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Avoiding ‘the faddlings of Dr Choake’: The professionalisation of medicine in Poldark?

Barbara Sadler

The BBC television series *Poldark* (2015-2019) is an adaptation of Winston Graham’s novels about a Cornish family which begins as the main character, Ross Poldark (Aidan Turner), returns from the American Revolutionary Wars. The Mammoth Screen production of *Poldark* is adapted for television by Debbie Horsfield and covers the period 1783 to 1802.

Significantly, this particular time frame marks the period when the medical profession is beginning to establish itself and progress in medical science has begun to move beyond the ‘classical framework’ of the body. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, Galenic humoral doctrine prevailed, wherein disease and illness were thought to be caused by ‘imbalances of the fluids, or humours, which the Ancients believed to be the constituents of the body: black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood’ (Shorter, 2006:107). Medical historians agree that during this material time most people would treat themselves or obtain remedies from other family members, neighbours or close friends. It was rare that patients would seek the assistance of a physician. This situation was not merely the result of the fees incurred, but also that the treatments available from the physician were not always efficacious and, in some cases, folk medicines were known to be more reliable. Sumich (2013:4) points out that the excessive fees of some physicians led to a reputation of greed and in general that ‘physicians as a group were plagued with issues of low social status’. What this brings to the foreground is the deep mistrust of physicians. In addition to such opinions, physicians would also need to compete for business with barber-surgeons, herbalists, apothecaries, religious healers and even blacksmiths, who were known to reset broken bones. It is clear Winston Graham had taken care to research the historical background for his characters and storylines and it is within this milieu of numerous lay healers and ‘quacks’ that the doctors of *Poldark* operate.

Graham's focus upon family life, the wars of the era and the centrality of tin and copper mining in Cornwall, all allow for some quite detailed and interesting medical storylines to be developed. Through such stories and over all five series, there is a demonstration of the increasing professionalisation of medicine. This can be evidenced by analysing and charting the rise of Dr Dwight Enys (Luke Norris), whose skills many of the main characters come to rely upon at various points in the narrative.

The doctors of *Poldark*

Ross: Demelza, my friend Dr Dwight Enys.

Dwight: Ma'am

Demelza: 'Twas you that mended his face? (1:5)

As Ross Poldark introduces his friend Dr Enys to his wife (Eleanor Tomlinson), and to the viewing audience, it is the doctor's knowledge and surgical skill which act as the marker of his identity. Throughout the five series the development of Enys's character and narrative offer the viewer a glimpse of the historical development of medicine from the 'free for all' of 'herbalists, midwife-healers, bonesetters and others' (Saks, 2003:142) to the reliable, educated and experienced doctors the general public would recognise in the twenty-first century. However, at the time Dr Enys arrives there is already a doctor working in the area. The resulting competition between the two doctors marks the real circumstances which would have existed.

In *Poldark's* Cornwall Dr Choake (Robert Daws) is the embodiment of the upper-class gentleman as physician with little scientific medical knowledge and little concern for patients who could not pay. Even his name is something of a warning. At their very first meeting the dialogue between Choake and Enys sets up their relationship as one of opposites.

Choake: If in doubt, purge. That's our motto. Bleed, boil, blister, sweat. Healing is a science. Few comprehend its mysteries

Dwight: Or its fees...I merely meant not everyone can afford expensive treatments.

(1:5)

This initial exchange continues with Ross explaining to Choake that Enys is studying lung diseases which prompts Choake to point out that miners rarely pay and that Enys will be 'living under a hedge and dining on thistles.'

As a character, Choake personifies the greedy physician with the somewhat tarnished reputation. He is laying claim to healing as science and aiming to elevate his position within the assembled company. Throughout the seasons, Choake uses a haughty manner and some medical language to maintain and encourage belief in his authority. At first it appears he is defending his position or his right to make a living from his work, but closer scrutiny illustrates how physicians use such language in their practice and in doing so usher in the birth of medical discourse. In the Foucauldian sense, Choake's declaration of his knowledge (even if it is limited), and his authority because of such knowledge, has the result of bringing his subject position as a physician into being. At the same time, the discourse also produces a subject position for the patient or listener as subordinate to his knowledge/power. Foucault claims that discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (2011:54). In this example, Choake's discourse produces the identity of both the doctor and the patient. Within the *Poldark* narrative Choake is represented as an incompetent doctor, and yet he is still a professional in that he receives payment for his work. For Choake, he must convince people to trust him and pay for his services and in the programme, he achieves this by presenting himself in a superior way and utilising some medical terms. However, with the arrival of Dr Enys, Choake faces additional competition for work and the underlying narrative towards professionalisation takes some significant steps forward because Enys shows some of the traits contemporary patients would recognise and expect.

Within the seasons, the two doctors are represented as physical opposites; Choake is rotund, florid and wears a rather dandy-like wig, whereas Enys is slender, fresh-faced and with a full head of thick, natural hair. Enys's extreme good looks only serve to heighten the difference between the two men. Indeed, in the British press he is referred to as Dr Dishy or Dr Dreamy (Shelley, 2018) in a clear reference to the *Grey's Anatomy* (ABC, 2005-) character Derek 'McDreamy' Shepherd. Nevertheless, it is in their chosen profession where the distinctions are most damning for Choake. This is made manifest in their differing approach to patients and the resulting interactions. Fissell explains that 'early modern medicine was dominated by the client' (2005:92) insofar as the diagnosis was conducted largely from the patient's narrative of events and symptoms. In his interactions with patients, Choake follows this pattern and he is rarely depicted conducting a physical examination of his patients. However, as medical knowledge progressed Foucault points to a shift in practice where the doctor ceases to ask what is wrong with the patient but rather 'where does it hurt?' (2003: xxi) and then proceeds with a physical examination. This change makes the patient's story almost redundant and shifts power to the hands of the physician. In *Poldark*, this is made manifest in the outbreak of 'putrid throat' (1: 8). Choake is called to Trenwith to attend Francis (Kyle Soller) and Elizabeth Poldark (Heida Reed) and their household. As Choake is leaving Ross Poldark asks if the family have the dreaded 'putrid throat'. Choake responds incredulously, 'Morbus strangulatorius? What fool gave you that idea?' and states his remedies are applied and 'they are all on the mend'. They are not, but the family survive due to Demelza's attendance and sustained care with the use of herbal treatments. This example serves to illustrate again how Choake uses medical language to display his superiority and even though his confidence is misplaced, his use of medical terminology has the effect of establishing a relationship of power where it is the doctor who can define whether or not an individual is well or ill. In this circumstance it is the beginnings of professionalisation. In the

same episode, Demelza and Julia become ill and Ross fetches Dr Enys to tend them. Dr Enys immediately conducts a physical examination to confirm the diagnosis, and whereas he cannot save Julia, he remains present at Nampara so that the viewer is left in no doubt that he is the embodiment of the 'good' doctor.

Throughout the seasons, Dr Enys has an interesting character arc. When he first appears, he presents as kind and self-effacing, even in his first meeting with Choake (detailed above) he seems almost at pains to ensure his remarks do not cause offence. However, his attraction to and relationship with Keren Daniel (Sabrina Bartlett) in season one, have the effect of casting some doubt upon his character. In this way, he reflects the concern patients held that physicians were 'intrinsically immoral, perhaps even atheistic' (Sumich, 2013:20). He can be interpreted as immoral in his sexual relationship with another person's spouse and even as atheistic in his search for medical knowledge to cure illnesses, when during that historical period some believed illness was a form of punishment from a god for wrongdoing or weakness of character. By interfering with the will of God, physicians were often believed to be anti-religious. Their powers to potentially cure gave physicians a god-like quality which was akin to blasphemy for some. Notably when Reverend Whitworth is attempting to have his wife committed to an asylum for being mad (4:4), he points out that the Church's view is that madness is a judgement upon the wicked. Enys refutes this common belief of the time and mentions King George's afflictions and reminds Whitworth it would be treasonous to say the King's madness was a result of evil ways. Throughout the seasons of *Poldark*, Enys is constantly seeking medical knowledge and means to cure, but what can be interpreted as against God within the historical setting, is simultaneously evidence of the professionalisation of medicine. After Keren's murder by her cuckold husband, Ross implores Enys to leave the area. When Enys refuses, he admits he has wronged Mark Daniel (Matthew Wilson) but he explains how he cannot leave because the people in the area have been very kind to him and

he feels wretched that he has acted inappropriately. His willingness to face the consequences, and his subsequent absolute devotion to his medical work and local people, allow for his character to be restored to the former position of eminence.

In contrast, the position of Dr Choake diminishes as Enys's medical competence is established. Choake is the physician for the wealthier inhabitants of Cornwall and yet this situation appears to exist on the basis that Choake is a gentleman rather than any medical skill. Indeed, Uncle Charles Poldark (Warren Clarke) claims 'Choake is a fool' (1: 4) when Choake suggests to Francis that Charles will recover from his heart stroke. However, Enys and Choake observe an agreement to not encroach upon each other's clients. This is evidenced when Enys refuses to visit Trenwith as Choake will dislike the interference with his patients. Within the lower social groups, Enys's good reputation for healing surges on as he cures an outbreak of scurvy and fixes Rosina Hoblyn's (Amelia Clarkson) lameness. Even Ross's wife, Demelza, foregoes all help from Choake at the birth of Clowance Poldark. At this point in the plot, Enys is in prison in Quimper and rather than send for Choake, Demelza chooses to give birth without medical assistance at all. This is particularly significant because Ross and Demelza have sufficient funds to employ Choake and this would be the appropriate route for Demelza with her social position being that of a lady. She exclaims, 'Tis more than wise to avoid the faddlings of Dr Choake' (3: 4) as she goes into labour with only her servant Prudie to assist at the birth. Demelza's lack of faith in Choake's skills indicates more trust in shared female wisdom than to agree to the 'faddlings' of an inept doctor. The move to employ male doctors as man-midwife was rooted in distinctions of social class according to Wilson (1995). Before the mid eighteenth-century upper-class women would be attended by lower-class women who had experience of birthing. Effectively the lower-class women acted as midwives to aristocratic women, but in doing so blurred the social divide. Wilson points

out the birth experience had a ‘levelling quality... a tangible reminder that ladies were mere women. But the man-midwife offered proof of their superior social status’ (1995: 191).

Indeed, as Demelza goes into labour she states ‘Ross wouldn’t hear of me birthing alone but what he don’t know can’t hurt him’ (3: 4). In this circumstance, it is the ability to pay for treatment which restores the social status distinction. Moreover, it is the patriarchal order of the time which put Demelza, her body and her labour into her husband’s keeping. She considers Ross’s perspective temporarily, but then dismisses it as it would lead to her having to be tended by Choake for the sake of male pride and social status. Thus, this seemingly small scene highlights some important points in the struggle for the professionalisation of medicine and the role of social class and gender in its development.

The triumphs and limits of medicine

From the instant that Dr Enys is introduced to the audience, he is identified as a doctor seeking further knowledge. He is making a ‘study of mine diseases’ and receives wages from Ross of £40 for attending to workers at his mines. Enys is established as a scholar and professional using shots where he is seen dissecting and inspecting diseased lungs (1:6) but these shots are fleeting and easily missed. In series two there is no such escape from Enys’s thirst for greater knowledge of anatomy. Enys is called by Rosina and Charlie Kempthorne (Ross Green) as there is a dead body washed upon one of the Poldark beaches (2:6). Enys advises Charlie to take Rosina home and he will bury the body. Instead, he waits for the couple to leave then produces a saw to remove the dead man’s leg from above his knee. The good doctor then dissects parts of the leg – in particular, the knee. In series four, after the duel with Monk Adderley (Max Bennett) (4:7), Ross has been shot and Enys is seen to expertly remove a piece of Poldark’s bone in a bloody and graphic scene. Such depictions are at odds with the common misconception of period drama as soothing depictions of the past or ‘warm bath tv’ (Hunt, 2007). Byrne claims period drama has undergone an evolution of sorts

and it is more accepted that programmes such as *Peaky Blinders* (2013-) and *Banished* (2015) offer more realistic scenes which are ‘grittier and more corporeal than we are accustomed to seeing on our screens’ (2018:154). *Poldark* is part of this trend, especially when it focuses upon the medical expertise of Dr Enys. In both examples, the bloody scenes are not gratuitous, but serve to highlight Enys’s growing surgical skill and knowledge of the body. The removal of the dead sailor’s leg on the beach has more than a touch of Burke and Hare, but as a direct result of this questionable theft, the ‘good’ doctor Enys is able to cure Rosina’s lameness. This intervention alone does much to develop Dr Enys’s reputation for medical expertise in Cornwall and in a later scene between Ross and Caroline the stories of Dwight’s miracle cure are mentioned as being much talked of in the village.

Enys’s medical triumphs earn him good favour with the lower classes swiftly. They are his main patients in the earlier seasons of the show. However, by series three there is a marked increase in higher classes employing Dr Enys’s service. It is arguable whether this change is as a direct effect of his success in his medical practice or whether it is due to his attachment and subsequent marriage to heiress, Caroline Penvenen (Gabriella Wilde). Initially, Caroline mocks his skills by having Enys attend her pet dog, Horace. Enys acquits himself sufficiently to be called upon to assist Caroline herself when a fish bone is lodged in her throat. Thereafter, their courtship develops as does his employ by the wealthier patients in *Poldark* including the Warleggans. Valentine Warleggan is diagnosed with rickets by Dr Choake (3:5), but his treatment is to keep Valentine in darkened rooms, with his legs in splints and take prescribed tinctures which make him vomit. Elizabeth expresses concern about the treatments and motivated by ensuring his son’s full recovery, George Warleggan (Jack Farthing) sends for Dr Enys. On his arrival, old Aunt Agatha Poldark (Caroline Blakiston) points out that her advice would be to ‘get rid of the splints and get him out in the fresh air’. George dislikes Agatha and comments that Dr Enys ‘does not subscribe to old

wives tales'. What is important here is that George is acknowledging Enys's role as specialist physician and his reputation as recognisably more skilful than Choake. In the event, Enys agrees with Agatha and prescribes sunlight and fresh fruit and vegetables, which has the effect of attesting to the continued significance of lay healers, especially women. When Elizabeth expresses surprise at the lack of medicine, Enys points out 'Dr Choake's prescriptions often serve his purse not his patients.' In this example, Enys's medical knowledge, good manners and professional conduct mark him as a type of physician not dissimilar to the twenty-first century version of a professional medical doctor.

Notably, Dr. Enys's encounters with high status patients increase hereafter. Reverend Osbourne 'Ossie' Whitworth (Christian Brassington) employs him to attend his wife at the birth of their child. After a difficult labour Morwenna (Ellise Chappell) gives birth to John Conan Whitworth. Dr Enys delivers the child and saves the mother (3:8). However, Enys must intervene later in the episode to prevent Ossie from continuing his marital relations with Morwenna immediately after the birth of their son. At this point in the story Enys has not long been free from prison in Quimper where he was held as a prisoner of war. Enys's experience in the prison and subsequent release leave an indelible mark on his mental health but also provide the young physician with empirical knowledge of mental health symptoms and treatment. Consequently, Enys describes Morwenna as 'delicate' and continues to insist that Ossie refrain from sexual activity. However, Reverend Whitworth is determined and approaches Dr Enys to assist him in his endeavours to incarcerate Morwenna in an asylum (4:4) because she still refuses his advances. Enys acknowledges the position, but aims to reason with Ossie; 'As Mrs Whitworth's husband you are of course entitled to put her away, but why would you wish to? She performs her household duties admirably' (4:4). Ossie insists he requires a physician to sanction Morwenna's incarceration in order that he does not have his religious status damaged. Enys leaves the encounter stating clearly that he

hopes Ossie will not be able to find a physician to assist with such an act. In responding in this way, Enys accepts the position that husbands ‘have a right’ to put their wives in a mental institution. What is expressed here is the common law of coverture, which subsumed a woman’s rights to her husband upon marriage. In effect, ‘married women had no legal independence from their husbands’ (Hodgson-Wright, 2001:3), nor was marital rape written into UK Statute Law until the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. Ossie goes so far as to use the law and religion in his efforts to have Morwenna submit to him: ‘We are about God’s holy work’ (4:5). Whilst Enys acknowledges the legal position he refuses to assist and aims to reason with Ossie that in other aspects Morwenna is a good wife.

Later in the same episode it appears that Ossie may have indeed found a less ethical doctor to assist his aims, when Enys is called to Ossie’s house and he is confronted by the presence of Dr Choake. Until this point Choake and Enys have always operated as opposites. However, something unexpected occurs and Choake, breathing anxiously, entreats Dr Enys to provide a second opinion. When Enys requests to examine Morwenna Ossie objects, but Choake defies the audience’s expectations and encourages Enys with a sigh, ‘pray do’. Enys duly returns to Choake and Ossie confirming he can find no indication of Morwenna ‘losing her reason’. There ensues a discussion between Choake and Enys about the lack of sexual relations in the Whitworth’s marriage.

Enys: Choake, I don’t deny it’s a problem, but is it one we can take any professional steps to resolve? We were asked to confirm a diagnosis that Mrs Whitworth is insane and must be put away, well my answer is no as yours must also be. (4:4)

This encounter between the doctors marks a change in the dynamic of their relationship, with Enys occupying a clear position of power and authority and Choake accepting Enys’s diagnosis and advanced knowledge. Enys’s rise is predicated upon his ever-increasing scientific medical knowledge, his commitment to his patient’s wellbeing and his plain

speaking, reasoned explanations for his diagnosis. It is Enys's 'clinical gaze' (Foucault, 2003:148), the fact that he insists upon examination, which marks him as recognisably professional in the encounter. He refuses to accept Ossie's or Choake's account of what is wrong with Morwenna. He even articulates his professional status by asking if there are any 'professional steps' they could take to resolve the matter. The grudging respect Choake gives Enys is a significant triumph. Enys's success in this scene, and throughout the series, is achieved by consistent demonstration of skills and qualities that a twenty-first century audience would expect of a twenty-first century doctor.

Having examined many of the professional triumphs of Dr Enys, it is also necessary to point out the limitations of medical science in the eighteenth century which led to some notable disappointing medical outcomes. In season one, for all his skills and best efforts, Enys cannot save Julia Poldark from the 'putrid throat' or Jim Carter from 'jail fever'. One of the most affecting storylines is his failure to save the life of his own daughter, Sarah. Enys's keen 'medical gaze' exposes a congenital heart defect in his baby (4: 4) but he is aware there is no effective treatment and must accept that she will succumb to the first infection she contracts. The drama in the same episode is heightened, when after a flood at the mine, Enys refuses to stop his vigorous efforts at resuscitation of a miner who appears dead. Enys is aware there is medical hope for the miner and continues with mouth to mouth breathing. The medical detail here is significant because the miner was almost drowned, and this enables the writers to use historically accurate resuscitation techniques which were established in the 1740s (National CPR Foundation 2017). His professional actions at this point are fuelled and motivated by his despair at not being able to cure or save his own child. A similar conclusion occurs for Lieutenant Hugh Armitage. Armitage was Enys's protégé in Quimper prison. Enys refused to leave his post in the prison hospital which prompted Armitage to offer 'to learn some of your skills if only to give you one hour's rest in twenty' (3:4). Dwight proceeds to

show Armitage certain medical treatments. This has the effect of further developing Enys's claim to professional status in that he is teaching a 'student' his medical knowledge. After the pair are rescued from France by Ross, Armitage becomes ill with a 'brain fever'. Unable to cure him and suspecting Armitage is weakened because he is lovesick for Demelza, Enys can only help alleviate his patient's symptoms by encouraging Demelza to visit him. At this point it is worthy of note that some twenty-first century medical doctors have stated their admiration for the series. Roger Jones, editor of the *British Journal of General Practice* comments that 'Dr Dwight Enys and the dreadful Dr Choake represent the opposite poles of diagnosis and treatment' (2018: 451). Whilst David Garner, consultant microbiologist, appears to have great fun working out exactly what infections caused the deaths of the characters in *Poldark*. He states, 'Lt Armitage died from granulomatous amoebic meningoencephalitis' (2018). This appears to indicate the medical storylines are a point of identification for professional medical practitioners which lends further support to the point that *Poldark* has an underlying story to tell of the professionalisation of medicine. It is doubtful that any twenty-first century doctor would agree that Armitage died as a result of 'lovesickness', although the connection between mental health issues and physical illness has long been noted to increase the risk of developing physical illnesses (Naylor et al, 2012:5) Enys identifies Hugh's mental health issue as impediment to physical wellbeing, but does not have the knowledge or medical language at that point to treat the physical condition.

In the case of Armitage, Dwight does not have sufficient scientific knowledge to provide a cure, but in the case of Elizabeth Warleggan her death may have been avoidable medically. Despite Elizabeth maintaining that Valentine's birth was premature, George suspects Valentine is not his biological child but that of Ross Poldark. To secure Valentine's inheritance and happiness, Elizabeth seeks to induce an early birth of George's actual child to prove to him that she usually delivers prematurely. This plan is first intimated by Ross when

he and Elizabeth meet at Sawle church (3:8). Years later Elizabeth enacts the plan and seeks help from Dr Anselm (Richard Durden) who operates a practice for society ladies which clearly includes abortions. Anselm is represented as having some knowledge and he conducts his encounter with Elizabeth very professionally taking notes and providing detailed guidelines for safe use of the medicine and with strict instructions that if there are complications, she should explain the full circumstances to her physician without delay. However, his secretive practice and subject specialism implies that he is a 'bad' doctor, in contrast to Enys.

After a quarrel with George, Elizabeth takes medicine which produces the desired effect and Elizabeth goes into premature labour. Dr Enys attends the birth and a healthy girl is delivered. George and Elizabeth reconcile, but Elizabeth begins to experience violent post-delivery spasms. Dr Choake attends but cannot help so George summons Enys. Arriving back at Trenwith Enys speaks to Elizabeth, 'This is a sad change, Mrs Warleggan. I wonder what could be the cause?' (4:8) Elizabeth does not respond and when she fails to follow Anselm's advice and does not take Enys into her confidence her fate is sealed, and she dies. What is significant is that Anselm suggests even if complications occur that a recovery is possible. It is not the limit of medical knowledge which leads to death, but Elizabeth's silence. Enys clearly suspects her actions and when he finds the incriminating medicine bottle immediately before her death, he understands what has occurred. Being the benevolent doctor, he removes the evidence thus preserving her secret and her reputation.

Quimper and mental health specialism

Throughout the five series of *Poldark*, the doctors are referred to as physicians. During the time the story is set, there are only three recognised types of medical professional within law: physicians, surgeons and apothecaries. The physician occupies the highest esteem and rank, as it is the physician who administers the medicine produced by the apothecary and who

oversees the operations of the surgeon (Waddington, 1977:165). At the beginning of the nineteenth century there is a change in the professional structure of the medical professions to merely distinguish between general practitioners and consultants. To be considered a consultant there must be a defined area of medical expertise. The character development of Dr Enys begins to highlight this forthcoming alteration to medical hierarchy as he begins to achieve eminence for his knowledge and treatment of mental health disorders. This interest, knowledge and skill develops from Enys's own experience whilst being held as a prisoner of war in Quimper. The prison has an infirmary section where queues of prisoners line up for whatever basic treatments Enys and the other three physicians can provide. These queues of patients and the addition of Hugh Armitage as Enys's 'pupil' in medical matters mark the prison infirmary as a figurative 'clinic'. The 'clinic' in Foucauldian discourse is the teaching hospital. Within this learning space Enys performs surgery using the most primitive tools made from any material he can find. In one scene he is shown removing a bullet from a patient with tweezers that appear to be constructed of sticks (3:4). Throughout the horror of his imprisonment Enys never leaves his post and rarely sleeps. When Williams is shot by the French guards Enys stares in disbelief and rolls over on the floor in tears of desperation. This point illustrates the degeneration of Enys's own mental health and at the point that Ross appears in the infirmary to rescue him, Enys laughs and believes he is imagining things in his delirium (3:5). The escape continues at the cost of Captain Henshawe. Enys tends to him on the roadside as they are fleeing the French soldiers. Enys confirms he is dead, and the company continue to their boat and away to the safety of Trecrom's smuggling ship *The One and All*. Aboard the ship, Enys saves Drake Carne and confesses to Ross that Henshawe was not dead when they left him. Enys justifies his actions stating, 'unless I lied you would willingly die alongside him and that I could not permit' (3:5). Enys articulates that he knows

he must keep himself busy to prevent the necessity of facing impossible questions of why he was saved and others were not. At this point Enys knows he is suffering from mental illness.

Enys's return to Caroline and Killiwarren brings the doctor's mental state into sharp focus. Dwight is plagued by flashbacks of his prison experience and when Caroline inadvertently sneaks up behind him, he shrieks and runs and collapses on the floor hunched and clutching his knees.

Caroline: Don't be so girlish...shall I be forced to prescribe hartshorn?

Enys: Opium is more effective

Caroline: For what?

Enys: Inducing oblivion. (3:6)

It is evident that Enys is suffering from the trauma of his prison stay and in the grip of what contemporary doctors refer to as post-traumatic stress disorder. Ross recognises the symptoms of distress many men suffer after experiencing the horrors of war and he sends for Armitage to visit Enys. The two spend time discussing their recollections and as Armitage leaves Killiwarren, Enys acknowledges that Armitage has found a cure for his torment. Hugh dismisses this accolade, but notes it is 'not a cure, but the direction by which we may find a cure' (3:6). At Ross's behest Enys then begins to discuss his trauma with his wife and in doing so begins to cure himself through talk. Jones suggests this 'talk therapy' is '19th-century CBT' (2019:448). Cognitive behavioural therapy, a contemporary form of talk therapy, addresses problematic behaviour patterns and bears some similar features to the therapeutic conversations adopted by Pinel as 'moral treatment' in mental asylums in Paris in the later eighteenth century (Bynum, 1981). Pinel maintained that talking to the patient enabled the doctor to get to know the person and thus enabled an accurate diagnosis and effective treatment. Enys adopts this talking approach several times with mentally distressed patients.

This personal struggle with mental health matters begins Enys's focus upon this area of medicine as his subject specialism. This has significant impact when Enys is called to attend the Whitworths' home when Ossie is attempting to have Morwenna committed. Enys's specialist experience provides him with confidence and Choake ultimately defers to him. In this case and in the case of Henshawe's death, Enys holds power over life and death and the ability to declare who is ill and who is not. It is his superior knowledge and skill and his command of medical discourse which separates him from the more 'general practitioners' in the later episodes. Dr Enys acts as a metonymic sign for the rise of the consultant and the reorganisation of the medical professions which occurred in the mid-nineteenth century.

Enys's subject specialism is certainly put to effective use in season five. After Elizabeth's death, her husband George Warleggan descends into a grief which results in him having hallucinations of his dead wife. In an interview for the *British Journal of Medical Practice*, actor Jack Farthing who plays George Warleggan discussed the research he conducted for these episodes, confirming that hallucinations present for up to eighty per cent of older people after the death of their spouse (2019). In the programme, George exhibits symptoms of similar complicated bereavement and he begins to see images of Elizabeth and subsequently begins to engage in conversation with the apparitions. Rather than allow George's grief to damage business relations and opportunities, uncle Cary Warleggan (Pip Torrens) employs Dr Penrose (Simon Thorp). As Jones states, 'The dreadful Dr Penrose, engaged by uncle Cary, considered George to be possessed by animal spirits and subjected him to bleeding, blistering, cupping, sedation, restraint and iced baths' (2019:448). With the absence of Choake in this series, Penrose occupies the role as 'dreadful doctor' to Enys's 'good doctor'. The brutal treatments inflicted upon George follow the pattern of being identifiable as accurate of the period. In many examples this is due to the research endeavour of the *Poldark* novelist, Winston Graham. However, season five is written by Debbie

Horsfield to bridge the gap left by Graham between the setting of *The Angry Tide* (1977) which is set in 1798-99 and *The Stranger from The Sea* (1981) which is set in 1810-11. Horsfield uses hints provided by Graham from the later novels to produce new storylines which account for developments which are apparent in the later books. In addition, the production company, Mammoth, employed a historical consultant, Dr Hannah Grieg, to manage the historical depictions of the setting. The knowledge of such accuracy makes some of the scenes extremely uncomfortable viewing, particularly those of George being provided with vomit inducing medicine, of bloody cuts from leeches burrowing his skin and of him being waterboarded. Many of these treatments were used upon King George III and depicted in Hynter's film *The Madness of King George* (1994). Enys ultimately treats the king for his symptoms in the later novels.

[Insert Fig: Caption: 'May I accompany you back to Trenwith?']

In the Mammoth *Poldark* story, George Warleggan is depicted strapped to his bed in his nightgown after further injurious 'treatments'. However, George manages to escape his restraints and flees across the Cornish fields to Nampara where he peers through the window to see Valentine happily included with Ross's legitimate children in a vision of domestic contentment. This image is clearly too much for George to bear and he wanders to the cliff edge in readiness to end his torment and join Elizabeth. Enys spots George through the window and follows him to the cliff, managing to grab hold of George before he leaps to his death (5:3). Enys calmly holds George and asks to accompany him back to Trenwith. Once back in Trenwith, Enys questions Penrose and uncle Cary about George's bodily injuries. In the exchanges between the men, Penrose sneers to Enys, 'Call yourself an expert on mental conditions? Sir George is clearly in the grip of animal spirits' (5:3) In spite of the disparaging

tone, the effect of Penrose's question is to bring Enys's reputation as an expert on mental health matters into being. Enys responds by branding Penrose as 'the only lunatic' and suggests that George requires kindness and patience.

In the scene with George, Enys has full authority as a direct result of his knowledge, and this is recognised by both Penrose, albeit grudgingly, and Cary. His elevation to subject specialist is complete and at this point he embodies all of the characteristics expected of a professional, twenty-first century doctor; well educated, extensive clinical experience, constantly seeking new knowledge, sound character, good bedside manner and clear subject specialism, and regarded highly enough to teach others. However, Enys is very much at the vanguard of professionalisation. Physicians such as Penrose, Choake and Dr Behenna were still in circulation with their lack of knowledge, strange beliefs and willingness to seek profit over patient's welfare. In season five, Enys is duly employed to treat George who recovers swiftly and reverts to his former habits of business and profit at all costs. The treatment given to George reflects the turning point already heralded by Pinel in France of 'moral therapy' that instead of treating patients with mental health disorders as mad beasts there was 'a recognition that kindness, reason, and tactful manipulation were more effective ... than were fear, brutal coercion and restraint and medical therapy' (Bynum, 1981: 37).

In later episodes, Enys delivers a paper on mental health to the Royal College of Surgeons. This, in turn, leads to him being called as an expert witness at court. All of these factors would be recognisable as part of the work of a contemporary, professional doctor. However, the impact of the success for Enys 'gave this quiet country doctor a national reputation' (Jones, 2019:448). In the final scenes of the television series, Enys is set to accompany Ross Poldark to France, where Ross will become a spy and Enys explains he will complete further study 'with the famed Dr Pinel at his mental asylum in Salpetriere in Paris' (5: 8). In subsequent *Poldark* novels not covered by the series, Enys is employed to treat the

mental health issues of King George III— a role which must be perceived as sanction of his outstanding medical status.

Conclusion

It is evident that Winston Graham's detailed research provides a foundation for the stories and characters of *Poldark*. The series' historical advisor, Dr Hannah Grieg, confirms that, 'the historical context behind the drama is carefully construed in the original novels' (2016). This research has importance for Dr Enys, as the character seems to map onto the known historical developments of the medical profession at the time of the setting. By following Dr Enys's narrative over the five series, he is represented as a symbol of the move towards professionalisation. Scriptwriter Debbie Horsfield has developed the character in the Mammoth adaptation to depict detail of Enys's own mental trauma as a result of his experience in Quimper prison and this is understood as motivation and empirical knowledge for his subsequent treatment of George Warleggan. Neither aspects are represented in the earlier 1975-77 BBC TV adaptation of *Poldark* which suggests that the foregrounding of Enys mental health and trauma is expressing something relevant for contemporary culture in 2015-2019. This cuts to the heart of the necessity of adaptations to refresh the narrative for a new audience and articulate concerns of the era. Mental health trauma and the need of quality health care are currently in public debate.

Viewed in the context of the struggling NHS in Britain maybe the attraction of the idealised, professional doctor is assuaging some anxieties. The recent damaging scandals of doctors who are serial killers (Harold Shipman) or 'wound with intent' (Ian Paterson) or overprescribe opiates causing death (Jane Barton), are described by Mannion et al as 'an enduring problem' (2019). Larger scale misconduct or poor professional practice within an institution, such as the Staffordshire Hospital scandal, Alder Hey organs scandal and the Liverpool Care Pathway Scandal (Stanford, 2012), all have impact upon public trust in the

medical profession. The effect is to align contemporary doctors with the misogynistic monstrous doctors which are so often the subject of television period dramas (see Taddeo and Wright in this volume). Dr Dwight Enys, and Dr Turner from *Call The Midwife* (discussed by Byrne) stand apart as positive representations which counter the bleak fictional and life-world narratives. Both are kindly and pioneering, both have suffered personally with mental health issues and both take time to listen to their patients.

Luke Norris performance of Dr Enys is distinctive from other television doctors, and other versions of Dr Enys in the source novels and an earlier BBC adaptation of *Poldark*. The reigning Dr Enys has prevailed in dire circumstances and subsequently flourished to defend and support the disadvantaged and vulnerable. He is a ‘good’ doctor and a good guy who succeeds. In a brief article in *The Big Issue* (2019) Luke Norris writes about why he considers *Poldark* became so successful and suggests it is the show’s ‘gospel of tolerance’. This is an apt description of the actions of Dr Enys championing the poor and vulnerable, challenging the misguided and continually seeking knowledge and new perspectives himself. Dr Enys stands apart not just because he is a metonymic sign for the professionalisation of medicine, but because he is the personification of the ideals of the National Health Service. Viewed now within the most recent context of the global pandemic and the sacrifices made by real medical professionals, Enys’s character may set a precedent for future depictions of period drama doctors.

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