring, 2017b).

NHS statistics reveal that almost half of the people claiming the main out-of-work disability benefit in England have attempted suicide at some point in their life. The figures, showing rates of self-harm among claimants of employment and support allowance (ESA), were published by NHS Digital in September 2016, but have apparently never been reported to the media. Although only one in 15 adults (6.7 per cent) in the general population had ever made a suicide attempt, that rose to 43.2 percent for ESA claimants, and as high as 47.1 per cent for female ESA claimants. Two-thirds of ESA claimants (66 per cent) had thought of taking their own life at some point, compared with 20.6 per cent of the overall population.

Jay Watts, a consultant clinical psychologist and member of the Alliance for Counselling and Psychotherapy, who uncovered the figures, said she felt 'shock and horror followed by, on reflection, an absence of surprise' when she first saw them. 'Being treated like a second-class citizen, being blamed for not being an ideal neoliberal subject, being denied the basic financial means to survive, being sanctioned for being too ill to make an appointment – these belittlements monopolise the internal world and the result is often now suicide.' (Pring, 2017b)

In 2016 new academic research confirmed the Waddell and Aylward BPS model of assessment as adopted for the WCA as being 'policy-based evidence', when referencing Models of Sickness and Disability Applied to Common Health Problems (Waddell and Aylward, 2010); and identified the Waddell and Aylward BPS model as having 'no coherent theory or evidence behind (it)' which demonstrated 'a cavalier approach to scientific evidence' (Shakespeare et al, 2016).

DWP psychological tyranny wasn't difficult to achieve for people too ill to work when using the WCA, especially for claimants with a diagnosis of mental illness (Bell 2015, Marks et al, 2017). Using carefully constructed statements and press releases the DWP continued to manipulate the British public (Stewart, 2017a), when quoting discredited DWP commissioned research evidence. False information was used in many Ministerial speeches (Cohen, 2013). This was enthusiastically reported by the right-leaning tabloid press (Peev, 2010; Hall, 2011; Littlejohn, 2011) on route to the long-ago planned demolition of the UK welfare state to be eventually replaced by private healthcare insurance (Stewart, 2015). The relentless demonization of chronically ill and disabled ESA claimants for five years from 2010 was aided by faked examples of claimants used in a DWP leaflet to justify savage benefit sanctions (BBC, 2015; WW, 2015a), which removed all income from claimants due to minor transgressions. This resulted in death by starvation (Gentleman, 2014) of some of the most vulnerable people in the country when, quite literally, 'killed by the State' (Elward, 2016, p29), when



using the BPS model of assessment for the WCA (Stewart, 2018b). The WCA is a replica of the non-medical assessment model used by the American research sponsors UnumProvident<sub>TM</sub> Insurance to resist funding healthcare insurance claims (Stewart 2015.). Sanctioning claimants for deemed non-compliance was identified in the Unum sponsored research (Waddell and Aylward 2005, p166), which the DWP have used to excess since 2010 (Webster, 2018).

The impact of the WCA on distress and mortality rates are concerning and can be deemed State Crime by Proxy (SCBP). This is because the harms produced by Maximus are produced by order of the state, whose policies permit – even encourage – the mistreatment of claimants. WCAs could be deemed criminal because they represent the systematic targeting of society’s weakest citizens (Crisis, 2012). These people are helpless against such institutional power, as the strain the WP places upon claimants pushes many into a social abyss or early graves. WCA processes could arguably be viewed as democide, as some claimants are, in essence, killed by the state or officials acting on their behalf (Totten and Barttop, 2008). This means that Maximus are also culpable because they are acting according to DWP policy which is proven to cause death with the approval of state officials; the government is purposely permitting or creating conditions which systematically produce death (Elward, op cit).

There was, therefore, no surprise when prosecuted disability hate crimes increased by 213 per cent from 2008, and especially during the Coalition government’s term in office (WW, 2015b), aided by the reported hostile and often dangerous rhetoric of Iain Duncan Smith MP when Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. He regularly and knowingly misled Parliament and the country regarding various statistics, and used the false statistics to justify his many unsupported claims of his version of a ‘dependency culture’ (Cohen, 2013).

A decade ago, Professor Jonathan Rutherford had been warning about the influence of UnumProvident<sub>TM</sub> Insurance with future UK welfare reforms (Rutherford, 2007), as he identified the increasing role of corporate involvement with the public sector. He alerted readers to the November 2001 Malingering and Illness Deception Conference (Halligan et al, 2003), which was attended by thirty-nine participants including Malcolm Wicks, the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work for the New Labour government, and by Mansel Aylward, his Chief Medical Officer at the DWP. The plan was to stop Incapacity Benefit (IB), as used by the DWP for long-term sickness benefit, and replace it not only with another benefit but with a different welfare system to significantly limit the number of people supported by the State when too ill to work. Rutherford exposed this American corporate influence with the UK welfare state in an opinion piece in *The Guardian* in March 2008 (Rutherford, 2008), but the national press has since been silent.

What linked them all together, including Aylward, was their association with the giant US income protection company UnumProvident, represented at the conference by John LoCascio. The goal was the transformation of the welfare system. The cultural meaning of illness would be redefined; growing numbers of claimants would be declared fit for work and 'motivated' into jobs. A new work ethic would transform IB recipients into entrepreneurs helping themselves out of poverty and into self-reliance. Five years later these goals would take a tangible form in New Labour's 2006 Welfare Reform Bill. (Jonathan Rutherford)

Identified in 2008 by the American Association of Justice as the second worst insurance company in America (AAJ, 2008, p6), the British national press was again informed about the influence of UnumProvident<sub>TM</sub> Insurance on the planned UK welfare reforms as long ago as 2010, but refused to alert the British public. The claim at the time was that they 'didn't dare' to expose the influence of a corporate giant in fear of possible future litigation. The question remains as to how many more government-funded atrocities are hidden from the British public when the national press, en masse, refuse to offer significant information to their readers which is already available in the public domain?

Happily, at least one independent journalist retained his moral and ethical integrity. John Pring, the Editor of the Disability News Service, has willingly published detailed evidence of the influence of corporate America with UK welfare reforms for several years (Pring, 2011; 2012; 2013; 2016), as the numbers of ESA claimants dying following a WCA are no longer available via the DWP, who refused to publish updated ESA mortality totals (Patel, 2016).

Prior to the introduction of the WCA, the DWP had commissioned a working group to advise the DWP regarding the adoption of the assessment for disability benefit claimants. The DWP were warned against the adoption of the WCA, which was identified as being damaging, counterproductive and guaranteed to negatively impact on population mental health (Pring, 2015). Professor Geoffrey Shepherd, a consultant clinical psychologist and expert on mental health and employment, exposed the fact that the DWP were 'ruthless' and 'reckless' when going ahead with the adoption of the WCA against expert medical opinion (Pring, 2015).

Shepherd is one of three mental health specialists to have spoken to Disability News Service about their work as members of the mental health technical working group used by DWP to help design the WCA in 2006 and 2007:

The fact that the process is so bad makes it stressful, because it's a bit like Russian roulette: you don't know if there's a bullet in the chamber or not. That's hardly going to make you feel comfortable. It's predictable that it is going to be stressful because of the arbitrary nature of the outcomes, because of the way it was done

itself, because it was so much depending on the single interview on a single day. I can very easily believe that it would damage people's mental health, at least in the short-term, and I can believe that it might lead to suicide. Obviously there are some tragic stories here about individuals and what happened to them. I think it is tragic and I think it is reckless the way the DWP continued even in the face of evidence that it (WCA) was damaging. (Pring, op cit)

Frances Ryan, writes the 'Hardworking Britain' column for *The Guardian* and her column has finally alerted readers to some of the human consequences of the ongoing welfare reforms and severe austerity measures adopted by successive UK governments since 2010. Following the appearance of ESA mortality totals (DWP 2015), published following direction from the Information Commissioner's Office, it was established that between December 2011 and February 2014 a total of 50,580 ESA claimants had died following the WCA, with 2,380 claimants dying after being found 'fit for work' (DWP 2015, p8). Frances Ryan highlighted the fact that more than '80 people a month are now dying after being found 'fit for work'. The safety net that used to be there for the most vulnerable is being torn to shreds' (Ryan, 2015)

The ESA mortality totals also identified a total of 7,200 claimants who had died after being placed in the Work-Related Activity Group, deemed by the DWP following a WCA, which obliged people to prepare to go back to work whilst living with a chronic illness (DWP 2015, p6).

Government rhetoric constantly claimed that the DWP 'welfare reforms' were helping disabled people into work, that work was good for health, and Iain Duncan Smith's claimed 'sickness benefit culture' (Deacon 2015) would be resolved with opportunities for sick and disabled people to find employment. The claimed help for long-term sick and disabled ESA claimants included DWP letters threatening sanctions for non-attendance at WCA centres which were often inaccessible to wheelchair users.

As this relentless DWP coercion has progressed, aided by the persecution of the disabled community by the tabloid press, disability support groups have formed an antidote to this psychological tyranny. Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) is by far the largest group who, over the years, have organised public protests that have seen thousands of disabled people and their supporters marching in protest against the government's welfare reforms, and causing major disruption. This all proved fruitless as the DWP and government Ministers weren't listening.

The demonizing of chronically ill and disabled people since 2010 has been very successful. Those in greatest need live in fear of the DWP: fear of another brown envelope arriving to demand yet another WCA (Garthwaite, 2014), often for a permanent health condition that can't be cured regardless of coercion or

intimidation. The excessive use of DWP sanctions, which removes all income from chronically ill people has negatively impacted on public mental health, with claimants living in fear of the consequences of being unable to fund rent, utility bills or food. There is no concern expressed by the DWP, who maintain an indifference to human need with a refusal to conduct a cumulative impact assessment to identify the often-fatal impact of welfare reforms and austerity measures (Ryan, 2018).

The combination of neoliberal politics with austerity for the past eight years has successfully created a society of suspicion. There remains a 'deserving' or 'underserving' distinction when judging chronically ill and disabled people in need of State financial support, always guaranteed to negatively impact on wellbeing and survival (Thomas, 2016).

The most vulnerable in society are paying a high price for the political ideology of neoliberalism; some with their lives. Suicides and deaths are the tip of the iceberg of misery and suffering experienced by those who are physically or mentally unfit for work, as the government implements an increasingly punitive and authoritarian regime against benefit claimants. Vulnerable people are left destitute by sanctions that suspend or end their benefits if they fail to comply with orders to attend 'assessments', 'training courses', or submit the required number of job applications. (Thomas, 2016)

Despite High Court rulings against the DWP demonstrating, in one case, that the DWP 'blatantly discriminates' against people with mental health problems (Bulman, 2018), it makes little difference to the Department who claim they will need several years to reconsider the 160,000 claims identified by the court. The Department admitted that they had found 'errors' in the system, which meant they had underpaid many thousands of ESA claimants (Ryan, 2017). Yet, there is no rush to confirm that all those under-funded have been repaid; and the DWP were also dismissive of a 2016 United Nations report (Jones et al, 2017), that identified that the UK government were in breach of the human rights of sick and disabled people. Given the lack of authority by the UN to hold any country to account, once again there is no accountability for the psychological tyranny and preventable harm linked to the DWP social policies, adopted since the introduction of austerity in 2010. This all links back to the identified 'dark legacy' of Margaret Thatcher, which has never disappeared:

Materialistic individualism was blessed as a virtue, the driver of national success. Everything was justified as long as it made money – and this, too, is still with us. Thatcherism failed to destroy the welfare state. The lady was too shrewd to try that, and barely succeeded in reducing the share of the national income taken by the public sector. But the sense of community evaporated.

There turned out to be no such thing as society, at least in the sense we used to understand it. Whether pushing people off the road, barging past social rivals, beating up rival soccer fans, or idolising wealth as the only measure of virtue, Brits became more unpleasant to be with. (Young, 2013).

By definition, the removal of perceived care, concern, compassion, dignity and humanity when using an enforced assessment is identified as a 'deliberately prejudiced, vicious attack on a significant minority of the population' (Beresford 2017) which, in other words, is government enforced tyranny against the most vulnerable people in society. There are now three million chronically ill and disabled people living in fear of the DWP (Stewart, op cit).

With little evidence of any significant new political challenge, and no politician in the House of Commons recently exposing the influence of Unum (Provident) Insurance on the UK welfare reforms since 1992 the question remains as to how many more chronically ill and disabled people will die when, quite literally, 'killed by the State' (Elward, op cit); with a UK government perilously close to charges of identified Crimes Against Humanity (Stewart, 2014; 2017b).

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# A War Without Bullets – psychology’s role in disarming the workforce and weaponizing the industrial-medical complex

Paul D Duckett

**SUMMARY:** Psychology’s engagement in the war *with* bullets has been through a somewhat hidden collusion with the industrial-military complex. In this paper I argue that psychology’s war *without* bullets is that which has occurred through its more public collusion with the industrial-medical complex.

**KEY WORDS:** Industrial-medical complex, anger management, anti-bullying, positive psychology

The industrial-medical complex refers to a global spread of corporations that work, for profit, to deliver health care services and products. The complex includes, among its major players, the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. These industries have become extraordinarily profitable (Chen, 2015) through the privatisation of health care, an increased reliance on private health insurance and selling off public health care assets and the transferring of health care responsibilities from the public to the corporate sector. Psychology’s collusion with this part of the industrial sector is keenly felt in the workplace, which serves as the focus for this paper.

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Wars with bullets have been described as a spectacle used to divert public attention from domestic discontent – such as government policies that contribute to social harm (see Oakes, 2012). The public are invited to participate vicariously in these wars through point-of-view (POV) news coverage, playing computer games, and consuming tv dramas and movies (see Stahl's 2010 thesis on *Militainment* that discusses new interactive modes of 'militarised entertainment' that recruit audiences as virtual-citizen soldiers). Wars with bullets are very much alive in people's consciousness and leave few people untouched. As such, to write an article on psychology and the war *with* bullets is relatively straightforward. Your job is to link a social institution (psychology) to a visceral and visible experience (war). The *Hoffman Report* (Hoffman et al., 2015) made this very link, bringing public attention to the links between the discipline of psychology, as a social institution, and the 'War on Terror' through detailing the collusion in torture programmes between the American Psychological Association and the US Department of Defence. It reported on something relatively unknown to the public – that collaboration with the industrial-military complex has been a large part of psychology's *modus operandi* from its very inception. Psychology became a modern profession by fusing itself to a war mission (Richards, 2010) through the applied work it undertook for the military during World Wars I and II. Psychology has continued this work ever since, providing technologies to aid the military and security forces. Aptitude and intelligence testing of soldiers, facial recognition software, attitude formation research and motivation studies are a few areas psychologists have directly applied their work for military use. These activities are focused on promoting soldier resilience and destabilising individuals, organisations and governments that are the target 'enemy'. The fervour shown by psychology to work in this area largely came from psychologists seeking to aid the military rather than the military seeking help from psychology (Shephard, 2015). Psychology's close connection to war was also maintained through making war an object of the profession's theoretical enquiry. It provided psychological explanations for the origins of war. These explanations have worked well to blinker public attention to the politics of war and to 'naturalise' war as a part of the human condition. Among the prominent examples here are the thesis that war is caused by the authoritarian personality which predisposes people to fascism (Adorno, 1950), or by unresolved Oedipal aggression (Freud, 1933).

Psychology has been less than forthright in critically discussing its involvement in war. This is particularly noticeable in areas of the discipline that you would expect to see it (Değirmencioğlu, 2010; Duckett 2005; Duckett and Değirmencioğlu, 2017). Typically, where critical commentary on psychology's involvement in war occurs it does so through broader coalitions of peace-focused psychologists that sit outside of psychology's professional bodies such

as Psychologists for Social Responsibility (<http://psysr.net/>) or from the sub-discipline of peace psychology that sits on the periphery of the profession. The shaming effect of the Hoffman report might explain psychology's reluctance to discuss its relationship to the industrial-military complex. The discipline might not be keen to be publicly associated with war when recently the public's appetite for war has appeared to wane, particularly during the lead up to and aftermath of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Gribble et al., 2015). This is hardly the time when psychology would want its profiteering from war to gain broader attention.

### Psychology and the war without bullets

Writing about psychology's involvement in a war *without* bullets is a very different task. It calls for a level of enquiry that makes clear the way psychology contributes to social harm outside of the profession's involvement in the industrial-military context. Social harm refers to harm instigated by social institutions, corporations or nation states as opposed to harm instigated by individuals. There are many ways psychology has contributed to social harm. We know, for example, that it was psychology that provided the technology to sustain: misogyny through making scientific claims about the inferiority of women; racism through making scientific claims about the inferiority of anyone not white; and heterosexism through helping to criminalise and pathologise gay people so that they were seen as sick or wicked or both. Psychology has sat, for most of its history, on the wrong side of progressive social change. So, psychology in the past told us that women, black people, gay people, disabled people, working class people and so on are all in a bad place (in poverty, in poor housing, in poor jobs or out of work) because they are all bad people in some way or another. It was psychology that explained how society could not value such people because such people carried character deficits. It created inventories of these deficits around such concepts such as 'intelligence', 'personality' and 'mental illness'. These inferred psychological states became so deeply infused with political ideology that, with a scientific sleight of hand, they were turned into 'things' that were then sifted into the categories of normality and abnormality. 'Mental illness', in this regard, has been the profession's most powerful 'thing'.

That is, perhaps, too broad a place to start in understanding psychology's war without bullets. Certainly, it is quite difficult to get one's head around the casualties of those broad practices and to describe all the ways the social harm is enacted. So, I am going to narrow my focus onto one social institution – the workplace – and show how psychology enacts harm there through stifling the opportunities for progressive social change. This involves looking at how psychology has managed anger and violence in the workplace and how it has weaponised the employer

against the worker through positive psychology. Most of the examples I cite come from my present cultural context in Australia, though the issues I discuss are transnational.

### **War against the worker: decommissioning anger from the workplace**

The dominant view of anger held by industrial and organisational psychology is that anger is a negative emotion that is best understood as a form of hostility and aggression directed towards a person (Lindebaum and Geddes, 2016). Workplace policies and procedures have largely been informed by this definition of anger. Zero-tolerance policies are implemented in an increasing number of organisational settings (particularly health care settings like hospitals) and anger management is widely adopted as an effective means to address the presence of anger in the workplace (often delivered by troops of counselling psychologists that rove the labour market via outsourced services such as ‘Employee Assistance Programmes’).

There is an alternative definition of anger that is emerging from the industrial and occupational psychology literature, but it does not appear to have gained enough traction to impact employer organisation policies and practices. This definition has arisen from a more sophisticated approach to defining anger that makes a distinction between personal anger and moral anger. Moral anger is described as a prosocial behaviour that is motivated by a perceived injustice or by goal obstruction which primarily affects others (social collectives) rather than self, ie. it is not motivated by self-interest. The drive behind moral anger is a determination to redress an injustice: to right a wrong. This is an anger that is not motivated by an *intention* to harm another individual but to help someone other than oneself. It is an: ‘... emotional response to correct and prevent injustice’ (Tripp and Bies, 1997: 413). Such anger might be directed towards a corporation’s impact on the environment, threats to public safety due to unsafe products or more general acts of corporate social irresponsibility. ‘Righteous indignation’ has been with us a long time: there has, however, been little attention given to moral anger in the psychological literature.

Anger in the workplace can cause harm and the fear of harm. That is beyond dispute. But with no distinction being made between personal anger (where the intent is to harm others) and moral anger (where the intent is to help others), we see employer practices effectively prohibiting social action and muffling signals that point to the occurrence or immediate threat of social harm. This is the first element of the war without bullets against the worker in which psychology has become complicit. The second is linked to how this proscription of anger in the workplace is typically conducted through a response to ‘bullying’.

### **Obscuring violence through the discourse of bullying**

Bullying, like anger, has been constructed as a loosely defined concept and operationalised in such a way to create the opportunity for it to be deployed to suppress dissent that is intended to promote progressive social action. The now extensive use of the word 'bullying' to describe problems in the workplace is a rather recent phenomenon. Three decades ago it was unusual to hear of adults experiencing bullying, it was largely a word used to describe the mistreatment of children by other children at school. Thus, when the word was first used to describe the experiences of adults it was criticised as having an infantilising effect. The more worrying and less discussed concern is how the use of the term bullying has diffused the attention on workplace violence. Though bullying is often cited as an example of psychological violence, it is given a more diffuse overall definition that is much more laxly associated with violence. An example of this in Australia is the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) definition of the term bullying which states that it can include: 'subtle psychological abuse'. The way the word 'subtle' turns the concept into something quite expansive can be seen in how, in an AHRC's factsheet, the item: 'intimidation (making you feel less important and undervalued)' sits in the same list as the item: 'attacking or threatening with equipment, knives, guns, clubs or any other type of object that can be turned into a weapon' (AHRC, 2011). The AHRC is the main statutory body in Australia that deals with complaints of bullying through its remit to investigate complaints of unlawful discrimination. A similarly expansive definition was cited in the Australian House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment report on workplace bullying which stated: 'Bullying behaviours might range from subtle actions that seek to exclude, isolate or marginalise, to extreme acts of physical violence resulting in death or serious injury' (AHRSC, 2012: para 1.4). Also, the definition of bullying adopted by Fair Work Australia (the Australian industrial relations tribunal, now known as the Fair Work Commission) included in its definition of bullying: 'unwelcome behaviour that intimidates, offends or humiliates a person' (Potter, Dollard and Tuckey, 2016:5).

Bullying becomes a spectrum of violence that is stretched so wide that it no longer resembles one that is wholly about violence. These definitions may explain the spread of the phenomenon as it increasingly captures a set of experiences in the workplace that can range from clear acts of violence and cruelty to experiences of unsettlement and discomfort. It also might help explain how in many countries bullying straddles several areas of legislation, caught somewhere between anti-discrimination legislation, workplace health and safety legislation, criminal law and industrial relations. Its overlap with areas around anti-discrimination legislation (particularly those around sexual harassment) is sufficient for the definition of bullying to incorporate the stance that the intent behind bullying

behaviour is unimportant, ie. a behaviour can be defined as bullying even if there is no evidence that this was the intent of the behaviour. This is the point at which moral anger, which is defined as different to personal anger because the intent is not to harm anyone (actually the opposite is the case), becomes obsolete. In its place is a term that has become so wide in its scope that it is difficult to take any meaningful position towards it. Whilst one would not want to downplay the seriousness of bullying on one end of the spectrum (eg. physical and sexual violence) one would not want to play up the seriousness of bullying at the other end of the spectrum (eg., a colleague unintentionally forgetting to invite you to the works Christmas party).

The term whilst catch-all is, however, also quite restrictive at the violence end of its spectrum, with the focus only on interpersonal violence rather than corporate or state-sponsored violence. Whilst there is some recognition in the literature of a 'bullying culture' the act of bullying is typically coded to mean that which takes place between individuals. And, the most common form of bullying that is reported is verbal abuse (shouting, swearing and malicious sarcasm). It could reasonably be argued that bullying is a concept that has been stretched to the point that it has lost its ability to shock and then squeezed to the point that it has lost its ability to foster social change.

What we do see, however, is that the concept of 'bullying' is very effective when it is used to manage the expression of unwanted emotion in the workplace (including all forms of anger). The management of these unwanted emotions occurs through implementing anti-bullying programmes, transgressions against which are managed through disciplinary policies and procedures. Here, moral anger against injustice in the workplace has little or no room for expression. Anger towards systems is re-read as *ad hominem* attacks (mostly against management) that require an 'anti-bullying' response. Psychology largely reinforces this trope of individualism. It does so by making personal anger the dominant conceptualisation of anger in occupational and industrial psychology and by maintaining an almost sole focus on interpersonal bullying. It then proffers solutions to these supposed individual problems that effectively ratchets up the war against the worker. Its latest offering in this regard is positive psychology.

### **The emotional cosh of positive psychology**

If anger management doesn't do it, positive psychology weaponises the employer to snuff out the last remnants of workers' moral anger. Positive psychology purports to promote human happiness and is premised on the belief that a person's life circumstances (such as the conditions of their employment) have a negligible impact on happiness and that instead people need to think more positively about their lives. Positive psychology is largely associated with the work of Seligman and

his theory of 'learned helplessness'. It has, unsurprisingly, become very popular in the corporate world and government sector. I say unsurprisingly because this approach offers a way of conceptualising social problems as having nothing to do with social context (such as pay and conditions) and everything to do with the persons' psychology (such as personality and cognitions).

Positive psychology, in its early days, focused largely on the promotion of 'happiness' but has recently abandoned this largely because it attracted derision. The problem was that the concept 'happiness' is an equivocal term. Happiness is experiencing the thing that makes you happy and the thing that makes you happy shifts depending on the social context of your life. Quite literally, happiness means different things to different people at different times. As a concept it is thus a poor building block upon which to build universal psychotherapeutic programmes and is a poor variable to use in positivist programme evaluation research: both of which positive psychology excitedly pursues. So, positive psychology has recently turned to the concepts of 'flourishing' and 'meaning' but essentially it is still bound to this notion that engaging in positive thinking is the universal answer to the negative things that happen in our lives.

For the industrial world, positive psychology has enough merit for the vagaries upon which the approach is based to not prove too troublesome. What positive psychology offers to the corporate-industrial sector is a very useful way to manage workers' moral anger. It says to the employer: 'if your workers are angry, you don't have to change your workplace practices, you can change your workers' perceptions. They will learn to become more resilient, more mindful and will adapt to your workplace, however toxic that environment might be'. Positive psychology teaches workers to treat the source of their angst as personal, pathological thinking. The approach offers to the employer a cosh to numb worker dissent and disquiet; workers become modern mechanical Turks upgraded with an emotions algorithm that only permits happiness and a cognitions algorithm that only permits introspection. Positive psychology is by no means the only branch of psychology that has engaged in such practice. Indeed, one could characterise such practice as broadly aligned to the mission of mainstream approaches to psychotherapeutic practices. But, positive psychology is an approach that has gained widespread traction in the industrial-corporate and education sectors and thus warrants our attention.

The popularity of positive psychology's central concept 'resilience' in the industrial-corporate sector is obvious. In higher education, 'resilience' is increasingly listed as one of the most important graduate capacities that prepares students for the workplace. This is the attribute that employers want from their employees, and of course they would. In 2017 the UK's University of Buckingham, under the direct guidance of Seligman, announced itself as Europe's first positive university

with positive psychology being adopted by staff and students across all areas of the university. Students are not only being trained to be resilient in preparation for the workforce, they are now being trained to be resilient in their education.

Despite its early success, positive psychology always has to tread carefully unless derision towards it spreads and the flimsiness of its central concepts gains so much unwanted attention that even the corporate-industrial sector would have to turn away from it. So, at certain times it will go into retreat. For example, it often goes into retreat when workers' anger is in relation to sexual or racial discrimination in the workplace. The solution it poses (to increase women's and black people's resilience) would, and does, provoke outrage. It also provokes divisive political debate: typically, with the political right bating the political left. But, positive psychology effectively sidesteps all of this. Advocates of positive psychology say nothing, and its mission carries on in the background ready to suppress the next social injustice that can be disguised as psychological pathology without public outcry. But positive psychology has another strategy to ensure its survival. It has wedded itself to the industrial-medical complex by offering positive psychology as a psychotherapy to treat mental illness and also as a purported means of preventing mental illness. It does so by serving up a set of scientific contrivances over the health benefits of resilience and mindfulness training and those contrivances are the final element to this war on bullets against the worker – the technologies of mental illness diagnostics.

### **Weaponising the employer**

The management of emotion in the workplace through the management of anger, the deployment of anti-bullying policies, and the introduction of positive psychology regimes are all done under an umbrella commonly now referred to as 'psychological wellbeing'. It is here we find the underpinning technology of mental illness diagnostics. The threat of impending mental illness is used to warn workers that if they feel anger, become subject to bullying or fail to engage in positive thinking, they risk becoming mentally ill (with depression and anxiety). Or, if they continue to argue with their managers and refuse to follow the employer's policy, that this is a sign the worker is mentally ill: for example, has 'oppositional defiance disorder'. The technologies surrounding mental illness diagnostics (it might be best to describe them as pseudo-technology) fully weaponise the industrial and corporate sector in the suppression of worker dissent. They act as a warning to workers of not following the employer's programmes that purport to promote wellbeing and of managing those who fail to heed to such warnings. I use the term pseudo-technology as the knowledge these diagnostics are built upon does not meet the scientific standards of medical science that these diagnostics rely upon (Boyle, 1990; Division of Clinical Psychology, 2013).



Psychology, along with medical psychiatry, has managed to cement in the mind of the industrial and corporate sector (as well as in the minds of government officials and media organisations and anyone else who cares to listen) that physical markers for so called mental illness exist and that emotional states like sadness, anxiety and anger, when heightened, are symptoms of disease states: disorders of the brain.

Seldom does psychology or medical psychiatry admit that the concept of mental illness is speculative. It is rarely called on to do so as governments and corporations have found the concept of mental illness useful. This is not through a benign disposition to the work of psychology and medical psychiatry but because the medical-industrial complex's interests are very much served by these faux diseases. 'Mental illness' has given birth to a whole sector of health service industries that directly profits from labelling people as mentally ill. Among the most powerful is the psychopharmaceutical sector that has created a whole suite of highly profitable bogus drugs to treat those purported illnesses.

One could consider from this the harm that has been caused by diagnostic and treatment practices that locate the source of people's distress in a supposed pathology in their brain's chemical structure rather than a pathology in the socio-economic conditions in which they live and work. One could consider how many workers have been subjected to the risks of inappropriate and invasive medical treatments (including surgery and drugs) because they spoke out against social harm. That, surely, is what we can reasonably call a 'war without bullets'.

### **Beyond positive psychology**

So, psychology has been feeding the industrial and corporate sector with pseudo technologies to make workers compliant and to suppress workers' anger. Workers are threatened with the prospect of becoming diseased if they do not follow workplace wellbeing regimes that effectively prohibit moral anger, distort understandings of violence, and emotionally numb workers through positive psychology programmes. That is mostly enough to ensure moral anger is not expressed or is contained. When moral anger is expressed we mostly don't hear of it outside of our workplaces and inside our workplaces we usually hear of it filtered through a psychologising discourse that labels the morally angry employee as the 'difficult staff member', the staff member who is not a 'team player', the staff member who is 'disruptive' or 'unprofessional' or 'unreasonable' (confused as a synonym for emotional). The staff member is usually en route to being performance managed or 'let go'. Mostly, these cases are internally managed and contained through the processes described in this paper. But, we do see moral anger when it can no longer be contained by the employer: such as when expressed by whistle-blowers or by ex-employees. But even here these stories are muffled by the discourse of the 'disgruntled ex-employee' who

is acting out of personal anger towards their employer for removing them from their job ('sour-grapes') or else ends up self-censored through the ex-employee's fear of being blacklisted. Also, psychology is there at hand to syphon those unmoderated negative emotions, particularly those that might feed progressive social change, into an array of pseudo-scientific categories of medical pathology that effectively portray that disgruntled ex-employee as in various states of being mentally unhinged.

Psychology works hard to manage public perceptions of its links to both the industrial-military complex and the industrial-medical complex when those links threatens to taint its image as a 'helping profession': helping here defined as working in the public interest rather than in the interest of the corporate world or of government agencies. Psychology works hard to maintain its image as politically neutral, objective and morally beneficent. Whilst the profession's involvement in a war with bullets has become transparent to the public, it is imaginable that we may soon see similar scandals hitting the profession as the effect of its collusion with the industrial-medical complex become more apparent and the casualties become more visible. Just as the Hoffman report ruptured psychology's image as a 'helping profession' through detailing the use of psychology technologies in the interrogation protocols used by the US of America in the War on Terror, might we not expect to soon find an increased attention paid to how many of those technologies developed to aid the industrial-military complex have been re-tooled to aid the medical-industrial complex for the benefit of the corporate sector and to maintain the power of political institutions? The link is already there in Seligman's positive psychology that was cited by the Hoffman report as one of the key technologies used in torture programmes.

The workplace provides a compelling site to observe how the corporate world had benefited from the pact between psychology and the industrial-medical complex. Critical analysis of activities occurring in this space call for an increased resistance to psychology's efforts to pathologise and expunge negative emotions from the workplace and an increased effort to reclaim space for moral anger and for stopping the re-narration of worker dissent into a worker disease. There are considerable risks to the public of psychology remaining complacent on and complicit in such things. If space for moral anger in the workplace continues to be obstructed, employers will increasingly be placing their workers and their organisation at risk. If anger management, anti-bullying strategies and resilience and mindfulness programmes continue unabated or unmodified, they will increasingly be used by the industrial and corporate sector as the sock that is stuffed into the sirens to muffle any warning of impending social harm. This is psychology's war without bullets: a war that is stripping the worker of the ability to deploy the emotional resources that are required to flag injustice and to enact progressive social change.

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# Psychology, History and War: two examples of academic discourses that fail to oppose war and militarism

Jim Orford

**SUMMARY:** This article examines two important academic contributions on the subject of war: the 2018 BBC Reith Lecture series given by historian Margaret MacMillan, and psychologist Steven Pinker's 2012 book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: a history of violence*. It is suggested that each can be seen as offering justifications for continued support for militarism, or at least for withholding unconditional support for anti-militarism.

**KEY WORDS:** war, militarism, academic neutrality, psychology

In the 2018 Reith Lectures, broadcast on BBC radio between 30<sup>th</sup> June and 28<sup>th</sup> July, Margaret MacMillan, professor of History at Oxford University, considered the subject of war and humanity. This annual lecture series is important, commemorating as it does the foundation of the BBC. For some people, like the BBC itself, the Reith Lectures are a much admired and valued feature of British life. Of the five lectures that made up the 2018 series, the first two were held in London, but the third and fourth respectively in Beirut and Belfast, both places that have experienced organised armed conflict in recent times. The fifth was held in Canada, Professor MacMillan's home country, at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.

What she had to say was full of insights into the nature of war and our attitudes towards it, but overall the lectures troubled me. They put me in mind of another, now famous source of ideas on the subject, US psychologist Steven Pinker's (2012)

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book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: a history of violence and humanity*. Both, I have concluded, can be read as subtle arguments in defence of war, or at least as failed opportunities to oppose conditions and policies which support war.

### **Pinker's argument: Focus on how much less war there is now**

Pinker is prominent amongst those who argue that war is on the decline and has been for a long time. His book presents an impressive collection of statistics to support that view. An important early decision in the book is to look at the rate of violence per head of population. He admits that, in absolute numbers the Second World War tops the historical death toll, but, as a proportion of the population, earlier wars were more deadly and attitudes towards violence were far more accepting. The inter-state wars of earlier centuries have largely been replaced by 'new wars' or 'low-intensity conflicts' in the developing world (Kaldor, 2006), genocide and terrorism, but the evidence, he says, is that they too are all in decline. He adds to his thesis by pointing out that nuclear weapons have never been used in conflict since 1945 (although he does refer to nuclear strikes on Japanese civilians as perhaps 'among history's greatest war crimes', p595), the USA not using them in the late 1940s when it held a nuclear monopoly. The period since could be seen as much more peaceable than any previous time if you calculate the amount of destruction nations perpetrated as a proportion of how much they could perpetrate. Since the Second World War there has been a steady reduction in length of military service and the USA, Canada and most European countries have eliminated conscription altogether. He recognises the dangers of nuclear weapon proliferation but argues that this has not been as great as predicted.

There has been a change, he suggests, in our shared attitude to war and a 'decline of martial culture' (p28), thanks to a long-term civilising process, starting in the middle ages and given a huge boost by the humanism and liberalism of the Enlightenment. What he thinks are important are liberal revolutions, democratic governments, networks of reciprocity and trade, growth in higher education and scientific research, technologies that made ideas and people mobile, debunking of ignorance and superstition, increase in invitations to adopt the viewpoints of people unlike oneself, 'an intellectual agility – literally a kind of intelligence – which encourages one to step outside the parochial constraints of one's birth and station' (p576), cosmopolitanism, and ability to draw on a vast informational catchment area.

The First World War, he argues, finally put an end to romantic militarism in the Western mainstream and the whole idea that war was in any way desirable or inevitable, glorious or heroic: '... in the West today public places are no longer named after military victories. Our war memorials depict not proud commanders

on horseback but weeping mothers, weary soldiers, or exhaustive lists of names of the dead. Military men are inconspicuous in public life, with drab uniforms and little prestige among the hoi polloi ...' (p29).

### **Macmillan's argument: We are ambivalent about war which has some admirable qualities and brings some benefits**

Margaret MacMillan's perspective on war is different. She began her first lecture by staking out her main thesis; that we are ambivalent about war which we fear but also admire. We find admirable qualities in war, not often found at other times, such as sacrifice and organisation. War requires organisation, it is 'organised violence', becoming possible with the settlement and need for defence that came with agriculture. That same organisation has brought advances in science and technology. *Among the Paradoxes of War*, the title of her second lecture, are the benefits such as penicillin, the jet engine, even the welfare state, which she attributes to the Second World War. War can bring other benefits such as female suffrage and a decrease in inequality.

A recurring theme for her was the role of women. More than once she answered questions following a lecture in a way suggesting she supported women in the military, for example referring to women now in combat roles in the UK showing themselves to be just as strong as men. Women have served as combatants in the past although they have often been written out of accounts of war. Although she also recognised the role of women as war resisters (eg., against men going to Afghanistan), women now being acknowledged as playing the same roles as men in the military was clearly seen by her as an advance for women.

Her third lecture was entitled *Civilians in War*. She referred to several roles for civilians. The first was as targets. In the Second World War an estimated 50–80m civilians were killed but, as Pinker also does, she pointed out that this was not new. Civilians have always been targeted; they have suffered slavery, rape, destruction of land, and as refugees. But, she added, civilians have also been beneficiaries of war because Governments reward them in various ways after war is over.

*War's Fatal Attraction*, the fifth lecture, focused on how the arts deal with war and how we commemorate war. Art has served as catharsis after wars and as an act of defiance during war, or in opposition to war. Art has also been used to prepare for war, as propaganda, often distorting the reality of war in the process. But again, MacMillan reminds us that great art can come out of war (she cited Benjamin Britten's requiem and the novel *War and Peace*), from some wars more than others – the First World War and the Vietnam War for example.

### How the two arguments fail to take a clear stand against war

Although neither likes war, Pinker is the clearer about the unmitigated horrors of war. Near the end of his magisterial book, he writes, 'To review the history of violence is to be repeatedly astounded by the cruelty and waste of it all, and at times to be overcome with anger, disgust, and immeasurable sadness... with deepening horror as it comes to realize just how much suffering has been inflicted by the naked ape upon its own kind...' (p841). It is the decline of violence that he celebrates.

MacMillan thinks Pinker's argument that violence has decreased, although it is very persuasive, is too optimistic. She hesitatingly wonders if we could aim to end war, especially because technological change has made it so more dangerous potentially, although she sounds doubtful. On the question of whether war is natural, she thinks the truth is closer to the Hobbesian view that it is, than to that of Rousseau who thought it was not. She was asked directly at the end of her final lecture, 'Isn't war the aberration?' She replied that she found it hard to believe that because there has been so much war. She says we must understand war because from it we learn something about being human. This comes dangerously close to the idea, now rejected by most of psychology, including the American Psychological Association, that war is natural to human kind because of some built in aggressive drive or instinct (Barash & Webel, 2009).

Both can be seen as critical of, or at least less than wholeheartedly supportive of, an explicitly anti-militarist stance, Pinker because he believes human kind has already made gigantic strides in reducing organised violence, MacMillan because she recognises war's benefits, its admirable qualities. Each could object to being construed in that way if it were not that they are both quite explicit in their criticism of those who do not recognise the advances that have been made or the paradox of war.

Pinker is dismissive of always asking, 'Why is there war? rather than, why is there peace?': 'We can obsess not just over what we have been doing wrong but also over what we have been doing right' (Preface, p xxv). He refers to an unwarranted new pessimism about war. For example, instead of relief at the decline of organised violence, the 'innumeracy of our journalistic and intellectual culture' (p356) has led pundits to talk about a return to great power rivalry or the world being a more dangerous place than ever, as if 'a hundred thousand Iraqis being killed is the same damned thing as several million Vietnamese being killed' (p356).

Later he deals with what he views as a misplaced obsession with weaponry and disarmament: 'Writers who are engrossed by violence and those who are repelled by it have one thing in common: they are fixated on weaponry... Many movements for non-violence have been disarmament movements...' (p813). Yet, while weapons got better and better, rates of violence have gone down. Human



behaviour is goal-directed not stimulus-driven. 'The cliché of gun control opponents is literally true: guns don't kill people; people kill people' (p814).

MacMillan is also critical, in her case the criticism is of those who take a one-sided condemnatory approach to war. She was explicit that it is wrong to think there is nothing positive about war. We may think of war as an aberration, something barbaric indeed, but this is not helpful, she suggested. We need to be aware of the functions it has served. We need to take war more seriously, to try to understand it, so we can reduce it, or even abolish it, although that is unlikely she thinks.

Each can be seen, therefore, as offering justifications, subtle though those justifications may be, for continued support for militarism, or at least for withholding unconditional support for anti-militarism. Neither in Pinker's book nor in MacMillan's lectures is there any clear repudiation of militarisation policy in the USA, Britain, Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Canada or elsewhere. Those who take an anti-militarist stand are, if anything, portrayed as obsessive, badly informed, innumerate, unwilling to see the benefits of war, wrong to think of it as unnatural.

#### **Grounds for continued concern about militarism in the UK and elsewhere**

The way MacMillan and Pinker deal with war contrasts with that taken by some others. Solomon (2003), for example, argued that the optimistic outlook, from Kant onwards, that the flourishing of human rational moral capabilities might lead to the demise of warfare, overlooks two things. First is the continual replenishment of state militarisation in which states act, in the interests of protecting their citizens, in a field of forces which is essentially anarchic and amoral, a situation quite unlike that operating within the constraints of the domestic law within a country. Secondly, even citizens of democracies become integral participants in this state of affairs by supporting the competitive arming of states. They are, 'personally implicated... through their loyal and responsible support of their state's independence and security requirements... [and] partake in the generation of forces that produce weapons of frightening, apocalyptic destructive power...' (p116).

Internationally, there are grounds for pessimism. According to the Global Peace Index produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace, in 2014 the estimated total cost of violent conflict, including providing services for refugees and internally displaced people, was \$14.3 trillion, equivalent to 13.4 per cent of total gross domestic product (Guardian Weekly, 26 June, 2015). These costs and the more direct costs of war generally bear more heavily on the poor and disproportionately on women and children (Shaw, 2005). The database kept by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) showed total world military expenditure rising to \$1.69

trillion in 2016 with spending continuing to grow in Asia and Oceania, Central and Eastern Europe and North Africa (CAAT, 2017).

The cold war great power rivals continue to flaunt their military might. Referring specifically to the US, several scholars (eg. Van den Linden et al., 2011) have attributed the perpetuation of the country's military-industrial complex, which General Dwight Eisenhower warned of in his farewell address as US president, to the military superiority of the USA and a militarised worldview. Russia has recently displayed the largest public demonstration of military armaments and troops for several years as well as announcing testing of a new line of strategic, nuclear-capable weapons. Britain's defence chief of general staff has called for increased military spending, warning that the UK is falling behind Russia in terms of defence spending and capability (Guardian Weekly 26 January, 9 March, 2018).

In September 2017 was reported an event that speaks volumes about the continued support of militarism: a statue of Mikhail Kalashnikov, the inventor of the AK-47 assault rifle, had been unveiled in central Moscow. The nine-metre monument depicts Kalashnikov clutching his automatic weapon. The event was attended by high-ranking officials and religious leaders. The collusion of formal religion in militarism is illustrated by the blessing of the statue by a Russian Orthodox priest who shrugged off suggestions that it was inappropriate to sprinkle holy water on a statue of a weapons designer. Another religious leader wrote on Facebook, 'Our weapon is a holy weapon' (Guardian Weekly 20 September, 2017).

In his book, *The Shadow World: inside the global arms trade*, Andrew Feinstein (2012) describes the murky world of arms dealers and brokers, the corruption and bribery associated with arms transactions involving even the largest and most respected arms companies, the shadowy relationships with governments, and the 'revolving door' through which powerful well-paid people move between government, the military and the arms industry. He refers to there having been over 500 documented allegations of violations of the UN arms embargoes since their inception, but only two instances where these have led to any legal accountability and only one which lead to prosecution.

British historian Joanna Bourke (2014) is another who is sceptical of the optimistic notion of a 'decline of martial culture'. She points, amongst other things, to the continued use of euphemisms: for example, emphasising the defensive rather than offensive functions of Armed Forces; modern references to forces personnel as 'warriors' (an expression Macmillan used) or peacekeepers; ballistics experts using phrases such as 'delivery may be achieved' as though they were referring to flowers; bombs referred to as 'clean bombs' even though they are several hundred times more powerful than the Hiroshima fission bomb; use of mathematical abstractions such as SCRs and SKRs (standardised casualty and killing rates); and weapons design and research viewed as life-saving. Interest in military weapons

appears to continue to be high, still routinely portrayed in the media as objects of beauty, even charm, while online games which often have a war-like content are now much more realistic than they were, require choice of weapons and ammunition, precision and use of appropriate tactics. Gaming production teams now use military consultants and immersion experiences. She concluded that, '... the relationship between the armed forces and the entertainment industry has become closer, denser and more direct in recent decades' (p202).

In the UK, a Forces Watch report on 'The influence of the military in everyday life in the UK' refers to 'Thousands of visits each year by armed forces to schools and colleges' and new initiatives such as University Technical Colleges, sponsored by a university and employers, specialising in practical, employment focused subjects for 14 to 19 year-olds, of which half the Colleges in 2017 were sponsored or partnered by part of the armed forces or an arms company. There are reports of the international arms company BAE Systems offering postgraduate apprenticeships and a Masters programme and collaboration on drone development at British Universities (CAAT, 2018). The special issue of child soldiers continues to be important in various parts of the world, including the UK. A recent Medact (2016) report has drawn attention to under-age recruitment to the armed forces in the UK: 22 of every 100 UK army recruits are under 18 and, although they are not deployed on frontline activity at that age, they are more vulnerable to being casualties later – for example being twice as likely to have been killed or injured in Afghanistan than those recruited at an older age.

Perhaps even more troubling, and relevant to the present argument, is what Forces Watch describes as an increasing emphasis on 'military ethos' in schools: as a statement from the Department of Education in 2012 said, 'We associate the military with many positive values, loyalty, resilience, courage and teamwork to name but a few. We recognise that these core values, together adding up to a 'military ethos' that can have a positive impact on pupils'. There are signs of a growing narrative of the military helping to develop character and solve social problems. Forces Watch suggests that this apparently benign and subtle growing militarism is dangerously misleading: it discourages critical thinking, dissent, independence, is not balanced with peace education, encourages uncritical support for military institutions and action, portrays military figures as heroes, reduces space for alternatives to military approaches to conflict, does not question whether military values including hierarchy, obedience, chain of command, and conformity, are good ones, offers a partial, sanitised view of military careers and activities, and targets disadvantaged schools and pupils. War graves and war memorial celebrations are important national ways of remembering and depicting war (Mosse, 1990). In one of her lectures, Macmillan reminded listeners that there was talk in the 1980s of dropping war Remembrance Day celebrations in the UK

but it is very evident that, to the contrary, support for war remembrance has been restored and heightened since then.

### Psychology and anti-militarism

I have argued elsewhere (Orford, 2017, 2018) that we need a more clearly identified *Psychology Against Militarism* (PAM). Contrary to Margaret Macmillan's advice, it would take as its starting point the idea that war, and militarism which supports it, are problems, aberrations indeed, things to be, not merely understood, but opposed and resisted. It would provide a full account of the psychological and other costs of war, how those costs bear differentially upon different social and socio-economic groups, how militarism and violent solutions to conflict are justified and promoted, including the militarism of childhood, of educational establishments, of games, of masculinity, of history, and of economic life, enjoyment of and vested interests in war, and support for armaments and the arms trade. I also argue that community psychology might be an appropriate psychology sub-discipline to take a lead in advocating for PAM.

At present there appears to be no clear part of psychology which currently serves that purpose. In fact, there are sub-disciplines which can be seen as subtly supporting or at least not clearly opposing militarism, in the same way that I am arguing Pinker and MacMillan do. One is feminist psychology, which has often been very clear in its opposition to militarism (eg. Costin, 2006), but which has at other times been confused in its position, for example advocating for women to have greater acceptance in the armed forces, which Macmillan appears to welcome.

Nor has peace psychology, which is a well-established sub-discipline (Blumberg et al., 2006; Barash & Webel, 2009), taken an unambiguous position on militarism, often speaking of the absence of war without social justice as 'negative peace', implying that armed conflict may be justified as a means of obtaining social justice. Mere peace without justice is downplayed as a relatively conservative goal, even a passive state in the face of gross political or economic oppression, which kills people indirectly and slowly (Blumberg et al., 2006). Although, along with conflict resolution, peace-making interventions, peace education and peace movements (Blumberg et al., 2006), peace psychology does deal with the origins of violent ways of solving disputes, including possible psychological causes, militarism per se is not a clear focus. Peace psychology has '... spent much time trying to conceptualize peace while avoiding the very real problems of war and violence' (Barash & Webel, 2009, p2). Anti-militarism might also expect to find a home in political psychology. But again, although that sub-discipline deals with many relevant topics including stereotyping, nationalism and cognitive simplicity, anti-militarism appears not to be a major focus (Cottam et al., 2010).

Meanwhile, at the time of writing a proposal is before the British Psychological Society for the establishment of a new Section of the Society on Psychology in Defence and Security. In response to a letter and an article in the December 2016 *Psychologist* supporting that proposal, a letter I wrote was published in the February 2017 issue. I questioned the scope of Defence and Security psychology and whether it would extend to such topics as weapons research, understanding the enemy, and interrogation techniques (Arrigo et al., 2012). I suggested Military Psychology as a more straightforward name for any such Section; 'Defence and Security' might sound too much like Government propaganda. Another letter, critical of mine, appeared in a subsequent issue, from a forces veteran and psychologist working within the Ministry of Defence, arguing that it is mistaken to reduce the work of the military to war-fighting: 'War is the last resort, and... it is the last thing that most of the military want to do.' The reference to Last Resort is highly significant because it is one of the necessary conditions for going to war in Just War Theory (Frowe, 2011) and one which it is always difficult to be clear about (Hoffman, 2015).

There are theories in psychology that may go a long way towards explaining our continued support for war or our failure to resist it more than we do. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) continues to have great relevance for understanding hostile attitudes of those who self-identify as members of one group towards those who are, in contrast, seen as being members of other groups. Accentuating the in-group's positive attributes and the negative attributes of out-group members is strengthened and rendered more dangerous if the perception of the 'other' is a stereotyped one and particularly if it corresponds to a threatening 'enemy' image (Cottam et al., 2010). Another highly relevant theory is the contact hypothesis – that intergroup contact reduces prejudice and that positive contact can increase trust and improve attitudes between groups in conflict (Wright et al., 2017).

Another eminent US psychologist, Albert Bandura, has made one of the most pertinent contributions to a psychological understanding of justification for harmful actions generally and for war specifically, especially drone warfare (Bandura, 2016, 2017). He outlines eight mechanisms of 'moral disengagement'. They include justifying harmful means in terms of what are believed to be righteous ends such as national protection against terrorism threat (emphasised by Solomon, 20013, see earlier), or rendering harmful conduct as benign through comparison with something worse, for example arguing that precision targeting spares lives; sanitising harmful behaviour by the use of euphemistic and innocuous language (one of Bourke's, 2014, points, see earlier); evading personal responsibility by displacing it on to others such as those higher up the chain of command or dispersing it so widely that no one is held responsible; minimising, distorting or disputing the harmful outcomes of actions by, for example, minimising civilian

casualties or referring to them as 'enemies' until proved otherwise; weakening moral qualms about actions by dehumanising the victims of ones actions or blaming victims for bringing harm upon themselves (part of the business of war propaganda over the centuries: Taylor, 2003).

How might Pinker's and MacMillan's failures to take a clear stand on present day war and militarism, if failures they are, fit into Bandura's scheme? Neither case is straightforward. Pinker's thesis might be seen as a case of 'rendering harmful conduct as benign through comparison with something worse', although the 'worse' in this case is not social injustice or more lives lost, but rather 'how things used to be'. Although he is horrified by war, he fails to take a stand because things are so much better in comparison with how they were. His comparison of deaths in Iraq and Vietnam (see earlier) supports that. It is even harder to find a fit for MacMillan. Her argument might be a case of 'justifying harmful means in terms of what are believed to be righteous ends' except that her thesis is not that the expected outcomes of war justify it, rather that war often results, unexpectedly and inadvertently, in admirable or beneficial experiences and consequences.

### A final word

I conclude that the two stimulating contributions to the never-ending debate on these matters, which I have concentrated on here, illustrate two of the ways in which academic arguments can be read as justifications for ambivalence about, and failure to stand unequivocally against, war and militarism. It may be argued that I have politicised a topic that neither of the main protagonists were addressing politically. In the process I could be accused of conflating war and militarism. The distinction between support for a military force and militarism is itself a difficult topic and beyond the scope of the present article. But it is the failure of MacMillan and Pinker to take a stand, their apolitical stance if you will, that I wish to draw attention to. There may be a particular danger for academics of appearing to be neutral and thereby failing to question the status quo. That is certainly true of my discipline, psychology, and, unsurprisingly, history too.

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# The Malaysian Emergency: a war with and without bullets<sup>1</sup>

Doug Newnes and Craig Newnes

**SUMMARY:** The Malaysian Emergency is an almost forgotten part of Britain's colonial past. This article presents one view – from the jungle, rather than the halls of academe or the establishment.

**KEY WORDS:** Conscription, discipline, war, Malaysian Emergency

And when it comes to action, put your trust in discipline and silence... Meet the enemy, therefore, in a manner worthy of your record in the past.

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*<sup>2</sup>

The official Scots Guards version of the Malaysian Emergency tells a story of a successful if troubled campaign.<sup>3</sup> In his introduction to *Noone of the Ulu* Field-Marshal Sir Gerald Templer's version is more upbeat.<sup>4</sup> Doug Newnes, a regular soldier who served from 1948–1951 tells a different tale. This is his story, faithfully recorded by his son in a series of discussions poring over a faded photo album. These talks are a tale in themselves: the story of a son and father who, finally, sat

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1. This is an extract from *Malaya* published by Real Press, 2019.

2. Thucydides (1954). *The Peloponnesian War. Book Two*. Warner R (trans). Harmondsworth: Penguin (p183).

3. Erskine D (1956). *The Scots Guards: 1919-1955*. London: William Clowes & Sons Limited.

4. Holman D (1984). *Noone of the Ulu* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Doug Newnes was a guardsman, dad, gardener, factory worker, mechanic, drummer and car lover. He died shortly after writing an account of his small part in the Malaysian Emergency.

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down to talk about the past. It is a past that shaped my dad, ours and countless other relationships within families of a certain generation – relationships with authority, G-d, queen, king and country. Of course, my dad's story also portrays a truth known to us all; that no one 'up there', be it in high command or the Government, either knows or much cares what is going on for the rest of us. My dad learned that the hard way. May G-d bless him.

*By the end of the Second World War there were 8,000 men and 450 officers in the Scots Guards. Within two years the total was less than 1500. The rise in general employment and wages had reduced the number of volunteers to a trickle. Even lowering the height standard (to five foot eight inches) had little effect. By 1948 anything up to a quarter of guardsmen were national servicemen. On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1948, based at Pirbright, the First Battalion took on its new training role. The air of peace was deceptive. Over half the Battalions of the Brigade of Guards were based in Germany or the Middle East. In London, guardsmen found themselves confronting fellow working men on unofficial strike for better pay and conditions of service. In 1947, as a semblance of peace returned, the Second Battalion lined the streets for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to Prince Philip of Greece.*

*Elsewhere, things were less settled. Men were coming home from Burma to find wives and jobs already taken. During the Second World War the communists in Malaya had been supported by the British in armed struggle against the Japanese. Post-war the communist party had encouraged increased terrorist activity against the Government of the People of Malaya. On 17<sup>th</sup> June 1948 a State of Emergency was declared. Anything up to 4,000 communist soldiers, mainly Chinese, moved into the jungle but many times that number remained within the huge Chinese community living in Singapore and Malaya. The local police and allied military couldn't cope and on 13<sup>th</sup> August the Second Battalion Scots Guards was warned to expect to leave for Malaya within a month.*

### Call up

Everybody at my age was called up if they had no exemption through occupation. As I had no trade, I said, 'I'm here now, I might as well stay,' so I signed on for five years with the colours and seven on reserve. We were at the beck and call of HM Government for twelve years. I could have made it a career but I got disillusioned.

I was called up in February 1948. I was 17 and 10 months. We'd been evacuated to Otley in Suffolk, then, when I was 16, we were living in a flat in Clarence Road in Gorleston. It was my mum, my sister Joyce who'd been in the WRENS, and me.

Everyone who wasn't dug away in University got letters. They just said report to the recruiting officer. I went to Yarmouth first. Then to Norwich – the labour

exchange. If you didn't go the men in blue dragged you off; next best thing to a press gang. I didn't want to go into line regiments. I said I would go into my father's regiment. He'd signed up as a private in 1912. His mother had two boys and could only afford to look after one so he was packed off to Queen Alexandria's school in Dunblane. When he was too old to be regarded as a stray orphan the only option was the army. His brother, John, joined the Royal Flying Corps. My father chose the Scots Guards because of his time in Dunblane. By 1918 he was a Warrant Officer. The story was he'd buggered off during World War Two with the proceeds from the Quartermaster's stores – they never brought charges. Not good for propaganda probably.

My mate John Rudge went off to Dymchurch in Kent. For some reason he chose the Scots Guards too. The army was still in Germany, still in Palestine, somewhere in Egypt. We weren't trying to shoot anyone, just hanging on to the Empire. I fancied my chances outside Buckingham Palace with a bear skin and a tunic.

I think Recruitment Officers got brownie points for putting their charges into the elite – it's still the elite despite what the paras and the green berets call it – the mercenaries as we call them. Pride is drummed in from the off. You can rattle off every battle honour after six weeks. I eventually got a letter to report to Caterham Guards depot – plus the king's shilling for my first pay and a railway warrant.

The national servicemen all knew each other. Ninety per cent of the local yokels went into the Norfolks etc. The paras and marine commandos were in their infancy and took what they could. Anyone over 5'10" wasn't considered for the paras – you couldn't get out of the hole in the plane.

My father had briefed me about Caterham. It was at the end of one of the branch lines on the southern railway London to Brighton. The buses could only just crawl up the hill from the station. At the top were two almost identical blocks of buildings. First was the loony bin and second was the Guards' depot. The trick was not to get off at the first stop. Every now and then the siren would go because someone had gone over the wall and you didn't know which wall they'd gone over. My father had gone in 1912 and the original barrack blocks were still there in 1948. The café over the road is still there today.

I reported to the sergeant of the guard. There were several lads on the bus. They had a reception building where everyone went to start with. In you went in civvies and were allocated to a dormitory for each regiment. We knew more or less what we were in for because we'd been in the cadets. I thought Caterham was a doddle. Some lads were home sick, but us regulars had signed on as volunteers. We'd made our bed and had to lie in it. The minimum time then was three years. No-one went for three weeks then decided to give up. You could keep in touch with home only by letter.

The plan was that the regulars would do sixteen weeks basic training. Then you'd do twelve weeks at Pirbright on field training with assault courses, rifles and everything. You were meant to go to Thetford for a month afterwards. It was only three years after the war and when we joined there were blokes who'd been through it. To fill a squad with twenty-four blokes you had a trained soldier with you in the hut – we called the huts spiders because of their shape. They had six dormitory legs connecting to a central toilet block. John Rudge had done about two months at Dymchurch and turned up in our hut. John and I were Londoners, the only two English amongst all these Scotsmen. Then Johnny Tucker, another Londoner, came in and that was it – three English and twenty-one Scots. That was the first time I learned about religious fights between Catholics and Protestants. Johnny Tucker got some kind of lurgi and ended up in Hendon hospital. He was invalided out after his tour. John Rudge did his national service of two years in Malaya, then got sent home.

We had a squad instructor and there was a sergeant in charge of three squads. Because I'd been one of the first, I had to wait three weeks while they made up the rest of the squad - so my basic training was nineteen weeks. There was this bloke Reilly who polished everything – we all had to stack our kit next to the beds and keep our boots polished. But Reilly set to polishing the wooden wall behind his bed. It went up to about three foot from the floor then it was plastered. Reilly polished the wood 'til you could see your face in it – mad bastard.

Then there was the brigade squad with public schoolboys who were meant to be officers. They had to do the basic stuff in 10 weeks. Then they'd go off to Sandhurst and start all over again. We did four weeks square bashing and polishing the kit. If you didn't pass inspection you didn't get your pass home. After seven weeks we had 48 hours leave. You were only home for Saturday and Sunday. Probably went to the pictures. We had four-week, 12 week and 16 week inspections and then got 10 days leave. On the 10 days' leave we could wear civvies.

After Caterham we reported to Pirbright. Whatever regiment you were in you'd done the same training. There was friendly rivalry though – we all hated each others' guts. At Caterham we'd been behind a wall and felt looked after. We'd had good food and warm beds. The nearest modern-day comparison to Pirbright is Centre Parcs. Miles from anywhere, a bloody great barrack square and nothing but wooden huts everywhere. It was pissing with rain everyday (in August) and you had to *run everywhere* in full kit.

Being the Household Division meant you had to have a daily drill parade in your best bib and tucker. Then, after half an hour you changed into full battle gear. We were knackered by the evening. At the end of August they said, 'Right, you lot, that's it, you're going to Malaya.' We said, 'Where the bloody hell is Malaya?' We hadn't finished our training, never made it to Thetford. By mid September we were on a troop ship. It wasn't an auspicious start to active service.

### Embarkation

*The War Office ordered the formation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Brigade from those Battalions in and around London; the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grenadiers, the Second Coldstream and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Scots Guards. To ensure a full Battalion complement (a headquarter company and four rifle companies), the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had to draft men from Pirbright. On the 5th September 1948 the Coldstreams and Scots Guards embarked in the Empire Trooper at Southampton. On the 4th October the Battalion disembarked at Singapore.*

We were in Chelsea for a week before we went. We met all these blokes who wore medals all over. We were allocated at random. I got allocated to headquarter company. My father had been Company Sergeant Major in Left Flank infantry company. I was asked if I could drive, said, 'Yes', and was told I'd be driving three-tonners through the jungle. I fancied that. We went down to Woolwich to do a driving course – four of us in a 15 hundredweight truck. We came out of Woolwich barracks. The trams were still running. The only way to get past them was to go on the inside. If they rocked as they went past, you'd knock the wing mirrors off the tram. We collected a few. We got almost as far as Maidstone before the officer woke up. He'd been sound asleep the whole way. We pulled over and gave him a nudge, 'How far do you want to go?' 'Christ!' he says, 'We don't need to be this far.' We turned around and went back and that was it; our driving test.

There wasn't anything special about the embarkation. We just got on the boat and went. The fact there were 2000 men going to Malaya didn't seem to bother anybody. They even called it an 'emergency' rather than a war. I heard later that was for insurance reasons!

'... though civilians were being murdered daily, the government in Malaya had taken great pains to insist that this was an 'Emergency', not a 'civil war', simply because the insurance rates on stocks and equipment covered losses due to riot and civil commotion, but not due to civil war.'<sup>5</sup>

We went with the Coldstreams and when we got there, we were to join up with the Grenadiers to make up the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guards Brigade – 3000 men. In theory a Battalion is a 1001 strong. The odd one is the padre. Ours was a Church of Scotland chaplain. There must have been a catholic priest available, but we didn't see much of him. We were on the boat for thirty-one days. We crossed the Bay of Biscay on a 1912 German liner, painted white and called a troop ship. The decks were just open to the air and wind I suppose. We had fold-up beds and a pipe band making a

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5. Barber N (1971). *The War of the Running Dogs: how Malaya defeated the communist guerrillas 1948-1960*. London: William Collins (p114).

racket. We stopped at Gibraltar but weren't allowed off. Across the Med to Malta then through the Suez Canal. We stopped at Aden to be fitted up with oil and provisions. I spilt blood for king and country on that troop ship. There were safety lights on the steel stairways. I fell down the stairs and hit the screw holding the light. Took a lump out of my shoulder. Their attitude in sick-bay was to say, 'Stop running around in army boots on slippery metal decks.' From then on they made us wear gym shoes.

The medics gave us Paludrine anti-malarial pills everyday. We had to take them for three years. They help make you deaf.

At Columbo we had shore leave. I bought a wooden elephant. I'd wanted a pair, but the bloke said he'd only sell me the other one on the way back. He did too – two years and 243 days later. We got to Singapore in October and were sent to Nee Soon camp to live under canvas. Then we did this parade – 300 Scots and Coldstream Guards in 90°F and G-d knows what humidity.

### Batu Arang

*The official history of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion's arrival in Malaya is frank: '... when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion stepped ashore in Malaya the standard of training of the majority was extremely low... with a number of men who had not completed even their Basic Training.' Then the tone changes: '...as few men were instilled with any form of tactical theory at all, they may have found it easier to absorb the rather special techniques required for jungle warfare.'*<sup>6</sup>

Malaysian weather is simple to describe – wet, hot and always damp. It rained every day, sometimes so hard you couldn't see to drive. Then it stops, the sun comes out and dries everything. Then off you go again until the next downpour. Nights were cooler – perfect for mosquitoes. Here's an old soldier's tip – don't use insect repellent, the little buggers love it.

We'd been told we were meant to stop the Chinese who *we'd* trained to fight the Japs. The story went that we'd told the Chinese that we'd look after them when they'd kicked the Japs out of Malaya after the War. But we hadn't so the Chinese communists decide to take over Malaya. Bandits were classed as big wigs, little wigs and ear-wigs. The civilian admin put prices on their heads. We didn't get the money – it would be shared out in the local police force. The idea was that we'd never go out alone – there would always be a member of the civilian security forces with us. They'd organise the screening operations, checking ID cards and so on. We were there to support the police and protect the rubber plantations.

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6. Erskine Op. cit.

*Communist Revolutionary Warfare (CWR) ‘... is fought in three stages. The first is the Passive Phase: penetration of such organizations as trades union movements, local governments, student unions and touring repertory companies... In post-war Malaya this stage lasted for twelve years... The Chinese communist guerrillas who had sided with the Allies for the war years started the second phase of their struggle, the Active Phase, in June 1948. This entailed small-scale military actions, coercion, intimidation, acts of banditry and sabotage.’ During the Emergency there were 40,000 regular troops with aircraft, artillery and naval craft, 70,000 police and 25,000 Home Guards. There were around 8,000 guerrillas. In theory, a third phase involving regular troops to topple the government would emerge. The process was the opposite of conventional warfare where new territory would be initially captured to be put under the rule of the invaders. Phase III didn’t happen. After twelve years of the ‘second phase’ Britain promised Malaya independence and the communist movement ‘petered out.’<sup>7</sup>*

We were in camp for three weeks, then onto a train at Singapore railway station and off to Kuala Lumpur. The vehicles had already gone. We were supposed to have our own transport division but by the time we got there it was only a Battalion’s strength of vehicles.

Eventually, they decided to split the Battalion in Operation Lemon. Your immediate superiors – the officers – would get you all together to give you the plan of campaign. For the Lemon business Lt. Col. Sanderson got us all together in the mess hall and told us what was going to happen. Any companies not accessible by road would have stuff dropped from an Auster at about 50ft. We were sent to various outposts. From KL they took us to Batu Arang, an open cast coal mine with big piles of shale everywhere. The Japanese had set light to it in 1945 – it was still burning. There was a disused plywood factory at Batu. Right Flank was the first group to billet in there. We were in tents. When they put the showers in the water supply turned out to be infected. The only treatment was to be painted with some different coloured stuff. Sometimes green, sometimes red, sometimes blue. We called it the Tinea factory. Tinea was like ringworm. It came up as a circle of blisters on the skin. Bloody uncomfortable.

Us odds and sods formed the defence platoon attached to HQ Company. We used to drive escort just waiting to be shot at. We’d stumble on these characters on patrol. We challenged them, they ran away, we let fly – and missed the lot. They just disappeared. We’d go through bandit country blasting at trees – a bit like mine-sweeping. We never knew if we hit anyone.

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6. Cross JP (1996). *A Face Like a Chicken’s Backside: an unconventional soldier in South East Asia, 1948-1971*. London: Greenhill Books (p20).

*From the air the jungle looks like a sea of cabbages and a novice might be forgiven for thinking that underneath it is impenetrable. It is not. Under the treetop canopy nature jostles to find a space to catch the sun's rays, producing a litany of sounds and a library of sights.<sup>8</sup>*

We'd go down to KL to pick up rations; a lumpy ride there and back. Our Platoon Sergeant, Bill Rogers, had been our recruiting sergeant at the depot and they called us Rogers' Rangers. He was a smashing bloke. He became Acting Company RSM. We did foot patrols around Batu. Thought we were playing Cowboys and Indians. It was like a big game hunt. We would walk along past the jungle thinking we'd meet a bloke with a red star on his hat and we'd shoot him. We were young – thought if anyone got shot it would be the other bloke.

We picked up more vehicles and my first was a 15cwt truck. Biggest thing we ever had was a three-tonner. We'd left them for the Japs. After the war we got them back. One of ours had a rising sun still painted on it. We painted over it, then went down to Matai to pick up more three-tonners. The rubber estates weren't made for army vehicles. A bit of rain combined with a three-tonner on a wooden bridge meant something had to go. An ordinary three-ton truck was just that. 'Frankenstein' was like a steel shed on a three-tonner and was a sod to drive – it was so heavy. Captain de Klee bought it in Frankenstein because a bullet spattered on the outside and went through the visor.

I moved on to scout cars – they had no tread on the tyres but they *were* armoured steel and we were only likely to come up against small arms fire. I don't think I got shot at by anybody but I did burn my elbow on a hot shell case getting out of the bloody thing.

There was a rule that no vehicle could go anywhere on its own. But scout cars could go wherever they wanted. The engine was behind you. You were surrounded by two-inch thick steel. At the start we had no guns on the top. The Humber had twin Vickers on the top. They were the same as the ones in the Sopwith Camels in World War One. There was a mounting on the top and the gunner below operated the triggers with cables.

The daily routine was reveille at six and breakfast at seven. Then if we weren't driving, we'd do vehicle maintenance. Mind you we were on 24-hour stand by and could be told to go anywhere. We came unstuck a few times. We were a motor transport – spread all over the country. There were rifle companies spread all over the State.

News travels fast in the forces; it goes in a convoy. We were only boys – we had no idea what we were letting ourselves in for. But as soon as somebody copped

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7. Ibid. p16



it news travelled fast. Someone has to get the body for a start. Two officers were killed in a jeep that didn't wait for a scout escort. It was shot at, turned over, and went down a bank. The bandits poked at the two dead men and took their guns. There was another bloke alive, but he was frozen solid with fear. It was Black Murray. The bandits thought he was dead too. He eventually crawled out when they'd gone.

Black Murray was Scottish but went the colour of a native in days. These characters all had nicknames to distinguish them – if they'd been in the Welsh guards they'd have gone by numbers because there were so many people with the same name. Murray was killed in a car accident on disembarkation leave. He lived up in Lancashire and his dad came to meet him at Liverpool in his car, but Murray never got home.

I was at Batu Arang when Reilly got the Military Medal. There was a red clay road from Batu that eventually met tarmac. On the left was an area they decided was safe enough to train new blokes in jungle fighting. It was meant to be clear of bandits. We went out with these recruits. Ken Holland had only just joined us. He was called Dutchy and was in the next bed to me. We took them down and dropped them off. We went back and waited for them to radio in and say, 'Pick us up'. We hadn't been back long and they radioed 'We're in trouble'. Holland copped it in an area the bandits used for training too. He just happened to walk into a bandit group. Just bad luck. All the senior NCOs knew exactly what they were doing but the officers were fresh out of Sandhurst. They were just boys themselves and didn't have a clue. The older ones would look after you – they didn't want to get hurt if they could help it. If some seniors had been with Ken Holland, he wouldn't have been shot. Mind you, some of them were three parts out of their tree on whisky – remember they were Scotsmen. When we got to the training area Holland's body had been taken back on the civilian road by Reilly. He went to hospital.

The details of the battle were obscure. No one understood how Reilly got the MM. He was the bloke who polished the wall behind his bed – a pain in the arse. I'm sure the officers thought it was a good idea to throw some medals about. Technically I suppose he was seen as holding the fort while they got Ken's body out. I think he just sprayed the trees with rounds from a Bren gun he'd grabbed.

After Batu Arang we went up to Kapar Bharu, deeper into Selangor. The Grenadiers had been at a tin mine there; they went home because they'd already been in Palestine for two years before that. We would guard trains going up to Penang. Some bright spark suggested taking the wheels off the Ford Lynx scout cars. Their axles were the same width as the train tracks, so the wheels were replaced with track runners. They would drive in front of the train with a search light on top. It didn't work because someone had to meet you at the other end with a spare set of wheels to get you off the track and back onto the road. Then they decided

on a flat-bed rail wagon with three-inch mortars mounted on the wooden base of the wagon. The idea was to lob mortar shells into the jungle. The train would stop – they'd fire the mortars. We'd sit in the steaming jungle in the middle of the night defending the mortar crew. Now and again men were killed by accident. Some were ambushed by bandits who weren't supposed to be there. I never met one. I was there when Major Bland shot three of them. He ended up equerry to the Duke of Gloucester. I only met dead ones. We'd been told terrible things about them. Like their favourite past-time was to stop a bus, steal everything on it, put the people back on then set light to it. They really meant business, but they didn't want to take on the military.

Bob Porteus was my gunner. Bob had played the pipes since he was big enough to carry them. He used to play 'Highland Laddie', one of the regimental tunes. I don't know if we were ever shot at. I wouldn't have heard it in the scout car anyway. Bob used to spray the bushes with bullets, but he didn't knowingly shoot anybody. Our Brigadier was once most dischuffed about how oily Bob's gun was. He said, 'Driver, did you know your gun is oily?' 'Yes sir,' says I, 'If it wasn't it would seize up.' 'Point taken,' came the reply.

Ibans were aboriginals from Borneo – our trackers. They had this tattoo business where they'd tattoo themselves with a bit of wood and a needle shoved through a bamboo. It was a major offence to have tattoos – they could leave you in hospital for months and no good to man nor beast.

### Back to Singapore

Selarang barracks were on Singapore island. Christmas 1949 was spent at Selarang. It had been there since before the war, right next to the airstrip – Changhi airport now. The Japanese had filled Changhi with 15,000 British prisoners. We'd driven down Malaya as an advance party and had the first call on Selarang barrack block. We bedded down then went out to meet the convoy. They drove into the barrack square – every truck was filled with kit. The Seaforth Highlanders were in charge administratively and their Sergeant major had a fit when he saw the trucks. He gave us ten minutes to clear the square – it was a burial ground for the Brits killed by the Japanese.

The three weeks or so we had in Singapore were our most enjoyable time. The idea was that after 18 months you would have a refit and a think and pick up new recruits from Singapore. By now we were seasoned jungle fighters – men instead of boys. You tend to grow up quickly when metal starts pinging off the concrete. We had days out to visit the *Tiger* brewery; drivers weren't allowed samples, you had to wait your turn as a passenger. *Tiger* beer was fierce stuff. In 90 degree heat and 95 per cent humidity you don't need much to make you fall over. The officers

had it sewn up. They got themselves driven to Raffles Hotel. Major Mostyn even had his wife staying there. I've no idea how he fiddled it. She was a real live debutante – we called her up-market totty. It was fun waiting outside in a freshly painted jeep, spotless seats, immaculate driver. I really fancied myself despite these enormous Sikh policemen making sure I didn't step foot inside the hotel. It felt like I was taking part in the old Empire days. I found out afterwards that officers were meant to use local taxis, but the CO had more faith in the Military Transport bringing him and his missus back in one piece.

Being a Guards regiment, you'd have a drill competition – things like drill competitions gave you something to do. Much to everyone's disgust HQ Co was split into two for the Christmas 1950 jaunt and HQA won the competition. We weren't meant to win because we were the dugaway people. But we were all trained to do the same thing. It so happened that Joe Allardyce MM (won at Monte Casino) had been company sergeant major at the Guards depot so he applied his know-how to HQ Co. He organised polishing boots and all that. Drill was basic – no one forgets how to do that. We won it. I don't think we got anything out of it, but it upset everyone else in the Battalion especially Right Flank who thought they were the elite.

We celebrated Christmas and New Year by getting drunk. Traditionally the officers served the men. The Scots did guard duty at Christmas and the English at New Year. I stood guard Old Year's Night 1950/51. They had wild turkeys and we had them for Christmas dinner. Presumably they had turkey farms upstate – if the British had been there for a few generations they were going to have things their way. Our chefs could cook anything – we once had wild boar with an orange in its mouth.

Major Bland was Company CO of Right Flank at Kajang. He was only young, but he was a gentleman – and surrounded by oiks. He used to organize sports days. I was in close contact with him because he'd travel in the jeep and I'd do escort in the scout car. Alec and Adam Morrison were twins, both just over five foot. At the Battalion boxing match, they were the only two at that weight, so they had to fight each other. We had a 'milling' competition. The idea was to knock seven shades of shit out of each other and the winner stayed on to fight the next bloke. I can't remember who won but it wasn't me.

### **An 'Emergency' – with bullets**

*It is easy, in these days of 'pin-point' bombing and the visceral carnage displayed in films like Saving Private Ryan to assume that war is a bloody and terrifyingly lethal affair for the military. The Malaysian Emergency had its moments but, like so many other campaigns, men were as likely to be killed by accident as by enemy design and fatalities didn't match the UK civilian death rate for the time. The Green Howards, for example embarked on the Devonshire in July 1949 and by the end of April 1952*

*had killed 50 communists. At the end of their tour in October 1952, they had killed just over 100 for the loss of 21 men.*

The Green Howards really copped it once. One of our platoons had been up state for weeks with no trouble. We passed the Green Howards who were replacing us. By the time we got back to Tampin they'd been annihilated. They'd been in Malaya for less than a month and about twenty of them were killed by bandits who must have been there as we'd gone past.

*For the Scots Guards, the numbers are: ten men killed in action between February 1949 and January 1951, and two more had died on active service.*

Clucas was killed accidentally one morning in July '50. He'd been out on early guard duty and was sitting in his tent when a call went out for the next 'stag'. Some silly sod was carrying his Bren gun with his finger on the trigger. The guns were more or less home made. They had short barrels and a gap where the bullet casing shot out. Some of the boys lost their fingers because the block and spring were so loosely fitted, they would spring forward and take your finger off if you had it in the wrong place. The gun collapsed and he fired six rounds into Clucas's tent and at least one into Clucas. We took him to hospital at Kinrara near KL. It took 45 minutes, but he was dead before we got there.

Brigadier Malcolm Erskine went missing in an Auster over Pahang in 1949. He was presumed dead. After three years 13 Scots Guards, 80 communists and one 9'6" tiger had been killed.

It was February 1951. We were in Trolak on a detachment to Left Flank. I was in my three-tonner days taking blokes as far up the main road as we could. We'd drop 'em off, then pick 'em up a few days later. The patrol we'd dropped off was led by Sergeant Duff. There were about fourteen of them and we were told to pick them up which meant muggins driving with a couple of blokes sitting on the back as gunners. The only way of finding anything were these mile posts – our reference points and we'd been told the patrol would be out at a certain time. They had a radio, but some twit had left ours at HQ. We sat at the exact spot at four – then five. Then, at six - nothing happened. Our orders were to sit – and keep sitting. Three hours later these two blokes emerge with huge grins and said, 'We've shot a tiger.' Sergeant Duff shot him. When you're faced with a bloody great tiger six feet away growling at you, you're disinclined to think of it as a defenceless beast. Duff had shot it between the eyes. It took eight men to carry it and it took up the whole length of the truck. I drove it back in the three-tonner and the char-wallah skinned it. We put the carcass on a pole and set light to it. The head was mounted on a shield and as far as I know was carried around with the Battalion silver in the

Sergeants' mess. It might be in Regimental HQ by now. The skin was professionally cured, and Duff took it home to his mother.

### Full circle

I'd started as a Caterham recruit, got as far as Pirbright and joined the Battalion after only three weeks. The only thing that saved my bacon was being able to drive. When I got back from Malaya, I thought I'd be on public duties – finally get to stand outside Buckingham Palace in my bearskin. I was sent back to the depot at Caterham. After five months there and three years overseas I was back at square one.

*How close to miracle seemed that retreat;*

*As if, by some providential cheat,*

*Victory had been defeated by defeat,*

From, *Letters to Malaya* Martyn Skinner (1906–1993)

# A Letter to Nelson Mandela

Cathy McCormack

SUMMARY: A letter from Cathy McCormack, a mother in a Glasgow 'township', to Nelson Mandela written in 1996.

KEY WORDS: ANC, Apartheid, autobiography, community, dampness, Easthall Residents' Association, health, justice, liberation, Long Walk to Freedom, oppression, Passive Solar Housing Energy Conservation Project, personal testimony, township, truth, war without bullets

Dear Nelson,

I've just read your autobiography, *The Long Walk to Freedom* (2008), and it really inspired me to write this letter to you.

I, too, have been trying to write an autobiography – not just of myself, but of my community's fight in Easterhouse to expose the truth of our children's reality.

Reading your personal testimony, I could hardly believe how much our minds and spirit had in common. Your story threw up so many similarities with my own – although, geographically, we're worlds apart.

Nelson, I have spent every moment of my life since I became a mother trying to understand the insanity of my children's reality. That is why I understood it when you wrote: 'that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. The man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.'

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Cathy McCormack is a Scottish activist, author, blogger, broadcaster, film maker, popular educator and teacher.

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In your case, the oppressors were the architects of Apartheid. We too suffer Apartheid – of the rich and powerful against the poor and oppressed.

Our oppressors don't need to put us in prison. They have already socially excluded us, imprisoned us within our own poverty, taken away our lack of self-respect, and even managed to lock our pain and anger safely up inside us.

Your book enabled me to understand that the first causality of war was not people but the truth. Now I also understand why the people who control the media in Britain won't even allow people like me the freedom to fight back against the war that has been waged against the poor in Britain for the past seventeen years. They probably fear the truth about their own reality more than they fear the truth of mine.

Half my life, I never even knew I was being oppressed until one day I felt so powerless to change the cruel reality facing my children and the people in my community in Easterhouse, that I started to wish with all my heart that I could go to sleep and never wake again.

As long as I live, I will never forget that day. For me it was 'D' day. Not the end of this war against the poor, but the beginning of my own liberation and the evolution of the spirit inside me, that refused my children's mother to roll over and pretend that she was dead. When I emerged from swimming in the pits of human despair I started to see the light which you understand so much. A light which must surely bring about an end to this war.... The war that started long before even the other two.

Reading about your war threw up many questions that I want to ask you about how your fight relates to mine. I know that my friend and your colleague is trying to arrange a meeting with you in February with the Scottish task force to South Africa but, in case we don't meet, I want to share my personal testimony and the vision of my spirit with you.

Reading about the courage of your people has given me the courage to write. I only hope that my testimony will not only give people who are concerned about our children's future the courage to read it, but also to broadcast it. Because I never thought in my wildest imagination when I took my first step towards my community's fight for justice that I would end up in the ozone or fighting in the world war against the poor.

Unlike yourself, I never had an advanced or political education. Like the oppressed in your country I was educated to think that I was daft, and only fit for working in factories. My real education started when I brought my babies, who were bouncing with health, home to our freezing cold damp flat and my life became a constant battle for survival between my family and the fungus family.

Then, Mrs. Thatcher closed the factories and we were forced to live like animals. In her Britain, poverty was privatised and no longer a communal concern, but the fault of the individual.

Families, communities, and industry were devastated, but that's nothing compared with the deep violence that's inflicted on our spirits. Like South Africa, the most defenceless people became the targets of our government, in an unrelenting vicious attack on our 'morality'. But here they have made sure that there is no hiding place for the unemployed, the homeless, the young, the old, single parents and even the sick. Now we have nationwide 'Shop your neighbour' campaigns.

Oddly, I ended up almost envying the plight of the South African people. At least the emotional pain of being treated like human weeds was a shared hurt. Your pain created the energy and solidarity to fight to put a great wrong right. In our case, however, Thatcher had privatised the pain of poverty but her greatest achievement was a kind of Energy Conservation Project – that disconnected the Nation from their sense of responsibility.

That's how she managed to condemn the oppressed in this country without even a trial, to a life of 'Solidarity' Confinement – in a prison without walls.

We both know that our children are the future and that they need truth, for only the truth can set them free. Free, to build a world where every child has a sense of their own unique value and where faith in each other becomes a higher human goal than faith in money.

You and your people have given your life blood trying to build those very foundations within South Africa. Against all odds you have fought and won a war that gave hope and inspiration not just to the oppressed people like me living in Glasgow's post war townships but to my rich friends who had felt morally and spiritually bankrupt.

I have such a great pride in the city of my birth, Nelson. Only you can appreciate however the emotional turmoil inside me that day in Glasgow, when my civic leaders granted you the Freedom of my city. The same freedom that is denied people in our own townships.

As long as I live I will never forget that rainy wet day in George Square. I was standing at the edge of the crowd with my youngest son Gary. When you emerged from the City Chambers, you came right over to where we were standing ready to shake my hand. Your body guards were quick to steer you in a different direction, but they were not quick enough for me to be overwhelmed by your powerful charisma.

For the first time, I experienced tears of joy. Tears that were so different from the ones that were locked up inside me. Tears for my own people who like yours have been robbed of the simple joy of just living. You can imagine too, the thoughts that were racing through my mind as I stood next to my friend Canon Kenyon Wright the chair of the Scottish Assembly. Kenyon once referred to me on radio as being the modern-day equivalent of Joan of Arc. At least she had an army. I had long given up hope of our churches or political parties marching in defence of our oppressed people.



I wondered what was going through the minds of my civic leaders who organised the wonderful celebrations that day. Were they so oblivious to their own social and economic apartheid that they could celebrate the end of someone else's? I suppose I envied you a bit even then Nelson, for I felt I'd never be able to celebrate the end of ours. I guess social and economic oppression looks more innocent when your oppressors are the same colour.

That day in the Square I began to think back to when I took my first step towards my community's fight for justice. Like you, I never thought about the personal implications for myself or family. I never had your courage however; when I first faced the truth I wanted to run but soon realised that there was no escape and no one was going to rescue us.

There was no hint of it being different from any other day, that cold dark morning in 1985. The moulds that covered my bedroom walls were such a familiar sight. Gary was only six months old at the time and lay asleep in the cot beside me. Even subconsciously, the expression on his face was a mixture of contentment and trust, written in a language which only a mother could understand. I felt an overwhelming urge to pick him up, to hug and kiss him, 'I won't let you down, I promise ...'

But I started to feel that I had already let my children down Nelson – I was made to feel such a failure as a mother.

I remembered thinking that even the animals in the zoo were better off than families like mine. At least they didn't have to worry where their next meal was coming from. It really struck me then, that if animals were kept in the conditions that we lived in, then there would be a public outcry and the owners would be prosecuted.

You can't imagine how struck I was when I read how your oppressors had you removed from your damp prison cell because they were concerned about the effects the damp was having on your health. Our leaders here try to blame our health problems on our lack of exercise when we know that it's not keep fit exercise that we need but homes that are fit to live in.

The effects on our health were bad enough but Thatcher didn't only take away our right to work. She wanted to take away our right to live. She kept talking about giving people individual choice but I was sick to death of having to choose between feeding my hungry fuel meters or my hungry children. Sick to death of the people living in luxury pretending that our poverty was an accident. Sick to death of always having to justify my children's existence to the people who had been brainwashed by a powerful media propaganda machine.

Sick to death of the people in my own community who were still lucky enough to be in work being made to think that they were getting poorer because of the 'lazy scroungers' like me who didn't 'want' to work. Sick to death of being blamed for the damp, for the health problems, for my own poverty. I became tired of the daily

struggle to survive. Unlike South Africa Nelson, the oppressed here can't find moral or spiritual support in our churches. They don't teach liberation theology here.

My experience was that the wealth in this country was not trickling down from the rich, but gushing up from the poor. I will never forget that deep hurt and sense of betrayal. It dawned on me that it was not their mother who was daft but the people in their society. Those whom I had trusted with their lives and future who were either morally corrupt or politically insane.

Even the smile on my baby's face couldn't reassure me that I was fit to mother. I felt too powerless to change the truth of their reality. It was then that I started to wish with my whole heart that I could go to sleep and never wake up again. Something inside me did die but I will never forget the bully of the spirit inside me that refused to allow me to roll over and play dead. Instead, my spirit switched a light on inside my head.

I began to see things differently. I understood that my life, and my children's lives, and the lives of all the people around me, did have a purpose. I began to realise that we could dream of a better world – and fight to make that dream a reality. I was inspired to start my journey, which started with Easthall Residents' Association, my local community organisation. That was when I really started to see the human suffering and hardship that was all around me. I realised there was a war' going on. A War without Bullets.

Like you Nelson I am a very keen gardener and spend endless hours trying to discover the secret relationship between the flowers and the weeds. In 1989 while Glasgow was preparing to celebrate the European City of Culture. I made a discovery in my own garden which was a fascinating insight into our real Culture.

I was sitting intently watching Gary and his friends playing with their broken-down toys when I started to see their toys as symbols of their broken-down families. The rocking horse looked so battered, torn and worn out, the machine gun which had lost its firing power, the bike with the deflated tyre. The broken toys, broken dreams, broken minds – pictures of a broken-down society. Whole families like weeds, surplus to Market Requirements and thrown onto the human scrap heap.

Children damaged before they even get a chance to live, the old dying before time, the unemployed being used like food mountains to keep down the price of labour. Teenagers that have lost their right to work and benefits, and are being forced into prostitution or made to sleep in the streets beside the rubbish. Many become drug addicts to escape this terrible reality. Mothers are being forced to work in sweatshops – at a lower rate of pay than many women in the supposed 'Third World' – and where they pass round painkillers to get through the shift; to feed and clothe their children.

It was Gary's machine gun that confirmed to me to that we were living through World War Three. But this war didn't need tanks or guns – the powers that be have

become much too sophisticated for that. This is a psychological, social, economic war, where only the fittest and the richest can survive.

A global market economy which our oppressors keep referring to as being 'FREE' but in reality, has enslaved both rich and poor. A war which The General Secretary of the United Nations only now refers to as social and economic Darwinism and which the Cuban ambassador to the UN describes as a social and economic time bomb. An explosion of world poverty, where the main target is people like me and my family.

My own mother survived the bomb raids in World War Two but never survived the war without bullets. She died for the sake of 28 pence. She suffered from bronchitis and her doctor always prescribed antibiotic therapy. Until, three years ago she was denied this treatment, and died.

That's how I could relate to how you felt when your mother died. It's only now as I write, that I'm able to cry thinking of all the times I left my mother sitting alone waiting for me in our local shopping centre which oddly enough is named the 'township'. I was always too busy at meetings fighting this war. She understood my struggle but she used to get so angry with me at times.

But sometimes, just sometimes, the struggle has its rewards. From time to time there is good news and I can hardly wait to tell you mine.

Just like the ANC my community organisation started to build allies with middle class professionals who shared our vision. Together we started to accumulate the evidence to prove that it was not the poor to blame for all our social ills. We were also able to demonstrate that there was a more sensible and humane way in which our society could organise itself. Once we started to make the links between our sick houses, or sick children and the sickness of the planet, we became involved in the International struggle for justice.

We proved that it's not poor people causing the damp but poor housing that was making people poor. That there's a quarter of a million people in Glasgow and an estimated 10 million nation-wide living in damp houses. The poorest families in my township alone spend an estimated £50 million every year in fuel bills and are hundreds of pounds in debt. No wonder, Nelson, the fuel companies were privatised! Nation-wide, families spend two billion heating the sky above our great cities and towns. Our houses are not just killing the old and making us and our children sick but costing the tax payer an estimated £1000 million every year treating the symptoms of the related health problems on the National Health Service.

Our struggle resulted in the first ever community-led Passive Solar Housing Energy Conservation Project. The families who live there are a lot happier and healthier and can heat their houses instead of heating the sky above. They can also afford a decent diet and can now grow fruit instead of fungus.

I was delegated by the Scottish Environmental Forum to go to the UN

Commission on Sustainable Development which was set up to police the agreements made by the World Government at the Earth Summit. I was sent to find out if it had any relevance to the people in Scotland and also to talk about our struggle and to demonstrate the success of our project. We obtained evidence which you understood a long time ago; that when people at the grass roots actually get listened to, then the benefits can go far beyond our own social and economic environment.

I was so embarrassed Nelson by the arrogance of my own Minister for the Environment, John Gummer. He actually said, quote: 'We have got to teach the middle-class children to switch off their light bulbs' – either he lived on a different planet, or was convinced that we really do live in classless society or took it for granted that all the working-class children already had their lights cut off because of fuel debts.

He and his top civil servants were really embarrassed too when I spoke out against our government. I told them that they might regard the Commission as a public relations exercise but we were deadly serious about trying to conserve the lives of our people. When John Major promised to make Britain a classless society, unfortunately for the working-class people, he was also deadly serious.

Everything we need for our survival has been systematically taken from us. The only Minister who had the courage to admit to a hidden agenda was Sir Nigel Lawson the then Chancellor of the Exchequer who was quoted in the national press in the '80s saying, 'We have got to put the working-class people back in their place. We have got to train their children, not so much for low tech jobs but for no-tech jobs.'

Leaders like that make you realise that the War without Bullets is waged with briefcases instead of guns. At the Commission, there are men whose debt repayment policies and structural adjustment programmes have caused the explosion in world poverty. Policies that were forcing Governments in both North and South to privatise everything under the sun. Policies that were killing more people in the world than tanks or bombs. Debts which are forcing the poor all over the world to carry the heavy burden.

You and I both know from experience that you cannot cure a social evil in a country any more than you cure plants that are diseased in your garden unless you first diagnose the root cause.

The activists from all over the planet who came to the Commission also brought with them good news. It was so good to hear the different success stories, of how the NGO movement throughout the world were winning battles every day within their own communities. Acting locally but thinking globally.

My community in Easterhouse has become like a mini United Nations. Now people from all over the world are coming here exchanging stories and learning from one another's different experiences. I have met many of your colleagues from South Africa who have inspired me and people throughout Scotland. They can't

understand why people here are happy to support the struggle in your country but turn a blind eye to the struggle of their own people here.

For example, your colleague Lynn Brown. Lynn stayed with me for a few days and I feel as though I had known her all my life. We shared so much, not only the pain we have had to endure in our struggle but also our hopes and vision for our future. The one thing we couldn't share, however, was our faith in democracy. She couldn't understand why the people in Scottish townships are so full of energy and commitment to their communities, but aren't interested in joining political parties... until I told her my story, which I've now told you. Well Nelson, it took 571 pages to read your story and it only took a few pages to write the bare bones of mine. Still, I hope you will enjoy it as much as I enjoyed reading yours.

Me and my colleagues here have been learning a lot from so called 'developing countries'. Like you, we want to spread the word that people's real strength lies within them. We want to put working-class people back in their place – as motivated, empowered members of their society. We want to turn working-class light bulbs on. We are setting up a popular education centre in the middle of Easterhouse to turn on the real power.

The day I wanted to go to sleep and never wake up again, my spirit told me that someday I would be able to bear witness to the truth. This letter is about the truth of my reality and my children's reality. Now I know that we are more than just a bag of bones dressed up in a birthday suit.

You ended your long letter, Nelson – The Long Walk to Freedom – by saying that you have only won the right not to be oppressed and that the oppressed will never be free until their oppressors are liberated. I have lived in a democracy all my life and never even knew that right existed, now that's something else I've learned. Lynn, like me recognised our communities have still got a lot to learn from each other.

This month is the start of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of World Poverty. I hope that by sharing my experience of living in poverty people will be encouraged to look at some of the root causes and what people in poor communities are doing to try and overcome the 'war without bullets'.

Like you, Nelson, my journey has enabled me to see that the survival of the rich is now dependent on the liberation of the poor. Poverty is not only costing our lives – it is costing us all the earth.

Yours in solidarity.

Cathy McCormack.

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# Viva Viva Cathy McCormack

Dan Glass

SUMMARY: Fellow activist Dan Glass pays tribute to activist Cathy McCormack.

KEY WORDS: activism; hope; love; popular education; transformation

I feel very honoured to be given the opportunity to write a piece in tribute to Cathy McCormack.

Without a shadow of a doubt Cathy has been the biggest inspirational living legend I have ever been lucky enough to meet. That is a big statement considering how many blocks I have been around and how loud I am.

Since I met Cathy my whole perspective on life, love and liberty has changed. Cathy was sitting on a 'health, housing and climate change' panel as part of a health-activist panel in Glasgow in about 2005 and I was sitting in the audience spellbound by how such a huge heart and phenomenal mind could squeeze into such a tiny body.

Cathy had the audience captivated – so articulately drawing the dots between the deepening injustices of poverty, inequality and the climate crisis and weaving in an extraordinary web of how the powerful remain powerful and the weak

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Dan Glass is a healthcare and human rights award-winning activist, performer, writer and agitator from the Training for Transformation educational programme, born out of the Anti-Apartheid movement, the core of whose work is the development of critical consciousness and creativity to spur people 'to read their reality and write their own history'. Dan has won *Attitude* Magazine's campaigning role models for LGBTQI youth, a Guardian 'UK youth climate leader' and 2017 'Activist of the Year' with the 'Sexual Freedom Awards'.

See: Dan Glass and Cathy McCormack in conversation: <https://www.mixcloud.com/CathyMcCormack/>  
Dan Glass is contactable via his website: <http://www.theglassishalfull.co.uk/>, email: [alright@theglassishalfull.co.uk](mailto:alright@theglassishalfull.co.uk) and on twitter: [#danglassisfull](https://twitter.com/danglassisfull)

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obedient. At the heart of this was her extraordinary commitment to 'actions speaking louder than words' and the legacy of her community's transformation when it refused to obey the barbaric politics of inequality of the Government and instead fought back. Amongst many campaigns Cathy has been part of possibly her most well-known is creating the first community solar-power project to combat fuel-poverty in Britain in her community in Easterhouse. This changed the course of history.

As a fellow lover of *Popular Education* and *Critical Community Psychology* and as co-students of Paulo Freire we instantly connected on our passion for effective activism which enables the oppressed to speak for themselves and overturn charitable efforts which actually keep the oppressed in chains. As the great Paulo Freire (2007) says: 'Although oppression dehumanizes both parties and stifles their humanity, the oppressed has to lead the struggle for a fuller humanity for both. The oppressor, who is himself dehumanized because he dehumanizes others, tries to hang onto his power and dehumanizing practices. When the oppressed seek to regain and deepen their humanity, they must not in turn oppress the oppressors, but rather help to restore the humanity of both.'

Forever armed with humour, wit, wisdom, compassion and sass Cathy has contributed to so many social movements since we have met. We have spent many a night listening to Amy Winehouse with a glass of wine laughing together and setting the world to rights in front of her beautiful Nicaragua solidarity wall-hanging – a testament to her kitchen in Easterhouse being a home away from home for many a global revolutionary.

She performed on stage with me at a cabaret to empower those with HIV+ to speak their truth and highlight the importance of protecting the National Health Service; contributed to campaign strategies about the Scottish government's unlawful use of police infiltrators in protest groups; led workshops underneath flight paths to empower communities to connect health, housing, environmental and social justice struggles and a variety of anti-war programmes and cultivated critical inquiries for so many affected by stigma – whether they are racial, economic, sexual, gender-based and many more.

Always at the heart of Cathy's powers is cultivating individual and collective powers to speak our truth and dig at the root of our powers. Cathy's ability to witness and expose the bigger picture surrounding all injustices is phenomenal.

A lot of my activism is sparked from my grandparents' journey as Nazi Holocaust survivors – and Cathy has helped me enormously to see the parallels today. Connecting dots through time and space, across seemingly unconnected injustices and through a huge range of social movements is not easy. Today as we face such potentially debilitating oppression by the elite, it takes an incredible person to leave such a comprehensive legacy of understanding in each individual.

Humans can change the world for the better. Cathy does Steve Biko's – another of our icons – legacy so proud when he says, 'The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed' (Biko, 1978).

In Cathy's book *The Wee Yellow Butterfly* (McCormack, 2009), in her seminal political analysis 'The War Without Bullets' and her article 'Economic Barbarism – an uncomfortable truth', she so beautifully and deeply explores our purpose to strengthen the spirits of struggle. The Dalai Lama states that spirituality is made up of qualities that make up the human spirit including love, compassion, sense of responsibility and sense of harmony. Cathy's life has been the struggle – for social, economic and spiritual justice. Cathy has harnessed her wounds and guides many in the next generation in the struggle for justice, such as myself and my fellow activists, today.

This cultural heritage she has shared through her journey has provided my generation with an in-built sense of awareness of the scale of human emotions. This includes nightmarish effects of calculated destruction and human depravity, of the depths of people's courage to struggle and of how much one's spirit can withstand. Through learning from Cathy my eyes were immediately opened to issues of injustice, and once opened they could not be shut. Cathy's work taught me about Hannah Arendt's 'banality of evil' – about how everyone can become complicit and how oppression becomes normalised. Because of this, I learnt the purpose of critical thinking and sticking to your values.

Against the backdrop of such death in the current hyper-individualism turbo-capitalist environmentally-savaging world or as Cathy speaks, 'The War being fought with briefcases and not guns', the heart of my purpose began to beat. It dawned on me I must use this work, not to dwell on my sorrows but to fight the epidemic of melancholy around us to enhance people's possibility of revival, collective joy and sheer ecstasy at being alive. In our awareness of the inner work needed to achieve this, we can acknowledge the intense interplay of shadow and light within the struggle for hope in overcoming oppression.

Reducing Cathy's teachings – or spiritual qualities – to a number that can fit in this article is not going to be easy but here goes – and three is the magic number.

The first spirit(s) quality that Cathy has taught me are maintaining hope and faith in desperate times. How keeping the faith that change will happen even while it seems you might be living in a lunatic asylum and all the doctors have gone deranged. Authentic hope, however, requires faith which in turn requires clarity. Clarity which witnesses the troubles in the world and imagines what might lie beyond these situations that are perhaps not inevitable and immutable. Faith, and strategy, that makes the impossible, possible. I see many global conflicts as beyond reason and logic – so we need to open new places that allow for new forms of thinking to emerge and work from a place of beauty and truth. Direct action, such



as the community work that I do, attempts to do this, to create the framework to enable these places of truth to be opened in the practising of them. These spaces then create community and perpetuate a spirit of hope. Direct action (in the broadest sense) can attempt to speak to the human condition, to the innermost core of people where everyone is coming from the same place. When we witness these spaces opening, I see opening the critical and fundamental understanding of spirituality which drives activism and ultimately, that change is possible.

The second spirit quality Cathy teaches is about love and preservation. Cathy is so fierce and militant but simultaneously incredibly loving – a deep scholar in ‘revolutionary love’ – when we truly acknowledge what we love in our lives and communities we will fight for it. Cathy truly shows me through her actions one of the most well-known definitions of love, ‘Love is the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth ...Love is as love does. Love is an act of will – namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love.’ (Scott Peck, 1978).

The continued acknowledgement of the loss of love, empathy and a pervasive feeling of broken-heartedness in the world has led me to begin thinking more deeply about the meaning of building real, loving relationships in all our human-ecological relationships far beyond human interactions. This spiritual purpose unveils the importance of understanding humanity’s interdependent role within global ecology or the ‘the underlying principle, the reason for it all’. Every day I try to have five minutes standing by the Thames in London before the pains of the world rear their head in the communities all around on the sharp end of the knife. Every morning I harness and the spirit of Cathy and others that guide me. Standing in front of the roaring Thames reminds me that struggle and hope are dependent on the beautiful understanding of the human-ecological imagination as humans are just part of a much larger sum.

In order to feel this collective pain on the search for hope and liberation, the third spirit-quality – Cathy so vividly teaches that this is a journey of the soul. A journey of continued struggle, reflection, fervour and the magic of surprise. This is the true power of spirituality that motivates people to rise up above the parapet. This motivation which is enhanced in the solace of the unknown, in the mind-boggling awe and wonder of the world. It is a spiritual purpose to restore the soul of the world. Through a deepened imagination, we are capable of blossoming intimacy, belonging, conviviality and hope in the surrounding world from our collective experience of struggle or as liberation theologian Donal Dorr says ‘beyond support and comradeship and camaraderie ...this is a meeting of souls’ (Dorr, 2008).

As many people, whose hearts are on fire with the need for social change, how does Cathy continue to teach us to go forth with the purpose to build hope in the human consciousness and pay tribute to the power of the human spirit?

That everything has spiritual purpose; it's whether you choose to acknowledge the search. I have come to this conclusion through the ten years I have been friends, comrades and as Cathy calls me 'her spiritual son' and suddenly find myself initiated into a fellowship of understanding everything as spiritual on the journey to transformation. When faced with understanding this purpose, not just of what to eat for lunch, or which word to use instead, but a choice. A choice involving branches with roots in your heart, where there are so many budding fruits to consider and where you might find a patch of disease that needs culling. How does a person decide which is best when the roots go further than just one heart, one tree, one Earth? On my own I can't untangle the glimmering threads or retrace the nutritious roots as the fruits are related to more than I can conceive. Yet my heart stays grounded and everything still remains close. I think it's because I trust the spirits that teach my spirituality and that we all make up one collective spirit. What I've had to come to terms with in this search for purpose is pace - pace and practice. For it's in the community that we fully flourish - and that's a purposeful process to enhance towards reality.

As Cathy so often says 'This world of war and injustice needs popular education centres on every street corner' I think we need a Cathy McCormack in each one too.

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# Book Reviews

## **Reflective Writing in Counselling and Psychotherapy (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)**

*Jeannie Wright*

Sage Publishing, 2018, £26.99

ISBN: 978 1 526445 21 6

This is a revised edition of a book first published in 2012. The changes do not appear substantial but do include the addition of some new material and a degree of editing of the original text. The focus of the book is on supporting people undertaking counselling and psychotherapy training with the practicalities of personal and professional reflection – particularly with regard to the use of a reflective journal, which is a requirement of many programmes. This context will probably place the book on many reading lists and ensure that it is turned to for guidance by a significant number of trainees.

Jeannie Wright takes an eclectic approach to the subject and embraces different therapeutic models in an even-handed way. There is no attempt to develop an original theoretical framework for reflective writing, or to be particularly concerned about the limited amount of research in the area. Rather the sense throughout is of trying to stimulate and encourage readers to find their own way to make creative use of the written medium in the service of personal reflection and awareness raising. There are plenty of suggestions for how to go about writing with different aims in mind but very little prescription.

The currently ubiquitous journey metaphor is used both to help engage the reader and structure the text. The first section is called 'Maps' and lays the foundations of writing reflectively in the context of an unfolding learning process. It contains an interesting chapter on writing to identify prejudice with exercises to guide self-reflection in areas such as class and gender. Section two, 'Navigation' takes a closer look at writing that is private versus shared in some way and the process of writing in the context of time past, present and future. In section three 'Signposts' the problem of blocks to reflection and reflective writing, the use of reflective writing in relation to supervision and the place of external assessment are explored. Throughout significant use is made of the perspective of three fictitious characters to try and give shape to the kind of lived experience that people can have of the process of reflection and reflective writing in therapeutic training.

Overall this is an engaging and helpful book on reflective writing for those on counselling or psychotherapy courses. It manages to provide topical material for reflection in a wide range of areas relevant to therapeutic practice as well as suggestions for how these topics might be explored on the page by individuals. The use of extensive examples of reflective writing penned by the three fictitious trainees is likely to be useful to people completely new to the process as it demystifies the

conversational form such writing can take. However, it is likely to be of less interest to those who are already at home with reflective writing and familiar with reflective practice. This is not surprising. It is clearly an endorsement to suggest that ultimately more may be gained from the practice of reflective writing than from reading about it. This book provides ideas, stimulation and encouragement for those about to get started.

**Michael Maltby**

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**Practitioner Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy: the power of examples**

*Liz Bondi and Judith Fewell*

Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, £27.99

ISBN: 978 1 137390 29 5

The authors offer a thoughtful and coherent discussion about the necessity of research outside the strictures of the medical model making an argument for more personal and experiential research being needed. They provide some nice examples of what this might look like and comprehensively consider the ethical difficulties of doing it.

As part of my training to become a clinical psychologist I was consistently encouraged to consider myself a scientist practitioner by consuming and producing clinically relevant research. However, it is rare that as a consumer of research one finds research that resonates with the experience of being in a room with a client. This book does that through stimulating examples of the authors' own work and reflections on it. These led me to reflect on my own practice in a way that an RCT of different forms of therapy would not and

as a clinician it feels as though there should be more of this kind of research out there.

Research and publications in psychotherapy are often criticised for not referencing enough or lacking robust material. While this book would make the argument that this is because of a gap in research that we should be filling. I was impressed with the strength of the research that the authors used to consolidate their arguments. While the authors of this book argue for an increase in research from a more personal perspective, the one discussion that the book did not touch on was how to improve dissemination and access to this form of research. This feels like an important gap as without dissemination, others cannot benefit from the research for which they make such a strong case.

**Alexa Duff**

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**Critical Psychotherapy, Psychoanalysis and Counselling: implications for practice**

*Del Loewenthal*

Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, £63.00

ISBN: 978 1 137460 57 8

*Critical Psychotherapy, Psychoanalysis and Counselling: Implications for Practice* is very much a book of the moment, being a response to the changing context in which the talking therapies are currently practiced: one characterised by increasing marketisation, medicalisation, and state-sanctioned 'evidence-based' practice.

The book is helpfully organised into sections that include: what can be learned from critical psychology and critical psychiatry, perspectives from both 'inside' and 'outside' the professions, and critiques

of training. The breadth of topics covered is a particular strength with many ideas being given critical attention, including those that have long been central to practice (eg. the role of relationships) and those becoming increasingly so (eg. neuroscience). Therapy is viewed from perspectives including critical theory, feminism, and queer theory. Importantly, questions are asked about what kind of therapy is possible in a neoliberal society and how this is then experienced by both people in the consulting room.

The inclusion of service-user perspectives is an important one; arguably being the group with the most at stake in therapy, it might have been nice to hear more. Perhaps this is something for future projects of this kind to consider. At times, this book can feel as if it is not for the uninitiated, with certain commentaries drawing heavily from areas of knowledge not traditionally a part of therapy trainings (eg. deconstruction). Such critiques however, may present a challenge to view therapy through quite different lenses.

What this book does do extremely well is demonstrate critical engagement with psychotherapeutic practice in context. By its very nature it therefore engages in more questioning than answering. Those looking for a 'how to' guide to critical psychotherapeutic practice may struggle to find answers here. However, for those seeking to scrutinise their deepest assumptions, study their own vested interests, and consider their relationship to the theory and practice of therapy afresh, this book is an engaging and exciting place to visit.

**Aaron Roberts**

### **Psychoses: an integrative perspective**

*Johan Cullberg*

Routledge, 2006, £29.99

ISBN: 978 1 583919 93 4

### **Cultural and Critical Explorations in Community Psychology**

*Heather Macdonald*

Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, £63.99

ISBN: 978 1 349950 37 9

*Psychoses: An Integrative Perspective* provides a genuinely eclectic and integrated approach, blending biological, psychodynamic and social perspectives to understand psychosis.

That Cullberg's orientation for psychological work is psychodynamic rather than the now more familiar cognitive behavioural approach for psychosis makes a refreshing change in the earlier part of the work, but leads to deficits in the psychological interventions section. The reader may leave the book wondering what actually occurs in psychological work for psychosis and how change is brought about.

Cullberg is a specialist in the area of early interventions for psychosis. In the second half of the book he offers a sense of practicality and pragmatism with a tone of authority based on experience.

As a prescriber of medication, Cullberg is refreshingly candid about medication, what it does and does not achieve and where there is and is not evidence for underlying biological mechanisms. The approach is both pragmatic and scientific.

The book covers a lot of areas in detail; it is a book that is broad and deep. This makes it best read over time and then referred back to as a reference.

The illustrations and case examples are well placed and add something to the text helping the reader understand a little better.

*Psychosis* would make a valuable addition to the reading list of anyone starting to work with this client group as well as a rewarding read for someone with years of practice in the area.

Cullberg passes the *friends and family test*: he would be someone you would be happy to work with or treat a friend or family member.

Heather Macdonald's subtitle is *The Inner City Intern* and it is in relation to the secondary title that this book is most successful. It is the account of an intern placement whilst training in clinical psychology. An intern placement where she was a white psychologist working with black children and adolescents in Portland in the USA carrying out assessments and writing reports on clients considered to have psychological problems, often conduct disorder. It is not hard to imagine how the cultural and power aspects of this role would have stared MacDonalD in the face.

When MacDonalD writes about this from her first person perspective as being the psychologist in the narrative it is an enjoyable read. It forms part of the small literature about becoming a clinical psychologist or therapist written in a narrative form, a story of the clinician, their clients and their work together. The book is less successful when it moves into the theoretical. The book was developed from MacDonalD's thesis and the origin still shows with references piled as one would do in preparation for a tough viva to prove that she knows her stuff and it is not just storytelling.

This book would not be a good first introduction or primer on Community psychology. The account of the work that MacDonalD was carrying out as an intern was very traditional clinical psychology; assessments and report writing. The

cultural and critical explorations are in her reflections about the work and how she tells the stories.

It would be useful to have more such cultural and critical explorations from settings that are more subtle and nuanced in relation to the culture, personal histories and power of clinicians and client than the one MacDonalD presents here, with a balance between storytelling and more subtly placed theoretical references and ideas interwoven.

Stuart Whomsley

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**Self-Care for Clinicians in Training:  
a guide to psychological wellness for  
graduate students in psychotherapy**

*Leigh A. Carter & Jeffrey E. Barnett*

OUP, 2014, £14.99

ISBN: 978 0 199335 35 0

The title of this compassionate, well-intentioned book implies a broader readership than that for which it is actually intended: graduate students on an American clinical psychology program. This is a shame, as there is much in here that could be of benefit to a whole range of clinicians in training: trainee psychiatric nurses, psychiatrists, CBT therapists, social workers and more besides, although there are some chapters, like 'Get a great mentor now', which seem to refer to a practice peculiar to the U.S. graduate psychology culture. The structure of the book is clear and accessible, with helpful action plans and Reflection Activity sections at the ends of chapters, so that it becomes a working handbook rather than another ephemeral self-help text to read and discard.

The main principle is stated most clearly in the conclusion:

'To truly understand and help your clients and those you treat, you must first come to know, understand and care for yourself' (p193).

The authors systematically break down this enterprise into useful tasks: dealing with your own distress (including any unresolved trauma); addressing professional competence; getting good supervision and – perhaps – personal psychotherapy (encouraged but not described as essential); juggling personal and professional lives; developing your own self-care plan and also widening this out in the spirit of 'communitarian ethics', which could include attempting to improve the self-care culture of the program you find yourself in.

There were only two areas where their advice seemed either misplaced or inaccurate. While they offer a range of activities for helping to switch off, equating watching TV with mindfulness practice (they appear in the same list) sells mindfulness short – and the jury is still out on whether TV reduces or increases stress. Elsewhere – in defining the distress problem – they state:

'Unfortunately, your body and mind are not triggered for alarms to automatically sound or warning signs to pop up when your distress levels rise. The onus is once again on you to be able to recognise and respond to problems' (p16).

To a mindfulness practitioner, anxiety is precisely such an alarm. If we can learn to listen to it, then that will help us to engage in just the sort of strategies recommended in this book.

**Dheeresh Turnbull**

### **The Political Self: understanding the social context for mental illness**

*Rod Tweedy (Ed)*

Karnac, 2017, £30.99

ISBN: 978 1 782204 09 1

This is a timely book, featuring chapters by a lot of the big hitters in the contemporary world of 'critical' psychotherapy, psychiatry and psychology. Among them is the late David Smail, Nick Totton, Sue Gerhardt (the only woman) and James Hillman. It's an 'inside and outside' look at the social and economic contexts which affect our wellbeing. Power looms large; uses and abuses, as the personal, the societal and the political. Inequality is a huge indicator of disempowerment and distress.

Nick Totton delves into power imbalances in the therapeutic relationship, and the potential for abuse, and the late Joel Kovel looks at therapy in late capitalism, and the role of neurosis and the Oedipus complex within this. Sue Gerhardt continues her 'selfish society' theme, and examines the social brain and the erosion of empathy under capitalism. Iain McGilchrist contributes a chapter on brain hemispheres and the colonisation of the left brain of our experience. The 'Outside' section starts with Nick Duffell and wounded leaders (all at boarding schools, mainly all boys) 'running on fear and confidence'. A fascinating piece 'On Killing' follows, by Lt Col Dave Grossman – he digs down into the innate resistance of a human to kill, and what psychological mechanisms have been used to overcome this. A look at internet pornography, sex addiction and erosion of attachment follows, and then the corporation as a pathological institution, personified, branded and dissociated. (There's a very unPC use of 'schizophrenia' in this piece – whatever it is, it is *not*

split personality) Finally a rather louche sounding James Hillman and friend discuss 100 years of psychotherapy, and where we are now. 'Many who are therapeutically sensitive are also dumb and fucked up politically; and if you look at the people who wield the most power in almost any sphere of life, they are often people whose inner growth has been severely stunted.'

This is a book for our times.

**Polly Mortimer is librarian at  
Minster Centre, London NW6**



### Books Received

Readers wishing to review these, or any other books, are encouraged to contact the Joint Book Review Editor – Anne Cooke, Clinical Psychology Training, Salomons, David Salomons Estate, Broomhill Rd., Southborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN3 0TG. Please note; reviewers keep any volume they review. It is appreciated if reviews are received within two weeks of receipt of the book. Reviewers will be sent a subscription form for the journal.

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