The Golden Age

The Golden Age:

Nostalgia in Word and Image

Edited by

Elizabeth Rogers, Jeffrey W. Smith,
Chris Murray and Laura Findlay

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

The Golden Age: Nostalgia in Word and Image

Edited by Elizabeth Rogers, Jeffrey W. Smith, Chris Murray
and Laura Findlay

This book first published 2016

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Cover illustration by Hannah Rose

ISBN (10): 1-4438-8906-7
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-8906-3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE AND THANKS

This publication is the result of the tenth annual postgraduate conference held by English postgraduate students at the University of Dundee in June 2012, where several postgraduates, early career researchers and established academics gathered to participate. Since then, several delegates have refined and updated their research in order to produce this publication.

Since 2003, the annual English conference has provided a platform for students to discuss, present and develop their research, whilst meeting postgraduates from different universities, disciplines, and nations.

The experience of senior academics is always invaluable to those starting out in academic research, and the conference's keynote speaker, Sarah Edwards, Senior Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Strathclyde, provided a stimulating paper, which further inspired this printed collection. Edwards has also written the introduction for this publication and provided valuable feedback on each paper in this collection, and has been extremely supportive and helpful throughout.

This publication would not have been possible without support from the English Programme and the School of Humanities at the University of Dundee. All staff have continually supported the annual postgraduate conference from which this publication arose, and we are thankful for this, but particular thanks are due to Christopher Murray, who has been invaluable, peer-reviewing several of the articles within this publication, offering advice and support, and even joining the editorial team in order to make this publication a reality. We are also very grateful to Brian Hoyle and Keith Williams for diligently peer-reviewing the papers in this book.

Additionally, we would like to thank each contributor. The conference was a hugely informative and enjoyable one as a result of their papers, and we thank them for the hard work they have put into the written versions.

Finally, we would like to thank Cambridge Scholars Publishing for providing us with the opportunity to publish the proceedings of our conference. In particular, we would like to thank Carol Koulikourdi, Anthony Wright and Sam Baker.

The Editors, Elizabeth Rogers, Jeffrey W. Smith,
Chris Murray and Laura Findlay
Dundee, 2016

INTRODUCTION

MAPPING THE GOLDEN AGE: NOSTALGIC HAVEN OR FUNDAMENTALIST IDEOLOGY?

SARAH EDWARDS

The idea of the Golden Age has evolved from its mythical and literary origins to become a familiar phrase in daily conversation. From recent television documentaries on 'Glamour's Golden Age' which question why the decades of the 1920s and 1930s "became synonymous with decadence", to laments for the supposedly free and inclusive university education of a previous era, the term is used to evoke an (apparently) mutually understood image of an ideal period that has receded, but to which we hope to return.[1] As my above examples illustrate, though, individuals and institutions draw on a wide range of meanings when they reference the 'Golden Age'. The concept may be used to modify – or codify – ideas about periodization, or 'decadent decades'; such a temporal understanding may or may not refer to a specific geographical place, a wider sense of a shared culture, or a sub-culture within a declining society; any of these formulations may also include an ironic self-awareness that questions our attachment to the idea ("The golden age that never was"). In this introduction, then, I will provide a brief overview of the Golden Age myth and consider how words and images have been used to re-create this elastic, mutable narrative. I will also ask whether nostalgia and the Golden Age - often treated as synonymous concepts – may be considered more profitably as different ways of imagining the past which can nevertheless shed light on the developing meanings of the other term.

[1] Kenneth Macdonald, 'The golden age that never was', BBC News Scotland, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-12727623, accessed 15/02/14; 'Glamour's Golden Age', http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00njy28, accessed 15/02/14.

The classical representations of the 'Golden Age' (*Chryson Genos*) – a term which refers to a primordial state and to the first in a series of several, declining Ages of Man, leading to the present Iron Age - are themselves various and shaped by a range of inter-textual influences. The ahistorical and 'idyllic' pastoral landscapes in the *Idylls* of Greek poet Theocritus were re-written by Virgil in his *Eclogues* to prophesy a Golden Age ushered in by the birth of a divine child (generally believed to denote Octavian, the heir of Julius Caesar). Thus, Virgil re-located the Golden Age in historical time and within a political landscape. Later writers have used the anticipated return of the Golden Age to create narratives of political critique and glorious renewal, rather than eulogies to a fondly remembered past. The Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, drew on Aeschylus's account of war to imagine a new classical age in 'Hellas' (1821), which was written to raise funds for the Greek War of Independence: "the world's great age begins anew/The golden years return…Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam/Like wrecks of a dissolving dream" (lines 1-6). Another element of Virgil's Golden Age narrative – the return of Virgo Astraea, goddess of justice, to earth in the *Fourth Eclogue* – has been woven into the iconography of female symbols of renewal, such as Queen Elizabeth I. The Golden Age, then, is easily assimilated to nationalist myth-making; but many of its features are also observable in teleological narratives of spiritual belief - such as the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21, or the Summerland of theosophists and paganists – which promise redemption either through the literal re-creation of a "new heaven and a new earth" or by an ascension through spiritual spheres which negate earthly time and place.[2]

Some classical texts equated the Golden Age with an actual geographical location, Arcadia, whose economic and cultural poverty was transformed by Virgil into an idealised version of Sicily in his rewriting of Theocritus. The values which were attributed to the rural idyll were also diverse. The Greek poet Hesiod's *Works and Days* situated the Golden Age in a world of primitive communism and abundant natural resources and thus envisaged humans in a state of nature, prior to the invention of culture and the arts. In this landscape of 'soft primitivism', inhabitants

[2] Theocritus, Anthony Verity (transl.) and Richard Hunter (transl.), *Idylls* (Oxford University Press, 2008); Virgil and Guy Lee (transl), *The Eclogues* (Penguin Classics, 1984); Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Hellas' (Portable Poetry, 2014). For images of Elizabeth I as Astraea, see Edmund Spenser, Book V of *The Faerie Queene* (Longman, 2003); Frances A. Yates, *Astraea* (Routledge, 1985); for an account of the New Jerusalem, see Revelation 21. Andrew Jackson Davis wrote about a Swedenborgian-inspired Summerland in *The Great Harmonia* (1850-61).

enjoyed some cultural pursuits, such as music-making, but remained untainted by the vices of culture, which were associated with urbanism and sophistication. Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*, described the native reason and simplicity of primitive man thus:

> *The Golden Age was first; when Man, yet new,*
> *No rule but uncorrupted Reason knew:*
> *And, with a native bent, did good pursue.*
> *Unforc'd by punishment, un-aw'd by fear.*
> *His words were simple, and his soul sincere;*
> *Needless was written law, where none opprest:*
> *The law of Man was written in his breast* (lines 117-123)

In Virgil's 'Fourth Eclogue', the 'age of gold' is similarly a place where ploughman and animal live in a state of communal harmony and in which fruits and grain blossom in a clement landscape of eternal spring. These primitive humans embodied what later came to be theorised as the 'noble savage': creatures that were *tabula rasa*, free from original sin.[3]

However, Arcadia was the traditional home of the god Pan, whose sensual and bestial nature was signified by his shape (half-man and half-goat). Pan was also depicted in an eternal spring landscape of music ('Pan pipes'), but his creativity has often been linked with sexual licence and revelry. Furthermore, Pan was the god of hunting, often associated with woodland settings. The wood has long been imagined as a place of mystery and transgression, but also as a space for ideal alternative communities: the 'sylvan remnant of arcady' and "the place where one found oneself" (Schama, 141-42). This version – and location – of the Golden Age, then, may suggest a self-contained world which exists in contemporary historical time, seeks to subvert contemporary moral norms and to explore repressed desires. The later Victorian and Edwardian writers and intellectuals who revived the neo-pagan cult of Pan - including popular children's writers such as Kenneth Grahame – claimed that Victorian culture was dominated by the civilisation of the 'Plough': of work, conventional religion and the repression of natural instincts. Grahame's novel *The Golden Age* (1895) re-located the first age of man in the life stage of childhood. For Grahame, the child was a 'pre-historic little

[3] Hesiod, Stanley Lombardio (transl.), Robert Lamberton (transl.), *Works and Days and Theogony* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1993); see Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (University of California Press, 2001); Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (John Hopkins University Press, 1997); Ovid, A. D. Melville (transl), E. J. Kenney (transl.), *Metamorphoses* (Oxford University Press, 2009); cf. Virgil.

savage' whose animal nature was condemned by 'pulpiteers and parents' as a manifestation of "Original Sin: a term wherewith they brand whatever frisks and butts with rude goatish horns against accepted maxims and trim theories of education". In his more famous novel, *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), the anthropomorphised beasts encounter Pan in a sensually vivid, dream-like experience which erases all awareness of linear time. This golden moment takes place on a journey up-river, which once again re-configures the spatial and temporal parameters of the Golden Age. This trope may suggest forward or backward movement in historical time, or the disorientation of time, while the river is another self-contained, idealised landscape, symbolising the cycles of life, death, cleansing and renewal.[4]

From its inception, then, the concept of the Golden Age has been re-imagined and re-shaped in response to various textual and visual depictions.[5] It meshes with other cultural narratives that equate the state of nature with a state of human innocence and perfection which precedes inevitable loss and decline, including, of course, the Biblical account of the Garden of Eden and mankind's fall. In such narratives, decline may connote aging, sexuality, urbanisation, materialism and a host of other meanings. Indeed, the symbolism of gold in Western European culture is a similarly dense cluster of spiritual, material, aesthetic, sexual and emotive connotations. In contemporary culture, the 'gold standard' refers to a monetary system and is also widely used to denote a benchmark of excellence in any field; the 'golden ratio' (also known as the 'divine proportion') is used in mathematics, art and architecture to denote buildings, objects and faces with proportions that humans generally perceive as beautiful.[6] Many cultural myths use narrative, symbolism and allegory to explore these multiple connotations within their particular historical and social contexts and these tales, as well as accounts of the

[4] For example, Pan's life is recounted by the inhabitants of a pastoral, wooded scene in John Keats's poem *Endymion* (1818); see Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Harper Perennial, 2004); Kenneth Grahame, *The Golden Age* (Aegypan Press, 2007); *The Wind in the Willows* (Methuen Modern Classics, 1937); 'Orion' in *Pagan Papers and Other Stories* (Jane Books, 2012), Kindle edition. Pan also appears in Algernon Blackwood's 'A Touch of Pan' (1917), Saki's 'The Music on the Hill' (1911) and E. M. Forster's 'The Story of a Panic' (1903).

[5] The earliest reference to the Golden Age is in *Hesiod's Works and Days* (109-126).

[6] See Mario Livio, *The Golden Ratio: The Story of Phi, the World's Most Astonishing Number* (Library Binding, 2008); John Butler, *The Golden Revolution: How to Prepare for the Coming Global Gold Standard* (John Wiley and Sons, 2012).

Golden Age, have shaped understandings of the term. For example, the Biblical figure of the Golden Calf is an animal who simultaneously represents the spiritual (as an idol) and material wealth (as it is made out of golden earrings)[7]; in the Greek myth of the Golden Fleece, this grail object is linked to the gods, the heroic recovery of a kingdom and, thus, the inception of a golden age. The Biblical Magi's gift of gold similarly denotes (spiritual) kingship and the dawn of a new era in the newborn baby Jesus; both Mary's virgin birth and the amorous visits of Zeus, king of the gods, to Danae in the form of a golden shower also link gold to sexuality and fertility.[8]

Danae's imprisonment in a tower also points to recurrent motifs in the relationships between gender and gold, such as the 'gilded cage' of the palace, country house or middle-class home where women are trapped as decorative objects of male pleasure. This objectification and conflation of women's bodies with the aesthetic and material values of gold, is evident in Grimm's fairy tale 'Rapunzel' – 'let down your hair, so that I may climb the golden stair'- where Rapunzel's hair is both a visual symbol of her youthful beauty and an object which is appropriated by the enchantress and the prince. In Christina Rossetti's 1862 poem, *Goblin Market*, the heroine's loose, luxuriant hair – a Victorian symbol of unrestrained female sexuality – is used to invoke the dangers of prostitution and moral fall in the modern city, when the 'merchant' goblins permit the heroine to eat their forbidden fruit if she sells herself: 'you have much gold upon your head…buy from us with a golden curl' (Rossetti, 1468).[9]

Within academic discourse, the 'Golden Age' is an accepted term for describing a historical period that witnessed the production of acclaimed artistic or cultural outputs, including the Spanish Golden Age of the sixteenth century or the Dutch Golden Age in the seventeenth

[7] The Greek myth of Midas and his 'golden touch' (whereby all the king touches turns to gold, including his daughter) appears to be a condemnation of avarice, although the phrase 'the Midas touch' is often used as a term of approval for successful business people in capitalist societies.

[8] See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths: The Complete and Definitive Edition* (Penguin, 2011); Exodus 32; Matthew 2.

[9] See Wilhelm Grimm, Jacob Grimm, Andrew Lang (transl.) 'Rapunzel' (Illustrated Edition) (Kindle edition, 2014); Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*, in Carol T. Christ and Catherine Robson (eds.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume E: The Victorian Age* (W. W. Norton and Company, 2006). See also the Greek myth of the Garden of Hesperides, where golden apples grow, which grant the gift of eternal life and are guarded from theft by beautiful nymphs; they are also a grail quest for Heracles.

century.[10] This category, then, aids periodization and the construction of official narratives about the past, but its meaning and significance remain variable and shifting. My examples above associate cultural value with national identity and prosperity, which may or may not be linked to specific and idealised places. Studies of the Dutch Golden Age observe the development of a vernacular architecture and thus construct an idealised urban culture, rather than a rural idyll. However, in British Golden Age detective fiction of the 1920s-1940s, a specific type of place – the country house – is often the scene of the crime. In works such as Margery Allingham's *Dancers in Mourning* (1937) or Agatha Christie's *The Body in the Library* (1942), the country-house setting is a metonym for a nostalgic ideal of Englishness – aristocratic, white, rural – whose decline during the inter-war period symbolises the national anxieties that are also represented by the disruptive crime. Detective fiction, of course, has often been regarded as a popular or middlebrow genre which has nevertheless been subjected to critical scrutiny and both academic and popular texts employ the 'Golden Age' designation.[11] In this example, then, the term can allude to the cultural value of the works' literary merits, and/or to their popular appeal and their portrayal of a specific historical moment and social milieu.

The development of media technologies – photography, film and television – has also shaped the meanings and functions of the Golden Age. For example, the first colour photography system, the autochrome, was marketed in 1907. The autochrome produced muted colours with a golden tint, and hence the photographs evoke the hazy light of a warm summer afternoon. Indeed, the photographs required bright light and long exposure times, so they were always taken outside on sunny days. These images, then, may have influenced subsequent imaginings of the Edwardian era as a long summer preceding the catastrophe of war.[12] However, the English country house, so often linked to the 'long summer' of the Edwardian era or *la belle époque*, was criticised for its increasingly museum-like function in Vita Sackville-West's *The Edwardians* (1930) and the myth of the Edwardian Golden Age was similarly undermined in

[10] See, for example, J. L. Price, *Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Reaktion Books, 2012); Hugh Thomas, *The Golden Age: The Spanish Empire of Charles V* (Penguin, 2011).

[11] See Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (Routledge, 1991); Peter Haining, *The Golden Age of Crime Fiction* (Prion Books Ltd, 2012).

[12] See Bertrand Lavedrine and Jean-Paul Gandolfo, 'The Autochrome Process - From Concept to Prototype', *History of Photography* (Summer 1994): 120-28.

another novel, L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* (1953), where the splendid rituals of banquets and costumes conceal class hierarchy and repressed sexuality. In the 'heritage' films of 1980s Britain, though, the Merchant Ivory production team used warm, soft-focus lighting and wide-angled shots of country piles to re-create E. M. Forster's Edwardian novels for a global television market. ITV's hugely popular *Downton Abbey* seems to be re-inventing this genre and its privileging of a pre-war, aristocratic, rural Golden Age for a twenty-first century media landscape and audience whose interest in this era is now being modified by global centennial reflections on the outbreak of war in 1914.[13]

The revival of heritage drama in the twenty-first century raises the question of how, why and when 'Golden Age' narratives are constructed. A glance at some of the 'Golden Ages' of film and television suggests that they cannot be easily assimilated to any single, overarching narrative of national culture and identity. The Hollywood Golden Era (c.1927-1963) is generally characterised by the dominance of classical narrative style - which creates an illusory sense of reality and the possibility of viewer escapism - than by a focus on one theme, time or place, or by the artistic excellence of the films. The Golden Age of British television drama (c.1965-1985) produced many adaptations of Shakespeare and canonical novels, but is lauded equally, if not more so, for its original plays on contemporary social and regional problems, such as Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home* (1966), which dealt with homelessness.[14] While many scholars and cultural commentators, then, point to political and social conditions which may encourage nostalgia (the United States recession of the early 1990s, the 1970s recession in Britain, Thatcherism and 'Victorian values'), the multi-decade longevity of these 'Golden Ages' indicates a range of loyalties, identifications and structures of feeling amongst producers, critics and audiences which are continually

[13] See, for example, Ismail Merchant and James Ivory, *A Room With A View* (1985) and *Howards' End* (1992) and Andrew Higson, 'Re-presenting the national past: nostalgia and pastiche in the heritage film', in Lester Friedman (ed.), *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism* (University of Minnesota Press and UCL Press, 1993) and Claire Monk, *Heritage Film Audiences: Period Films and Contemporary Audiences in the UK* (Edinburgh University Press, 2011). 'BBC – World War One', http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww1, accessed 20/1/14.

[14] See Richard Jewell, *The Golden Age of Cinema: Hollywood, 1929-1945* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007); John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

shaped by new technologies and social conditions.[15] For example, the 'Golden Age' may refer to a particular kind of viewing experience for some audiences (in a previous televisual world of three terrestrial channels, which the nation watched together) rather than to specific televisual genres, times or places.[16] While the contemporary and subsequent designation of an age as 'golden' is usually made by academics and critics, it is worth remembering that the Golden Age is ultimately a subjective concept and experience.

This subjectivity - and the structure of feelings which generate a perception of an era as golden or idealised - informs my discussion of nostalgia. One notable account of the Golden Age which illustrates the range of possible depictions and responses is Erwin Panofsky's celebrated essay, '*Et in Arcadia Ego*: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition' (1936), which discusses two pictorial versions of Arcadia by the French painter Nicholas Poussin. In the first version (1627), the shepherds stumble upon a death's head; in the second version (1637-38), the skull is still present, but the shepherds seem to be meditating on the tomb's inscription, *Et in Arcadia Ego*. Both these visual renditions, and Panofsky's musings on the correct translation of this phrase – 'Death is even in Arcadia' or 'I, too, was born, or lived, in Arcady' – indicate the rich metaphorical connotations of word and image, both singly and in combination, inflected in this example by the uncertainties of linguistic translation which underscore the difficulties of historical and cultural translation. The second painting is particularly compelling because the viewer is mirroring the reading and meditative processes of Poussin's shepherds; each reading is personal, subjective and unknowable to others. Furthermore, the various paintings, translations and interpretations point to the range of responses to decline and death, both latent themes in the Golden Age narrative. These

[15] See Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (Basic Books, 1993), which examines nostalgia for the 1950s; Clare Lockhart, *The 1970s' Edwardian Resurrection* (BBC4, 2007); for analyses of the 1980s heritage industry, see Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (Methuen, 1987), Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (Verso, 1985) and cf. Higson (1993).

[16] I suggested in an earlier essay that many reviewers of the 2002 television adaptation of John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* expressed nostalgic regret for the viewing experience of the 1967 BBC version, rather than for the Victorian setting of the drama. See Sarah Edwards, 'The Rise and Fall of the Forsytes: from neo-Victorian to neo-Edwardian marriage', in Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben (eds), *Neo-Victorian Families: Gender, Sexual and Cultural Politics* (Rodopi, 2011).

themes are often explored in retrospective accounts of a time which precedes crisis or tragedy, a time which is often re-imagined as Edenic. Philip Larkin's 'MCMXC', which recalls the summer Bank Holiday weekend before the outbreak of war in August 1914, invokes the Golden Age themes of benign community and sunshine to lament 'never such innocence before or since/Never such innocence again' (Larkin, 25-26). In these scenarios, Arcadia's citizens may by blissfully ignorant, or they may anticipate change. Panofsky observed this range of possible responses, noting that 'the Arcadians are not so much warned of an implacable future as they are immersed in mellow meditation of a beautiful past' (Panofsky, 258). This state of melancholy remembrance is a much more prominent feature in the history of nostalgia.[17]

The concept of nostalgia was originally associated with sickness and death. Although the sentiment is often associated with the pleasurable idealisation of a Golden Age, the word 'nostalgia' derives from the Greek term *nostos*, which means to return to one's native land, and *algos*, which refers to pain, suffering or grief. The term was first used in a 1688 medical thesis by Johannes Hofer, to describe the physical illness endured by Swiss mercenaries on deployment, who were believed by Hofer to be suffering from homesickness. It was not until the later nineteenth century that the modern meanings of nostalgia began to prevail and the concept became primarily associated with yearning for a past time. While it is undoubtedly true that some nostalgic representations are also linked to specific places – such as the Edwardian country house - nostalgia is essentially a structure of feeling, a mode of remembering and, as Tammy Clewell observes, an interpretative stance. It is a much more recent concept that has been linked by many scholars to the emergence of modernity, industrialisation and urbanisation. Steiner (1974) described 'nostalgia for the absolute' caused by a decline in religious faith, while Davis (1979) understands it as a sociological phenomenon, a restitutive link by which people can preserve their identities in the face of unprecedented cultural change. Furthermore, people can experience nostalgia for a past which is consciously remembered as problematic: for example, *ostalgie*, or yearning for the former East Germany, is generally identified with a desire for security rather than an idealisation of the regime. Nostalgia is frequently linked to mourning, melancholia and trauma, for example in Rebecca West's novel *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), when the shell-shocked hero's amnesia for all events after an

[17] Erwin Panofsky, '*Et in Arcadia Ego*: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition', in Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (University of Chicago Press, 1955); Philip Larkin, 'MCMXIV', in *The Whitsun Weddings* (Faber and Faber, 1964).

idealised 1901 symbolises his mental breakdown and bodily damage. In *The Struggle of the Modern* (1963), poet and critic Stephen Spender characterised contemporary nostalgia as symptomatic of hatred for the present (which could, nevertheless, invigorate the modernist desire to reform literature and culture, to 'make it new', a point to which I will return) [18]

It is important, then, to consider how various imaginings of 'home' and 'sickness' still inform the concept of nostalgia. Perhaps nostalgia might be defined as a desire to return home, whether that might mean a literal place, a previous era or a psychoanalytically-informed notion of home as primal unity and maternal plenitude. This nostalgic stance meshes easily with many aspects of the Golden Age narrative, for example, with nostalgia for a shared cultural history beyond personal memory, such as an era of perceived greatness (Unger et al, 1991; Stern, 1992; Baker and Kennedy, 1994; Havlena and Holak, 1996). Nostalgia has, for this reason, sometimes been defined as a conservative and nationalistic response to social, and technological, change, drawing on features of the Golden Age myth which are less palatable to modern Western sensibilities, such as claims of national or cultural superiority, religiously inspired notions of purity and sin and ahistorical landscapes (Wright, 1985; Hewison, 1987; Higson, 1993). Until recently, nostalgia was not regarded as a worthy subject of academic study, tainted by its associations with the heritage industry and its commodification of the past in film, publishing and museums (Higson, 2003), and by its consequent links to lowbrow or middlebrow forms of cultural production, to emotional rather than intellectual responses and, implicitly, to women. By contrast, the enshrinement of Golden Age periods in academic discourse points to its origins in classical antiquity and religion and its subsequent associations with canonical artists and traditional notions of cultural value.

[18] Johannes Hofer, *Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia*, Anzac C. K. (transl.) (Bull Institute of Historical Medicine, 1934); 2: 376-391; Tammy Clewell (ed), *Modernism and Nostalgia: Bodies, Locations, Aesthetics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); George Steiner, *Nostalgia for the Absolute (*Massey Lectures, 14th series, Toronto: CBC, 1974); Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (Free Press, 1979). On *ostalgie*, see Daphne Berdahl, *On the Social Life of Postsocialism: Memory, Consumption, Germany* (Indiana University Press, 2009); on modernism, see Stephen Spender, *The Struggle of the Modern* (University of California Press, 1963). Jean-Francois Lyotard suggested that modernist discourses were inherently nostalgic: 'modernist aesthetics is an aesthetics of the sublime, though a nostalgic one' (Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 81.

These 'official' Golden Age myths, then, are closely linked to official memorial events that often characterise periods (for example, centenaries of events such as the sinking of HMS *Titanic* or a writer's birth); although such events often inspire nostalgic forms of remembrance, many obscure and unbounded times and places are sites for nostalgia.[19]

Indeed, nostalgia has also been connected with a democratic celebration of working-class or women's histories, which often revive earlier technologies such as traditional crafts and agricultural tools (Samuel, 1994). Similarly, past eras and cultures have provided inspirational models of masculinity and male homosexuality for gay writers such as E. M. Forster and Paul Monette, who re-instates the ideal of classical Greece as a Golden Age in his semi-autobiographical novel *Borrowed Time* (1988). Recent scholarly interest in cultural production and the marketplace, and the deconstruction of high/low oppositions, has led to work such as Elizabeth Outka's account of 'nostalgic authenticity' and the ways in which nostalgia has been an integral element in recreations of the past in a range of texts, architecture and product design (Outka, 2009). The recent rise of memory studies has also led to greater awareness of the subjective and partial processes of remembrance. Scholars have theorised the developing relationships between nostalgia and postmodernism (Jameson, 1989; Hutcheon, 1998; Brown, 2001), suggesting that many nostalgic sentiments are self-consciously escapist and frequently ironic. Svetlana Boym (2001), who writes about the reconstruction of post-Soviet cityscapes, distinguishes 'restorative nostalgia', which would attempt to re-create a past Golden Age, from 'reflective nostalgia' which seeks to combine tradition and modernity to suit contemporary needs. Indeed, nostalgia is often future-oriented and makes a selective use of the past in the service of progressive reform (in, for example, William Morris's medieval fantasy, *News from Nowhere*, 1890, which is set in the future). For Fred Davis (1979), 'first-order' or simple nostalgia for a Golden Age is a different process of remembrance to 'second-order' or reflexive

[19] L. S. Unger, McConocha D.M. and Faier, J.A., 'The use of nostalgia in television advertising: a content analysis', *Journalism Quarterly*, 68.3 (1991): 345-353; B. B. Stern, 'Historical and personal nostalgia in advertising text: *the fin de siècle* effect', *Journal of Advertising*, 21 (1992): 11-22; S. M. Baker and Kennedy, P. F, 'Death by nostalgia: a diagnosis of context-specific cases', *Advances in Consumer Research*, 21 (1994): 169-174; W. J. Havlena and Holak, S. (1996), 'Exploring nostalgia images through the use of consumer collages', *Advances in Consumer Research*, 23 (1996): 35-42; cf. Wright (1985), Hewison (1987), Higson (1993); Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema: The Costume Drama in the 1980s and 1990s* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

nostalgia, or 'third-order' or interpreted nostalgia, which entail the critical examination of nostalgic versions of history and, ultimately, of the concept of nostalgia.[20]

The increasingly atemporal nature of postmodern nostalgia is also evident, as the past can be instantly accessed through saleable objects from the past and, more recently, filmic images. These examples demonstrate, then, the role of technology in the cultural development of nostalgia. The Internet has influenced its temporal and spatial dimensions, making different eras and locations available to users simultaneously, via online purchasing and video uploads. It has also contributed to the development of short-term nostalgia, whereby the minute recording of the past and its cultural change can make recent eras appear dated. The Golden Age of British television, then, is divested of any associations with a primordial state or a distant age: in 2016, this relatively youthful and well-archived medium is a focal point of nostalgia for the 1980s.

The chapters in this book illustrate a variety of ways in which these concepts of Golden Age and nostalgia have evolved, and are still evolving. They suggest that these narratives have shaped the history of Western representational culture, and are continually being re-shaped by new technologies, re-written in diverse texts and re-formalised in retrospective studies of genres and periods. Elizabeth Rogers's essay, 'Shakespeare's *Henry V*: A "Golden" King?', examines a history play which has been a focal point of twentieth-century nostalgic nationalism, largely through its transposition to cinema and to a wartime context by Laurence Olivier – himself an iconic leader, of British stage and screen - in his *Henry V* (1944). Rogers returns to the text, and to the court of Elizabeth I, to argue that Shakespeare's account was shaped by contemporary discourses of propaganda and satire which unsettle its nostalgic elements.

[20] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (Verso, 1994); E. M. Forster, *Maurice* (W. W. Norton and Company, 2005); Elizabeth Outka, *Consuming Traditions: Modernity, Modernism and the Commodified Authentic* (Oxford University Press, 2009); Linda Hutcheon, *Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern* (University of Toronto English Library, 1998); Frederic Jameson, 'Nostalgia for the Present', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 88.2 (1989): 527; Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, 2001); Stephen Brown, *Marketing – The Retro Revolution* (Sage, 2001); cf. Fred Davis (1979). For a more recent account of the role that nostalgia has played in the history of the left, see Alastair Bonnett, *Left in the Past: Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2010).

Emma Kennedy's essay, 'Present Mysteries, Removed Occasions? Idealised Magnificence and Political Pragmatism in Ben Jonson's *The Golden Age Restored*', also examines the subject of idealised monarchy. She considers how the form of the masque was deployed in the court of King James I to mirror and enact factional tensions. The generic component of the antimasque safely enabled the performance of disruption in a removed world, while the narrative drive towards the renewal of the Golden Age validated the authority of James's kingship. Kennedy also draws attention to the use of space in the masque performance to underscore these themes.

Jeffrey W. Smith's 'Yearning for Home: Memory and Meaning in George MacDonald's Fiction', returns to the association of nostalgic longing with home by reflecting on how the nineteenth-century Scottish novelist infuses this association with spiritual and religious significance. Smith demonstrates how the formal and thematic structures of MacDonald's novels create a universe in which 'going home' and the parent/child relationship are of crucial importance to the protagonist. In these works, 'home' connotes both the spiritual fatherhood of Christ and the actual Scottish homeland of his childhood, while reflecting on one's personal past becomes a valuable spiritual exercise.

Caitlin E. McDonald's essay, '"I am Big. It's the Pictures that got Small": The Talkies Discuss the Silent Era', considers how films produced towards the end of the 'Golden Age' of Hollywood (*Sunset Boulevard*, 1950 and *Singin' in the Rain*, 1951) are themselves characterised by nostalgia for the silent film era. She then goes on compare more recent evocations of silent film: *The Artist* and *Hugo* (both released in 2011). McDonald observes several common features of these re–creations: the function of nostalgic longing as displacement for contemporary crises (such as the introduction of television); the blurring of factual and fictional representations of the past and successive 'layers' of nostalgia, whereby contemporary depictions of silent film are mediated through (and are nostalgic for) earlier films such as *Singin'*; and increasing contemporary fascination with the technologies of silent film.

Selma Purac examines a postmodern destabilisation of the classical Golden Age in her reading of John Banville's novel *The Untouchable* (1997). In 'Undercutting Arcadia: Banville, Espionage, and Poussin', she demonstrates how the first-person narrator seeks solace in Nicolas Poussin's paintings of Arcadia and believes in the mimetic (and mediating) powers of seventeenth-century art to evoke a lost world. Purac examines the novel's strategies for undermining the concepts of stable representation and identity, such as the use of masks and spying, critiques

of Stoical principles and, once more, the blurring of factual and fictional narratives.

In 'End to End Action: Canadian Hockey Fiction and the Retreat to The Golden Age', Robert Wooldridge examines the ways in which this sub-genre of twentieth-century fiction has been shaped by pastoral, a Golden Age narrative which focuses especially on place. Wooldridge demonstrates how these novels and short stories enact the 'retreat and return movement' that characterise pastoral writings, by presenting the rink as the ideal 'otherworld' which exists both in the present and in the past time of childhood. He shows how the rink embodies the freedom and creativity of Arcadia and functions as an implicit critique of the materialistic world of professional hockey. Wooldridge also examines how these prose works employ visual and sensuous imagery to evoke the pastoral scene.

Christopher Kydd provides another perspective on the relationships between film, history and nostalgia in '"You're Goddamn Right I'm Living in the Fucking Past": History at the Pleasure of the Coen Brothers'. This essay specifically addresses the postmodern representation of history in cinema, by drawing on the seminal work of Linda Hutcheon. Kydd demonstrates how the Coen brothers' *oeuvre* is highly intertextual and layered, drawing on fictional and filmic representations of the past, evoking both historical and fictional characters, and working within a variety of genres and historical settings in order to problematize their conventions. Kydd's analysis suggests that the Coen brothers enact an ironic and self-conscious nostalgia through their recurrent concern with, and undermining of, conventional representations of the past.

Finally, Chris Murray's essay, 'All that Glisters…Nostalgia and Censorship in the Golden Age of Comics', discusses another popular art form whose history has been conceptualised as a 'Golden Age' narrative. Murray describes how this narrative has distorted accounts of the comic's development and reception. The historical events of later decades (such as the Vietnam War) led to perceptions of the 1930s-50s as a period of primordial innocence and Murray also observes how the concept of childhood, and child readers, was integral to debates about censorship. This final essay in the collection also returns to my initial questions about the relationships between nostalgic and Golden Age discourses: how they become interwoven in different historical and cultural contexts to produce an array of effects, informing both the 'utopian zeal' and 'fundamentalist ideology' of political rhetoric and comforting personal imaginings of home. This book, then, seeks no overarching explanations but rather

expands our conceptualisation and understanding of Golden Ages past, present and future.

SHAKESPEARE'S *HENRY V*: A 'GOLDEN' KING?

ELIZABETH ROGERS

> Shakespeare's history plays focused entirely on the character of kings. In Richard II (1597) and Henry VI (three parts, 1591-1594) Shakespeare exposed the harm that weak rulers inflicted on their states, while in Henry IV (two parts, 1598-1600) and Henry V (1599) he highlighted the benefits to be derived from strong rulers.[1]

When researching Shakespeare's history plays a major question that arises is whether they are intended as propaganda to support the monarchy, or as an attack on it. Lawrence Olivier claimed that *Henry V* (1599) was intended as propaganda to create a feeling of patriotism in a time of war with Ireland and animosity with Spain[2], and as such, used this approach in his film (1944). It is certainly true that *Henry V* mirrors an England in which politics and historical forces worked together to create the Elizabethan ideal of monarchy. However, whilst both Henry and Elizabeth can be seen as good monarchs in various ways, the play shows that they are also *idealised* monarchs. This chapter will examine the relationship between idealism, nostalgia as political discourse, which can include an element of satire, and the nature of propaganda as idealism mobilised for political ends.

Both Henry V and Elizabeth I began their reigns with their country left in a poor state by previous monarchs: Henry IV had created tensions with Wales and Mary I had lost Calais; this devastated England. Despite this, it is evident that both Henry V and Elizabeth I left England in a better state than they had found it.[3] The plays *Richard II*, *Henry IV Part One*, *Henry IV Part Two*, and *Henry V* show the transition of England

---

[1] M. Kishlansky, P. Geary, and P. O'Brien, *Civilisation in the West* (New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006), p.487.

[2] R. Olivier, *Inspirational Leadership* (London: Spiro Press, 2002). Further references in text.

[3] J. J. Norwich, *Shakespeare's Kings* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2000), p.6. Further references in text.

from a poor state, as it was when Elizabeth first took to the throne, to a strong state:

> The first play is a picture of a sick state in which appearance and reality are at odds and the last play is a picture of a healthy state in which political appearance and reality are unified in terms of the Elizabethan ideal of monarchy.[4]

This pattern is mirrored in the plays *Henry VI Part One*, *Henry VI Part Two*, *Henry VI Part Three*, *Richard III*, and *Henry VIII*. In seeing the Wars of the Roses played out through *Henry VI 1 + 2* and *Richard III*, the pageant play *Henry VIII* appears to show how the country is now stable. However, the fact that Shakespeare did not write a play about Henry VII can be seen as quite significant. Whilst it can be argued that Shakespeare felt that Henry VII did not have anything too dramatic occur in his reign, unlike Henry VI and Richard III whose reigns ended with battle, it can also be argued that Shakespeare did not want to draw attention to the fact that Elizabeth I's grandfather was an illegal usurper, much like Henry IV.

Shakespeare's *Henry V* appears to show a glorified monarch and a 'Golden Age' of Medieval warfare but it can also be interpreted as a *satire* of war, imperialism and the monarchy. The parallels between the reigns of Henry V (1413-1422) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603) are clear, most evidently through the battle of Agincourt (1415) depicted in the play, which can be seen as an allusion to the unlikely English victory against the Spanish Armada (1588). Henry V is described in C. Hibbert's *Agincourt* as the 'true monarch of Elizabethan idealism'[5], using the battle of Agincourt to create a feeling of patriotism amongst Elizabethan society (p. 136). However, this play also seems to challenge the concept of this 'Golden Age' and questions whether Henry V, and by extension Elizabeth I, can be defined as an ideal monarch. Gerald Gould believes that far from being propaganda this play is intended as a mockery of war.[6] Considering Gould's claim, we may be able to argue that Shakespeare was criticising, instead of idealising, Elizabeth's wars. After Elizabeth's cruel refusal to pay the navy after the Spanish Armada, it is likely that Shakespeare found the portrayal of war as 'glorious' ironic, and is thus challenging this view

[4] L. F. Dean, 'Richard II: The State and The Image of The Theatre' cited in *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by L. F. Dean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.159. Further references in text.
[5] C. Hibbert, *Agincourt* (London: Phoenix, 2003), p.136
[6] G. Gould 'A New Reading of *Henry V'* in *English Review* 128 (1919), p.42.

in *Henry V*.[7] However, Elizabeth herself seems to have identified with Henry V, and she reportedly loved the play (Norwich, p. 6).

The reasons for this are not hard to detect. Henry V and Elizabethan had much in common as rulers. Both were descended from usurpers (Henry IV and Henry VII respectively), and thus would have had anxieties regarding their claim to the throne. Alison Weir argues that Henry V 'removed the taint of usurpation that adhered to his dynasty […] Certainly, England had not been so well governed since the time of Edward III'.[8] The same can be said for Elizabeth I, who interestingly kept the Westminster Portrait of Richard II in her chambers.[9] Richard II's pose in this portrait is later echoed by Elizabeth I in her coronation portrait, thus suggesting that she wanted to emulate this monarch as Stephen Orgel comments:

> Elizabeth's coronation portrait returns to the model of the last English monarch with an unquestioned claim to the throne […] The painting in short, iconographically abolishes a century and a half of both English history and royal iconography, and returns us to the last moment when the legitimacy of the monarchy was not a problem. (p. 12)

This indicates that Elizabeth was looking to emulate Richard II as the most recent monarch who had not descended from a usurper, and that she felt that the English people would respond with a sense of nostalgia to her identification with earlier monarchs, like Henry V, who had supposedly created Golden Ages during their reigns. The idea of using Richard II in this way was not new. It is something that Henry V also did: 'He sought to present himself as Richard's political heir'.[10] This implies that during Henry V's reign, the usurpation of Richard II was viewed in a negative light; as Richard II was not a tyrant, outright rebellion was illegal.[11] This is seen in the way Henry apologises for his father's usurpation:

---

[7] A. Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p.395. Further references in text.

[8] A. Weir, *Lancaster & York: The Wars of The Roses* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p.58.

[9] S. Orgel, 'Prologue: I am Richard II' in *Representations of Elizabeth I in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by Alessandra Petrina and Laura Tosi (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.12. Further references in text.

[10] M. Bennett, *Richard II and the Revolution of 1399*, (Sutton: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2006), p.207.

[11] E. M. W. Tillyard, 'Richard II' cited in *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. by L. F. Dean, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.156

> […] Not to-day, O Lord,
> O, not to-day, think not upon the fault
> My father made in compassing the crown!
> I Richard's body have interred anew;[12] (IV.i 248-251)

The above lines also refer to the fact that Henry V reinterred Richard's body in Westminster, showing that Henry had respect for the late king. Interestingly, in *Henry V* there are references to the Black Prince, firstly by Canterbury and Ely:

> And your great-uncle's, Edward the Black Prince
> Who on the French ground play'd a tragedy,
> Making defeat on the full power of France. (I.ii 107-109)

The way the Black Prince is described as Henry's 'great-uncle' is used to justify his claim to the throne of England, and, by extension, Elizabeth's, in that it eradicates any reference to usurpation. The Black Prince is also referenced by Llewellyn:

> [...] and your great-uncle Edward the Plack
> Prince of Wales, as I have read in the chronicles,
> Fought a most prave pattle here in France. (IV.vii 77-79)

This again encourages the audience to compare Henry to another great leader and, interestingly, a Plantagenet. Robyn Bolam suggests that Shakespeare was a supporter of the Plantagenet rulers (Richard III). He did not cast a Tudor as the ultimate hero; instead he gave the role to a Plantagenet, Henry V, the warrior king who united England and won France.[13] The parallels between The Black Prince Edward III and Henry V in the play *Henry V* indicate that Shakespeare wanted his audience to view Henry V as a new Plantagenet King. This could explain why Shakespeare emphasises the negative relationship between Henry IV and his son in *Henry IV parts 1 and 2*, and why Henry V apologises for his father's usurpation; to emphasise the differences between the two, making Henry IV Lancastrian and his son characterised as a Plantagenet (Bolam, p.151). Here, the forging of an ideal of a Golden Age is not just based on nostalgia for the past, but a subtle negotiation of loyalties and a manipulation of

[12] W. Shakespeare, *Henry the Fifth*, ed. by J Bate and E Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) (4.1). Further references in text.
[13] R. Bolam, 'Richard II: Shakespeare and the languages of the stage', cited in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. by M. Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.151. Further references in text.

attitudes. Yet the fact that the comparison is brought forwards by Canterbury, Ely and Llewellyn makes it problematic. Canterbury and Ely are portrayed as dishonest and scheming: they encourage Henry to invade France to prevent the Church from losing money to him. Additionally, Llewellyn is depicted as a buffoon, repeating the term 'look you' and pronouncing things comically:

> Llewellyn: Ay, he was porn at Monmouth, Captain Gower. What call you the town's name where Alexander the Pig was born!
> Gower: Alexander the Great.
> Llewellyn: Why, I pray you, is not a pig great? (*Henry V*, 5.7)

This is an example of the audience being invited to laugh at Llewellyn, leading to the view that the audience cannot take his opinions seriously, thus muting his comparison of Henry and the Black Prince. This makes one question whether Henry can be seen as a strong ruler like the Black Prince.

This play can therefore be interpreted as a satire of war, rather than a glorification. This is most obvious in the inclusion of the four captains, Gower, Jamy, MacMorris, and Llewellyn. On the surface, the four captains can be interpreted as comic relief; the audience is clearly supposed to laugh at the variety of accents used by the characters. It is likely that this is to distract from the harrowing war scenes whilst dispelling the threat of the Irish (who Elizabeth was at war with) by portraying the Irish character as an inconsequential buffoon. Furthermore, the four captains can be seen as fulfilling the myth of the Grail Kingdom, where a hero emerges and unites England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and France (Olivier, p.109). However, the four captains also serve to emphasise the lack of unity between these countries.

The inclusion of Jamy, the Scottish captain, is often interpreted as prophetic; as Elizabeth had not provided an heir to the throne, Elizabethan's possibly saw a union with Scotland as imminent. However, both Jamy and MacMorris disappear from the play before the battle of Agincourt. It seems significant that, as a result, Ireland and Scotland are absent from this great English victory. This adds an ambiguous and unsettling quality to the play: did they die in battle, or worse, could they have allied themselves with the French? As Scotland had a strong relationship with France, the latter is probable. Furthermore, the continued presence of the character Llewellyn serves to emphasise the absence of the Scottish and Irish captains, whilst also reminding the audience that the Welsh are now allies of England. The audience sees Henry acknowledge that Llewellyn is a man of integrity: 'There is much care and valour in this

Welshman', which further casts doubt over the reliability of Scotland and Ireland (*Henry V*, IV.i 80). Indeed, Shakespeare's use of anti-Irish lexis such as 'knave' (meaning man-servant, a term used to describe the Irish) seems to confirm the interpretation of the Irish being a threat to English prosperity and success (III.iii 60).

Likewise, the formidable enemy Glendower is an interesting character, in that he was clearly a considerable threat to the state, yet Shakespeare has him practicing magic to make him laughable. We also see Hotspur mocking the Welsh accent, which in productions of Shakespeare's plays is always satirised.[14] In *Henry V*, we see the proudly Welsh Llewellyn mocked. This could suggest that the Welsh were merely laughable, but it seems more likely that they were actually seen as a threat. Shakespeare's choice of the name 'Llewellyn' for his Welsh Captain is interesting in that the last known Prince of Wales was Llywellyn ap Gruffyd (Llywellyn the Last), and before him there had been the renowned Llywellyn ap Lorwerth (Llywellyn the Great). Both these princes were held as inspirational by a lot of Welsh patriots, so in using the name Llewellyn Shakespeare is not only mocking the last great Welsh leaders, but is also reminding his audience of the threat that they posed. However, in *Henry IV*, Glendower (or in Welsh, Glyn Dwr) is killed. This could be seen as Shakespeare attempting to kill off the Welsh threat, and emphasising that the Welsh are no longer a threat by portraying Llewellyn as a buffoon. However, no-one actually knows what happened to Glendower as he is rumoured to have retreated to Wales and lived into old age.[15]

It is argued by many Historians, including John Davies, that Elizabeth I was of Welsh descent, yet like her father, Henry VIII, played this down despite being known to speak the Welsh language.[16] This was not a common language for people to learn at this time, which indicates that Elizabeth I did have an interest in the culture of her distant ancestors. It is not known why Elizabeth I played down her Welsh descent, but it may have been to avoid association with the usurping Henry VII, who also had a bad reputation due to his poor treatment of Katherine of Aragon, or it could be to avoid association with a previous enemy.[17]

---

[14] This was seen in the 2003 production of *Henry V* by the National Theatre in London, as well as previously in The Globe Theatre's 1997 production.
[15] J. Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1994), p.203.
[16] Davis, p. 141; A. Weir, *Children of England: The Heirs of King Henry VIII* (London: Pimlico, 1997), p.10. Further references in text.
[17] A. Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, (London: Vintage, 2007), p.67.