‘To re-enter the Temple by means of the Gate called Beautiful’: new approaches to prostitution, criminality and rehabilitation? The work of the *Committee for Social Investigation and Reform*, c.1913-1921

Introduction

Prostitution may be the oldest profession in the world, but social attitudes towards it have changed considerably in the twentieth century. Legal frameworks that criminalise prostitution afford one means of gauging attitudes; the outlook of social workers and institutions dealing with the issue provide another. The intersection of new currents in psychiatry with older Social Purity traditions makes the period just preceding and during WWI a particularly apposite era for study. Taking as its basis a previously unstudied organisation, the Committee for Social Investigation and Reform (CSIR), this thesis examines the changing stance of philanthropists and state officials towards the ‘social evil’ in the time of the Suffrage campaigns and the dawn of psychoanalysis.

Prospectuses, reports and newspaper articles reveal the complex interplay of religious, scientific and utopian thought underpinning the CSIR’s endeavours; whilst study of their Hand-weaving Studios and rural Women’s Training Colony (WTC) highlights groundbreaking experiments with therapeutic treatment, and a novel optimism in the malleability of the criminal mind. In the CSIR, this study has uncovered a previously unrecognised example of very early art therapy, and challenges established accounts of the development of British psychiatry and therapeutic communities.

Archives kept by the Home Office and Metropolitan Police, meanwhile, illuminate state regard for the CSIR’s work and relations with reforming philanthropists in general. Though conducive to penal reform, Home Office taste for change in this era was tempered by institutional inertia, such as old Missions’

dominance of the probation service, and the CSIR struggled to integrate itself. There was no sudden shift from a paradigm of religious rescue work to one of secular social service. Yet, the CSIR provides a useful example of how social workers of the period called upon a wide range of philanthropists, magistrates, MPs, and state officials to champion their case. Those involved included Dr Helen Wilson, President of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene before becoming Chairman of the WTC; veteran social worker Miss M.L. Shaw, who became warden of the Colony; Margaret Odeh, wife of Paul Nash and a key figure in the foundation of the CSIR in 1913; and Arthur St John, follower of Tolstoy and founder of the Penal Reform League.

An element of utopian idealism, resonant with a pre-war 'New Age' spirit, can also be unearthed. Furthermore, campaigns for lessening the stigma surrounding female criminality – of which the CSIR is a prime example – remain an under-acknowledged area of the pre-war feminist movement.

Magdalenes and missions

Institutions that addressed prostitution in the late nineteenth century were generally highly punitive, and overwhelmingly religious. 'Magdalenes' had existed since the mid-eighteenth century[1] for the internment of 'fallen women' and placed a high price on female sexual sin. Concern was undoubtedly heightened by Victorian religiosity, for two major reasons: firstly, the great growth in evangelical outreach of the churches in the mid-nineteenth century; and secondly, the 'feminisation' of British Christianity, which came to place a much higher premium on the sacred nature of the female than it did on the male[2]. Within this atmosphere Magdalenes, and their equivalents, flourished and spread. Almost without exception, they were run by convents, viewed their subjects in terms of souls requiring redemption, and sometimes

[1] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727 – 1783* (1989), pp. 142-5.
[2] Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (2001), *passim.*

sought to 'institutionalise' prostitutes permanently, with little hope of return to the outside world.

One such example was the House of Mercy, established by the Clewer Sisters in Windsor, in the 1850s. Gladstone, now renowned for his secret efforts to 'rescue' prostitutes, also had a hand in its foundation[3]. Whilst many of its inmates were placed in domestic service after 18 months' tenure, others chose – or were forced – to stay for longer. As a Sister declared, 'we are never satisfied to let them go 'till they become settled Communicants.'[4] The primary aim, therefore, of the House of Mercy was to produce women who lived as models of Christian virtue; worldly independence was of secondary importance. Throughout their lives in the House, the women were reminded of their past sins, taking the name of *Magdalene*, the repentant harlot of the Bible: today, inmates' gravestones still bear the term.[5] The harshness of the Magdalene regimes, particularly the Catholic Magdalene laundries in Ireland, is only now starting to gain a public airing.[6]

The aims of atonement and redemption were not confined to religious Orders but also pervaded the much broader sphere of urban social work in the later 1800s. Women who solicited but were spared a prison sentence were often signed over to police court missionaries, devout Christians almost without exception, who did their utmost to prevent recidivism. Charitable Homes were founded, with increasing frequency from the 1850s on, for containing and reforming prostitutes, employing them in needlework and laundry labour.

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[3] Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (1995), p.76, p.308.
[4] Quoted at http://www.clewervillage.co.uk/The%20Convent.htm [30 Jan 2006]; see also Valerie Bonham, *A Place in Life: The Clewer House of Mercy, 1849-83* (1992).
[5] Ibid.
[6] See, for instance, Peter Mullan's broadly accurate film, *Magdalene Sisters* (2002).

State Regulation of Vice, and after – medical or social reasons?

With particular force from the 1860s onwards, thanks to the passage of the Contagious Diseases (CD) Acts (1864 – 85), the authority of the British state was brought to bear on prostitution. The reason for this was not so much moral fervour as concern for public health, national efficiency and military effectiveness, as the spread of venereal diseases in the later 1800s particularly affected the armed services. Prostitutes were assumed to be major carriers of VD and were subjected to forcible examination, with many more being sent for virtual incarceration in the Lock Hospitals (an earlier innovation, but much expanded in the 1860s).[7] Though a massive campaign, headed by Josephine Butler, secured the repeal of the CD Acts, the Social Purity movements that emerged in their wake had a conservative, moralising aspect of their own. Medical concerns were conflated with a desire for chastity and moral rectitude, epitomised in the phrase 'social hygiene'. Whilst this trend has been well documented[8], less has been written about social work in the Edwardian period, and the impact that the Suffrage and women's rights movements had on attitudes to prostitution. This study suggests that the relationship was complicated. Many feminists pushed for greater focus on the male client over the prostitute, such as Christabel Pankhurst, who in *The Great Scourge* prescribed 'Votes for Women and Chastity for Men' to be the cure for both VD and solicitation[9]. Yet social workers were still wont to focus on women. Their approach, however, became considerably more sympathetic, reacting against both state compulsion and the moralising message of the old missions.

[7] J. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society* (1980), pp.57-65.
[8] F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in C19th England* (1980), pp.182-221; S.K. Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (1987), pp.60-79.
[9] C. Pankhurst, *The Great Scourge and How To End It* (1913), p.vii.

This liberal reassessment of prostitution coincided with signs that the British state was beginning to favour rehabilitation over punishment in its criminal policy, with the appointment of the reformist Ruggles-Brise as Prisons Commissioner (1895), and the start of statutory probation (1907). But what was the situation with the organisations actually performing rescue work? Were such trends imposed, or initiated at the grassroots? Study of the CSIR helps illuminate such issues.

'The most advanced scientific treatment'[10]: the CSIR and psychiatry

The classic sociological model describing change in social work at this time is that it was a 'transition period', from a religious paradigm to a secular one. Adopting the language of 'paradigm shifts', developed by Thomas Kuhn to explain moments of historic caesura in science[11], social historians in the 1960s tended to view the onset of psychiatry, penal reform, and more optimistic appraisals of the worth of the criminal, as sudden and inevitable. Woodroofe, in her 1962 account *From Charity to Social Work*, presents very clearly this model of transition, from a paradigm of Christian missionaries pursuing charity as a means to saving souls, to one of secular socialists aiming to remould minds. A tellingly-named chapter, 'The Psychiatric Deluge', portrays social work as being overwhelmed by a nascent psychiatry – and in particular, psychoanalysis – in the second decade of the twentieth century[12].

This approach has come under sustained criticism in more recent years, particularly by those who, like Edward Shorter, have sought to correct the hubris of Sixties historians too enamoured by the 'inevitable triumph' of psychoanalysis. Today, as psychoanalysis languishes as an increasingly discredited discipline within psychiatry, the historical revisionists have begun circling[13]. This study supports a

[10] WTC Prospectus (c.1916), BRO, D/EX 774/1/1
[11] T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).
[12] K. Woodroofe, *From Charity to Social Work* (1962), esp. pp.118-147.
[13] Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry* (1997).

more gradualist view, which sees the persistence of missionary concerns as coexisting with a desire to take on board new, 'scientific' methodologies. But it does not merely seek to muddy the waters. There were clearly certain entrenched assumptions and institutions in the field of social work that, once breached, could precipitate a decisive shift away from the old Missions. Rather than be content with abstractions such as 'paradigm shift' or 'tipping-point', this study looks for the precise vehicles for such change.

The Colony's publicity material strongly conveys the impression that its endeavour falls neatly into the 'modernising' category, proclaiming

> …Disciplinary methods of a machine-like character… should be superseded by systems of scientific reformatory training.[14]

And again:

> The scientific spirit which during the past few years has changed the character of all social work…[15]

The inspirations cited by the Committee also suggest an endorsement of the novel. The CSIR was particularly enamoured by an innovative educational facility recently begun, in 1913, at Batcombe on the south coast: 'Some features [of the WTC] have been adopted from the Little Commonwealth in Dorset; and Mr Homer Lane has given a good deal of help.'[16] Homer Lane was an American psychiatrist with a particular interest in Freud's theories of child development. In helping to set up the LC, a cross between a school and a reformatory for juvenile delinquents, Lane hoped to observe the behaviour of asocial children and socialise them through application of the therapeutic methods of psychoanalysis. In particular, Lane allowed great freedom of expression and action, aiming to remove repressive adult authority and hence

[14] WTC Prospectus (c.1916), BRO, D/EX 774/1/1.
[15] CSIR Prospectus, (c.1916), NA, HO45/22774.
[16] H. Wilson, letter (17 Nov. 1917), NA, HO45/22774

promote responsibility through self-governance. Besides providing advice and an example, Lane was also on the Provisional Executive Committee of the Women's Training Colony.

The debt owed to Lane's experiments by the CSIR is plain to see in their prescriptions of greater liberty and individualised treatment for their charges. 'One underlying principle will characterise all the work done in the Colony; there will be no cast-iron system'[17], proclaimed one prospectus. This lack of rigid goals continued to underpin the WTC throughout its existence; in late 1917 the Warden wrote that 'the Colony is largely in the nature of an experiment, and, as such, no hard and fast rules can be drawn up.'[18] Even by November 1918 the road ahead seems indistinct: 'I am just beginning to see the outline of the far distant shore of the ocean, on which… the Colony [has been] launched.'[19] Perhaps the CSIR simply suffered from a lack of forward planning. But its liberality was deliberate, attesting to a spirit that saw the benefits of both empirical testing and letting their charges find their own way:

> …The Colony is an attempt to find the sort of environment *which the girls themselves think will best help them* to… start anew in life's battle[20]. [original emphasis]

Its work further reflected the influence of psychiatry in its high optimism that criminal defects in human behaviour might be ironed out:

> …Yesterday, we assumed the inevitable evil; to-day the tendency is towards the assumption of an inextinguishable good, even in the deeply depraved, even in the outcast[21].

If psychiatry did not truly give such grounds for optimism, it at least portrayed the human mind as malleable, offering the potential for rehabilitation. Such an outlook contrasted with the semi-Calvinist faith of many contemporary Missions, who

[17] WTC Prospectus (c.1916), BRO, D/EX 774/1/1.
[18] Cited in W. Clarke Hall, *The State and the Child* (1917), p.172.
[19] M. Shaw, letter, (19 Nov. 1918), WUA, M85.16C/3/LC/9.
[20] Cited in Clarke Hall, *State*, p.172.
[21] WTC Prospectus (c.1916), BRO, D/EX 774/1/1.

retained an underlying presumption in the ultimate damnation of certain offenders. It conflicted, too, with the more recent assertions of *biological determinism* by the eugenicists, such as the influential criminologist Cesare Lombroso[22], who propounded the hereditary defectiveness of the 'criminal classes'. Psychiatry helped shift the discussion from one of unchanging 'character', genes, and ancestry, to one where the criminal was treated as more individually responsible, but could be altered.

Psychiatry and its predilection for categorisation had, furthermore, aided the breakdown of criminal classification and penal provision. Individualised treatment was coming to be seen as beneficial, and the CSIR was an early champion of the argument that 'one size won't fit all':

> …We see that even for offences that come under the same definition, in the case of A, disciplinary treatment may be indicated… whereas, in the case of B, committed for a similar offence, identical treatment might be sheer injustice, because his degree of responsibility is more subtle…[23]

This same concern influenced the gradual trend of prison reform towards separate institutions for juvenile delinquents, such as the Borstal and the Little Commonwealth, and for women. The CSIR took particular inspiration from penal developments in America, itself increasingly a byword for modernity in pre-war Britain. In its prospectuses, the WTC repeatedly cited US experiments, notably the New York State Institutions at Hudson and Bedford[24]. Both were pioneering women's reformatories (established 1887 and 1901 respectively), deploying psychological methods to analyse their inmates and prescribing outdoor work as treatment. The CSIR was, however, more enamoured by their cures than by their analytic method.

[22] Cesare Lombroso, *L'Homme Criminel* (1895).
[23] WTC Prospectus (c.1916), BRO, D/EX 774/1/1.
[24] Ibid.

In itself, research into prostitution and VD reflected a growing spirit of 'scientific inquiry' in social work, and a conviction that discussion of sex was no longer the preserve of religion. The CSIR's Bureau of Investigation conducted research into the prevalence and causes of prostitution in British cities[25], and digested American investigations like Maud Miner's *The Slavery of Prostitution* (1918)[26].

Thus the CSIR was indeed receptive to the promises of scientific psychiatry. Yet was it merely associating itself with the latest fashion for propagandist reasons, without absorbing its meanings? How far can we see specific influences of scientific schools of thought? How vague were its methods?

A ferment of novelty: psychoanalysis, hydrotherapy, and eugenics

It is clear that whatever the CSIR's general outlook, its practices were not ideologically dogmatic; it was not seeking to implement a specific school of psychiatric theory – such as psychoanalysis – in the same way Homer Lane did in the Little Commonwealth, or like later therapeutic centres, such as the Q-Camps during WWII. The organisation balanced receptivity to scientific ideas against other intellectual trends; and in certain regards its methods contradicted the emphases of modern psychiatric thinking. But it is necessary to view this in the context of the wider psychiatric community by the second decade of the twentieth century, to appreciate the lack of strict rigour that pervaded the profession.

The very recent emergence of Freud's psychoanalytic method had produced great upheavals in psychiatry. Ernest Jones' writings properly introduced psychoanalysis into Britain for the first time[27], in 1913. Along with David Eder –

[25] Letter, F.J. Wakefield, 15 Feb. 1915, NA, MEPO/2/1644.
[26] Letter, Feb. 1918, NA, HO45/22774.

[27] E. Jones, *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (1913).

thought to be the first doctor in England to practise psychoanalysis[28], from c.1912 – Jones founded the London Psycho-Analytical Society in 1913, the same year as the CSIR's inception. There is no evidence to suggest the CSIR adopted explicitly psychoanalytic ideas, despite Homer Lane's influence. Given the ongoing controversies over Freudianism, this was hardly surprising. An outraged medical establishment and bewildered reading public were not encouraged by the psychoanalysts' infighting, which caused Jones to 'purge' the Society of Jung's followers in 1919.

As psychiatry was grappling with Freud's ideas, other therapies competed for popularity. Organicist treatments, such as hydrotherapy, and the administration of electrical currents to the brain, jostled with mental therapies, such as the rest cure. The CSIR seems not to have been too precious about the uniformity of the cures it doled out to its charges. One girl at the Colony became 'very nervy', and was sent to Bournemouth for a week to recover from being 'rather run down'[29]. Bournemouth in 1918 remained renowned as a health resort, where patients were served spring-waters from the Auvergne, hoped to benefit from the bracing sea air, and could partake of hydrotherapy treatments in the sanatoria. The true benefit of these courses for the patients' mental health was highly dubious. And, in succumbing to the language of 'nerves', the Warden of the WTC reveals herself either to have a shaky grasp of mental discomfort, or an attachment to euphemism. Public stigmatisation of mental illness in the nineteenth century led to 'nerves… becom[ing] a euphemism for psychosis.'[30] A matron was employed at the Colony, but the other staff were social workers, not psychiatrists.

[28] DNB entry for David Eder, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/61592
[29] Shaw, letter, (19 Nov. 1918), WUA, M85.16C/3/LC/9.
[30] Shorter, *Psychiatry*, p.116.

Further challenges came from the eugenicists. Forming from a blend of Darwinian ideas and biological psychiatry, eugenics viewed physical and mental retardation as hereditary in nature. The 'feebleminded', by continuing to breed, were contributing to the degeneration of national stock. Prostitutes were often accused of contributing to this decline: a study of 1910, *The Feeble-Minded: A Social Danger*, accused 'prostitutes and ne'er do wells' of out-breeding society's respectable classes[31]. The report was circulated enthusiastically by the then-Home Secretary, Winston Churchill. In casting criminality as heritable, intellectuals like Francis Galton and Lombroso paved the way for eugenicist penal strategies that recommended containment and, in some cases, sterilisation of offenders. The 1913 Mental Deficiency Act even sought to brand single mothers on poor relief as feeble-minded and hence liable for detention[32].

At least three trustees to the Colony were members of the Eugenics Education Society (EES)[33]. This appears paradoxical: rather than espouse rehabilitation, were they not more interested in how the 'criminal classes' might be eliminated through selective breeding? Some eugenicists were, but the proliferation of 'isms' in this period has caused some unfortunate pigeon-holing. Lady Henry Somerset, for instance, was a trustee to the WTC, a member of the EES, and had her own farm colony for inebriate women at Duxhurst. She wrote in her book on Duxhurst in 1913, the year after she attended the First International Eugenics Conference in London: 'There is danger… in the careless statements that are made as to the hereditary predisposition to drunkenness.' For Somerset, '"Heredity" has become a sort of catch-

[31] Cited in N. MacMaster, *Racism in Europe 1870-2000* (2001), p.51.
[32] L. Zedner, *Women, Crime, and Custody in Victorian England* (1991), p.275, p.293.
[33] Trustees on list in Prospectus (c.1916), BRO, D/EX 774/1/1. Lady Henry Somerset: Vice-President of EES, 1909-11: *Eugenics Review* 1909-11. Lady Barrett: on EES council 1917: *ER* 1917. Earl of Lytton: VP of EES, 1909-11: *ER* 1909-11.

word which is often used to avoid personal responsibility.'[34] If paid-up eugenicists could argue this, perhaps historians should be more wary of strict categorisation of contemporary beliefs about the malleability of minds and behaviour. Clearly, reformers were willing to experiment with a wide variety of approaches.

One other aspect of the WTC attested to the influence of eugenicist arguments – the decision to exclude the feeble-minded: 'The Colony is intended for women of minds sufficiently normal to respond to training.'[35] This is not to claim that the CSIR somehow succumbed to false and discriminatory notions of deviancy; despite the arguments of Foucault, true mental illness is undeniable, and very far from being the construct of a conformist society[36]. Even so, this acknowledgement that *some* peoples' disturbed behaviour could not be reformed by therapy, acted as a cap on the organisation's otherwise idealistic view of humanity. Yet far more prevalent amongst their literature is an optimism that no woman should be left behind; that from even the basest material might be transmuted a little gold.

It was, therefore, a time of flux in psychiatric work. But in some ways, this very ferment produced ripples of its own amongst receptive social workers. The impression gathered through study of the CSIR is of an enterprise inspired by accelerating changes in the psychiatric and social work fields, without becoming dogmatic in its espousal of a particular set of theories.

Contradictions: other influences creep in

Yet in other respects the CSIR's philosophy ran against the prevailing currents in psychiatry, psychology, and particularly psychoanalysis.

Firstly, by laying stress on *environmental* factors as crucial to a person's development, their philosophy disagreed with the emphasis placed on internal desires

[34] Both Lady H. Somerset, *Beauty for Ashes* (1913), p.46.
[35] WTC Prospectus (c.1916), BRO, D/EX 774/1/1.
[36] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (1961).

and memories by psychoanalysis. Setting or circumstance was not peripheral but rather, to the CSIR, played a major role in moulding an individual's outlook. In this regard they owed more to the ideas of Edwardian anti-poverty campaigners, such as Charles Booth; to the architects of the new Garden Cities[37]; and to an older 'back-to-the-land' tradition in social work.

Secondly, the organisation's liberal outlook did not stretch to absorbing the nascent psychiatric trend for a more frank examination of sexual motives. The CSIR maintained the prudery of the social purity movements, even though it cast aside much of their moralistic language; and it eschewed those early followers of Nietzsche and Freud who talked of 'alleviating repression'.

Thirdly, many of the CSIR's workers were too pragmatic, and too experienced in the practicalities of social work, simply to throw out everything they had learnt for a new ideology. Such an outlook emerges in correspondence between the WTC's warden, Miss Shaw, and its chairman, Dr Wilson, over the demise of Lane's Little Commonwealth. Wilson viewed the open discussion of conflict permitted at the LC to be beneficial, but wondered sometimes whether it was 'carrying openness too far'[38], and led to further problems. After all, Lane had been forced to resign due to (unfounded) accusations of sexual misconduct by two female inmates. Shaw, a veteran of twenty years' social work[39], advocated pragmatism, criticising Lane's penchant for 'theories as against experience'– implying that fashionable psychoanalytic models are ultimately no substitute for 'real knowledge of the material he was working with' [40].

[37] See, for example, Gordon Cherry (ed.), *Pioneers in British Planning* (1981).
[38] Wilson, letter (17 Nov. 1918), WUA, M85.16C/3/LC/8.iii
[39] Anonymous letter (17 Sept. 1917), NA, HO45/22774
[40] Shaw, letter, (19 Nov. 1918), WUA, M85.16C/3/LC/9

Finally, and most significantly for the history of social work, was the CSIR's stance on the milieu of rehabilitation. While psychiatry increasingly laid emphasis on individual patient-doctor relations, the WTC – and the Committee's other craftwork centres – posited a community setting as the ideal *modus operandi*. Later, such an enterprise would be termed a 'Therapeutic Community'. This study would like to see such a label extended, to acknowledge the WTC as a precursor to the more widely recognised therapeutic communities set up in WWII. For Shorter, 'Social and Community psychiatry insisted it was not the patient's genes nor early childhood that made them ill but the surrounding community… This tends to be an English story.'[41] But he, like others[42], only acknowledges developments during and after WWII.

The complexity and diversity of social work in this period, seen afresh in the light of this unstudied organisation, is becoming apparent. Victor Bailey is broadly correct to contradict the accounts of Sixties historiography, stating that in Britain there was 'no "psychiatric deluge", as was the case in America in the 1920s.'[43] But this study can add that there was *some* movement in the direction of the psychiatric approach. Though the onus remained on environmental factors – rather than purely mental causes – in fostering delinquency, much of psychiatry's stress on individualised treatment and the capacity for change had been absorbed by the CSIR. Older traditions, however, continued to influence both the CSIR and wider social work, such as the religious missionary spirit, a back-to-the-land impulse, and an arts and crafts heritage.

[41] Shorter, *Psychiatry*, pp.229-238.
[42] S. Hogan, *Healing Arts: A History of Art Therapy* (2001); see also later section on Art Therapy.
[43] V. Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship: Reclaiming the Young Offender 1914-1948* (1987), p.16.

'Christian atmosphere, with personal and religious liberty'[44]: the air of the old mission?

Was the CSIR so very different from the old religious missions? We should perhaps not be surprised that a moralising streak persisted. Though the evangelical fires were cooling, British Christianity remained very pervasive in 1913-20. And given the nature of their work, the CSIR would have found it difficult to avoid the subjects of morality and sin when approaching high-society grandees for donations. Moreover, despite the overtures to science, the CSIR's workers were not secular socialists, some being devout indeed. Private correspondence in particular reveals the religiosity that underpinned some of the Committee members' appraisals of human nature. 'If GOD meant it to go on, no Home Office could close it'[45], opined Miss Shaw on the closure of the Little Commonwealth. 'God seems so completely left out of the story', agreed Wilson, 'It is all playing off one human mind against another… Satan finds some mischief still'[46].

These opinions crept into the CSIR's institutions insofar as they prescribed 'the vital importance of religious influence', envisaging 'family prayers' and 'definite religious instruction'[47] in the planned Training Colony. The WTC ended up converting one of the Hall's rooms into a chapel. But from the offset the CSIR promised interdenominational worship, pledging to offer spiritual succour to patients 'according to their own form of religion'[48]. In an age when Catholic police court missionaries fought their Protestant counterparts for access to souls, this was liberal indeed. Yet it also ought to underline the fact that, in social work, the transition from confessional to psychoanalyst's couch was only gradual.

[44] Prospectus (Nov. 1919), BRO, D/EX774/1/2
[45] Shaw, letter, (19 Nov. 1918), WUA, MSS.16C/3/LC/9
[46] Wilson, letter (17 Nov. 1918), WUA, MSS.16C/3/LC/8.iii
[47] Early prospectus (c.1915), WUA, MSS.16C/3/W/1
[48] WTC First Annual Report (1917), NA, HO45/22774

Philanthropy

To some extent the CSIR rested happily in the tradition of Victorian philanthropic charities, relying on the rich and high-born for finances and publicity – as an examination of their lists of trustees amply demonstrates. The Committee courted the patronage of such worthies as the Duchess of Marlborough, Lord Sydenham, the Lord Bishop of Winchester, and the Duchess of Bedford[49]. Their names brought respectability to the cause, and sometimes their monies eased a tight budget. The genteel, charitable, uncontroversial aspects of the CSIR's efforts were clearly prominent enough to win them invitations to speak at home residences. A sample entry in *The Times'* 'Court Circular' column from the period, for instance, runs:

> The Countess Brassey will be 'At Home', at 24 Park-lane, to-morrow… Artistic hand-woven materials will be on view, and addresses on the work of the Committee for Social Investigation and Reform will be given…[50]

Publicity material also appeared in periodicals whose readership was typically drawn from the upper- and upper-middle classes, such as the fashion magazines *Queen* and *Englishwoman*, and in *The Times* and *Westminster Gazette*. Official lists of donors[51] and the amounts they contributed reveal both the importance of bequests from the wealthy, and the public nature of giving in the period – the lists were reprinted in the Annual Reports. Moreover, one of the methods adopted to encourage sponsorship was a classic piece of public philanthropy: those who financially 'adopted' a girl had their names inscribed in the 'Golden Book', an accolade and a way of tying patron to recipient[52].

[49] WTC Prospectus, (c.1916), WUA, MSS.16C/3/W/2.
[50] *The Times*, 19 June 1916, p.11.
[51] Lists of Contributors, 1 March 1917, WUA, MSS.16C/3/W/5 and 6.i.
[52] CSIR Prospectus (c. April 1916), NA, HO45/22774.

These were tried and tested methods of raising awareness and obtaining funds, from an established stratum of philanthropists. But the nature of the CSIR's work also led them to approach notable suffragettes and suffragists. Some of the famous donors-cum-signatories included Millicent Fawcett, Mrs Creighton, Frances Balfour, Lady Emmott, and Maude Royden. That the society wished to be explicitly linked to such names suggests a more radical political stance and linkage to women's rights in general; something noted by one of the Metropolitan Police officials who annotated the official files kept on the CSIR: 'It is of course full of people who are interested in W.'s suffrage too.'[53] Before she helped found the CSIR, Margaret Odeh worked in the Tax Resistance League. Articles and adverts for the CSIR appeared in the *Common Cause*, the magazine of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS).

Furthermore, many of the trustees were actively involved in other social work. Researching the life-histories of those on the lists of trustees conveys a sense of a vast network of social workers, political reformers, and charitable individuals. The philanthropic, reformist elite of the Edwardian and pre-war periods appears to have possessed extraordinary brio. In pursuit of its goals, the CSIR was able to call upon the support and expertise of various social purity organisations, such as the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene (AMSH), of which Dr Helen Wilson was once president; MPs, such as Lord Henry Cavendish Bentinck (Honorary President of the CSIR from c.1913 – 1919); and London magistrates, such as Cecil Chapman and William Clarke Hall. The last were most important of all, having a real handle on the everyday workings of judicial administration. These links reveal, as shall be reviewed later, a true commitment to lobbying and reform, not just piecemeal work.

[53] Annotation in Metropolitan Police file, NA, MEPO 2/1644.

Most interestingly of all, the CSIR was receptive to advice from very different parts of the political spectrum. It was not a typical social purity organisation, and was, in some respects, rather bohemian. Biographical studies of two key members, Captain Arthur St John and Margaret Odeh, illustrate this well.

Arthur St John had been a Fusilier Captain serving in Burma before he read Tolstoy and received an epiphany that sent him into radical politics. His work in helping run the Tolstoyan anarchist colony of the Croydon Brotherhood Church undoubtedly informed his later engagement with social work; manning soup kitchens, he also ran 'classes for drawing, clay modelling and various handicrafts.'[54] St John's activities were both philanthropic and eccentric: he once helped resettle a sect of persecuted Russian pacifists, the Doukhobors, to Canada; around 1903, he founded and edited the *Midland Herald*, a paper with links to vegetarianism and theosophy. Hugely idealistic, his tract *Why Not Now*?[55] called for the creation of an anarchist utopia on Earth. His inspirations came from an eclectic mix of reformers and spiritualists, including Rudolph Steiner, Patrick Geddes, and Maria Montessori. In 1907, St John set up the Penal Reform League (PRL), which was particularly concerned with the treatment of women criminals, including prostitutes. His 1912 paper, 'A Reformatory for Girls and Young Women', presented at a Conference of the Ladies' National Association, depicted 'the ideal Training Home where the keynote would be the true joy of life attained through self-expression and fellowship'.[56] It was later cited by the WTC as an important inspiration. His interests and experience made him well-suited to working with the CSIR, and he joined the WTC Executive Committee in 1917[57]. Moreover, his Tolstoyan philosophy clearly

[54] Nellie Shaw, *Whiteway: Colony on the Cotswolds* (1935), chapter on Croydon Brotherhood, p.27.
[55] Arthur St John, *Why Not Now?* (1939): introduction also contains biographical details.
[56] Cited in WTC First Annual Report (1917), NA, HO45/22774.
[57] Ibid.

influenced the WTC's application of community work to social problems, and underpinned some of the PRL's lobbying.

Margaret Odeh, meanwhile, was a central figure in the foundation of the CSIR in 1913. She became the wife of Paul Nash, the artist, in 1914. Odeh was a keen suffragist, and whilst, according to her husband, 'not a member of the militant side of the movement', could at times be 'formidable'[58]. When distributing suffrage literature for the Tax Resistance League, she had been forced to take defensive measures to deter hecklers, and had taken to carrying a dog whip. Joining Margaret on one such foray on the back of a milk cart, Nash recounts how they

> …charged through the crowd in a storm of missiles and floating leaflets… Margaret… standing erect in the milk chariot like a new kind of Boadicea.[59]

Though some of her colleagues in the CSIR were more conventional, Odeh was not. She and Nash kept many artistic friends and moved in undeniably bohemian circles. Odeh regularly dined at the fashionable vegetarian eatery, Soho's Eustace Miles Restaurant[60], and hobnobbed with poets, dramatists, and artists from Roger Fry's Omega Studios. Her outlook on creativity was crucial to understanding the CSIR's attachment to craftwork, whilst her circle of friends influenced her liberalism and originality. There was, indeed, a broader 'New Age' thread within the suffrage and social reform movements of the period. This undercurrent of utopianism deserves greater recognition.

Social work and the Edwardian 'New Age'

The CSIR serves as a window onto a 'New Age' spirit that permeated bohemian, radical and activist circles in the Edwardian and pre-war years. The epithet is not anachronistic: indeed, it was the name of A.R. Orage's influential literary and

[58] Paul Nash, *Outline: An Autobiography* (1946), p.151.
[59] Ibid, p.153.
[60] Ibid, p.164.

political journal of the time, a powerful contributor to discussions of 'progressive' work. Such an idealism suffused the CSIR's efforts. An article printed in the *Commonwealth* magazine, 'A New Spirit', wrote of the CSIR: 'a new spirit has arisen… it is almost as if the eyes of the blind had been opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.'[61] The sentence refers, reasonably enough, to the increasing interest in social care; but expressed in language that is spiritualist, almost millenarian.

When one pushes open this envelope a little further, a raft of idealistic and esoteric projects begin to emerge. A desire to debunk traditional assumptions is attested to in Lytton Strachey's iconoclastic *Eminent Victorians* (1918), encapsulating the contemporary mood of irreverence, and wish to break decisively with the past. The *New Age* itself carried articles on social work, prostitution, and penal reform, invariably advocating 'progressive' liberal legislation; St John and Dr Wilson sometimes contributed letters. St John's own *Midland Herald* championed his social causes, whilst speaking to an audience whose interests also included vegetarianism, animal welfare, and theosophy. At least two of the papers in which articles on the CSIR appeared had radical audiences: the *Commonwealth* magazine was semi-socialist, whilst the *Common Cause*, paper of the NUWSS, dealt with all manner of feminist campaigns.

Though there is insufficient space to explore this theme fully here, it is plainly inadequate to dismiss the influence of artists, writers, spiritualists, and assorted 'cranks', on practical experiments in social work during this period. A recent article has acknowledged the role vegetarianism played in the outlook of suffragettes, opining, 'There was undoubtedly a strand of what we might call "New Age" spiritual

[61] Anon., 'A New Spirit', *Commonwealth* magazine (c.1914? Undated), NA, HO45/22774.

fervour present.'[62] Usually written off as the pre-war 'fringe' movements, trends like vegetarianism, Tolstoyanism, and theosophy were, in their connections to practical social schemes and discussion, not always so peripheral.

Back to the land

In other regards the CSIR's treatments reflected age-old assumptions about a lifestyle healthy in body and mind. English radical politics in the C19th contained a romantic 'Arcadian tradition', seeing a return to rural communities as the best antidote to the problems of an industrial society. This recurrent theme underpinned, for example, the Chartists' resettlement plans, the communes of Tolstoyan anarchists, and much of the Arts and Crafts movement.[63] In the last two decades of the century, a 'back to the land' ideology was being increasingly applied to the resolution of the 'Social Question', notably the condition of England's poor and unemployed[64]. The key campaign was General Booth's *Darkest England* scheme, begun 1890. To provide unemployed workers, primarily men, with a means of subsistence and a change from the cramped urban environment, the Salvation Army exhorted workers to go 'To the country – the farm colony'[65]. With the success of the first such colony at Hadleigh, others were undoubtedly inspired to borrow Booth's approach. Indeed, the CSIR deliberately consulted the Salvation Army when it came to planning its rural Training Colony, persuading SA Commissioner Adelaide Cox to sit on its committee.

Now that rural retreats were seen as a beneficial environment in which one could mould behaviour and kindle new aspirations amongst the downtrodden, the model started to be applied to other social problems. One such attempt, particularly

[62] L. Leneman, 'The awakened instinct: vegetarianism & the women's suffrage movement in Britain', *Women's History Review* 6,2 (1997), p271-87.
[63] Dennis Hardy, *Utopian England* (2000); Chris Coates, 'Utopia Britannica', http://www.utopia-britannica.org.uk [27 Jan. 2006]
[64] Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England 1880 – 1914* (1982).
[65] W. Booth, *Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890).

germane to the later efforts of the CSIR, was the Duxhurst reformatory for inebriate women, set up by Lady Henry Somerset in 1896[66]. In her book *Beauty for Ashes*, Somerset espoused a vision of outdoor work that accorded with that of the CSIR:

> Contact with Mother Earth brings a rest all its own, and I have seen the return to health of many a woman, wan and jaded, who has worked among the flowers and plants.[67]

Somerset also came to be a trustee of the WTC, so must have been reasonably impressed by its focus on 'the value of outdoor work for difficult types of women'[68]. During the Colony's planning stages, an advert was placed in *The Times* for a 'Trained Lady Gardener… wanted for charge of poultry, apiary, herb, vegetable and flower gardens in women's training colony'[69]. Not only would the women benefit physically from horticultural work; they would also, it was hoped, feel satisfaction from achieving a degree of self-sufficiency. Indeed, it seems the Colony did more than simply achieve autonomy in certain foodstuffs; by the end of 1917 the garden superintendent was planning to sell some of the produce and poultry in the nearby market town of Newbury.[70] The 1914 sale catalogue for Cope Hall, where the Colony eventually began, shows the ample gardens and grounds that evidently formed an excellent venue for much outdoor activity.[71] Though demolished in the 1960s, the overgrown grounds of the Hall still attest to such bygone endeavours. The base of the Victorian greenhouses and forcing pits remain, leading the observer to speculate what exotic fruits the Colonists might have enjoyed almost a century ago[72].

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[66] DNB entry for Lady Henry Somerset, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36188
[67] Somerset, *Beauty for Ashes* (1913).
[68] Prospectus (Nov. 1919), BRO, D/EX774/1/2.
[69] *The Times*, 23 March 1916, p.1.
[70] Clarke Hall, *State*, p.172.
[71] Cope Hall sale catalogue (1914), author's collection. See Bibliography.
[72] Personal visits to site of Cope Hall, summer 2005. See Appendix for map.

Yet did it do the women any good? It can hardly have harmed their physical health. In terms of employment prospects, however, one must be more dubious; as Taylor has written on other back-to-the-land efforts:

> …The practical training was limited and inappropriate. It is difficult to see how the inmates, drawn almost exclusively from urban centres, could put to use their training in butter making, bee keeping and even hay making![73]

Taylor is justified in regarding such Romantic aspects of the rural movements with scepticism, but the CSIR was also more practical-minded than some – aiming to train its charges in employable trades, as discussed in the section on art therapy. The Colony's approach certainly won support from leading magistrates, who contrasted it favourably against the bleak city Homes. As the Old Street magistrate, William Clarke Hall, wrote:

> …For young girls the ordinary Penitentiary Home is often most unsuitable. In order to develop into normal healthy-minded and moral women, they need healthy and happy physical surroundings.[74]

'A spirit of "common weal"'[75]: self-government and citizenship

The organisational structure of the WTC was also devised to break from the rigidity and discipline of traditional Rescue Homes. To instigate the principle of internal democracy, but also to inculcate girls' responsibility for their own affairs, a weekly Colony Conference was held. Established Homes' preference for hierarchy was seen by the CSIR as deterring problem girls from seeking rehabilitation. Furthermore, it was reasoned, any institution that created conditions far removed from those of the outside world could hardly hope to 'socialise' their charges. To the Warden, M.L. Shaw, the manner in which girls in Rescue Homes were subjected to strict external discipline removed their own self-drive: 'On returning to the conditions

[73] D. Taylor, *Crime, Policing and Punishment in England, 1750 – 1914* (1998), p.163.
[74] W. Clarke Hall, letter (c. Sept. 1917), NA, HO45/22774.
[75] WTC First Annual Report (1917), NA, HO45/22774.

of the world they are too often like hot-house plants, unable to stand up against adverse environment *[sic]*.'[76]

This experiment in greater self-governance by delinquents was innovatory, though not entirely without precedent. The Little Commonwealth and previously cited American endeavours provided inspiration; transatlantic exchange of social work ideas in this period is in itself interesting to acknowledge. Indeed, the importance of the WTC at Newbury, and the trend towards American methods that it attests to, has been fleetingly acknowledged by William Forsythe:

> …In America experiments in rehabilitation of young offenders outside the walls of traditional institutions became much more common, and self-governing communities for young offenders, children and prostitutes were set up along the American lines at Batcombe in Dorset, Newbury and St Pancras.[77]

As this study has suggested, the WTC's organisation and treatments lay much closer to the paradigm of the Therapeutic Community - though no such term yet existed - than to the older Rescue Homes, Lock Hospitals, and Magdalenes. This was further reflected in its usual acknowledgment of its charges as 'Colonists', rather than as 'inmates' or 'patients'. Such citizenship brought responsibility, but also payment for produce, in order to familiarise the women with waged work as much as possible. After an entrance fee and initial 'probationary' period, colonists came to earn a fixed wage sufficient to pay for board and lodging and still be left with 'pocket money'[78].

Though initially the Colony was unable to accept mothers and their children, the organisers had every intention of providing for family life. A grant request was placed before the Home Office in 1918 for a Home for Mothers to be built at Cope

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[76] Clarke Hall, *State,* p.171.
[77] W.J. Forsythe, *Penal Discipline, Reformatory Projects and the English Prison Commission 1895-1939* (1990), p.157. St Pancras refers to the Caldecott Community for homeless children. See http://www.randolphcaldecott.org.uk/named.htm#CaldecottFoundation [30 Jan 2006].
[78] WTC First Annual Report (1917), NA, HO45/22774, and prospectuses.

Hall. Further plans were for the construction of Cottage Homes where colonists could be placed in family groupings, with a 'House Mother' in charge of each cottage; land was purchased but funding remained insufficient. Such expansions were clearly intended to help mimic real-world conditions within the Colony, and accommodate the traditionally stigmatised single mother: further indications of the CSIR's unusually liberal attitude.

Gradually, the CSIR was building towards a more comprehensive system of dealing with girls. Besides the various city handicraft studios and the WTC, by 1918 the organisation envisaged an intermediate Clearing House to vet girls for the most suitable next step. Though this scheme seems not to have come to fruition, it attests to the CSIR's ambition, and desire to be comprehensive in its treatment.

Art therapy

The discipline of art therapy has only recently gained a full-length history – Susan Hogan's *Healing Arts* (2001)[79] – although this underplays the significance of pre-1942 experiments. For Hogan, the Withymead project (1942) was 'Britain's first therapeutic community dedicated to art therapy'. But was this truly the case? Hogan explains that 'the term "art therapy" was coined in 1942 by an artist, Adrian Hill', but acknowledges that 'therapy employing the use of image-making work was carried out before this date in the context of moral treatment [and] psychoanalysis.'[80] The definition of the term remains vague, its relation to explicitly psychoanalytic theories ill-defined. For the British Association of Art Therapists,

> …Art therapy is the use of art materials for self-expression and reflection… The overall aim of its practitioners is to enable a client to effect change and growth on a personal level through the use of art materials.[81]

[79] Susan Hogan, *Healing Arts: The History of Art Therapy* (2001).
[80] Ibid, p.25.
[81] BAAT official website, http://www.baat.org/art_therapy.html [7 Feb. 2006].

Since art therapy has never been the preserve of one psychiatric school, the purposes assigned to it, and the relative importance of analysis as against therapy, have fluctuated. Much more work needs to be done to trace earlier enterprises espousing the practice, if not the term, of art therapy.

What was being practised by the CSIR at their hand-weaving studios and other creative ventures seems to have been art therapy in all but name. 'Is it not possible that these girls may be enabled to re-enter the Temple by means of the Gate called Beautiful?', exhorted an article on the CSIR, blending Christian salvation with a striving for beauty. 'The learner, body and mind, is occupied with the mastery of technical detail, and this quiet absorption in something mechanical is a wonderful medicine for the soul.' Thus by channelling the 'creative power within herself, the rebuilding of her soul goes on.'[82] This is undeniably a central tenet of art therapy, even if it uses the language of 'soul' over 'mind'.

The work was seen to relieve frustration, for handicrafts '…are impersonal, and it is better to beat out your salvation on a piece of stuff than in conflict with the authorities!'[83] Furthermore, artistic work could be an aid to self-knowledge: 'Past experience warrants the belief that the most difficult natures can often "find themselves" in work which by its artistic and creative interest offers scope for the development of originality.'[84] This clearly accorded with the CSIR's other ideas on individualised treatment and the need for independence. There is an exuberance in the language used that suggests real ideological conviction: 'The worker finds in the art endless scope for the expression of her artistic ideas in colour, texture and design.'[85]

[82] Anon., 'A New Spirit', *Commonwealth* magazine (c.1914 ? Undated), NA, HO45/22774.
[83] L. Hay-Cooper, WTC Prospectus (c.1916), BRO, D/EX 774/1/1
[84] WTC Prospectus (c.1916), WUA, MSS.16C/3/W/2
[85] Hand-weaving Studio Prospectus (c.1914?), NA, MEPO 2 164.6

Lastly, the new stress laid on creative work was viewed as far more appealing than the traditional work provided by Rescue Homes: 'Laundry work suits some people, but to others… it is intolerable.'[86] There was little hope of keeping former prostitutes off the streets if the alternative was boredom and drudgery; the CSIR hoped – perhaps a little naively – that artistic work would be suitably absorbing. There was real faith in this: '… we are all artists! Perhaps we are, only the artist in us has not been given room to grow!'[87] This belief of developing one's talents, and hence one's character, has since become a central part of art therapy; for the CSIR, it was interwoven, characteristically, with an element of Christian redemption: 'The word "salvation" in Hebrew means 'room to grow'...'[88]

Many aspects of the art therapy of the 1940s were presaged by the CSIR's work in 1913-20. After all, the discipline did not spring, like Minerva, from one man's head fully formed. A better understanding of art therapy's development is gained by looking for earlier cross-fertilisation between artists and social work. The nineteenth century had witnessed a long tradition of artists' colonies, such as those at St Ives and Newlyn. These fulfilled artists' longings for the company of other artists, the bright light of the Westcountry, rustic subject-matter, and romantic seclusion. Similar intentions underpinned the numerous art fraternities and studios in London. None of these, of course, were founded for non-artists to learn art. But it is not difficult to see that these were the social circles in which the germ of therapeutic art might originate.

Margaret Odeh was clearly the lynchpin in the case of the CSIR. Her father, Reverend Nasser Odeh, was a Coptic priest by vocation, but also an amateur artist;

[86] Maude Royden, 'Room to Grow', *The Common Cause* (13 Oct. 1916), p.356 of 1916 annual.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

Paul Nash observed that he 'had a touching respect for the mysteries of art.'[89] Margaret was an Ottoman subject before coming to Britain for her education. Whilst a Hay Scholar at St Hilda's College, Oxford, she expressed an interest in the arts, participating in theatre and practising photography. During her tenure, the college debating society hosted a discussion on the motion: *'A beautiful environment is essential to moral development.'*[90] Sadly no records remain of who participated in the debate, but it seems too great a coincidence for it not to have reflected, or influenced, Odeh's early interest in merging aesthetics and social work.

Odeh became engaged in 1913 – just before she helped found the CSIR – to Paul Nash, the up-and-coming artist. Her friends included various artists, not least those members of the British avant-garde she met through her husband. From these interests and influences grew a central theme of the CSIR's efforts: to apply creative work to the rehabilitation of social outcasts.

Nash himself took a keen interest in Odeh's work, admiring her idealism and drive:

> I stole one of the printed letters from the 'Social Reform'; it fills me with such pride to read [your] name there and to think what a courageous girl [you are], how far more plucky and determined than I…[91]

Indeed, Nash seems to have viewed her work as important for the cause of women's assertiveness, not simply for helping unfortunates:

> You must call yourself Margaret Odeh… I believe in the importance of the personality in your work more than mine. …I am delighted that [the Committee] have all written down their full names on this paper, it is great and they are all good names and names to remember; there is something brave about all of them.[92]

[89] Paul Nash, *Outline: An Autobiography* (1946), p.150.
[90] Margaret Rayner, *Centenary History of St Hilda's College* (1993), p.39.
[91] Letter, Paul Nash to Margaret Odeh, 25 May 1913, NAL, 86.X.27 [surnames N-Z].
[92] Ibid.

Though there is no direct evidence that Nash himself contributed designs or help to the CSIR's hand-weaving schemes – he was, after all, called up to the Artists' Rifles in 1914 – it is likely that he had a considerable influence on his wife's work. His fame allowed Odeh to negotiate an exhibition of the Hand-weaving Studio's work at the Alpine Galleries, alongside that of London's artistic avant-garde, including Bernard Leach, John Nash and Will Rothenstein[93]. Hand-woven materials made by the CSIR's girls were also exhibited during 1916-17 at a 'Women Artists' Exhibition' in Sussex House, an Arts and Crafts festival at Burlington House, and an 'Englishwoman' exhibition in Westminster Central Hall[94]. And, in the same year, a 'substantial donation' towards the Hand-weaving industry was accepted from the Art Union Committee.[95] Where previously exhibitions of the materials had only been held at private soirees, these displays enabled the CSIR's efforts to be broadcast to a wider gallery-visiting public.

Though less well documented, the CSIR's toy-making venture in Chelsea, begun in 1914, clearly had similar aims to the weaving studios. There was also discussion of experimenting with other creative ventures, like 'Artistic Dressmaking, Embroidery, Millinery… Upholstery, Photography, Flower and Vegetable Gardening'[96]. Some of these were practised at the WTC.

These initiatives clearly owed something to the English Arts and Crafts tradition, and the resurgent taste for hand-made goods that it had stimulated. Still more significant was Roger Fry's Omega Studios, founded 1913, to which Paul Nash contributed work; the Studios had great influence on the London craft scene until after WWI. Its vision of an 'artist's collective' may have inspired Odeh. But neither Fry's

[93] *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Pictures by the Members of the Friday Club – Alpine Galleries, 18 March to 8 April 1916*. NAL, 200.B.168.
[94] Listed in CSIR 3rd Annual Report, 1916-17, NA, HO45/22774.
[95] Ibid.
[96] CSIR prospectus, c.1914, NA, MEPO 2 164.6

Vision and Design (1920), nor Tolstoy's *What Is Art?* (translated 1899), contain sentiments that presage the CSIR's therapeutic efforts. Odeh's personal convictions and connections, therefore, rather than any single philosophical tract, appear to have been the inspiration for the CSIR's experiments in art therapy.

In some ways their work also resembled the practice of 'Occupational Therapy', of practising work for its own sake. The term is recorded as being somewhat older than 'art therapy', with the first citation in the OED dating from a medical journal of 1915. But its normative sense, and its application to practical schemes, dates from somewhat later; Warneford hospital in Oxfordshire was an early practitioner yet dates its first efforts to 1929[97]. In other words, the CSIR was breaking fresh ground.

Still, the CSIR's work lacked certain elements that would permeate later art and occupational therapy. Psychoanalysis was only just being introduced to Britain, and psychoanalytic language was absent from the CSIR's discussion of its craftwork. Further, girls were not *simply* expressing their emotions on paper or fabric, but rather being encouraged to create an end-product. The practical-mindedness of the social workers involved meant an emphasis was also placed on earning and employment. They wanted girls to be able to find decent jobs and stand alone once they had left their institutions. The CSIR also had to fund its enterprises, and selling hand-woven materials to various private buyers and department stores (including in Letchworth Garden City, and at the prestigious Derry and Toms in London) was one – small – source of revenue[98]. Such goods would have seemed a novel 'socially responsible investment', appealing to both wealthy do-gooders and middle-class bohemians.

[97] Oxfordshire Health Archives, http://www.webdoc.co.uk/archives/warneford.htm [9 Feb. 2006].
[98] CSIR 2nd Annual Report, 1914-15, NA, HO45/22774.

Yet undoubtedly much emphasis was still placed on the worth of craftwork *in its own right.* As Hay-Cooper wrote in a prospectus for the WTC: 'Not only do these handicrafts prepare the worker for life… but they have a moral value, as every craftsman knows. They form a marvellous tonic for the whole mind and nature.'[99]

Probation, the Home Office, and Scotland Yard

This study shall now consider the legal and political structures in which the CSIR's work, and contemporary social work generally, was carried out.

The benchmark piece of legislation for social work in this period was the Probation of Offenders Act 1907. In downgrading many penalties, and particularly those for juvenile offenders, from prison sentences to probationary service, the Act represented a liberalisation of criminal law. But various lobbyists – including the CSIR – found probation still being used only patchily a decade later. The CSIR had three objectives to its lobbying: firstly, to get its workers entrenched as legal Probation Officers (PO's); secondly, to establish the principle that societies desiring this status were dealt with more readily by magistrates, the Metropolitan Police, and the Home Office; and thirdly, that with such extra help, probation be used more frequently. As Odeh wrote to a Scotland Yard official, 'many magistrates do not put such girls on probation, because they do not know where to put them *where they will stay.*'[100] The CSIR's system of hostels and employment centres hoped to solve this issue.

Ideally the CSIR would have had some of its workers become registered Probation Officers, attached to magistrates' courts, with a legal right to take girls into their charge. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Edward Henry, was happy publicly to endorse the CSIR as 'a responsible organisation which is undertaking

[99] L. Hay-Cooper, WTC Prospectus (c.1916), BRO, D/EX 774/1/1.
[100] Odeh, Letter, 7 Dec. 1914, NA, MEPO/2/1644.

useful work'.[101] But on the crucial issue of their integration into the probation system, he hesitated. The draft letter of support includes the line, 'They are now anxious to be treated as Probation Officers by Magistrates' – but this has been erased in the final copy[102].

Similarly, the Home Office vacillated on the subject, wary of treading on the toes of existing Probation Officers: 'Experience has shown me the necessity for avoiding friction… only the missionary attached to the court should be in regular attendance.'[103] Though seemingly preferring more liberal and less zealous PO's, state officials were not lending their full support to bring about this shift. Rather, the smooth running of the existing system, and minimisation of conflict, were considered paramount.

Further, both Home Office and Met were less optimistic than the CSIR about successfully reforming criminal women. They recommended taking women who opted to be reformed, not just probation cases: '…it will probably be found that those who enter voluntarily and are not committed there under the Probation Act will prove the best material.'[104]

The CSIR seems to have taken heed of this advice, as the WTC set an initial ratio of not more than one-fourth of its inmates to be under Magistrates' orders. But this does not seem to have compromised their belief in the malleability of deviant behaviour, for others were drawn from prisons. The young age of the CSIR's subjects, almost all being 16 – 21, testifies to their interest in rehabilitation; for, as psychologists like Homer Lane had been suggesting, young delinquents stood a high chance of being reformed. Some Colonists *were* older, for reasons, it would appear, of

[101] Sir Edward Henry, letter, 17 Feb. 1915, NA, MEPO/2/1644.
[102] Ibid., and preceding draft copy.
[103] Memorandum, 1 Feb. 1918, NA, HO45/22774.
[104] Sir Edward Henry, letter, 2 March 1915, NA, MEPO/2/164.6.

communal benefit: 'a mixture of the two produces a better social atmosphere and… the older women have good influence on the younger.'[105] As discussed earlier, the Colony's aspirations to be a microcosm of society places it in the mould of later therapeutic communities, displaying a keen interest in experimenting with different educational methods.

Despite officials' misgivings over probation, the overall reception accorded to the CSIR was very positive. Most of the records we now possess on the organisation are thanks to the close eye that bureaucrats in the Met and HO kept on it – testimony to their interest. Sir Henry's sympathies – 'we should do all in our power to help these ladies'[106] – confirm his reputation as a reformist Commissioner (1903-1918), who also introduced fingerprinting and the first women police. HO undersecretary Sir Edward Troup, however, was not so sympathetic, as examined below.

Bailey asserts that 'before 1920 the pressure to make greater use of the Probation of Offenders Act came from two directions: from groups like the Penal Reform League, the Howard Association, and the State Children's Association; and from the Home Office itself.'[107] The CSIR both lobbied for extension, and provided a new model to back up the words of others reformers such as the PRL. Bailey is correct that the Home Office, without being uncritical, was generally supportive. The main problems with the reform of probation actually stemmed from existing Probation Officers.

The CETS: old monopolies

Principal amongst the hindrances facing the CSIR was the intransigence of the religious missions that continued to dominate the probationary profession. Informal probation had begun in the 1880s thanks to the work of the Church of England

[105] Memorandum, 24 Sept. 1917, NA, HO45/22774.
[106] Memorandum, 12 Dec. 1914, NA, MEPO/2/1644.
[107] Bailey, *Delinquency*, p.37.

Temperance Society (CETS), who had proffered missionaries to the London police courts as aides. The 1907 Act had been intended to formalise this relationship and ensure uniformity of training and payment; but it had also meant to encourage magistrates to appoint PO's with better education and, to some extent, less religious zeal. As early as 1910, the Home Office was hoping that 'attention would begin to be moved from the soul and its potential grace, to the mind and behaviour and the potential for modification thereof.'[108] But most magistrates simply allowed the missionaries – who were, after all, generally experienced – to slot into the new system. The persistence of the CETS was the single biggest hindrance to the secularisation of social work; the gradual process of their displacement frustrates easy models of 'paradigm shifts' from religious to secular. And, as discussed, little was being done in practice by the Home Office to replace personnel.

The hegemony of the CETS continued a decade after the Probation Act, and beyond: even in 1925, 'nearly one third of all probation officers were still attached to a voluntary, generally religious, organisation'[109]. In the official list of London PO's for 1916, the CETS and their Roman Catholic equivalent dominated the positions. Out of 44 PO's, only 3 were unaffiliated to these missionary organisations. The CSIR languished as ancillary help in an appended note[110].

There were gradual signs of change. Home Office files on the CSIR also document the travails of a Probation Officer, Mrs Cary, who quit her post in 1918 to take up work the CETS had disallowed her from carrying out. The CSIR came to support the venture instead: the 'Homeland Club', a girls' hostel too liberal and

[108] Home Office report, 1910: cited on Probation Board website, timeline: http://www.probationboards.co.uk/Facing%20Crime/A%20History%20of%20Probation/briefhistory.htm
[109] Bailey, *Delinquency*, p.44.
[110] List of Probation Officers (1916), NA, HO45/22774.

autonomous for the CETS's liking[111]. The fact that PO's were starting to break ranks suggests old hegemonies were less stable.

Further, the CETS was coming under increasing fire from lobbyists. The important departmental committee's report of 1922 acknowledged the 'good deal of criticism' being levelled at the CETS, that it was 'based too much on ecclesiastical lines', and that to 'encourage a more progressive spirit in probation work and to attract better candidates to the service, considerable changes are required in the constitution of the Society.' Crucially, 'the selection of Probation Officers should not be limited to members of the Church of England.'[112] The CSIR and its allies had played an important role in convincing the committee of this necessity.

Magistrates

The decentralised nature of probation in this era meant practical change really required securing the sympathies of stipendiary magistrates, and in this the CSIR was very successful. Armed with recommendations from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the Home Office, the CSIR familiarised relations with various magistrates' courts in London. They received particular backing from two highly respected magistrates, Cecil Chapman and William Clarke Hall. The latter not only wrote letters of support and sat on the WTC's Executive Committee, but also used the Colony as a case study in his celebrated book, *The State and the Child* (1917). Clarke Hall had clout with policy-makers: Bailey recounts that he had an 'international reputation'. But he was also a 'practical-minded idealist'[113]. Not content with simply recommending models for imitation, he also set to work on reforming the probation system at his own court at Old Street. He lobbied for additional Probation Officers,

[111] Home Office memorandum (2 Feb. 1918), NA, HO45/22774.
[112] Report of Departmental Committee on the training, appointment and payment of Probation Officers (1922), NA, HO45/11074/395473.
[113] Bailey, *Delinquency*, p.64.

ostensibly because the existing CETS PO's were overburdened – knowing this would also establish a precedent for allowing non-CETS workers into the system[114].

Lobbying

The CSIR was not simply concerned with altering the methodology of social work, but also lobbied to alter structures and legislation governing its practice. St John's involvement secured close cooperation with the Penal Reform League, a small but tireless pressure group[115]. In a consultation exercise with the Home Office in February 1918, Dr Wilson, St John, and Mrs Torrey proposed the creation of a 'Commission of Protection and Control for Juvenile Offenders.' Essentially this would provide a national structure to regulate probation, ease out existing punitive practices, and circumvent CETS domination through appointed Commissioners. The reaction of Sir Edward Troup, permanent undersecretary of state, was critical; he considered the lobbyists to have 'little idea of the far reaching nature of the proposals.' Since the scheme would involve the erection of a new official body, it would cede control from the Home Office. Troup was also disparaging of criticisms that existing Rescue Homes practised a 'repressive discipline'. However, he did recognise the need for greater central regulation of probation, and wrote in a private memorandum of plans postponed due to the war for a new inspectorate[116]. A Probation Advisory Committee was eventually founded in 1924. Cumulative lobbying from social workers strengthened the case for this, although displacement of the CETS took longer.

Even so, the whole social work lobby possessed considerable brio, whose labours started to pay off more in the 1920s. For Bailey, the cause of juvenile penal reform had, by the mid-20s, forged 'a formidable alliance… linking social workers,

[114] Report to Sir Edward Troup, HO45/11912, and see Bailey, p.38.
[115] G. Rose, *The Struggle for Penal Reform* (1962), pp.73 – 92.
[116] Proposition and comments contained in single file, NA, HO45/22774.

magistrates, penal reform groups, associations of penal practitioners, and the administrators and inspectors of the Children's Branch.'[117]

Changing attitudes towards prostitution, VD, and women in general

What of medical opinion on how to deal with VD? Dr Helen Wilson was in fact an outspoken expert on this issue in the pre-war years. Her father, Henry Wilson MP, had been a key lobbyist against the CD Acts; she had maintained this interest in women's rights and health through her editorship of the *Shield* magazine and presidency of AMSH. As one of very few women doctors at the time, she was well placed to pronounce on VD and its implications for feminism. Attending numerous medical conferences on VD between c.1910-1917, as well as publishing on the subject, Wilson championed the need for alternatives to the prison-like Lock hospital, and the importance of getting prostitutes to stay long enough in a treatment centre to be rehabilitated. At a meeting of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases, Wilson opined: 'Names like "Lock" or "Magdalene" for special wards or hospitals had a deterrent effect, and should be avoided.'[118] She further recounted a folk-belief amongst prostitutes that entrants to the Lock hospitals were habitually smothered.[119] Lord Sydenham, chair of the Commission and a trustee of the WTC, agreed that many prostitutes feared they would receive punishment rather than treatment[120]. Creating centres to which VD sufferers would actually choose to submit themselves could solve a large part of the problem.

Such sentiments clearly informed Wilson's decision to be Chairman of the WTC. Prospectuses promised not to exclude VD sufferers, as part of their aim was to lessen the stigma surrounding it. Though there is some uncertainty as to how many

[117] Bailey, *Delinquency*, p.66.
[118] Cited in *British Journal of Nursing*, 28 Feb. 1914, p.191.
[119] H. Wilson's evidence, First Report of RCVD, 1914, Cd. 7475, xliv, paragraphs 5288-5693.
[120] Ibid.

were actually treated at the Colony, undoubted provision was made, with a full-time Matron and various visiting female doctors on the committee. Applicants filed a medical report as part of the selection process, showing further that the Colony had an interest in individual conditions, though also seeking to prevent admission of the feeble-minded and tuberculous, for whom they had no facilities.

The medical establishment's attempts to grapple with VD in this period, whilst tending, like Wilson, strongly to oppose state regulation, also objected to prophylactics, on the grounds that they encouraged promiscuity. Since existing contraceptives were mainly for men, feminists like Wilson could reasonably argue they did little to empower prostitutes and make them less susceptible to VD. Yet whilst arguing for greater legal culpability of male clients, the social work she pursued through the CSIR self-evidently continued to place the onus on reforming female behaviour. This contrasted with the outlook of Christabel Pankhurst, and of the White Cross League, who both stressed male restraint. The nature of the CSIR's work made it more conservative than sections of the suffrage movement, and represented an overhang of older concerns with social hygiene and chastity. But in trying to downgrade the criminal status attached to prostitutes and create more effective treatments for their rehabilitation, the CSIR also pursued a feminist progression on the aims of the social purity movements. The fight against the stigma surrounding prostitution was a small but significant part of wider moves for women's rights, and is now generally forgotten.

Conclusion

The Women's Training Colony was forced to close in November 1919, citing practical difficulties, principally a lack of resources for its cottage home extensions.

The CSIR continued to operate on a low level for two more years. Fundamentally, the war, and economic recession, had put paid to the organisation's efforts, in common with many charities of the time. Opinion had hardened somewhat towards prostitutes during the conflict, amidst fears about the spread of VD among servicemen; and the proliferation of charities for the relief of soldiers diverted donations.

Examination of the CSIR deepens an understanding of the development of social work in the twentieth century. There was no sudden paradigm shift from the pattern of the religious mission to that of secular service. The CSIR's attempts to work its way into the probation system reveal institutional inertia, particularly from the CETS, that frustrates such an analysis. Further, the CSIR's own complex philosophy defies easy categorisation. It retained an emphasis on Christian values, such as chastity, whilst seeking to remove external moral censoriousness from treatment in favour of building self-reliance. On the one hand absorbing psychiatric ideas, pertaining to liberal self-governance and individualised care, the CSIR also resisted the new emphasis on the alleviation of sexual repression propounded by psychoanalysts. Though in some ways lacking in rigour, its projects can also be seen as simply experimental, keen to test new ideas about education and rehabilitation.

Study of the diversity of opinions held by individuals aiding the CSIR also has wider implications for the history of ideas in this period. Evidence uncovered suggests that subscription to eugenic theories did not automatically rule out collaboration in schemes that promised the rehabilitation of criminals, and saw great worth in their salvation.

In two ways particularly, the CSIR struck out along novel lines. By asserting the importance of environment and community to behavioural development, and providing outdoor work as a therapeutic treatment, it presaged the 'therapeutic

communities' that flourished after the 1940s. Secondly, it championed the healing powers of creative work – rather than prescribing simply manual labour or training in employable trades – hence propounding a very early theory of art therapy. Though both approaches had their intellectual precursors – in the back-to-the-land and Arts and Crafts movements respectively – the CSIR's innovation lay in applying them to the rehabilitation of social pariahs.

The range of personnel involved in these efforts highlights the cohesion and vitality of pre-war British civil society: the relative ease with which social reformers could draw on networks of those in parallel organisations. There was considerable overlap, both of aims and of personnel, between campaigns to liberalise penal policy, the Suffrage movements, and social workers. Further, this study has unearthed forgotten links between utopian thought in the Edwardian 'New Age', and practical communitarian efforts. The experience of the CSIR has also provided a useful window onto the situation in which contemporary charities worked, the bureaucratic hindrances they faced, and their attempts to integrate with – and influence – state institutions, such as the probation system and Home Office.

Finally, the increased interest of suffragists and the medical profession in combating prostitution during the second decade of the twentieth century should be reappraised as an important aspect of the women's movement. As campaigns raged for the franchise and the extension of female employment, women doctors and social workers set their minds to liberalising conditions for female criminals, and lessening the stigma that still remained around the old Social Evil.

Bibliography

A general note on the sources

Much time has gone into tracking down the dispersed records of the CSIR and its endeavours, spread between several record offices. One of the crucial files in the National Archives was almost a chance discovery, bearing only a generic label of 'probation 1907-14'.

The site of Cope Hall itself is also in my locality and I paid it a couple of visits in summer 2005 to gauge a sense of its original size and the gardens that were once worked by the Colony. A map of Cope Hall in 1914, and several photos of the current abandoned site, are included in the Appendix.

I have also held useful conversations with several local historians, who are credited below.

Local historians

My special thanks go to John King, David Stubbs, and Jane Burrell: local historians (the last also the curator of Newbury Museum), who provided invaluable pointers as to where to search for sources – and in the case of David Stubbs, one of the documents themselves.

John King is also churchwarden of Enborne parish church, and kindly allowed me access to the Parish Registers of baptisms, to check if any illegitimate children had been baptised there 1917-19 (i.e. whether any WTC Colonists were mothers); as indicated in the thesis, this drew a blank.

(A) Manuscript Sources

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NAL, 86.X.27 [surnames N-Z]: Letters, Paul Nash to Margaret Odeh, especially letter of 25 May 1913.

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MSS.16C/3/LC, papers on the Little Commonwealth; the collection was in fact compiled originally by Dr Helen Wilson; of particular interest are MSS.16C/3/LC/8 and 9, correspondence between Wilson and Shaw, containing references to the WTC.

Author's personal collection:
Cope Hall Sale Catalogue, 1914. This document was salvaged from a Newbury estate agent's skip some years ago by local amateur historian, Mr Dave Stubbs. I hold a photocopy whilst he retains the original. See Appendix for extracted map of the grounds of Cope Hall.

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