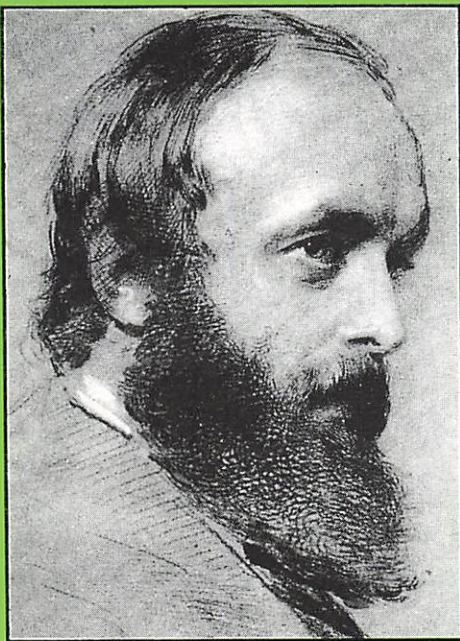


The Salisbury Review

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The Third Marquess of Salisbury
1830 - 1903

Stravinsky
Robin Holloway
Letter from France
Gillian Bardin
Home Rule
Vivian Linacre
William Tyndale
Rowland Whitehead
Childhood and Literature
Hal Colebatch
Education and Ethnic Groups
Ray Honeyford

The Claridge Press

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Conservative Journal

New Directions

Edited by a collective of priests and believers, *New Directions* describes itself as 'serving Evangelicals and Catholics seeking to renew the Church in the historic faith'. A hopeless task? Not according to the articulate and high-spirited writers for this remarkable journal, which revives the old Anglican spirit in the effort to point out as clearly as possible that the faith has been defined for all time and cannot be up-dated. Full of amused and amusing comment on modern heresies and post-modern flippancies, the journal also contains serious editorials and articles offering guidance and hope to the ordinary believer. Many of the writers are working vicars, and it is refreshing to discover that education, culture and the long-term view have not disappeared from the clergy. Although vexed and taxed by the Anglican hierarchy, with its unrepresentative Synods and yeah-saying Bishops, *New Directions* shows that the old Anglican spirit nevertheless lives on, and defends itself with gentle irony against the spiritual coarseness of our time.

The issue for October 1997 contains a vigorous criticism by Robbie Low (Vicar of St Peter's, Bushey Heath) of the centralising tendencies in the new Church of England — the Church which, through its Commissioners, has appropriated and mismanaged the funds of thousands of local communities, which has, in the name of freedom and innovation, all but destroyed the liturgy and ritual which provide its spiritual title, and which has signally failed to be what its name announces — the Church of *England*, of a people and a place with a spiritual meaning of their own. Other articles deal with the interpretation of scripture, iconology, theology and doctrine, the whole interspersed with wry commentary on the degenerate culture of our country, which is strangely cheering in its refusal to despair.

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Editor Roger Scruton
Literary Editor Ian Crowther
Managing Editor Merrie Cave

Editorial address and Subscriptions
33, Canonbury Park South,
London, N1 2JW
tel: 0171 226 7791: fax: 0171 354 0383
E-mail: salisbury-review@easynet.co.uk
Web site: <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~salisbury-review>

Our new rulers have decided that Britain should be re-packaged and sold off in bits to the highest bidder — whether Brussels or the regions or the celtic nations. However, they are acutely aware that, unless the younger generation can be persuaded to read, write and look intelligent, there won't be much to buy. Education therefore forms a corner-stone of Labour Party policy, and, because David Blunkett is an honest and decent man, with a disadvantage that endears him to the politically correct civil servants who would otherwise resist all intelligent change, many of the right noises are being made. At least, the emphasis is no longer on equality, but on standards. And a covert awareness exists, that the two ideals are diametrical opposites. 'Standards' means discrimination, which means selection, which means success, failure and responsible choice. 'Equality' means uniformity, removal of privileges, compensation to the stupid, lazy and indifferent, and a general dumbing down to the level of those who can't or won't.

Unfortunately, however, the attempt to impose standards on schools obliges us to define what those standards are. This is the work of universities, of journalists and literary scholars, of those charged with the conservation of the national culture. And the work has gone very badly. The title of 'university', now conferred on the most dismal collections of second-rate hacks, denotes no continuing endeavour to define the national culture or to distinguish what is good and lasting from what is ephemeral. Nor is the Labour Party aware of the need to perpetuate this endeavour, or of the necessary elitism that is involved in doing so. Its vestigial resentment against educational success is directed towards the tutorial system of Oxbridge, and the privilege that it rightly gives to those who work hard and take an interest. The idea that these high points of intellectual achievement provide the light to all our lesser endeavours is not one that our rulers can condone.

It is from the high culture of a civilisation that standards derive, and the effort of artists, writers and composers to match the great achievements of the past is the very same effort as that which we all should make, to live up to our inheritance and to be what we truly are. The recent death of Sir Michael Tippett removes the last great representative of musical modernism in our country, and also an example of educated taste, and of its revitalising power. Stravinsky, perhaps the greatest influence on Tippett, was also such an example, and Robin Holloway's survey of his stature and significance comes as a timely reminder of what is at stake, in the effort to renew and

build on the classical tradition. Stravinsky was as important to our post-war culture as Eliot or Britten or Orwell; his cosmopolitan genius made him as vivid a presence in Britain as he was throughout the Western world, and his rediscovery of the religious roots and aristocratic style of our civilisation led to music of unprecedented originality and power.

Whether such a figure could again emerge to comfort us is a moot point. But we should not despair. Composers like John Tavener, David Matthews, and Robin Holloway repeatedly hold up a musical mirror to the modern soul; and an educated view of listening and its significance has survived in our schools of music. The greatest sign that New Labour has no idea what it means, when it invokes 'standards' in education, is its elevation of pop music into the icon of our national culture, and its inability to hear, let alone to say, that Britpop is the enemy of Britain.

But what exactly is left of Britain, now that the process of devolution is under way? As Vivian Linacre argues, the result of this process will be widespread disaffection towards the celtic extremities, and an urge to repudiate the Union, whose nature and meaning will no longer be clear. Perhaps this will signal some kind of rebirth of England, as a national and cultural idea — the idea embodied in the person, the style and the religious sentiment of William Tyndale, here eulogised by Sir Rowland Whitehead. But for that to be possible, the idea of England must once again have a place in the education of the young; this, to put it mildly, is unlikely. Indeed, the currents of opinion and activity described here by Ray Honeyford will wish the young of tomorrow to think of England as nothing more than a multi-racial football team. And even if we could defend our national culture from anti-national schooling, we should still have to defend it from the trans-national conspiracy described in these pages by Gillian Bardin.

The only answer to our present distress, is for conservatives to re-enter the fray, and to take an active part in the education of the nation. They must find the way, through schools and clubs and social initiatives, to influence the young and to animate their better instincts. They must be active in theatrical, literary and musical life. And they must promote and support each other's endeavours, in the way that leftists have done throughout our century. If there is any ground for pessimism, it is that conservatives do not, as a rule, feel towards each other anything but a pale shade of the bitterness that they feel towards everything else.

The Significance of Stravinsky

Robin Holloway

Auden in his obituary tribute called Stravinsky the representative artist of modern times. Whatever might be thought of the claim's universality it is certain that he has become by now the century's mainstream composer. There was a seismic shift, and he made it; there was a battle and he has won. He is the air we breathe; or to use a grosser metaphor originating with Stravinsky himself he inseminated the epoch, and the peculiarities of his physiognomy stamp his descendants unto the third and fourth generation.

His victory is to defeat hegemony of the Austro-Germanic musical culture, so mighty, so manifestly holding all the greatest figures from Bach to Brahms (to go no further back or forward) that every other felt itself inferior, subservient, or marginal. By the turn of the modern century this tradition was decadent, although astonishingly fecund in its decay. A rating *circa* 1880 would still have been supreme: Wagner, Brahms, Bruckner, three giants at the height of their powers. Yet decay ran alongside: what is latent in the gods grows explicit in the succeeding demigods, the generation of the 1860s — Mahler, Strauss, Wolf — and the '70s — Reger, Schoenberg. These composers, heirs to a wealth of resources used with complete technical mastery, tend towards excess in all things — length, performing forces, volume (and later, exaggerated brevity; barely audible dynamics from a tiny group of players inside or without an enormous orchestra). Nervous intensity is the expressive goal; head and heart alike are liable to explode with approaching over-cerebration and overkill. A suitable motto for this era of *espressionismo* 'means overends', instantly evinced by its worst period-

pieces — *Sinfonia domestica* in which Strauss blares the intimacies of married bed and breakfast to an indifferent audience for instance, or Mahler's 'Symphony of a thousand' (about which the young Stravinsky sardonically remarked, having first described its colossal apparatus 'all, this, you see, to prove that $2 + 2 = 4$ '). But whereas Stravinsky had cosmopolitan reasons to detest Teutonian romanticism in its terminal agonies, we can enjoy more freely the general stylistic ambience and yield ourselves wholly to the particular strains in it that are supreme of their kind, alongside the bombast and slag. Our sense now is 'What a wonderful way to go!' — feasting, debauchery, fireworks, squandering the savings of centuries in a riot of conspicuous consumption; sunsets and love-deaths by the dozen, nightmares and blasphemies, heads on dishes and corpses under the bench, self projection of the artist as hero or martyr against a background of Alps, or Resurrections, or Jacob's Ladder, while the Great Bell of Midnight from *Zarathustra* clamours 'bimm-bamm'; decadent indeed but still inexhaustibly interesting in its vitality; invention, expressive daring.

With the next generation — Schreker, Korngold, Webern, Berg — decadence becomes explicit and flagrant. *Entartete* — 'degenerate' — was how the Nazis branded this music in the end; an exact aesthetic description however deplorable in context. Thus by the 1920s 'Teutonia' was in dissolution. Wolf, Mahler and Reger had died relatively young; Strauss retained the *de luxe* pre-First World War manner right through and after the Second; Schoenberg by a mighty effort of 'mentalism' invented a language to ensure, in his notorious words, 'the supremacy

of German music for a hundred years to come'. Degeneracy had overshot its zenith (probably to be located at the simultaneous premieres of the 23-year-old Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* at the end of 1920, soon followed by some eighty further productions); and a new generation headed by Hindemith, later made melodious by Weill, was busily engaged in cleaning out the rot in much the same spirit that Stravinsky (popular in progressive German circles throughout the decade, and in the 30s moving over to a German publisher) had already indicated. The altering political climate, the dispersal by exile, suppression, more war, complete the fragmentation. And the post-war regeneration is, by comparison, a sorry simulacrum; an *ersatz*-Bruckner/Mahler in the symphonies of Hartmann, an *ersatz*-Strauss in the operas of Henze, in Stockhausen, neo-Wagnerian ambitions unmatched by the necessary talent: all-in-all a story of decline within one lifetime from musical hegemony to but one culture, by no means the most distinguished, among many.

The lifetime in which it came to pass is of course Stravinsky's own. And it was his authentic, instinctive loathing and fear of the endlessly uncoiling python of Teutonic expression that was instrumental in dealing it the *coup de grace*. His attitude was not merely personal. Contempt and indifference were in the air. Well before World War I brought explicit anti-Boche sentiment into Debussy's music, he had deplored Germanic formulae, teased Strauss in print, walked in person out of a Mahler symphony and writhed in subtle gyrations to escape the seductive wiles of Wagner. Debussy, the living composer to whom Stravinsky acknowledged (for once) his principal

debt, had absolutely no use for the Teutonic forms or techniques from Bach to Brahms. Stravinsky's own stance, already formed, was perhaps confirmed by the edgy relationship with Debussy, and surely consolidated by friendship with the more congenial Ravel, younger, and frankly cheeky towards the horrors of the Huns, abominating Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, preferring Chabrier to *The Ring*.

But Debussy and Ravel were, merely in this respect, no more than especially sensitive harbingers of a change in the climate. (Paradoxically both owed their liberation to fresh currents from earlier phases of Russian nationalism that Stravinsky was determined to supersede.) The hostility so radical that it needed to blow the tottering edifice to bits is Stravinsky's. The heat of his cultural and political enmity is unmistakable; the little *marche boche* (with its lampoon of Beethoven's Fifth) makes a small musical parallel — more substantial, the outrageous Lutheran chorale-parodies in *The Soldier's Tale* — to what he declared in forceful unambiguous words. Equally unmistakable is the personal rage of the individual character, a rage that, exteriorised into acts of music, exerts so powerful an influence that one Russian provincial's quirky stance becomes the focus of the new aesthetic tendency of an entire epoch of composition, sweeping the stables clean of Germanic *Dreck* — and not just its decadent latter end but the whole world of romantic Teutonia, its sublimity, sensibility, soulfulness, seriousness, and musical style.

All the evidence shows that, measured by these, Stravinsky's intrinsic compositional gift was puny. What is not puny is an enormous will to write music. If one is drawn by magnetic ambition to compose but knows one is capable only of featureless mediocrity when composing 'by the book', the solution is to make the book contemptible, out-of-date, no longer worth mastering. Send it up, push it over, burn it, reveal its feet of clay, dance upon its grave. Then do otherwise: *your way*, however perverse; indeed the more artificial and against the grain and nature of music as currently under-

stood, the better. If you cannot join it, beat it.

What Stravinsky could not do and therefore disdained and subverted, was Teutonia at its apex: Wagner and Brahms. It's true that his immediate cultural enemy is the work of their living descendants, his older contemporaries, Brahms fatty-degenerated into Reger, Wagner dissipated into Mahler and Strauss. But behind them stand the Great-Grandfathers who represented the standard of Germanic music under which he grew up. His comprehensive re-slanting of the way to listen, to hear, the way music ought and ought not to be, the way music intrinsically is, is a rejection of the healthy centre as well as its disintegrating edges. Initially polarised in factitious polemic, Brahms and Wagner were revealed by the end of the old century as a complementary unity; they are equal tributaries in forming the composer who came to be seen, with a different kind of absurdity, for the first half and beyond of the new century, as Stravinsky's arch-antithesis: Arnold Schoenberg.

Of the two Teutonic giants, Wagner, on the face of it the more immovable impediment, can in fact be disposed of more easily by the denigration born of genuine artistic distaste. Cutting Bayreuth down to size was as old as Bayreuth itself, the ground-swell of hostility was given intellectual thrust in Nietzsche's polemics of the 1880s, and by 1900 or so even as the musical world at large, and some of its best practising composers (Strauss, Mahler, Elgar, Delius) remained within the sway, the wave of reaction was almost a commonplace among young Turks as different as Debussy and Sibelius. The fascinating conjunction of ego-type and influence linking Wagner and Stravinsky, making each the composer who gives his voice to the entire epoch they dominate — the swing of the pendulum from the Wagnerian to the Stravinskian age — could make a detailed study on its own.

But Brahms could never be dismissed (like Wagner) as a hyperbolic adulterator of artistic genres who then elevated the poisonous brew into a bogus religion with his own glory inextrica-

bly bound in (the substance of Stravinsky's objections, common currency by the time they reached his Harvard audience in 1939-40). Brahms is less destructible than Wagner because he presents a smaller target. As the most recent embodiment of the Austro-Germanic continuities, he is subtly pervasive rather than crudely invasive. Brahms can represent the Teutonic type at its most normal — a craftsman and grammarian of musical usage at its peak of culture, learned in a language rich in inherited resonance, affiliated to this heritage with unquestioning loyalty, bringing to it, so late in its life, a conscious consummation and subsumation. He gathers in a ripe harvest whose conspicuous emotional warmth is inextricably fused, by mastery of every technical means, with powerful brainwork. The result was criticised in his lifetime and still is — for lapses into cosiness and sentimentality, over-squareness that can become muscle-bound, lack of gaiety and lightness of touch, an unphysicality of movement, especially in the absence of a dance-element (apart from the glutinous Viennese waltz); and for limits of emotional range born of his very reverence for the past, showing that cultivation can, sometimes, have its disadvantages. But of course Brahms survives such sniping (of which Stravinsky's own paper dart, deploring the later Schoenberg's stiffness of rhythm 'rooted in the most turgid and graceless Brahms' is a fair specimen), just as Wagner has survived the heftier ammunition turned upon him. Between them they fill out each other's alleged deficiencies, and the composite, with Brahms as the norm and Wagner the perpetually extraordinary, is impregnable. Together, they are the culmination of a musical language that comes with 'instructions' as to how it is to be heard and apprehended; how its listeners are to be moved. This is music as food — nourishment spiritual and ethical, though in a medium of almost carnal richness of texture, aimed at the deepest and highest spaces in the hungry human soul.

So what does Stravinsky provide instead? The nature of his alternative is of course not clear at first. In his monu-

mental study, (*Stravinsky and the Russian traditions: a biography of the works through 'Mavra'*, Richard Taruskin, OUP, Oxford, 1996; 2 volumes) Richard Taruskin has charted the zigzags by which a genius for being different is gradually realised in compositions of equivalent worth. First come laboured attempts to be a dutiful Russian nationalist — Tchaikovsky for sentiment, Rimsky for orchestral magic, Brahmsian grasp of form and procedure dulled into the Petersburg academicism of Glazunov. (Glazunov is another victim of Stravinsky's long but selective memory. Taruskin unpicks the demonisation at the appropriate point in his first volume.) A whiff of Scriabin proves delusive and so for the moment do savours and scents from Paris (compatible with the vestiges of Russianness because in large part inspired by them). This brings us up to *Firebird* (1910). With *Petrushka* in the following year comes the dawning of light. The ingredients of this work that so wonderfully dramatises its composer's fury and frustration remain the same (save only the use of 'found' material, for which a royalty had to be paid after every performance!); but the attitude towards them — subversion, mockery, malice, impudence, sarcasm, irony — alters everything; and so do the conjoined techniques of montage and collage, fragmentation and re-assembly, dissection and destruction. From being slavishly obedient to his models, Stravinsky is from now on the most tyrannical of slave-drivers, brooking not the slightest impulse in his material to pull out of turn. The difference is at once total, yet oddly minuscule, like a change in the light that transforms all the colours, or the slip of a pen putting plus rather than minus in an equation, a 'not' into a sentence, a nought on the end of a cheque. And of course an enormous talent for music-making is apparent after all, in this simple but drastic shift. It's like the tiny nick in Peer Gynt's eye that would enable him to see loveliness and grandeur rather than ugliness and squalor, when imprisoned in the Troll-King's mountain fastness. Writing 'proper' music Stravinsky was derivative and

weak. But in subversion lie strength, power and the possibilities, rapidly exploited, of a new rationale to substitute for the old.

The results are audibly primitive when placed in juxtaposition to the musical culture they aim to dislodge. Taruskin characterises 'Turania' (his name for Stravinsky's land of lost content, the ideal Russia of his dreams) when he adduces 'the tough, aggressive modernity that has not mellowed with age' for the peasant nonsense-songs of Stravinsky's Swiss years. 'It is not their Russian archaism but their belligerent rejection of Europe — the denial of "panromanogermanic" common practice — that has remained their most conspicuous feature'. Ditching the depths and heights of Teutonian expression involves ditching the old-style mastery, learning, culture of the language which contained it. Yet what is done instead is done with consummate finish, a clarity and accuracy of aim that remain dazzling after eighty years and more. From *Petrushka* to *Svadebka* an exact balance of means and ends is restored to music by a barbarian from the East exactly when, at the centre, it seems to have been abandoned for good.

It is after this that the problems begin. Without Taruskin's voluminous and erudite guide, which leaves us at the moment when Stravinsky turns his back on 'Turania', the urgent questions that pressed upon the composer's subsequent trajectory rise up and clamour for answer. No doubt they were urgent questions for Stravinsky himself. Perhaps the obvious answer is also the true one — that he found himself, just turned 41 at *Svadebka's* premiere in 1923, to be, though famous and very experienced, as short of innate natural abundance as at the start of his journey. The 'Russian traditions' had run out. In an artist so rigidly disciplined, self-replication was not permitted. So from now on every new direction became an ingenious feint, yielding a single work or a group of similar pieces before it, too, dried, and continuing again became problematic. 'Neoclassicism' (for continued want of a better phrase) seemed to require a fresh blood-transfusion from

an as-yet-untried source for every further endeavour. Though the artist was never silenced, something vital was silenced in the music. Even now, as the best pieces from these decades harden into core repertoire, it is possible to admire, even to love, while still feeling the absence of some essential constituents. The former virtues of economy, exactness, directness, now feel like constriction, the self-denials now seem to deny the music's actual substance. Taruskin shows us Stravinsky at work — fretting, pacing, erasing, muttering "*pas de pitié*" the while. Moreover, the music's accompaniment of vindications, special pleadings, ever-more emphatic Papal Bulls enjoining order, discipline, submission to the laws of Apollo, tends to drown the exiguous melody. Taken together, they amount to an aesthetic position that deliberately narrows music's scope. It becomes illegitimate for music to be anything other than what Stravinsky himself happens to be writing. The completeness and rapidity of his early success seem to force him to go beyond a triumph-dance, to require the defeated enemy to embrace the victor's philosophy. And it is this philosophy, located more compellingly within the authority of the composer than in the borrowed mouthpieces uttering the aesthetic prescriptions, that has effected the seismic shift between the Age of Wagner and the Age of Stravinsky.

When 'Teutonia', the 'pan-romanogermanic' alliance of head and heart for expressive utterance, is replaced by the composer as maker, organiser, or as Stravinsky described himself on his passport, 'inventor' of sounds, the main emphasis shifts into lucidity and patterning in deployment of the *materia musica*. The aim is order achieved through rigour; and the attitude resembles a naturalist's, an accountant's, a lawyer's, a bureaucrat's. Circa 1900 none of this would have seemed suited to music in any way: music's very nature, unquestioned whether the result was high art or low kitsch, was to be moving, rendering all human life to its extremes of turbulence and exaltation. But in earlier centuries, music had indeed

been understood to be craft, and was categorised as a branch of knowledge, even a science. So Stravinsky's new attitude, counter-current in its time, is consonant with a wider historical perspective more fully appreciated nowadays. As always, he was ahead of the game. Indeed the later 20th-century predilection for medieval, renaissance and baroque music runs loosely parallel to the altered notion of what music is for, brought about by his aesthetic stance; and Taruskin has written persuasively elsewhere upon a more quantifiable alignment between the 'objectivity' of Stravinsky's neo-classic scores and the goal of authenticity in performances of early music.

But really there is no contradiction between the 'expressive' and the 'invented'. All great composers are concerned with making order, pattern, logic of construction; even Teutonia at its high-romantic apex. Who is more fetishistically careful over the small print, or more compelling in the architectural massing, than Wagner? Who more logical and lucid, almost to the point (sometimes) of laying out a self-analysis, than Brahms? And this remains true even as Teutonia disintegrates — the drowning of Wozzeck, the murder of Lulu, Salome and the Baptist's head, the green-faced chorus peeping through purple velvet curtains in Schoenberg's *Glückliche Hand*, the convulsive pulse and heart-beat that permeate the course of Mahler's ninth symphony first movement, are classics of *espressionismo* by virtue of their technical and formal exactness, even as they abrade the nerves, churn the stomach and make the flesh creep. Stravinsky's orderliness, placing the emphasis upon logic, construction, obedience to laws and rules, is an indispensable element of all great art. The question is, whether his banishment of its other elements has left enough behind for subsistence.

It would be absurd to tax Stravinsky with an absence of what he can't do, therefore doesn't want to. What he *can* do, and therefore *does* want to, and therefore does, and is, are what matter. And in the interaction of positive and negative, definitions arise characterising the characteristics and qualifying

the qualities of the epoch's dominant musician.

His muse is double-faced. On one side gaiety and wit prevail; in this he is unique among the 20th-century masters (*angst*-ridden to a man). In divertimenti he is elegant, stylish, vivacious, at a pretty consistently high level. But there is nothing trivial in this ideal. The high spirits of a fable like *Reynard* or a morality like *L'histoire du soldat* are intellectual as well as playful; the audience is likely to be as exhausted as stimulated by this strenuous entertainment; and the same goes for such later displays of athletic wit as the Octet for winds, *Jeu de cartes* and *Agon* (ballets inspired, respectively, by a game of poker and a formalised contest between male and female dancers), or the orchestral Variations, his last purely instrumental work.

Though shadowless, the composer's divertimento-side is not shallow; which is the cue for the serious face to appear. Not his most scathing adversary could fail to sense the numinous in Stravinsky. His religious expression is the antithesis of 'Protestant', eschewing any confessional witness to a 'personal' saviour. Breast-beating or wrestling with the angel are equally alien. It speaks, rather, by way of ritual observance, whose profundity resembles the grave accusing indifference of a Byzantine Pantocrator. This aspect, like the divertimento, was present nearly from the start — the first survivor is the third of the three string quartet pieces of 1914 (newly entitled *Cantique* when orchestrated in 1928); it surfaces soon after in the abortive project for a Liturgy-ballet (documented by Taruskin with his usual fascinating detail) and in the process whereby the aforementioned *Symphonies of wind instruments* symbolically renders the Orthodox Burial of the Dead in memory of its great dedicatee. Gestures like this when similarly placed in otherwise 'secular' works (often enough divertimenti) can be understood by analogy as liturgical, from the end of the Octet (again) to that of the *Symphony in C* (1940). The *Symphony of psalms*, an unimpugnable Byzantine masterpiece, comes at the very

middle of the divertimento-era (1930), and the Mass completed in 1948 foretells the final period in which the great majority of pieces are religious in inspiration, though never liturgical in function even when the text is drawn from the Catholic Requiem.

Divertimento and Ritual unite in the core of major stage works, where all Stravinsky's principal sources — Russia primitive and sophisticated, Greek mythology, Christian Orthodoxy — reveal a corporate core; for the theme is always a variant upon sacrifice, cleansing, propitiating God or the Gods or the forces of nature, to ensure the continuity of renewed fecundity — *The Rite of Spring* (where a virgin is sacrificed), *Svadebka* (where the victim is maidenhood itself), *Oedipus Rex* (a blinding in order to see clearly, bloody acts to purge evil blood-relations that have corrupted the body-politic), *Perséphone* (the seed must consent to lie annually in the underworld of quasi-death, that it may be reborn each spring and renew the earth as of old).

And meanwhile beauty, expelled by the back door for sins of romantic excess, is admitted in the rational light of noon by the Greek portico hastily run up at the front. The impulse here is Apollonian; the genre is ballet (the core of his oeuvre, providing the idiom for many pieces not originally designated for dancing); the subject, disciplining the body's tensions and aggressions into grace, moving communally in ordered symbolic pattern; an eloquence of bodily gesture rather than an expression of internal feeling, an art of measure and stylisation, with strong sympathetic alignment to the rhetoric, figures, metres, of verse.

Stravinsky can scarcely be faulted! He effects an enormous liberation and refreshment of the musical language, in a large (but not redundant) output. Flawless in facture, delicious in entertainment and diversion, it does not abhor some broader humane themes, and succeeds better than any other of its time with the religious. So how can one complain?

An answer can begin in a round-up of some previous reservations. A nearly line that can still be heard now and

again, especially in England, would see in Stravinsky mainly something cold and clever (a term of disapproval), lacking heart and naturalness, brilliant in colour and energy, short on content, cynically attuned to changing fashion (even when in earlier phases it set the styles) all the way from modernist folklore, via Cubist Baroque, Verdi, Mozart, to neo-Webern. Teutonia's counter-attack has more to it and can command heavier artillery: for instance Adorno, with his notorious dismissal of Stravinsky's classicism as 'music about music'. This is one of those backhanded phrases whose apparent significance melts away the more one thinks about what it might mean and how it might apply. What else is the vast majority of Bach and Haydn (to take only the two clearest instances) but music about music, spun from its own substance, essentially made out of its own processes? Schoenberg's graphic metaphor of a naked savage sporting a bowler hat suggests better the serious Teuton's contempt for what must seem, from their angle, the merest cod and faking, ineptly executed ('Stravinsky can't hear below middle C'), sprinkled with wrong notes whose function — for grammatically they are functionless — is to provoke outrage or giggles. Paraphrased, this anti-Stravinsky line says that he is compelled, for lack of grounding in the loamy musical culture of central Europe, to borrow or steal the material that he then subverts, emptying out meaning, retaining only husks and shards.

Direct refutation of these old charges would be otiose so late in the day. Stravinsky has won, his wrong notes are right, his subversions are brilliant, and his way of putting music together from what lies to hand is (almost) everybody's way. And no-one, surely, would any more call Stravinsky cold, or fail to feel how he *burns*. Not with *espressionismo appassionato*, of course. His passion is for exactness and order, he burns to consume the waste, and to reach the essence, be it of an occasional trifle or a major project. For him the precise delineation of a musical object is an all-sufficing aim. But the husks and shards rejected in

the process are those aspects of music that matter most to most of its lovers. Ask any average 'lay' music-lover what music means to them, and they will almost always grope after something vaguely romantic, inchoate but deeply-held, concerning the feelings and the emotions. This is by no means incompatible with strong unconscious recognition of the patterns, the construction, even the grammar, by which musical emotion works. But the prime purpose is always this emotion — a fact that the professional musician, especially the academic, tends to forget.

Music's power to move is by no means extra-musical; not only is it absolutely intrinsic — first codified in classic times, most memorably encapsulated in the first neo-classic era (Dryden's 'What passion cannot music raise or quell?') — but it is, properly seen, the most important and wonderful thing about it. The 'ignorant' popular view is not vulgar: it is right; and the entire history of the art has been towards the locating, defining, releasing, extending, refining, of 'Musick's Empire', giving it ever fuller scope to embrace and contain still more of human experience. The endeavour is risky: the incomparable equipoise of effects and causes in Bach, Haydn, Mozart is endangered by Beethoven's heroicism and pathos even as he also takes inwardness of expression to unheard-of heights and depths. The growth of romanticism throughout the nineteenth century can be measured in terms of loss and gain, but who, weighing the wealth of the achievement from Schubert to Berg (say), would care to count the cost?

The motto of popular romanticism could perhaps be 'from the heart, may it go to the heart', attached by Beethoven to the score of the *Missa solemnis*. And its view of music's role is none the less valid for being a bit squashy when put into words (but words are of course not its medium; it shouldn't need to be put into words). Music as mental refreshment and spiritual nourishment, solace in loneliness, depression and grief; music as shaper of fantasy and stuff of dreams; music as joy and sweetness. Also as the coursing of the blood, the surge of the

libido, the free representation of the inner life of the dynamic imagination even as the outer circumstances of the industrial, the modern, the technological world contract into complete banality. It is an affair of the heart, warm, expressive, charged with sensibility in all things secret and intimate — 'the private parts of the spirit'; or 'music's smile' (of sentiment not amusement, though amusement is part of it), expressive of tenderness and delight — the *petite phrase* that, as in Proust, unlocks the past and, as Cosima Wagner said of her Richard's Porazzi-melody (a fragment of *Tristan*-material unused in the eventual work) 'brought back the most secret incidents of her soul'. Music as balsam for aching heart, head, hand; and from this, music as guide to, or goal of, the deepest places of spiritual searching — music that not only exposes and forms and stimulates into utterance the innermost recesses of feeling, but seems to actualise a Platonic idea of human existence — thought, feeling, senses — rendered into a palpable reality. And thence to the most devastating and overwhelming effects of ecstasy and intoxication — the power of music to unite millions as one in a 'Kiss for the whole world' (Beethoven again, but this time setting Schiller).

All this redefines the role of the composer from its earlier incarnations as craftsman or quasi-scientist. A composer's music is born of the whole person — the physiological constitution, the physical characteristics, the identifying voice, gestures, walk; the individual tempo (why is Rossini naturally *allegro*, Bruckner *adagio*?); the personality as revealed in things both trivial (Schoenberg claimed that even the way Mahler tied his cravat was expressive) and vital; the cast of mind and temperament; the intellectual interests; the concerns social, cultural, spiritual, sexual.

Piquantly, Stravinsky is as clear an instance of all this as any composer one can think of — even down to his natty and self-revealing choice of cravats! But he would have outlawed the very idea of the composer as vehicle through which one individual's unique angle upon things, his especial sensi-

tivity, acuity, depth of feeling, is realised by the nature of an equally particular musical gift into musical statements that can be communicated to others, and therefore shared, entered, possessed. And thence back from the composer to the attempted sketch of music's scope. All, all is forbidden: everything that music is able to do more efficaciously not only than any other art but than any other resource known to mankind; what music seems not merely to be *for* (if there has to be a function) but intrinsically to consist of: the life of the spirit rendered in sounds, giving wings to cumbersome body and invisible soul, uttering everything that cannot otherwise be uttered, or heard. All this, which those who love music as the world's most precious invention find the most precious of its properties, is ostensibly made illegitimate by the Stravinskian stance which, sweeping all before it, has become the very air we breathe. At first fresh and new, this attitude by now clips the wings and chokes the voice, limiting domains so rich and hard-won, stunting the idea of music in its very essence.

This essence, though permanent and indestructible, is nevertheless at a loss when under attack. Having no defences, it exposes the soft flabby frailty of human nature. Insistence on the soul, the smile, the heart, sounds so woolly! When they are invoked as the measure, silliness, even absurdity, are risked. They've become shaming, so their mocker encounters not resistance, but half-willing collusion from within. For who wants to appear wet and exposed in a posture of abasement; the heart and soul laid bare haven't a leg to stand on! So the attack is bound to hit the spot; embarrassment and self-betrayal are deflected by an affectation of detachment and cynicism. Stravinsky's idiosyncratic stance, born of personal and artistic limitation, has, because of his compositional prowess and the colossal authority born of it, cut music down to his own shape and size and put its larger, less concrete aspects out of court.

The principal weapon is 'irony', a word so ubiquitous nowadays as to merit an attempt at its explosion.

Whatever it signified originally — a technical term in Greek drama involving 'speaking by contraries' (Johnson's *Dictionary*) — the idea developed into something both supple and subtle, a play of equivocation that, using the oblique to attain the direct, could penetrate to the core of a character, a situation, a thought, a feeling. Johnson's prime definition 'a mode of speech in which the meaning is contrary to the words' is the mere grit on which this pearl of European consciousness formed. But nowadays it is hard to find a term of comparable richness so trivialised and overworked; it has grown so vague and dilute as to mean virtually nothing. Colloquially it stands for something like 'tongue-in-cheek', odd, coincidental, mildly strange or amusing. Its more 'thinking' use is a careless commonplace in discussion of all the arts, a package containing sarcasm, mockery, parody, pastiche, spoof; disguise by quotation or allusion of the direct statement of explicit feeling and overt engagement; a parrying motion of the reflexes to keep such things at bay; guardedness towards the sublime, the sincere, the heartfelt, the naive, the ingenuous. Defence against those is certainly required when they're bogus, but defensiveness in the face of the real thing reveals frigidity or cowardice. So irony is a bastion against the too-revealing vulnerability of impulse and spontaneity, a satirical instrument poised to mow it down. From this, its development as a desideratum inevitably follows; it builds upon fear, wariness, knowingness, evasion, to congratulate itself upon, even to rejoice in unfeelingness.

But at bottom irony has something to hide, and its guilty secret is the unchanging facts of human weakness, the quivering heart, the distresses of hope, desire, love, illusions and delusions, tenderness and feebleness, the corruptions of sympathy and empathy, and corrosion of compassion: all these poor human characteristics, seen with contempt rather than charity. Stripped of the protective armour of 'speaking by contraries', men and women are revealed in all their pathos — human, all-too-human. From which an escape

can be found in the elevation of personal authority and *terribilità*, with its impersonal laws, rules, orders, over the hapless incoherence and muddle of humanity *en masse*. Yet the strength of irony is a false strength; its bristling bastions of defensiveness cannot conceal the internal collapse whereby head, heart, body and hand are no longer integrated as an organic whole.

What might be called an 'irony' in one of its many debased senses deserves to be reasserted as an evident truth: that music's innate emotional content and message-bearing power can only be achieved through the discipline of construction and technique that the Stravinskian stance claims to be music's *soleraison d'être*. Bach, by common consent the greatest master of pattern and geometry ever known, is also saturated in a language of affective symbolism so harmonically rich as to stand closer to Wagner than to any contemporary or predecessor. Nor can Beethoven and Haydn, the master builders of development and argument, be charged with emotional dryness, except for brief spells of temporary desiccation before a newly-acquired technique has been assimilated and given blood. Contrariwise, the greatest masters of overflow and charged-up expression — Schubert, Bruckner, Wagner — reveal an astonishing power to find formal and grammatical vehicles, even a geometry, for content that on the face of it would seem to have no chance of achieving organised utterance. Compared with these, Stravinsky, with a body of work, central to the modern spirit, whose consummate brilliance it would be stupid not to admire and rejoice in, seems exiguous. The sanctions he imposed on the name and nature of music bite most sharply at their source. Running right through his glittering yield is a vein of meagreness, perversity and acid. He has composed into his own music his own anti-musicality.

Of course, all great art is born of a collusion between its creator's limitations and strengths, knowing and using both, deriving one from the other. In music the clearest instance is Wagner who, manifestly not much of a melodist by nature, invents 'endless melody' by

which unprecedentedly vast spans evolve out of brief pregnant motifs. Stravinsky also exemplifies the old truism well. The evident limits are short-windedness; frugality that can turn mean, and orderliness so exaggerated that it can become mere tidiness. But he also gives the truism an unprecedented twist, in his conspicuous absence of a fount of original, primal musical inspiration. Yet even this apparently devastating limitation can be turned to advantage too, as can be seen in comparison with related figures more generously endowed by nature: Bartók for instance, a *musikantisch* Brahmsian type at the start, only to arrive by remorseless rigour (in emulation, 'ironically' of Stravinsky himself) at self-made deserts of fearful symmetry; or, still nearer home, Prokofiev, overflowing with natural fecundity more tuneful, more human, more loveable, but indiscriminate, artistically unscrupulous, self-squandering. Stravinsky, with the careful management that is one of his most genuine traits, make a shorter talent go further than either.

That the other deficiencies are converted to benefits is easier to discern. Shortwindedness become the basis for a brusque terseness of articulation and punctuation, a gestural authority closely related to bodily charisma, unrivalled before or since (Balanchine claimed that he could choreograph every note Stravinsky wrote). This, extended in duration, builds an architecture of interlocking strata and juxtaposed blocks that has become 20th-century common practice as surely as the polyphony, continuo, sonata (and so forth), of previous epochs. Frugality (or just meanness) and orderliness (or just tidiness) underlie the economy, elegance and precision of every move, and a self-observant self-consciousness permits no smallest detail to pass unexamined, evading cliché, banality and routine even where the stylistic surface makes naughty play with the most used-up materials. Wrong notes become his right notes; he has the courage to sound them in the first place, then relish them, sense and appreciate their strange qualities, and stick to them with single-minded ob-

stinacy. Every scrap and nugget of perversity is worked with rigorous concentration till it becomes a new thing with a new validity. All this is personal indeed, with a sharpness of character born of the intelligence, acuteness, and sheer peculiarity of the ears, which have gradually become the ears by which the entire era hears. But it is the lack of anything fundamental of his own, clearly described in the opening chapters of Taruskin's book, that twists him into complete originality. He must be less gifted for music than any great composer in its history! The absence of an inner well of spontaneous naturalness compels him to forage, from the Folk, from the Past, from contemporaries senior and junior, making himself up out of whatever he cares to hunt down and devour. A new possibility, technical and stylistic, opens out around his every act of theft, rapine and murder; and the musical world, unto the third and fourth generation, has leapt into the outrage and made itself a home.

Can the deliberate emotional hobbling also be seen as a virtue in reverse? The party defence-line (beginning with his apologists in the 1920s and '30s) is that his *anti-espressivo* becomes an absent presence, wherein the music glows with the repressed strength of what it doesn't care to state full-frontally. Such 'suppressionism' clearly hasn't impeded the consistent energy and vitality of the wit, the gaiety, the ceaseless intellectual curiosity. (Compare Webern, where a comparable tendency towards self-pruning clearly results in self-mutilation.) 'Less is more.' But thinking of lost Teutonia, with its fabulous beauty and depth of expression inseparably fused into its technical glories, and all rendered by the loveliness of its undoubtedly right notes, I'm not so sure. Maybe another swing of the pendulum is due.

Stravinsky effected a necessary timely and inevitable purge. He was right by gift, by birthplace, and angle upon the art — the primitive onslaught from the East slashing with super-sophisticated weaponry into the bloated body of Austro-Germanic high culture, then piecing together a culture of its own,

which substitutes 'Byzantine' impersonality and 'merciless' geometry for heredity and warmth, facture for fracture, in a series of masterpieces almost arrogantly perfected, celebratory, high-spirited, and instinct with religious observance. In all this he is a liberator; yet he is also a constrictor by inhibitions and prohibitions which, arising from individual necessity, harden into Laws as subtly inflexible as those of Schoenberg or Boulez are visibly repressive. In as much as he has permeated 20th-century usage, one might say as Keats did of Milton that 'our language sunk under him'. But this isn't quite right. Our *language* rose like leavened bread. Having purged the bloated body he refreshed the words of the tribe by a dose of salts, in a music where every element permitted to survive has been newly thought out. But the sacrifice is grave — it amounts to jettisoning what is so indispensable a part of music's gradual entry into the fullness of its powers that the old-fashioned *Musikant* would call it simply music itself. What music is for, what it can do, what it is, have been enormously curtailed by Stravinsky's particular sense of these things, and to the extent that he has become the air we breathe, our *century* has sunk under his influence into something tighter, smaller, drier. The age of Wagner choked the art one way; the age of Stravinsky chokes it another. Yet, paradoxically this limited notion of musical creativity is hitched to a creative drive of colossal force, that has changed the general sense of what the art can do.

Robin Holloway is a composer. A longer version of this article incorporating a review of Richard Taruskin's book appeared in *The Musical Times* for October, November and December of last year.

Home Rule and Home Truths

Vivian Linacre dispels the Scotch mist

Yes" is more appealing than "No". The positive is naturally preferred to the negative. So any referendum that calls for a 'yes' or 'no' vote is biased in favour of the affirmative.

Had the principal question in the Scottish poll on 11th September been turned around, to ask "Do you want Scotland to remain as an integral part of the UK, with a Secretary of State in the Cabinet, rather than be governed by a subordinate new parliament in Edinburgh [if you support the present system vote "Yes": if you support the proposed reorganisation vote "No"]?" the outcome would have been quite different. However, no such hypothetical redrafting is possible because its wording is unavoidably so cumbersome as to deter many from voting and to confuse many more. It is just too difficult to frame any question designed to ensure that *opposition* to some new proposal elicits the answer "yes" rather than "no". The bias is therefore built-in.

Furthermore, any issue put to the popular vote must be couched in stark, simple terms, as a plain choice between two absolutely contrasting views. But the complex arrangements for this Scottish parliament (its inter-face with Westminster in every department, its implications for the judiciary, for national quangos, government finances and powers of local government, to mention only a few areas of conflict) do not yield to a black / white verdict. So these are two objections to referendums *per se*. Worse still is the constitutional offence of usurping the role of MPs as the people's representatives — see Alexander Boot's "government by plebiscite is an abomination" ("Aimez-vous Burke", *Salisbury Review* Winter 1997).

Any referendum, accordingly, is deplorable, but the Scottish exercise was not even that. For the people were not presented with a Bill in final form, ready for enactment provided the electorate registered approval — the essence of a referendum — but merely an off-White Paper (with distinctly Green tinges), in advance of and subject to the introduction of a Bill and its presumed passage through Parliament. So it was merely a glorified opinion poll, conducted — in the absence of informed debate based on detailed proposals — in a climate of crude nationalist sentiment. How could any patriotic Scot oppose the creation of a national parliament? The size of the 'No No' vote (25% against a parliament and 36% against giving it tax-raising powers) and low turn-out (only 61.5% overall) were remarkable in face of the government propaganda and media 'hype'. Once the legislation emerges, revealing not a parliament — another cynical misnomer — but merely a glorified regional council with limited powers, then many electors will feel deceived and wish they had voted the other way. Even more will be disillusioned once they realize how much Scotland has lost in Treasury subsidies following renegotiation of the Barnett formula. Echoing a theme of the general election, the government's referendum campaign — waged at enormous (*our*) expense — boasted of "trusting the people"; but the Scottish people could not be trusted with details of these devolutionary proposals before being misled into assent.

The effrontery of the government, with the support of the SNP and LibDems, in proclaiming this reorganisation of Scotland's administration — which is all it amounts to — as a "major constitutional change", is

breath-taking. The Queen in Parliament, Privy Council, Cabinet, Courts of Law and other state institutions, will not be disturbed. So all that's wrong with the demotic dictum that "major constitutional reform is inaugurated by the referendum in favour of a Scots parliament", is that the constitution is not affected, it was not a referendum and it is not a parliament.

[Note the other semantic confidence trick, commonplace among politicians and the media: to refer to any proposed change as a "reform" — i.e. as an improvement — as if any change is necessarily for the better. This tilts the bias in favour of the poll's promoters even further, for who can vote against "reform"? Hence the agitation for "reform" of the monarchy, of the House of Lords, church liturgy, the age of homosexual consent, race relations or any other shifty measure for which there is no need and no popular demand.]

Which is the more amazing; the prevailing assumption that this heavily qualified result (remember that the turn-out in Glasgow was only 51.2% and that both Orkney and Dumfries & Galloway voted 'No' to the second question on giving a parliament tax-raising powers) reflects "the settled will of the Scottish people", even though it was based on a false prospectus; or the consequence that the supine Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party has now succumbed to this dangerous fantasy instead of exposing it? Of course, the Tories have always been as ambivalent on Scottish Home Rule as on membership of the EC/EU. Typically, half-hearted opposition is inevitably followed by defeat, whereupon, sacrificing principle to "pragmatism" (a favourite weasel-word) and the country's long-term interests to short-term

electoral considerations, the Party half-heartedly collaborates with the new regime "in order to make it work".

But the vital difference between these twin millstones, the EU and a Scottish parliament, is that the process of integration within the former does most certainly undermine our constitution whereas the latter leaves it untouched. Yet the pretence by Labour, SNP and LibDem and the media, connived at by the Conservatives, is precisely the reverse: that the latter effects a major constitutional reform whereas the former is just good business! Has the political establishment ever lied to the British people for so long and so consistently and over such fundamental national issues?

The next subterfuge, designed to reinforce these lies, will be to fabricate "regional assemblies" throughout England, in order to overcome the otherwise intractable "West Lothian question" (why should Scottish MPs at Westminster vote on English domestic matters once a Scottish parliament precludes English MPs from voting on Scottish business?) by creating a fully 'federal' system of government. So, if there is one mountain on a vast plain, how do you level the terrain; demolish the mountain? Of course not: build lots more mountains! Never mind that these English "regions" have no identity or even number; they will have to be invented in order to fulfil the grand design begun in Scotland and Wales. Never mind either that a subordinate parliament is a contradiction in terms *except* under a federal constitution which ours is not, and that such a transformation would require the biggest revolution since 1688; conversion to a federal model will be effected simply by superimposing a series of bureaucratic incubi. For all that matters is presentation and perception, and "federal" sounds so good: so 'New', with strong republican overtones.

The great irony is that, while the vast apparatus of English regional assemblies is to be constructed in order to justify the anomaly of the Edinburgh body, the effect will be precisely the opposite. For, whereas it is billed as a national parliament, it will be relegated

to the status of just another UK regional assembly, and Scotland treated as of no more importance than East Anglia or Wessex or whatever these county collectives are to be called. So this whole devolutionary exercise, impelled by Scottish national pride, will prove utterly counter-productive. The myth of Scottish nationhood will be exploded. Imagine if the voters had known all that on 11th September — that "the settled will of the Scottish people" was actually "the *last* will of the Scottish people" — how different the outcome would have been!

English regional assemblies will be preceded by the setting up of regional development agencies, like the Scottish and Welsh, each covering an arbitrarily defined area (by selection from a range of such definitions available among government departments) for the purpose of fighting one another for government and 'European' money to attract foreign investment (largely at the expense of local industry) and otherwise to provide employment for lots more bureaucrats. The agencies will act as nuclei for the establishment of the assemblies, evolving cunningly from executive branches into legislatures as the Common Market evolved into the EU. The fact that the benefits of development agencies are neutralised if every part of the country has one, and that consequently these networks of development agencies are a colossal waste of public money, is irrelevant; again it's presentation and perception that matter, and anyhow it is all a means to the main objective. That is — apart from establishing regional assemblies and providing jobs for another thousand third-rate politicians (129 MSPs in Edinburgh) as well as several thousand more groupies and apparatchiks — to dismember Britain into regions for piecemeal rule directly from Brussels.

The SNP's slogan is "independence within Europe"; an oxymoron which means that in return for personal perquisites and prestige the Ministers of an 'independent' Scotland would invite the European Commission to run their country. Labour will have largely accomplished this aim for SNP's ben-

efit without the need for quitting the UK, as a major EU presence will be set up in Edinburgh alongside the parliament, and the new Scottish Ministers will spend almost as much time over there as at home. Besides, why bother quitting a UK which will survive barely as a skeleton once English regional assemblies are in operation, each with its Commission consulate and its own offices in Brussels?

So the Westminster government will be satisfied, in the short term, because the other three parties will all collaborate in running the puppet parliament, and Scotland will have become consolidated within the UK as one of the EU regions. But the whole structure is unstable and must collapse eventually. Conflicts between Edinburgh and Westminster are unavoidable, and also between the new unitary local authorities in Scotland and the even newer parliament, which is bound to encroach on their powers. For this synthetic parliament, possessing neither sovereignty nor constitutional validity, has to spring into instant life, like a monster from some mad scientist's laboratory in a horror movie; but the Act that will eventually give it birth can hardly ensure a perfect fit with the organs of both central and local government. Moreover, it incurs two strong risks of constitutional crisis, either of which could lead to separation of Scotland from the UK without the SNP even seeking to exploit the situation.

One is a triangular conflict between Westminster, Edinburgh and Brussels: e.g. a dispute between the UK and Scotland over (non) compliance with EU Directives, Edinburgh taking Westminster to the European Court, discrimination by Brussels between Scotland and the rest of Britain, Scotland claiming recognition beyond that accorded to the English regions — the scope is infinite.

The other would arise from a vote by the Edinburgh parliament to expel Trident from its Scottish base. No use protesting that defence is reserved to Westminster; Scotland would have control over planning, coastal management, health and safety, etc., and anyhow could force the issue if so

minded. Deprived of those nuclear submarine facilities, Britain (not just Scotland) would be virtually defenceless. More than one military expert will secretly insist that this is the hidden motive of the Home Rule movement, but its leaders are scarcely clever enough to pursue such a far-sighted campaign, although there were links with CND that helped keep the movement alive during its lean years in the '80's. However, we were driven into the European Community by the USA, a federal state which could not have imagined the devastating effect of the EC/EU on our uniquely balanced, unwritten constitution. So the USA must decide now whether it wants us in the

EU or in NATO.

It is high time for a decision, too, by the Conservatives, especially the Party in Scotland. Will they rediscover resolution or continue to wobble between tradition and trendiness? Have they the guts to tell Scotland the truth: that this parliament is a sham — both in terms of its restricted domestic functions and its prospective parity with English regional councils — and a Trojan horse to take over government by Brussels? The only way to escape the apparent dilemma between sustaining opposition, thereby forfeiting representation once elections are held, and capitulation, thereby forfeiting respect and popular support — a di-

lemma in which the other three parties rejoice — is to seize exclusive command of this moral high ground (for once the cliché is justified!) by hammering home these facts, thereby turning the electorate against their betrayers, and then fighting for control of this pantomime parliament in order to avoid its inherent dangers. Once we are out of the EU, of course, most of these dangers disappear, and then Scotland can make an honest choice between real independence and a strong UK.

Vivian Linacre is a surveyor based in Edinburgh

Just Deserts

Mervyn Matthews lets the punishment fit the crime

We all know what an unfair world we live in. One of the greatest unfairnesses inflicted upon us is surely the absence of any system of punishment for ineptitude among our rulers. The contrast between chastisement for personal and public irresponsibility is startling indeed. Thus as a tax-payer way down the income pyramid I tremble at the thought of misleading our kindly inspectors even to the tune of a hundred pounds. No doubt the many honest *Salisbury Review* readers feel the same way.

Yet on the Olympian peak of government it is nothing for a minister to lose vast amounts of public money through some patently ridiculous decision, and be subject to no retribution whatever. Beyond the numerous million pound peccadilloes one reads about, lie the non-monetary blunders of state which blight the lives of entire generations. The leaders who have orchestrated

catastrophe may well go on to pursue eminent careers as though nothing whatever had happened.

In this context, of course, one thinks primarily of poor Sir Edward Heath, whose dreadful misjudgement about Europe has caused the loss of untold national wealth and sovereignty, and still, apparently, costs every family in the land ten quid a week. But he is one of a crowd. Who, for example, should take responsibility for all the other errors in the spheres of European union, immigration, education, Irish terrorism? Or the refusal to reform the antiquated socialist tax system, under which we have been groaning for decades, years ago? Or look at your local council's expenditures on God knows what. No one ever seems to be called to account for the mistakes, and glancing into the future, the prospects for blunder by droves of Labour politicians are breath-taking.

Many people would feel better (at

least, I would feel better) if we had a system of punishment, albeit minimal, for national fools and sinners. In that way they would lose the comforting thought that they can go home at five o'clock and doze in front of the telly, regardless of what they perpetrated in the office.

Any popular retribution for the mighty would have to be humane, socially improving, and fun for onlookers. It would also have to be flexible, so as to suit the infinitely variable nature of ineptitude. At the bottom end of the scale would be punishment for the loss of a piffling few million pounds of public money: say an afternoon, or couple of afternoons, in a conveniently situated pillory or the stocks. A class of well-mannered, middle-class children could be bussed in to pelt the culprit with fruit carefully checked for adequate rottenness, so as to avoid the risk of damaging good looks (if any). All culprits would be provided with goggles and people like Mr Major

would be invited to remove their false teeth first. Apart from the hilarity engendered, this would be excellent civic training for the younger generation.

A more serious punishment for vain-glorious mistake-makers could be a period of community service, possibly repairing the crumbling Victorian sewers in London. The actual application of the punishment would be brought to the attention of the public through the usual media. Thus Mr Heseltine's descent through a manhole in Acton, with trowel and other appurtenances of this useful trade, could be televised, and a suitably clad TV crew would follow him as he haughtily swished his way through the unmentionables in the tunnel. In fact, although I never watch TV myself, I might even get up early to see that, at least for a few minutes. The cameras would also catch the amusement and ribald comment of a small crowd of artisans and servants on their way to work.

It is some decades since I visited the Tower of London, but I seem to recall that space is not lacking in the nether parts. Towerisation (a more serious chastisement) would be acceptable to the public mind if it involved long periods of incarceration (ten or twenty years), and the conditions were hygienic though harsh. Obviously, for politicians of eminence, the actual conduct to the Tower would have to be effected on a National Holiday, so that large numbers of people could be there to enjoy it. Some individuality could be

built in. For instance, the tumbril which carried Sir Edward from his elegant home in Belgravia could be fitted with a polished teak shelf for his yachting trophies. He might be invited to conduct a small orchestra where the crowds now buy their tickets before disappearing inside for ever. But when the left wing of the Labour Party has forced Mr Blair out of office (presumably into Holy Orders), and it votes to towerise Maggie, her tumbril would need no embellishment: she would look magnificent in almost any vehicle.

Of course, every society has its extremists, and a few voices, even in liberal England, might call for the application of the death penalty by hanging, electrocution or the messy French method. That, in my view, would be inhumane and out of the national character (or as much of it as is left). Most of our politicians' errors were due to ignorance, lack of foresight, irresponsibility, an honest desire to "up" their stocks and shares, or just temporary inebriation. Such errors were rarely malicious or deliberate.

But if we were to have a system of Just Deserts, two problems can be anticipated. On the one hand, some of the more bilious politicians (especially on the Left) might extend the ultimate penalty to include perceived enemies in ever widening circles, right down into the middle classes. As any owner of a stately home will tell you, there is nothing more terrible than a vengeful ex-butler. So God knows what would

happen if someone like Mr John Prescott were to break loose and get hold of the *Salisbury Review* subscription list. We would all be trembling in our Parker Knolls. The Tories' brightest hope for the future (I refer to Mr Prescott again) would I imagine have few qualms about ordering a fleet of electric, pollution-free tumbrils for use in specified areas like Mayfair, Kensington, Chelsea and even Pimlico (where I live). A concentration camp could be opened for us somewhere like Hendon.

The second problem involves the prospect of punishment on the minds and intentions of the politicians themselves. The bravest might continue their public careers undeterred, but some of them might demand even higher salaries, as danger money. Others, I am sure, would be frightened out of politics altogether. This brings us to the central matter of whether "Just Deserts" would in fact lose valuable talent for the country. One might argue, looking at the sorry mess we are in, that little talent is available anyway. Sometimes, in my darker moments, I weep for my country. The problem of apportioning blame is not an easy one: but perhaps we should give the matter of due retribution a little more thought. It might help.

Mervyn Matthews was Reader in Russian Studies at the University of Surrey.

Good-bye to Bloomsbury

A D Harvey

Last October, after 140 years, the legendary Round Reading Room at the centre of the British Museum complex in Bloomsbury closed for business, as a result of the British Library's move to its new premises next to St Pancras Station.

Karl Marx, who was often in the

library in the pre-Round Reading Room era from 'nine in the morning to seven in the evening' even when 'plagued by haemorrhoids,' described it during the hot summer of 1854 as 'the only cool place in London' but he never recorded his impressions of the Round Reading Room itself. His reticence has

been more than made up for by other writers. For George Gissing, describing the Round Reading Room in 1891, the readers were 'hapless flies, caught in a huge web, its nucleus the great circle of the Catalogue'. They came, he sneered, 'to make new books out of those already existing, that yet newer

books might in turn be made out of theirs'. Similarly John Collier described the Reading Room in the 1930s as a 'vast hive', containing a 'swarm of busy creatures engaged in manufacturing a further and diluted yield out of the very honey that gorged its cellular lining'.

But such pen pictures, though part of the legend, tend to give a misleading notion of the objective truth. According to David Lodge, 'No sounds of traffic or other human business penetrated to that warm, airless space'. In reality there was an unceasing mumble of conversation in the Reading Room, and occasionally even a raised voice as an outraged reader complained of the time taken to deliver the books he has requested. In Gissing's *New Grub Street* Marian Yule 'once a week ... allowed herself to stray about the alleys of the Reading Room, scanning furtively those who sat at the desks,' but in more recent times there seem to have been a number of readers who did little else. While some ticket holders used the place as their office, keeping regular hours and apparently spending more time on marking exam scripts, filling in tax forms and writing letters than in consulting books ordered from the stacks, others treated the Reading Room as a place to meet up with friends

before going out to lunch, or as a kind of club to lounge in. The catalogue areas, both the concentric rows of weighty green-bound volumes and the desks with computer terminals, were famous as locations for chatting up members of the opposite sex. Obviously a certain amount of decorum was preserved — for example I never saw anyone streaking in the Reading Room — but there was often a measure of giggling and arm-pawing. Though there was a hard core of readers who were punctual in their attendance for decades, there were also relays of university students writing Master's theses, or even undergraduate dissertations, who turned up every other day for a month and then disappeared for ever: for them the Reading Room was not a way of life, simply a *rite de passage*.

But of course the essential point about the Reading Room was that it was a place for encountering not people, but books. There were certainly a lot of them: books in all different states of repair, from glossy brand-new with publisher's slips still inside them to wrecks tied up in tape and available only in a pokey gallery in a back room, pornographic books with hand-coloured prints, books about coups d'état and books about the Abominable Snow-

man, books annotated by Coleridge or inscribed 'For Bosie' by Oscar Wilde, books confiscated from the Germans in 1945, books by Victorian novelists in three volumes with one volume missing, books like Horne Tooke's editing copy of *The Diversions of Purley* with the diary he kept while imprisoned in the Tower of London jotted down on the blank pages, books about social conditions in the days of Ivar the Boneless and Harold Harefoot, books that were destroyed in the Blitz but still lurk spectrally in the famous catalogue.

All these books, and ghosts of books, are now available at the new site — well, most of them anyway — and rumour has it that the first novel set in the reading room at St Pancras is already with a publisher. It is said to be a murder mystery, entitled *Critical Judgement*: the victim is the architect of the new building.

A D Harvey's twelfth entry in the British Library Catalogue, *A Muse of Fire: Art Literature and War*, will be published this Spring.

Danish Referendum Campaign

In 1992, the Danes voted to reject the Maastricht Treaty. Now, they are holding a referendum on the Treaty of Amsterdam on May 28th. Amsterdam is a major step towards a federal Europe.

- It removes the national veto in 16 new areas
- It extends the power of the European Parliament in 23 new areas
- It lays the foundation for a European police force by giving Europol an operational role
- It harmonises civil law and civil proceedings

If the Danes vote against Amsterdam, the treaty automatically becomes invalid across Europe.

But "No" campaigners are suffering from a huge financial disadvantage. Danish newspapers estimate that the "Yes" side, supported with European money, will outspend them by 18 to 1.

Please help to even the scales.

The Danish Referendum Campaign has been established to raise funds in Britain for Denmark's anti-federalists. Every democrat in Europe has an interest in stopping the Treaty.

Please send cheques payable to "Danish Referendum Campaign" to PO Box 17912, London SW1P 4ZW.

Daughters of Lear

Michael Tatham compares two Tragedies

No doubt history seldom repeats itself exactly, but it is not too hard to notice similarities between Lear's barbaric kingdom and our media-sponsored barbarism. You don't have to be Cordelia. Without the youngest sister's private insight it is easy enough to grasp that Goneril and Regan both have their own private agendas and that either of them might have urged some sort of modernisation — 'you should be rul'd and led. By some discretion that discerns your state. Better than you yourself'. And if that was as far as it went then, of course, there might be something in what the girls are saying. But we know it isn't really like that; they are not really trying to improve the monarchy, so in no time the king is getting thoroughly soaked in a force eight storm, all his honest subjects are banished or keeping their heads down and the British army is being mobilised beneath the princesses' populist banners. And just what a popular cause it turns out to be. Lear's Fool (appropriate that a Fool should have remained one of the old king's loyal followers) is right enough when he says that he who cannot 'smile as the wind sits' will catch a cold.

In 1981 the House of Windsor made a tragic and — in many ways — an inexcusable mistake. The mistake was to suppose that the youngest of the Spencer sisters would somehow make a companionable, discreet, supportive wife for a lonely intellectual with a well-nigh impossible job. It should not have been sufficient that Diana Spencer was an attractive girl, had not had time to collect a string of former boy-friends, or was sufficiently simple-minded to welcome a role that even the most passionate and experienced of lovers would have found pretty de-

manding. This one appalling error of judgement on the part of the Windsors did precisely what was necessary for their enemies to have the means to destroy them. And if, in the end, they were not destroyed, then they owe their good fortune as much to chance as to anything that *they* could do about the situation. Regan and Goneril are thwarted in Shakespeare's play very largely because a servant happens to intervene at a critical moment in a futile attempt to prevent Gloucester from losing his eyes. In the present performance what finally removes the danger is nothing more central to the action than a shopkeeper's employee losing control of a car. In so far as the main protagonists attempted anything the attempts had always ended in ignominious failure. Nothing went right for Lear: nothing for the Windsors.

And like Lear they should have seen what was happening; they should have had at least some pretty good idea of what kind of subjects Goneril and Regan might turn out to be. By 1981 it was a quarter of a century since the cameras had shown the nation a young Queen pledging her life to its service in Westminster Abbey. It was beginning to seem both quaint and hypocritical that the sister had once rejected the love of an honourable, but divorced man with the sober words: 'Mindful of my duty...'. By 1981 whatever was left of a royal mystique had worn very thin indeed.

Increasingly, it was open season and the royal game — so boring; so strangled in their upper-middle class vowels — were there to be shot at. At the end of the period Auberon Waugh could observe that the monarchy had been under 'constant sadistic attack from the Murdoch press and the new *Mirror* group', and Dominic Lawson

in the right-wing *Sunday Telegraph* could declaim that with a few honourable exceptions 'the royal family had become a social byword for arrogance, boorishness and egotism'. In *Lear's* terms there had certainly been a 'great abatement of kindness'. What was so fortunate for the media was the way the Royals sold newspapers and, of course, sold them even better when it was possible for men like Richard Stott to claim that even if they were muck-raking this was because they were not afraid to reveal 'the shortcomings of the rich and powerful'. The Royals sold papers and at the same time the papers destroyed the Royals. A very cosy arrangement. What, however, had at first been missing from this campaign had been a credible focus for so much that might on its own account seem only malicious and petty and resentful.

The tabloid press might well be a disaffected cancer, but what it had lacked up to now was a trusted ally — someone who, with their expertise at her command, would divide public opinion. In Diana, Princess of Wales, they found what they had been looking for. Because she had joined the Royal Family she was a star and, indeed, in no time she was the only true star in the royal show. At the same time from the first days of her marriage Diana had made it plain that she was not a boring Windsor, that she was not just a consort, that she was not prepared to play second fiddle to her unloved husband. Like Regan she was already Duchess of Cornwall. In the circumstances what could be more natural than for the alliance to be formed: Diana as Regan and the Media her sister in arms, Goneril. Morton had yet to write his/her book so the public were still unaware of the private tantrums and the

'suicides' — the non-stop emotional blackmail — but what everyone could see in the papers and on the box was the way the Princess of Wales began to manage her photo opportunities: she was what the cameras wanted. Charles himself said so. It was all too easy to upstage Charles. And the sentimental, thoughtless public loved it. How glad they were to have some excitement, to 'Take Vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of her father'.

Together Goneril and Regan appeared to be invincible. They had only to work out between them what should appear in the public perception and gradually that perception would become itself an instrument of destruction. They would call it Diana's army but that was only a skilful subterfuge. The truth was that Goneril controlled the army and fed them titbits and carefully selected gobbets of information and when Regan was dead called their troops into action for one more crushing engagement. From the start one half of the alliance was composed of a moralising, dirt-raking, circulation-driven press while the other — the Regan half — was made up of a spoilt and manipulative young woman and her like-minded circle of friends.

In the early stages of the campaign there was some need for caution. Goneril could hardly be seen to smear the bridegroom with the worst sort of dirt so soon after what public opinion had been misled into believing was a fairy-tale romance. It was necessary for Diana to turn her back, to drop her mask of diffidence and shyness, but at the same time not to make it too obvious that she had become what Petronella Wyatt assessed as a 'con-ning and seasoned poseur'. The enthusiastic agency for this transformation was found in the person of a hitherto obscure journalist, Andrew Morton. As with Edmund (Gloucester's bastard son in the play) Morton was a man with his own agenda. For the present, however, he was very much on the side of the anti-Windsors. In an interview with Megan Tresidder (*Sunday Telegraph*) he was to offer the solemn opinion that the Royal Family 'should not be protected from revelations by a conspiracy of silence, espe-

cially when its constitutional role is patently in need of reform'. More pertinently, he was unable to recall having said that he 'could happily live off the ashes of the Windsors for the next 20 years'. The result of Regan/Diana's underhand connection with Morton was that he became very much the richer and she brought the gullible mass of the British public firmly on to her side. Few single pieces of premeditated treachery can have been so successful. In all these shifts the Princess was, of course, greatly assisted by the Goneril press. Murdoch's *Sunday Times* printed long extracts from the Morton book and the tabloids went into paroxysms of indignation. *Diana: Her True Story* revealed a hapless and beautiful young creature, so innocent and so alluring, who — in her hour of need — had been rejected and cast adrift by the heartless Windsors. Rees-Mogg, writing in *The Times* some years later, said it was as if 'the armoured division of the Establishment (was) putting down the heroine of the local resistance'.

All the same there remained a slight problem. If Diana was thought to have been too completely in league with Morton then, much as her connection with the book might kill off any question of Calcutt and Press regulation, there was also the danger that she herself might appear less than entirely blameless. Something rather special seemed to be required. Not too surprisingly, what this turned out to be was nothing less than a massive exercise in obfuscation. Had Regan/Diana turned to Edmund/Morton because her Lear/husband had turned again to his mistress, or had he turned to Camilla — as he told Jonathan Dimbleby — only when his marriage had completely broken down? Less than 16 months after the wedding, Nigel Dempster was already warning that the Prince of Wales had become a desperately unhappy man and that the Princess had revealed herself as 'a very wilful and spoiled girl...'. Dr James Le Fanu in his *Sunday Telegraph* column said that a person who was vomiting four or five times a day even on honeymoon would have been a nightmare to live with and that Charles emerges as a 'heroic fig-

ure, who, out of a sense of duty to the Crown, has put a brave face on a tragic marriage'. But with Goneril at her side and increasingly so as time went by, this was no longer a kingdom in which one of the most conscientious and best prepared heirs to the throne would be believed. Believing, indeed, hardly came into it, if only because the Prince of Wales and his few loyal friends were still bound by the old rules of royal conduct. His wife might secretly rendezvous with a *Mail* reporter; might entertain editors at Kensington Palace or fashionable restaurants; but when a journalist attempted to present a favourable view of the Prince it was rejected by *The Times* as too partisan. Charles could never have had any illusions that if Regan turned against him Goneril might offer some support. In the frenetic turmoil that marked the death of the Princess of Wales, Peter Stothard, editor of *The Times*, felt it appropriate to reprint lengthy extracts from the *True Story* with Diana's own handwritten corrections. Venerable columnists who deplored the Prince of Wales' adultery were usually able to see extenuating circumstances for whatever shabby intrigue occupied the Princess. At opportune moments — to deflect criticism from her follies — tapes would suddenly make their appearance. Diana might abandon the greater part of her charity work while still ensuring that those causes with the best photo-opportunities — landmines and lepers — remained, like media-approved Aids, part of her diary. John Lloyd was on target when he wrote on September 5th: 'she was Queen of the world of international caring, where pop stars and actors and broadcasters frame themselves with the wretched of the earth'.

On every side the credibility gap yawned but thanks to the mendacity of the media/Goneril nobody noticed. The Princess might announce her withdrawal from public affairs only to re-surface as Mr Blair's special ambassador in waiting; might speak in hushed tones of a 'crowded marriage' while somehow ignoring the lengthening list of damaged marriages and seedy affairs to her own credit. She saw no dishonesty in doing her best to

damage her 'follower' husband while at the same time being so very concerned for her children's welfare. She was a woman who could invoke cardboard boxes — her deep compassion — while seeing no problem about spending over £3,000 a week on her grooming. The homeless were always dear to her heart, but presumably only when she was not holidaying in the Bahamas at £1,000 a night. No doubt she was telling the truth when 'her head told her she would like to be ambassador to the world' and her heart told her 'she would like to be wooed by an adoring billionaire'. It is a context in which head and heart could well be interchangeable. But this is not quite the image of the newspaper columnists, this frivolous young woman whose chief interests in life were — in the more recent words of Edmund/Morton — those of an 'aspiring B film starlet...clothes, pop music, dancing and shopping'. In view of the popular myth that the Princess of Wales was not a materialistic woman — was in some way part of Blair's new, caring and modern Britain, — it is worth looking more closely at her friend Rosa Monckton's words on this very point in an article in *The Sunday Telegraph Review* (September 7th) "She (Diana) was not a material (sic) girl, and she became angry with Dodi when he would ring and recite a list of the presents he had purchased for her: 'That's not what I want, Rosa, it makes me uneasy'." But if Dodi was really so mistaken about her character and wishes, it seems quite extraordinary that the Princess should have wanted him for her lover — let alone her husband. How could he have so misunderstood her character? No-one was forcing her to accept Dodi Fayed's presents, but shortly before they were both killed she had chosen his gift of an extremely expensive diamond ring.

For a long time the alliance of Goneril and Regan in *King Lear* seems impregnable. Their combined forces defeat the French troops brought over by Cordelia in support of her father. On Edmund's orders Cordelia is hanged. Then, quite suddenly, the whole thing begins to unravel. And begins to unravel with a nicely ironic sense of

timing just at the moment when the Regan/Goneril partnership is widely perceived to have the House of Windsor on its knees. Diana had announced that she was here to stay; she would not go quietly, she said and there was no doubt Mr Blair would find her a suitable part to play in public affairs — some sort of roving Queen of Hearts perhaps. In the original play, it is the ambitious contriver, Edmund/Morton, who gives us the first hint that all may not be well. 'Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides' was what Shakespeare wrote. Edmund cannot be loyal to both Regan and Goneril — things develop in such a way that he is obliged to choose. A few weeks before Diana's death Morton had used *The Sun* to reveal his more considered assessment of her character. With a fruit like her, he explained, he could understand why it was that Charles preferred to talk to his vegetables. As for Diana's choice of Dodi Fayed as her newest lover, Morton was shocked. Dodi, it appeared, was not a man with much finesse. He was a 'wham, bam, good-night ma'am, sort of man' and in no time it was to be expected that he would be anxious to trade her in for twenty camels. It is not too far-fetched to see this as a type of poison of the sort Goneril used to remove Regan. It sits uneasily with Morton's self-serving decision to reissue his original book in its true colours as some sort of tribute to Diana's wishes.

In *Lear* it is, of course, the side plot of the rivalry between the sisters for Edmund's affection that leads Goneril to kill her sister. Today it is the minions of World media — the paparazzi — that (together with their readers) bear the lion's share of blame. No one had intended that Diana/Regan should meet her death in a car that was going too fast to avoid the Press. It was a difficult moment. Matthew Parris had written more truly than he knew when he had asked the morning after the royal divorce: 'Are we not turning the lives of people like Diana and Charles into what amounts to snuff soap operas?' Goneril was very much alive still, but she was anxious; if the public thought she had killed the No 1 Cover Girl goodness knows what retribution

they might take in restricting the Press in its more degenerate practices. Rupert Murdoch was sufficiently concerned to write an article for one of his own papers (*The Times*) decrying any statutory limitation on the power of the Press. Goneril clearly had no wish to fall on her sword. She would turn the situation to her own advantage. She would shape media coverage in such a way that anyone would be able to see that it was the Fayed family or the Windsors who were the guilty party.

Edward Heathcoat Amery, writing in *The Spectator*, noted that 'Britain's broadcasters, in collaboration with the tabloid press, had good reasons for choosing to venerate Diana's memory and for attacking the royal family for failing to worship rapidly enough at the public temples to her memory. Both groups feared that they would be blamed for her death'. In the event not an instant was lost. Diana's army had not dispersed and now they were leaderless they were happy to take their orders from her media ally. Or, as *The Times* put it so revealingly in its leader of September 6th: 'Spontaneously, but as if bidden by an unseen hand, people roused themselves from collective despondency and took their private grief onto the streets of London... That tide of inchoate sorrow was so powerful that it could not but summon up memories of past conflicts between the dead Princess and the House of Windsor. All who had sympathised with Diana in life now expected some gesture of compassion, of reconciliation beyond the grave. For a brief moment it seemed as though the Royal Family was deaf to these well-intentioned if sometimes irreverently expressed entreaties... public sorrow might turn to resentment or wrath'. At its least circumspect the mood had become one of outright hostility. Perhaps this reflected the realization that with Diana out of the way and Goneril possibly blameworthy nothing now was really going to work. 'The politics of the publicly shed tear' could not be sustained without their star patron. *The Sun* might bluster: YOU SPOKE. SHE LISTENED, and Derek Draper might use *The Spectator* to claim that despite Tony Blair's best efforts 'we

may well see the end of the monarchy... the people's party and the people's princess combined could lower the Buckingham Palace flag for good'. It was John Lloyd who saw what all this was really worth when he wrote in his September 5th article: 'A punk republicanism now perches on the memory of a woman who blasted the Royal Family into obscurity by the sheer brilliance of the image which one of the most pitilessly efficient media machines in the world pumped in, and out, of her... what the circling, vulpine media told of her...'.

In Shakespeare's play *Goneril* and Edmund both receive their just deserts. In England now Diana ephemera are still choking the land, but behind the ephemera there is an unaccustomed

silence. Diana's Army is drifting away. Her sister Goneril if not stone dead is at least discredited. Morton has become as nothing. What is missing — and has always been missing — in all this is what might be called the Cordelia factor. She, as you will remember, was King Lear's youngest daughter and she remained true to her father even though in his fit of blindness he banished her from the kingdom and gave her no inheritance. Thanks to the remarkable perception of the French king she becomes his wife and Queen of France. When the French army is defeated Edmund arranges for her to be killed. If there is actually a Cordelia factor in all this today then one can only say that it remains hidden away and out of sight.

Be that as it may it is pleasant to observe that at least some elements of her French forces have not laid down their arms. With an encouraging cynicism *Le Monde* has spoken of a cult of Diana being born — 'It is the cult of the perfect woman, somewhere between Marilyn Monroe and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux'. *Figaro* perhaps deserves the last word when it writes of 'all the shining and dangerous glitter which cover a very big emptiness'.

Michael Tatham is a former English teacher and freelance writer.

William Tyndale

Rowland Whitehead considers Gloucester's fame and England's shame

About forty years ago a three word expression came into our language for good. On our Desert Island the only available literature was the "Bible and Shakespeare". There you have it. The two most quoted works in this country, though not necessarily the best read, are those of Tyndale in his native Gloucestershire and Shakespeare just up the road at Stratford. How lucky we are. But then we say 'the Bible, what Bible?', and so the story begins.

If I call someone a 'lucky fellow', Tyndale said it first. Then, 'a fool's Paradise', 'an incurable disease', 'open sunlight', 'the signs of the times', are Tyndale's phrases and are embedded in our daily language. They sound totally modern to our ears. 'Am I my brother's keeper?', 'hewers of wood and drawers of water', 'passing the

love of women', 'the fat of the land', 'men of renown', 'in the land of Nod', 'scapegoat', 'mercy seat', even the word 'Passover' are all Tyndale's. We know them because they are in the King James Bible. What many do not know is that eighty percent of Tyndale's translation was taken straight onto the pages of the Authorized Version — and this without any acknowledgment to Tyndale.

Today there are nearly two thousand translations of the Bible, from Albanian to Zulu by way of a hundred or so African tribal dialects each spoken by only a handful of people. In our own language translations began with Anglo Saxon, and have continued down to the politically correct and feminist versions of today. I have a lovely bible, the Glasgow Bible, recently published, in which the passage about Job's tribu-

lations makes us reflect. We do not know exactly what language and speech Tyndale had, but this passage, the work of a devoted and intelligent churchman, has a resonance:

"I'll gie Job inty your power, then," says God. "But mind the rule — ye're no tae kill the man." Satan smirked tae himself. "Ah ken how tae deal wi Job noo". So he strikes doon Job's body wi ugly plooks an biles fae heid tae fit. Whit a state the man wis in! "It's aw the faut o your God", moaned Job's wife. But still Job disny complain. "Ye ken when God gies us guid things, were gled o it," he says. "So when he gies us trouble, we jist hiv tae thole it".

'Plooks and biles' has a down-to-earth quality. Tyndale talks about a man's 'brain-pan', about 'emerods and scurf'. We are in the same territory.

We are in the privileged position of

considering 'our man' and a book from his hand which not only 'gave us our language' but which made English into what it is today — the world's leading language. There are one billion speakers of English worldwide, eighty five percent of all international telephone call are in English, seventy percent of the world's letters are addressed in English. Eighty eight percent of the world's scientific papers are either published in English or almost immediately translated into our tongue. Particularly for young people throughout the world the English language offers hope, material advancement and an indispensable cultural key. It is the language of Pop, mass consumption, international exchange, generational conflict and, of course, the *bits* and *bytes* that fuel youthful aspirations.

Five hundred years ago things were different. French-oriented, latinised English on the one hand, and Anglo-Saxon and vernacular on the other. You bred sheep and ate mutton, tended the swine and dined on pork. If you were posh you employed the latinate words, if you were top-posh you communicated in Latin altogether and if you were ordinary then the short Anglo-Saxon words would do.

The Holy Bible is not homogenous. The prose and poetry must cover cataclysmic events, dramatic episodes, endless genealogical trees, descriptions of elaborate temple fittings, trivial everyday happenings, subtle puns and word plays, complex discourse and deep philosophical insights. The strength of our language is that we have such a vast choice: solemn words for great occasions and matter-of-fact words for everyday use. Tyndale knew this well and used it to the full.

We do not have any record of the actual date of William Tyndale's birth but we are reasonably certain that it was in 1494 and that he came from a respectable and well-to-do family. Tyndales had lived in Gloucestershire for many generations, though the name suggests that their origins may have been in the north of England. A Tyndale family lived at Stinchcombe about a mile and a half west of Dursley in a house called Melksham Court, and it is

here that we can presume that Tyndale was born. The church at North Nibley is thought to be where he was baptised. The imposing monument to Tyndale, erected in 1866, stands on Nibley Knoll, with its commanding view over the Severn valley. Edward Tyndale, probably a brother, lived at Hurts Farm just outside Slimbridge. The name Hutchins came into the Tyndale family at one point and it may have been adopted by the Tyndales, who came from the north, as a 'safe name' during the Wars of the Roses. However that may be, there are plenty of Hutchins in the Stinchcombe area today.

We must not think of William Tyndale as a country lad making good in the sophisticated and intellectual world of fifteenth century England. And we must not think of Gloucestershire as a backwater, either. The Tyndales were successful merchants, landowners and people with some local power. Gloucestershire was agricultural and prosperous with large farms and a rich social and cultural life. Trade coursed through the county: from the north down the strip of land east of the River Severn; to the east to London; through Bristol and its port to Ireland, Europe and further afield to Africa.

There was trade, there was bustle and there was intellectual activity. As Professor David Daniell has pointed out, it is curious that the greatest users of the English language have lived on the edges of other cultures and other tongues. Chaucer, an official working in the Port of London, spent many hours talking to sailors from far off countries. Shakespeare lived near enough to the edge of Wales to have known the country and language quite well and to create affectionately drawn characters for his plays. The Cotswold trade in sheep, wool and woollen cloth meant a stream of merchants from other countries visiting the county with their languages and ideas. Tyndale's love of, and great skill in, language must have stemmed from early youth. Equally his life in the farming community taught him the habits, thoughts, and idiom of those around him. Posterity benefited enormously from this.

Let us look for a moment at what this knowledge of local language might

mean. Tyndale would be using the speech of the Vale of Berkeley, which would be distinctive to the district — that is to say in sound, in the way the words are strung together and in the actual words themselves. Lord Reith had not yet pressed BBC English on the entire population, or Mid-Atlantic TV to finish the job with a flourish of flattened vowels and twangy adjectives. Local speech was distinctive.

Local speech often imparts wisdom in a memorable and rhythmic form. "A rolling stone gathers no moss" for example, is beautifully expressive of the idea that it conveys. Many of Tyndale's Bible phrases must have had their genesis in this tradition. "Be not weary of well doing", "When two or three are gathered together", "Seek and ye shall find". We are in the company of a master wordsmith, which is why these phrases of the 1530s are with us still today.

Tyndale, young and intelligent, steeped in his Gloucestershire culture, attended a local school and met a wide range of cultivated people. But we have only a hazy idea of the details of his early life. What we do know is that in 1506 he went up to Magdalen Hall at Oxford and received a formal training in the Quadrivium and Trivium — 'Quod and Triv', as they were known. This involved Grammar, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, and Astronomy: par for the course for those days and, actually, pretty good for us these days. In addition Tyndale studied philosophy as it was taught then: natural, moral and metaphysical, with Aristotle to orchestrate the thinking. He also spent some time at Cambridge, but we know less about this.

Thereafter Tyndale returned to Gloucestershire and became tutor to Sir Thomas Walsh at Little Sodbury Manor. This was, and still is, a typical Cotswold manor house, rambling, stone-roofed and walled, looking over to the river Severn and the Welsh hills beyond. Tyndale took Holy Orders, he preached locally with great effect and his duties to the Walsh children were minimal. Life was comfortable and secure.

At what point his thoughts turned to Bible translation we do not know. He

was a gifted linguist credited with seven languages. Latin would come naturally to him because that was the common language of Church and Officialdom. The great Erasmus came to England with not a word of English and got on splendidly with everyone he met by speaking Latin.

Tyndale's Greek was more than excellent and the bedrock of his New Testament skills. He knew Spanish, German, French and clearly some other languages as well. Best of all he had learned Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament. Few, if any, knew Hebrew in England at that time and a Bible translation of the Old Testament would have had to have been from St Jerome's Latin 'Vulgate' of the fourth century.

The turning point in Tyndale's life came with a visit to London to see Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, a significant Greek scholar, and someone whom Tyndale hoped could house him and help with a translation of the New Testament from the Greek. Tunstall would act as a patron to this young man. But the bishop told Tyndale to try elsewhere, as he really didn't want to be involved. It was quite clear that the only opportunities lay in Europe.

In the first centuries of the Christian era we find translation of the Bible more or less keeping pace with the expansion of the Church into new countries. Latin, Armenian, Georgian, Gothic, Ethiop, Slavonic and many obscure languages received the Bible to themselves. But these were all 'Greek' communities. The Latin communities of Western Europe had little enthusiasm for translation and sought to prohibit any in the vernacular. Wycliffe translated from Latin, thus producing a translation of a translation, and was immediately condemned. The Constitution of Oxford in 1408 expressly forbade the translation of any part of the Scripture into English. The Bible in English was known only in part, in snippets secretly passed from hand to hand.

However in 1499, in Strasburg, a first German Bible had appeared. Luther's New Testament came out in September 1522 and by 1524 the Bible

could be found in Danish, French, Italian, Spanish (that is Catalan), Czech and Dutch. Luther's Pentateuch, the first vernacular Bible direct from the original Hebrew, appeared in 1523 and his complete Bible, with illustrations by Lucas Cranach, appeared in 1524. But not in England. No complete Bible, the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, translated direct from the original source language, had ever been attempted. Nor could it. Little wonder that Bishop Tunstall, although a brilliant Greek scholar, had cold feet.

Tyndale went to Germany in 1524. He moved about and it is not exactly clear where his wanderings took him till we hear of him settled in Cologne. North east Europe had three great trading ports — Hamburg, Antwerp and Cologne, where there were many printing houses and English business communities, both helpful to Tyndale. He worked with an assistant, a Friar called William Roy, but the Cologne authorities got wind of them and they only just managed to escape arrest and flee to Worms. This was the beginning of years of pursuit and persecution. We can only wonder at and admire Tyndale's courage and tenacity.

In 1526, in Worms, a small hymn-book-sized Bible was printed, probably of three or at most six thousand copies. This was Tyndale's New Testament translation.

Suddenly, in phrase after glorious phrase, the English we know and recognise came forth. "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid", "No man can serve two masters", "Ask and it shall be given you", "Knock and it shall be opened unto you" and a hundred other familiar sayings. Here for the first time was a complete New Testament in the English that ordinary people could understand. Tyndale's boast to a cleric that one day 'the boy who drives the plough shall know more of the Bible than do you' was to come true. The English is clear and unambiguous; the language that people spoke, simple and uncomplicated. The book was small enough to be put in the pocket. The ploughboy could sit and read it under a hedge as he ate his mid-day bread and cheese.

Only three copies remain of the 1526 Tyndale New Testament. I was privileged, earlier this year, to visit St Paul's Cathedral Library to see one copy. "Yes", I said, "but where, in all these twenty-three thousand volumes, is the Tyndale Bible?"; "On the table just by your right elbow!", came the reply; I had not noticed it, it was so unexpectedly small. Conservationists and librarians will shudder but I did place a finger on this sacred volume — it felt like touching the Holy Grail.

Only very recently has a third copy come to light in Germany. It had been rebound with the date of the binding printed on the cover so was not assumed to be an original 1526 New Testament. It is an exciting thought that there may be others.

Copies of the New Testament were shipped secretly to England, often in bales of cloth or barrels of grain, and readily snapped up by all who came by them. Booksellers and eager readers in London and the south east seized on this remarkable book. So too, did the authorities. Cardinal Wolsey summoned his bishops and the process of burning these Bibles began. "Many children of iniquity, maintainers of Luther's sect, blinded through extreme wickedness, wandering away from the truth of the Catholic Faith, have craftily translated our English tongue," he stated. He claimed to have found many mistakes in this translation. As we might say now, "he would; wouldn't he".

Bishop Tunstall ordered copies to be piled up outside St Paul's Cathedral and to be burnt — fifty yards from where one of the remaining Tyndale Bibles now rests. Tyndale was devastated. Today we feel mortified not only on Tyndale's behalf, but on behalf of our country and its established Church.

Orders were also given to Sir John Hacket, the British ambassador to the Low Countries, to act against printers and booksellers. Burnings took place in Antwerp and Bergen-op-Zoom. Bishop Wareham was actually buying Tyndale's Bibles in order to put them on the bonfires. Martin Luther's Bible was also at risk in England. Cardinal Wolsey organised a particularly grand occasion when he sat in splendour,

surrounded by 36 bishops, abbots and priors, whilst five very penitent Germans set fire to faggots and piled high the offending works of Luther.

By now Tyndale was in Antwerp and well set on his Old Testament translation. Again the phrases so familiar to us came pouring forth from his pen. In 1525 he was living with a good friend, Thomas Poyntz, in what was known as the English House. It was peaceful and comfortable, a centre for English traders and, probably, what we might call today, 'a safe house'. Those who know and admire Salman Rushdie will know what such persecution must feel like to a writer, even in a safe house. The first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, were here completed and their printing set in motion.

Why was Tyndale so exceptional? Why is he relevant to us to day? First a thought about translation and the difficulty of rendering one language into another. Language transfer is not like currency exchange or the switch from Imperial to metric. Words have a specific visual identity, a musicality, an aural and cultural context. Phrases and sentences have different levels of musicality and rhythm and a multiplicity of cultural resonances. "Translation", says George Steiner, "is an act of double entry — both formally and morally the books must balance".

Returning to the Book of Genesis: in the Latin we see 'Fiat lux. Et facta est lux', six words of great economy. Strong with the repetition of 'lux' at the end of each phrase. This is truly God's command.

Italian is more economical still, only five words: 'Sia luce. E fu luce'. Still the stress on *light* but now the pronunciation comes in the way. These words are soft and feminine and the commanding tone is lost.

'Es warde licht. Und es ward licht.' This is longer but keeps the strength of the Latin. The French loses the dynamic surge and strength of God's purpose: 'Que la lumière soit; et la lumière fut'. Compared with the Latin it seems flabby.

In English Wycliffe gives us 'and God said Light be made, and light was' which is less than majestic. 'Let there be light, and there was light',

says Tyndale. We know that we are in the company of a master wordsmith. We experience a shiver of anticipation for what is to follow.

The work of preparing the King James Authorised Version occupied a large committee of advisers. The New International Version of the Bible of 1973 had a fearsome committee structure. Each book was assigned to a team of scholars; one of the Immediate Editorial Committee then reviewed the work; this went to one of the General Editorial Committees; it was then looked at by the Committee on Bible Translation who submitted it to a number of stylistic consultants, two of whom read every book of the Bible, before showing them to a large number of people, young and old, educated or not, ministers and laymen... *Tyndale, however, did this all by himself!*

***Tyndale's boast to a cleric that one day
the boy who drives
the plough shall know
more of the Bible than
do you' was to come
true***

"Let not your hearts be troubled", says Tyndale and we understand. "Do not be worried or upset" say some modern versions which sounds trivial. The New International Version, after endless committee meetings, comes out with Tyndale's original phrase: "let not your hearts be troubled".

The story of the serpent and Eve and the apple reveals Tyndale's skills perfectly. The Vulgate version has '*Dixit autem serpens ad mulierem — nequaquam morte moriemini*' — roughly speaking 'then the serpent said to the woman — by no means will you die of death'. The Lollard version has 'Forsooth the adder said to the woman — through death you shall not die'. Tyndale has: 'Then the serpent said to the woman — tush, ye shall not die'. The serpent of Tyndale is 'subtler' than all the other beasts and, as we

might say today, he is 'cool and streetwise'. The TUSH is utterly dismissive. 'No problem dear, go for it!' Surely this is how we imagine the scene.

As a translator Tyndale was a 'maximist' — he wanted everything to come forward. This was not always possible. Ancient Hebrew is obscure. Imagine a book in a dead language where often a word will occur only once in the whole book. There are no cross references to see how the word is used elsewhere. You have to guess at its meaning. Tyndale was staunchly courageous in doing so.

In the Hebrew, the Ark was made from wood of the Gopher tree — but no one knows exactly what that was. Tyndale settles for 'pine'. At least the ploughboy knew what he was talking about. Place names can be interesting. Moregrove and Saltdale have a true Gloucestershire sound. But then that is the point of the Bible — its message and its stories resound in all our lives, everywhere and always.

Tyndale found that Hebrew went into English readily and easily. "The properties of the Hebrew tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin", he wrote. One reason is the grammatical form known as the 'construct'. This is the form THE + NOUN + OF + NOUN. Thus 'the beasts of the field', 'the gods of your fathers' have a nice ring about them which 'your father's gods' does not. We do this today when we want to heighten the mood. The Minister of State rather than The State's Minister. In Tyndale monosyllables dominate. Verbs are simple.

"The wise knew not, babes knew": What could be more succinct?

We should also take note of Tyndale's sense of rhythm. The narrative moves steadily forward with a vigour that leaves other versions standing. In the Authorised Version, in the Book of Samuel, King David says to God, "When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid, the sorrows of hell compassed me about, the snares of death prevented me". Tyndale has: "The waves of death have closed me about, and the floods of Belial have

feared me. The cords of hell have compassed me about, and the snares of death have overtaken me." Tyndale keeps a run of concrete nouns and concrete verbs in strong simplicity. Waves, floods, cords, snares, and closed about, feared, compassed, overtaken. Open the Tyndale Bible at any page and this simplicity shines forth.

"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" says the Authorised Version. "Thou art my dear Son in whom I delight", says Tyndale. The Authorised Version suddenly sounds flat in comparison. Esau sells his birth-right for "a morsel of meat" in the Authorised Version. Tyndale has him selling it "for one breakfast" — does this not sound very modern? "And all that heard it wondered at those things that were told them of the shepherds. But Mary kept all those sayings and pondered them in her heart". The juxtaposition of 'wondered' and 'pondered' gives a nice balance. Luther has 'Bewiget', weighed up, the Latin Vulgate has 'conferens', brought together. Ponder, to us seems exactly right.

Whilst monosyllables dominate, Tyndale often reserves the polysyllables for the ends of the sentences. Like this from John 14: "lest they bid thee again, and make thee recompense," says Tyndale. The Authorised Version: "lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee." The rhythm is lost.

We read the Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter four, verse seventeen: "blinded in their understanding, being strangers from the life which is in God", says Tyndale. The Authorised Version says "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God...". Tyndale is pithy. A little further on we read: "let not the sun go down on your wrath neither give place to the backbiter".

In Genesis, chapter four Tyndale says, "Cain was wroth *exceedingly* and *loured*"; The Authorised Version has "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell".

Scholarship has advanced and new meanings have come forward. What Tyndale calls a 'hedgehog' the Geneva Bible calls a 'rat' and the Au-

thorised Version a 'ferret'. Probably we shall never know who is right. Tyndale has 'fritters' which later turn into 'cakes'. He uses 'goggle-eyed' and 'perl-eyed', 'fainty' and 'flaggy' which all have a feeling of familiarity though they have long since faded from the dictionaries. But 'mizzling' for 'light rain' is surely spot on. His 'Fortune and Luck' were taken out because they seemed to imply that God was subject to chance.

By May 1535 it was all over. Tyndale was arrested by the authorities in a villainous plot and imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle outside Brussels. The only writing in his hand that we have is a letter from prison asking for warmer clothes and the Hebrew Bible, grammar and dictionary. "I suffer greatly from a cold in the head, and am afflicted by a perpetual catarrh" he writes, "and I ask to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark". Tyndale had courage. He continued his work translating the Old Testament to the last.

We commemorate 6th October, the day of his death, and mourn the loss to Gloucestershire, to England and to the World of this greatest of men. Tyndale was led to execution in Vilvorde's square where two great beams of wood had been placed in a cross. "Lord, open the King of England's eyes" were his last words. A rope was tightened round his neck, he was strangled and, when judged dead, the Procuror General handed a lighted faggot to the executioner who set fire to brushwood, straw and gunpowder around Tyndale.

We are immensely fortunate to have our Bible from William Tyndale. From his hand came English in all its beauty, and the language of Shakespeare and all that has followed down the past five centuries. Maybe the directness and spontaneity of Tyndale will appeal to the young, the ploughboys and ploughgirls of today with whom the Authorised Version has not taken root. Perhaps it will "open their eyes". Let us at least hope.

Sir Rowland Whitehead is President of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting.

Sophist's Corner

Tony Blair says Britain is no longer "about living in the world of a hundred years ago, when guys wore bowler hats and umbrellas, all marching down Whitehall".

He told *Newsweek* yesterday that films like *The Full Monty* about unemployed Britons trying to make money as male strippers reflected the new mood.

"Not merely in a sense that it's a highly successful film, and that says something about the state of the British film industry now. There's a great sense of confidence and adventure and greater sense of comfort with ourselves."

The country was discovering an "exciting" view of its future which was "look, what we're actually good at is being inventive, creative, dynamic and outward-looking".

Daily Telegraph

Childhood and Literature

Hal Colebatch deplores the Nihilism in Children's Fiction

It seems that propagating negativity and despair in literature for children and teenagers is a specially valued quality for writers today.

It is notable that in this the kind of innocent, values-affirming stories thought to be of a previous generation (the *Swallows and Amazons* stories, of which more below, have been made a sort of anti-icon of these) are held up for ridicule and denigration. The following from a major newspaper is typical:

Danny is one of the least pleasant protagonists in [young adult] fiction... it is, of course, no criticism to say that these characters are not the admirable kind of heroes that readers of my generation found in *Swallows and Amazons*... Given what Danny does in this novel, it would be a moral challenge if he were "nice"... Young people also face questions of racism, sexuality, drugs, family dysfunction, homelessness. And if the present world is bleak, compared to the paradise of the baby-boomer's adolescence, the future must be alarming to any thinking kid. From HIV/AIDS to the hole in the ozone layer, there doesn't seem much hope of a happy ending. Young [people] wouldn't be suiciding so frequently if life were good ...

What planet have you been living on, lady? one might ask the learned author of this piece. The "Baby-boomers" grew up not in a paradise but in a world that lived in the shadow of nuclear holocaust, a world where living standards were in material terms far lower than today in practically every developed society and where social welfare was far scantier and sometimes non-existent.

Practically every family had been maimed by the Second World War. The recently-opened Nazi extermination camps gaped under the naked sky, their stones crying out what man was capable of. The Soviet Gulags were in

operation from East Europe to the Arctic. George Orwell wrote *1984* from the stuff of life about him on every side. In Britain it was common for families to live in caravans on bomb-sites and food-rationing lasted into the 1950s. (It was no coincidence that children's books by Enid Blyton and others in the 1950s were filled with descriptions of food.) There was real starvation in parts of Europe in the late 1940s and 1950s and half of Europe was under Stalinist tyranny, upheld by tanks. Refugees and concentration-camp survivors still wandered between the barbed wire. Even relatively affluent Western countries still at various times had forms of conscription. Soon the Soviet Union would be claiming possession of a 100-megaton hydrogen bomb. Some paradise! With some qualifications for his opinion, Albert Speer in a Spandau prison cell would lie sleepless with horror at the news of the Sputnik which seemed to him to presage the next and final war.

Medical treatments in the 1940s and 1950s were primitive compared to today and frequently much more painful as well as less effective, and a great many more jobs, both in employment and domestically, were dull, futile, soul-destroying (and sometimes body-destroying) toil. Many jobs which later disappeared in old industries were jobs which practically no-one in affluent countries would be prepared to take today (how satisfactory, except for the Epsilon-minus semi-morons of *Brave New World*, is a life spent as a lift-attendant?). There were then fewer opportunities to invest or accumulate money, for self-education or for other self-improvement, and a far smaller proportion of people were property- or share-owners.

By the 1990s consumer goods were incomparably better. Opportunities for holidays, travel and luxuries formerly available only to the rich had come well within the reach of practically all ordinary working people. Indeed the whole travel, leisure, entertainment and service industry generally had exploded. Tertiary education had become open to anyone with ability (and many without) who seriously wanted it.

If people were less unhappy in the 1940s and 1950s (and indeed they seem to have been: I myself, as a baby-boomer in Australia, clearly remember a more stable, happy and incomparably more secure and moral society) it was surely because they were not bombarded with messages and presumptions of hopelessness, breakdown, misery and despair of which both the above piece of journalism and the book it celebrates are examples. Some paradise! And yet in a way it was. There was courage, honour, hopefulness, and, as I recall the world around me when I was growing up, despite many problems and even tragedies, there was no cultural despair or self-pity. Did the fact that so many of our parents and teachers were ex-service personnel have anything to do with this, I wonder? Juvenile suicide was absolutely unheard of in my, and I think every other, socio-economic bracket.

The piece quoted above is a good example of a self-fulfilling prophecy: if nihilism, despair and hopelessness among young people are not widespread, given this kind of relentless propaganda, they will soon become so. The media and the publishing-entertainment industries by and large have become so deranged and departed from

elementary moral sense today that they appear utterly indifferent to the fact — emphasised to me many years ago as a cadet reporter on a long-vanished newspaper with a moral conscience — that shock-horror exposures of certain things were functionally the same as promoting them. Of course, this is true too in literature and particularly true in juvenile literature.

It is probable that Richmal Crompton's largely pre-war *William* stories, about a naughty 11-year-old English boy, had a much healthier attitude than modern "realistic" work when they occasionally mentioned drug-abuse: that is, that it was not tragic but ridiculous. In the *William* stories the occasionally-referred-to "Drug Maniacs" were not existential heroes or heroines living at the extremes of experience but people to laugh at. It was probably a more effective deterrent than anything today.

Those much-despised *Swallows and Amazons* stories (actually written in the '20s, '30s and '40s and still very popular), and apparently, according to a number of modern commentators, about a false paradise, were actually about children, principally the Walker family who, in the first book, counted themselves lucky to be allowed to borrow a sailing dinghy to go camping on a lake-island, whose mother (their father was away in the Navy) helped them sew their own tents, and who got the very modest presents of pocket electric torches for a birthday.

Few of the "despairing" generation of the '90s would have been content with so little. It is worth noting that the "drugs, family dysfunction, homelessness" listed above, as well as boredom and hopelessness, are to a large extent the result not of destructive natural forces or malevolent enemies, but of lifestyle choices. What made the children of the stories — and indeed probably the real children who read the stories — different and allegedly unreal was that they were not made to resonate with a culture of despair. It was revealed in dialogue and action in *Swallowdale*, the second book (and just hinted at in the first) that the Walker's friends and rivals the Blackett girls (the Amazons) and their mother

were bravely coping with, and refusing to give in to, the deep emotional wound of the loss of their father (probably in World War I).

Here is another piece of pure cultural barbarism, from (where else?) a guest book review in a Sunday newspaper:

It is difficult to persuade teenagers to read. It's often a matter of convincing them that the books won't up and grab them by the throat.

As a teacher, I find myself launching into spiels about how it's an achievement to read a novel [!] and that they'll be justifiably proud on turning the final page...

Publishers have become increasingly aware that kids do judge a book by its cover initially, that graphics must have the sharp visual impact of music video clips or kids won't bother. The pace, too, has to be fast, with 3D characters, up-to-date vernacular and situations they can believe in.

[This] is a new series on the market for young adults — novels that are racy with suspense, humour and truth. Authors ... are in sync with teenagers, unafraid to confront issues like suicide, family breakdown and desolation but challenging readers to hope and strive for self-realisation in the face of it all.

*if nihilism, despair
and hopelessness
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soon become so*

That is the real thing, the authentic voice of Caliban, a yawp that can't be counterfeited. Imagine the great writers of previous ages claiming, as a positive thing, that books would, while apparently presenting "suicide, family breakdown and desolation" as a normal part of childhood (they aren't, or at least not yet), help children strive for "self-realisation" in the face of it all!

I remember one of the very first books my parents read me, when I was not a teenager but a pre-school infant. It was the story of a cicada grub who

lived in the dark underground, knowing that one day he would climb up into the sky and air — a bright, warm, wonderful place." Even when I was a five-year-old the symbolism spoke to me: there was a world awaiting me that could be full of wonder and opportunity.

Somewhat later we studied *Lord of the Flies* for our School Leaving exam text and at my school our English master, Peter Naish (to whom be all praise!), led us on to other Golding works, including *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*. These led, I think, to a better understanding of evil, very different to a *Weltanschauung* immersed in and bounded by nihilism, self-obsession and despair. Further, by that time we were in our late teens and with luck had other furniture in our heads as well.

In 1997 playwright and columnist Keith Waterhouse (author of, among other things, the famous 1960s drama and film *Billy Liar* and *Jubb*, the somewhat yuckily realistic story of a member of the dirty-raincoat brigade), commented that the entries that year dealt with:

Heroin addiction, arson, and a bullied heroine who dies on the operating table while undergoing surgery for sticking-out ears... not having read any of the short-listed stories, and having no intention of doing so, I express no view on their suitability... except to observe that it does seem to be the tendency of modern juvenile fiction to rub children's noses in real life.

The same point was made, although with some exultation and very typical aggressiveness, by British children's author John Marsden, who was reported as saying: "Anyone who doesn't want to confront the bleak images of sex and violence he portrays in some of his fiction may as well stick to reading Enid Blyton for the rest of their [sic] lives."

Children, according to Mr Marsden, needed fiction that: "tells it like it is ... in a world where we're constantly being presented with images of bleakness, it would be very dishonest if fiction writers ignored that."

A few weeks after this interview was published, the 1997 Carnegie Medal Winner for children's book of the year

was announced (*Swallows and Amazons* had been the first winner when the medal was instituted). According to one newspaper:

A book about heroin addiction, under-age sex and prostitution has won Britain's Carnegie Medal, the children's equivalent of the Booker Prize.

This book, *Junk*, by 43-year-old Melvin Burgess, was praised by the judging panel for its ground-breaking approach, realistic social commentary and gripping drama.

Set in the south-western city of Bristol, the book is about "the drug culture, underground culture, sex, drugs and rock and roll and some runaways who get into it, make some wrong decisions and end up with a heroin problem," Burgess said.

Burgess ... used his acceptance speech to slam the censorship of children's literature.

"There's a nostalgic viewpoint that children should be reading about heroes and heroines, the other sort of heroine, that is, and it should all be escapism ..." Burgess said.

Of course, one answer to this is that posed by C. S. Lewis a long time ago: "Who hate books about escapism? ... Jailers."

Yet there is obviously more to it than that. Quite irrespective of the book's actual plot, the sort of publicity now inevitably surrounding it has consequences of its own. This is not something happening in a vacuum. It is a matter with public sociological and political consequences.

Is it coincidental that another thing notable about this culture is a widespread attack on, or denigration of, perceived symbols of goodness?

A few small examples from Britain make the point. The London *Times* of 30 September, 1997, reported that one in three churches would suffer from some form of arson, theft or vandalism every year. In the same paper it was reported that a 13-year-old girl had been driven to suicide by a gang of teenagers because she was active in the Salvation Army.

The *Daily Telegraph* of the same day reported that a couple in a district of Leeds known as "Beirut" had put their two-bedroom semi-detached house on the market for a reserve price of £1,000, because it had been burgled an average

of once every six weeks. An auctioneer said other properties had been sold for between £3,000 and £5,000. This represents a breakdown of civic society to an extent previously unseen in Britain in probably 150 years. The same paper reported that two 13-year-old girls would make sporting history by becoming the first females to contest an authorised boxing bout in Britain, contrary to the advice of most of the Amateur Boxing Association's medical advisors and the condemnation of the British Medical Association. It hardly seemed an advance for any previously-recognised concept of civilisation.

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On 10 November, 1997, the *Times* reported that a Mr Ian Erskine, aged 21, had hanged himself at Stratford-on-Avon after constant persecution and tormenting by locals. Two years previously his twin brother, Anthony, had been kicked to death outside his house while attempting to defend his father. Police and neighbours said it was the niceness of the family that made them the target of a hate campaign: "It is thought the perpetrators regarded the hard-working devout Catholic family as snobs ... In the months before Anthony's death all three Erskine sons had been beaten up and their daughter verbally abused. Their hedge had been torched, their car vandalised and their home pelted with eggs, water bombs, stones and bricks."

On the same day the *Daily Telegraph*

published a page interview with a dancer named Darcey Bussell, who claimed emphatically: "To be told you are nice isn't a compliment."

The *type* of culturally-recognized celebrity changed. Heroes and achievers in the old sense were marginalised. In 1997, Squadron-Leader Andy Brown became the first man to drive a car at supersonic speed. It is just the sort of thing Britain used to exult in, combining individualism, personal bravery and even something in the way of the advancement of engineering technology. However on returning from his record-breaking run in America, Brown received no welcome and hailed a taxi to get home. At the same time Mr Peter Mandelson claimed in evidence of the modernity of British achievements: "We have world-class design companies. We are not just the country of warm beer. We are the country of John Galliano, Alexander McQueen and Stella McCartney."

It might have been thought that these luminaries and exemplars were industrial, aerospace or computer designers. In fact they were fashion designers.

The *Sunday Telegraph* magazine for 15 November, 1997, quoted Chris Worthy, once President of the Oxford Union and now a prominent Blairite, as referring proudly to: "rock and fashion — areas in which Britain leads the world...". Even if this were true (actually here as in practically all other areas America leads the world), it is notable that rock and fashion are not only materially almost totally unproductive in general of individual well-being or public wealth or goods, but are also closely connected with social alienation, drug-abuse and nihilism.

According to a survey of 8,000 adults in Britain released by the Centre for the Future of Communications at the University of Leeds in September, 1997, more than 83% believe science created more problems than it solved. More than one in seven believe abduction by aliens to be possible. "People are displaying greater irrationality", the Research Director of the centre said. Certainly newsagents' shelves were groaning under the weight of UFO and Alien-abduction magazines.

The bizarre and irrational mass paroxysms of grief and even suicide in Britain and elsewhere, following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in early September, 1997, were a frightening demonstration of the susceptibility of the population of an educated Western culture to the most crude media suggestibility. Those who followed the Reverend Mr Jim Jones to Guyana had at least been for the most part from the ill-educated poor. This was different. Diana had been an icon of hedonism with something utterly nihilistic and self-destructive at its heart which suddenly seemed to resonate through a huge part of society.

It was a reversion to the most primitive, superstitious and pagan notions of redemption through blood-sacrifice, sweeping away, like the paroxysms of a Nuremberg rally or (as one who had seen both pointed out) the death of a Stalin, the judgement and even the basic dignity of many highly intelligent and normally sceptical people. It was a salutary shock to many observers who suddenly felt that they did not understand their own culture.

A few weeks later Niall Ferguson, Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, wrote:

Just lately, I have begun to fear that I am living in a neo-medieval society... It is the revival of superstition which alarms me ... how else are we to explain the huge success of (for example) a book such as *The Bible Code*, a ludicrous piece of neo-cabalistic claptrap which claims a secret message can be extracted from the text of the Scriptures by giving the original letters and words numerical equivalent? To my astonishment, this has been one of the year's publishing successes.

Until recently, I had always supposed the basic achievements of the Enlightenment were pretty secure ... Yet now I realise I was too optimistic. For not only are ordinary people reading superstitious tosh like *The Bible Code*. Increasingly, they are behaving with all the irrationality of medieval peasants... Of course it is always tempting for academics to see irrationalism as a perennial feature of popular culture. But the achievements of the Enlightenment are under attack in universities, too ...

It is hard to try to diagnose *precisely* or even define the health of a culture, since a highly visible and vocal minor-

ity who have access to the media are generally not representative of the culture as a whole; but a broad-brush picture can certainly be painted.

Previous societies have broadly agreed that stories which tell of, and teach, virtue, whose characters are heroes and exemplars, are stories which benefit both society and the individual who is affected by them, and which ought to be encouraged. A clergyman, the Rev. Marcus Morris, founded the *Eagle* comic, which first appeared in 1950, quite deliberately to publish adventure stories that put forward positive values without rubbing juvenile noses in them. Its heroes were honourable, brave, self-sacrificing and did not regard God and Christianity as irrelevant. This religious element was not at all heavy-handed. Thus a Space-explorer marooned on a distant planet counted a Bible among his possessions and stopped to pray for a dead comrade, and along with the Space, Foreign-Legion, sea, Wild West and detective stories, there were major serialisations of the lives of Christ, Saint Paul and secular historical figures who might be taken as inspirational and exemplary, all meticulously researched and illustrated with what was often extraordinary art and skill.

Eagle was consciously non-racist and in one of the very first stories, published in the early 1950s, long before integration in American schools, a Space-station in the early 21st Century was shown as having black as well as white crew-members. The leading scientist was a woman. None of this was done obtrusively or in pandering to any political correctness. It simply suggested that in the better, exciting, optimistic world of the future that was how things would be. It was in considerable contrast to many other British comics then and practically all since, which have been part of the prole-feed culture of sports, World War II (at least until recently) and general social resentment.

Eagle, incidentally, was hugely successful until its format was changed under new and self-destructive management in the 1960s, when it also lost its resident genius Frank Hampson,

creator of the Space-pilot hero Colonel Dan Dare and his Sancho Panza, Space-man Digby. (It was depressing to see what happened to *Eagle* after this as it gave away its unique qualities and sank into the general morass and eventual merciful oblivion.)

J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings* was also infused with a commitment to positive values, as more recently were Space-epics like *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. Of course, it is generally easier to write about nihilism, despair and negativity than hope and affirmation, but it is not always more profitable. It is still adventure stories with some kind of heroic and positive themes that are reliably good cinema box-office. The same is largely true of books, both adult and juvenile.

In a poll of their favourite books commissioned by the BBC's *Bookworm* magazine, of 10,000 children's book readers, *Junk* failed to "make it" being still eclipsed by the positive, affirmative works of C. S. Lewis, Tolkien, *Swallows and Amazons* and classics like *The Wind in the Willows*.

It was a result which drove the literary editor of the London *Observer*, Robert McCrum, to rail against "this bunch of dead authors", and to suggest that those polled may have been "brain-washed by a middle-class education establishment." He continued that the poll result was "strangely at variance with the world as it actually is" and asked somewhat plaintively: "Is it just escapism from the troubling and violent confusions of the alternative available narratives on film and television..?"

It is worth remembering the words of Evelyn Waugh, who said more or less (I quote from memory): "The spirit of the age is the spirits of those who compose it, and the greater the degree of dissent from received opinion, the higher the possibility of diverting it from its present ruinous course."

Hal Colebatch has practised as a barrister and solicitor and is the author of ten books.

The Language of Exclusion

Stephen Pimenoff grapples with jargon.

Recently, faced with selling my deceased father-in-law's sheltered flat, I consulted the lease to see what it said about this. Here is an extract from the relevant section:

It is hereby agreed and declared that forthwith upon the receipt of any notice of the wish of the Tenant to surrender the term hereby granted the Landlord shall take all such steps as shall be reasonably within its power to procure the grant of a new lease to a suitable person for a consideration equal to the Repayment Sum and for a term of ninety nine years but otherwise on the same terms and conditions as this Lease provided that at the expiry of six months after the service of notice by the tenant or mortgagee in possession of a tenant the Landlord shall not have procured the grant of a new lease to a suitable person the Tenant his personal representatives and any mortgagee or chargee of this lease of whom the Landlord has received notice will have the right subject to the conditions hereinafter mentioned to require the Landlord by notice in writing to grant a new lease to a person nominated by the Tenant personal representative or such mortgagee or chargee and named in the said notice subject to the said person so nominated qualifying for a tenancy and being a person who in the opinion of the Landlord (whose opinion shall be final) is a person in need of and not unsuitable for sheltered housing in accordance with the criteria hereinbefore referred to

What strikes the layman about such writing is that, partly because of the complete lack of punctuation, and partly because of the tortured syntax and faulty grammar, not to mention the jargon, verbosity and repetition, its meaning is very difficult to grasp. I had to read the passage several times before deciding that, omitting a few details, it means simply: "A tenant who wishes to sell the flat must inform the landlord, who has the first right to try and find a buyer at a mutually

agreed price. If the landlord cannot sell the flat within six months the tenant or tenant's representative can then undertake to do so, subject to the landlord's approval of the buyer's suitability." Fifty-eight words as against 228.

Now consider this, the first sentence of a teacher training manual put out by a college of higher education:

Intending teachers need to have practically applicable understanding of the nature of the intended learning outcomes they are attempting to teach and the learning activities and experiences that can lead to these acquisitions, also the internal and external influences on actions which may affect these activities and the ways that learners vary as individuals and groups in their relevant resources and dispositions as a basis for intelligently realising the functions and potential of particular teaching strategies for managing effective learning activity which is appropriately differentiated to particular pupils, teaching aims and contexts and effectively assessed for progress and achievement.

Here, what the writer is trying to say is, "Teachers must have a clear idea of their goals, and how to achieve them. They need to be aware of the factors which affect learning, taking account of classroom conditions and available resources, so they can tailor their approach to different groups and individuals." (The second half of the sentence more or less repeats the same idea.) Forty-four words as against 99.

Explaining what the two passages mean in plain English raises the immediate question, why did the writers not say so themselves? The reasons for this are several, and raise yet other questions of importance to clear writing, so it is worth considering them more closely.

Though the passages are very different in function and purpose, they are

similar in one curious respect: both were composed with the specific, if unconscious, aim of obscuring the very matter they purport to deal with. In both cases the meaning has been wrapped up in a protective cocoon of verbiage, in the first instance to make it difficult for the layman to understand what is meant, and in the second to disguise the meaning in order to conceal its painful obviousness and banality. (After all, if a professor of education is seen to utter sentiments no different from those of a man staggering out of a pub at closing time, questions might be raised regarding the basis of his tenure, or even the size of his salary.) In this respect the examples are unlike the usual run of illiterate productions, which result from the ignorance or haste of the authors. The first is typical of legal writing; the second, which stylistically owes much to the first, marks a disturbing trend in professional, especially academic writing.

As well as displaying a common attitude in the writer, the extracts share certain common characteristics, such as the reliance on jargon and the absence of punctuation. Jargon is sometimes acceptable, even necessary as a form of shorthand in communications between specialists, but when flaunted before the layman it assumes a pretentiousness whose effect is to obfuscate rather than elucidate. According to Philip Howard, who has written extensively on the subject, its chief function is "to clothe mundane ideas with a top of scientific objectivity, and generally to inflate the egos and the language of its speakers." He adds: "Perfectly sensible and good persons have fallen for this kind of mind-bending codswallop." As for punctuation, given that its role is not to convey meaning, but

simply to assist in apprehending that meaning, it is hardly surprising that the first writer dispensed with it entirely and the other used it sparingly.

Let us look again at the first example. Legal language has been under fire for a long time. Two hundred and fifty years ago Jonathan Swift wrote, "I said there was a society of men bred up from their youth in the art of proving by words multiplied for the purpose, that white is black, and black is white, according as they are paid... It is likewise to be observed that this society hath a peculiar cant and jargon of their own, that no other mortal can understand, and wherein all their laws are written, which they take special care to multiply; whereby they have wholly confounded the very essence of truth and falsehood, of right and wrong."

In the present day, anyone who has ever had to hack their way through a lease or other legal document will know how frustrating the experience can be. Legal language has a character all its own. It is marked not just by jargon (hereinbefore, aforesaid), but archaisms (lien, novation), complex syntax, repetition ('rest, residue and remainder'), circumlocution and, usually, a complete lack of punctuation. Why do lawyers write in such a graceless, impenetrable way?

There are several possible reasons. One may spring from a desire to protect the exclusivity of their profession. (Sir Ifor Evans, a former Provost of University College, London, refers in *The Use of English* to "their desire to increase their dignity by enlarging the mystery of their communications.") Certainly it is true that so long as ordinary people remain baffled by the complexities of legal language, an aura of impenetrability will surround the profession; so long as lawyers talk only to lawyers, their services will continue to be in demand, if only to interpret a contract like the above to a layman who has given up in frustration the attempt to make sense of it himself. More, two lawyers will always be needed for any property transaction, thus at a stroke doubling work for the profession. As David Mellinkoff, an American expert in legal language,

says: "What better way of preserving a professional monopoly than by locking up your trade secrets in the safe of an unknown tongue."

That the legal profession is probably the most conservative of all, undoubtedly also has something to do with it. Many lawyers might defend legal language solely on the grounds that its use is hallowed by tradition, and feel that no more effective defence could conceivably be mounted. But conservatism does not imply refusal, or even reluctance to change; if it did, it would have withered as a political philosophy long ago. What true conservatism means is that change must evolve, not for its own sake, in the baseless hope that new must imply better, but within the framework of tradition, custom and usage, to meet new conditions. Put simply, it only means that the light guiding us into the future must shine from behind, if we are not to be blinded by its dazzle. But at present there is still no sign that the legal profession understands the pressing need for language reform.

Another reason for their inertia may be a feeling that the majesty of the law can best be conveyed through majestic language. Charles Dickens expresses this well in *David Copperfield*: "We are fond of having a large superfluous establishment of words to wait upon us on great occasions; we think it looks important and sounds well... The meaning and necessity of our words is a secondary consideration, if there be but a great parade of them."

Lawyers themselves will mention none of these reasons for resisting change, of course, but will say that what matters is that the meaning of a document be unambiguous: if this can be achieved only at the cost of readability and stylistic elegance, so be it. As Ifor Evans graciously puts it: "Legal documents must be drawn up with the possibility in mind that they may be subject to the scrutiny of the courts of law. The drafters must attempt to foresee all possible interpretations and unforeseen contingencies..." Granted. But is the English language such a poor instrument as to be incapable of precision and intelligibility together?

In any case, how does leaving out all punctuation contribute to certainty of meaning?

Faced with such questions the profession falls back on a last argument. One solicitor put it like this: "Lawyers are trained to write a lease in a certain way, in set phrases. To write it any other way would involve re-training on a massive scale. And existing documents would effectively have to be translated, adding greatly to costs." This is valid — up to a point. Undeniably improvements could not be effected overnight. But should this be used as an argument against gradual reform? In the United States, where lawyers have been under increasing pressure for some 15 years to use plain English, there has been a great improvement in the intelligibility of legal documents, with no corresponding loss of precision that analysts have identified. All that has happened is that law students early on must receive some guidance in writing clear English. And they are discovering that although plain English may not be easy to write, it is not that hard (the example of legalese I quoted at the beginning probably took longer to compose than my brief summary, not least because there are twice as many words).

That plain English is *not* such a poor instrument of communication has been shown conclusively by the Plain English Campaign, which, having sniped at legalese for some fifteen years now, has recently declared all-out war on it. In an admirable booklet, *Language on Trial* (Robson Books, £5.99) the Campaign takes various examples of legal-speak and translates them into English, demonstrating in the process not only that precision can be maintained, but that clarity and even elegance are possible.

Here is an extract from an insurance contract:

The due observance and fulfilment of the terms so far as they relate to anything to be done or complied with by the Insured and the truth of the statements and answers in the Proposal shall be conditions precedent to any liability of the Company to make any payment under this policy.

And here it is as re-written by PEC:

We will only make a payment under this policy if:

- you have kept to the terms of the policy; and
- the statements and answers in your Proposal are true.

Crystal clear, and only 29 words against the original 52.

How successful the campaign will be remains to be seen. Certainly lawyers have yet to show signs of responding to the unanswerable demands for reform. One thing, however, *is* certain: the campaign will undoubtedly find its efforts spurred on by a public eager for reform. As one top US lawyer puts it: "There is probably no single reform that would improve the image of lawyers more than to get them to speak plainly and directly and understandably."

Turning to the second example we see comparable though subtly different influences at work. As in the first case, there is no valid reason why the passage could not have been expressed in plain English, but every reason in the world why the author balked at expressing it thus. One, as I hinted, is that, stripped of pretension, the idea to be communicated loses much of its mystique. But mystique is precisely the quality with which the author wishes to invest his production. What better way to do this than to array the meaning in a vesture of high-sounding

verbiage?

The impulse behind this lies in the widespread belief among the half-educated that simple English must be the product of a simple mind, and therefore to be avoided on those grounds alone. The truth of course is just the opposite, clear expression being the result of clear thought, which in turn is a discipline of the highest order. One might bring the author of the gibberish quoted to realise this through the expedient of asking him to explain what he means, and watching him squirm.

It is worth pausing for a moment and reflecting on who will read the passage. For the most part they will be education students aged in their early twenties. Imbued with the sort of culture fostered by such language, they will go into the schools talking about "high-quality learning environments" when they mean good schools, "pedagogical modes of delivery" when they mean teaching methods, and "pre-determined discrete elements of the subject pathway module" (topics). After a few years, if they have any sense (and most teachers do), they will eliminate such expressions from their vocabulary and adopt a simpler, more effective style, in the process becoming good teachers. If they can't, or won't, they will leave teaching and become a teacher trainer at a college of higher

education, thus perpetuating the melancholy round.

Does this matter? Until recently it didn't, or not very much. But with the growth of the new universities has come a burgeoning of interest in what might be termed "soft" disciplines — leisure management, gender and race studies (indeed anything containing the word "studies"), sociology, education... Much of the content of these subjects would be obvious to any reasonably observant person who reads a newspaper and the odd book and has spent less than nine of the last ten years in solitary confinement in prison. Hence the need to mystify the subject, to introduce an element of challenge to its study.

Unless efforts are made to curtail the proliferation of the jargon-ridden and unreadable prose being churned out by those with a professional interest in producing it, the situation will only get worse. Twenty years ago, the offensive mounted by plain English campaigners appeared to be winning ground; today it is just as plainly losing it again, in any number of arenas, with results which ought to worry anyone concerned with the writing of clear English.

Stephen Pimenoff is a teacher and freelance writer.

Letter from France

Gillian Bardinet

June 15th, 1940. "Declaration of the creation of an indissoluble Franco-British Union: every British subject, every French citizen would enjoy full rights of citizenship in both countries. There would be one Customs union, one currency, one Cabinet, one army and parliament." The stuff of dreams? Perhaps; but born in the midst of a nightmare. As the Wehrmacht flooded through France in

the summer of 1940, Jean Monnet, special envoy of the French Government, put this proposal to Winston Churchill. The British War Cabinet accepted it. That day, Paris fell.

June 16th. The newly appointed Under Secretary of the Ministry of National Defence, Charles de Gaulle, arrived in London, announcing characteristically that his mission was "to save the honour of France". He was

informed by Monnet of the spectacular dual nationality proposal. Paul Reynaud, the French Prime Minister, prepared to meet Winston Churchill in Concarneau to seal the agreement. But events moved fast. Reynaud was outvoted and resigned, and Albert Lebrun, President of the French republic, called on Philippe Pétain to form a government. The new French Cabinet prepared not to seal the solemn accord

with London, but to seek the best terms for an armistice with Germany. The scene is set for the long and complex history of the European Union.

Jean Monnet, now remembered chiefly for his part in the creation of the Coal and Steel Community in 1950, was born in 1888 and had, prior to 1940, pursued a brilliantly successful career as an economist and international expert in restoring faltering economies, notably those of Poland and Austria in the 1920s. Although he had never been an elected Member of Parliament, he had enjoyed enormous powers, both as an envoy of France and as General Secretary of the League of Nations. He could probably lay claim to the title of “the first supranational civil servant”. Monnet was a man of great charm and ability who rarely failed to solve problems, whether restoring the family fortunes in Cognac or persuading Roosevelt secretly to build and send planes to Europe despite the Neutrality Act (which forbade exports of any weapons to a nation at war). It was to Monnet that Daladier had turned in September 1939 to preside over the newly created Franco-British Co-ordination Committee. The June 15th declaration was typical of the ambitious and imaginative projects which Monnet had so often brought to fruition.

However, the scope of his plans had never been curtailed by the niggling demands of democratic procedure. Monnet had moved among the élite, forging alliances directly with world leaders and acting frequently with what he considered to be the necessary caution, not to say secrecy. He was a great “eminence grise” — or in cruder parlance, “a fixer”. It is not difficult to see him at the head of a family tree which might include not only men of the calibre of Jacques Delors, but more worryingly, cohorts of others, less well-known, but for whom democratic procedure can easily become irrelevant and be impatiently brushed aside to be dealt with by MP’s secretly considered to be something of a lesser breed than the technocrat, and latterly, the more gilded version — the Eurocrat.

The world of the Eurocrat owes a great deal to Jean Monnet. From 1945

onwards, he concentrated his energy and experience first of all on restoring the economy of France. On January 3rd 1946, the Commissariat au Plan was set up. This was a grouping of administrators, experts and representatives of various professions whose aim was to modernise the French economy, sector by sector. With hindsight, it seems to take on a rather disturbing corporatist hue. Not only was it made up for the most part of unelected experts, but also, since Monnet wanted to make sure that the Commissariat would not be bogged down in problems with the different ministries, he arranged to have it linked directly to the Prime Minister’s office. He was soon in charge of a virtual oligarchy, which despite its independence naturally had recourse to the powers of the French State whenever and wherever it was deemed necessary to intervene in the economy.

Delors...had learned only one thing from the failure to bring back primitive “socialism in one country”, he wanted a bigger field to play in!

Despite this “planification à la française”, the French economy could not have risen from the ruins of the war without a vital injection of dollars. Monnet was highly instrumental in organising the Marshall Plan, both in Washington and Paris. Unlike Charles de Gaulle, Jean Monnet was not only at ease with Americans but admired them. This admiration may have been one of the elements which contributed to his vision of a European Federation. One wonders, moving as he did among the élite, whether Monnet fully understood not only the homogeneity and mobility of the American population, but also the deeply rooted strength of national feeling among the peoples of the old continent.

By 1943, he was already planning post-war Europe, which would “dis-

pense with national sovereignty which naturally gives rise to policies of prestige and economic protectionism”. Did his knowledge of his own country lead him to this conclusion? Monnet’s vision of Europe stemmed from both his own origins and his experience as a cosmopolitan businessman, intervening periodically in the world of high diplomacy. He was able and pragmatic, but his methods, in the name of efficiency, were often secretive, and nearly always unaccountable. Both Edward Heath and Roy Jenkins worked closely with Monnet.

The setting up of the Planning Commissariat coincided, interestingly enough, with the establishment of the famed French Ecole Nationale d’Administration, created to endow post-war France with a regular supply of highly talented mandarins imbued with loyalty to the French State and the peculiarly French concept of public service. It was this quasi-Napoleonic meritocracy which came to dominate Monnet’s Planning Commissariat, and later to provide the French contingents to the fledgling European bodies. From 1981, with the election of the arch-Socialist, François Mitterand, to the French Presidency, many of them, metaphorically, sported red roses in their buttonholes!

The office of President of the French Fifth Republic, created by, with and for de Gaulle, is arguably the most powerful political post in Europe. With a red rose — literally in hand — Mitterand pledged dramatically to bring in Socialism reminiscent of the 1936 Popular Front. For two years, no efforts were spared to nationalise, to raise wages and decrease working hours, with retirement up to ten years earlier than anywhere else in Europe. Wealth was to be taxed and redistributed by the central power, the omnipresent State. This experiment combined the egalitarian zeal of the Jacobins with the disregard for economic reality of the romantic socialists of the 1930s.

Key figures at the helm were the Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, and the Finance Minister, Jacques Delors. Mauroy was an old-fashioned party activist who had long commanded the

great socialist fortress of Lille. Delors had risen thanks to union activity and membership of various planning groups. He was revered by left-wing Catholics who had helped to elect Mitterand in 1981, hoping that he would work for Christian Socialism. Delors was passionately interested in labour law, but unlike his hero, Jean Monnet, had very little experience of the real world of industry: consequently, he believed socialist economic theory would work whatever the circumstances. Two years later, the markets showed the fragility of the new Emperor's clothes. The franc collapsed and the great socialist bandwagon came to a juddering halt.

Delors was despatched to Brussels where he embarked on a decade as President of the Commission. This committed socialist planner had learned only one thing from the failure to bring back primitive "socialism in one country", he wanted a bigger field to play in! In Brussels, he surrounded himself with a bevy of clever, young *énarques* (graduates of the *Ecole Nationale d'Administration*) who eagerly settled down to Euro-wide socialist planning. Delors himself, who was the acknowledged fountainhead, concentrated on public relations, making converts, among others, of both the Christian Democrat, Helmut Kohl and the British TUC! He was, and is, a skilful politician.

As Delors and his acolytes worked zealously towards ever greater political and economic union for the largely unsuspecting peoples of Europe, back in Paris, maxi-socialism slowly gave way to stagnation. By 1988, "neither nationalisation nor privatisation" was the new slogan. This was dubbed the "ni... ni" (neither-nor) policy, a phrase which well conveys pathetic failure, and indeed it was accompanied by a total inability to deal with economic and social problems since none of the generous benefits already granted to vast swathes of the population could be withdrawn. "Les acquis" were sacrosanct and still are today. This concept of the inviolability of that which has once been acquired has become an essential feature of "l'Europe communautaire".

Indeed, current blueprints for European social legislation owe a great deal to Delors and his team. The basic concept remains that of a central authority using high redistributive taxation to implement both long and short-term plans. Without going so far as to compare this to the old Soviet Gosplan, it is nevertheless in direct opposition to the flexibility and low taxation required for a community based on free-market principles to work. Ironically, the Single European Act of 1987, ardently promoted by Lord Cockfield, did contain free-market principles which were enjoying a heyday across the Channel in Thatcher's Britain. Several major crises have already been caused by the implicit contradictions between the Delorian Social Chapter and the entrepreneurial character of the Single European Act. These were highlighted once again at the recent Euro-Jobs Summit in Luxembourg, called at the instigation of the French Socialist-dominated coalition elected in June 1997.

Fortunately perhaps for the rest of Europe, a grim dress rehearsal of Delors' ultimate vision of social Europe is actually being staged in France at the present moment, with his own daughter, Martine Aubry, playing a leading role as Minister for Employment. While much of the French press lauds New Labour's recognition of the irreversible achievements of Margaret Thatcher, this coalition of Reds, Pinks and Greens seems determined to bring in the same sort of state-fed socialism which failed in 1981-83. However, this time round, it was hoped that Europe, with Papa Delors as chief adviser, would underwrite the plan. In the event, such was the ambiguous nature of the Jobs summit that both New Labour Blair and Old Socialist Jospin were able to crow! Yet, the final communiqué sounds more like an apology for Thatcher than Delors, with stress being laid on the importance of flexible labour markets. Time alone will tell how all this is interpreted, and Lionel Jospin's aggressive reference to fiscal harmonization is not reassuring!

When first elected in June, there were signs that Jospin and his

heterogenous group would concentrate on socialism at home, while slowing down or even halting the great gallop towards EMU. The story goes that Pierre Moscovici, the new Minister for Europe, waved aside the framed photograph of de Gaulle and Adenauer embracing which his predecessor the Gaullist, Michel Barnier wished to bequeath to him. The present Minister of the Interior, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, campaigned vigorously against the Maastricht Treaty and regularly makes patriotic, Republican sorties. On the far left of the group, Robert Hue and his band of Communists were fiercely opposed to a Europe of "monetarists and unbridled Capitalists". Right-wing opponents of Maastricht, like the aristocratic nationalist Philippe de Villiers, and indeed a significant number of Gaullists, held their breath. History does sometimes require one to accept strange bed-fellows.

But, just as the new President, Jacques Chirac, had waved so blithely to the London crowds in 1994 only to pay homage to King Kohl a few days later, Pierre Moscovici was soon to be seen smiling modestly and affably on the banks of the Rhine. The Franco-German axis lives!

Understanding the nature and implications of this relationship has always proved difficult for the British. Over the years, the range of bewilderment has gone from feelings of rejection from those who vividly recalled the events of the war, to sheer disbelief that the sensible Germans, key members of NATO, can share a yoke with a people addicted to asphyxiating corporatism, redistributive taxation and fierce anti-Americanism. At the heart of this British bafflement stands the figure of de Gaulle.

In 1940 it was he who telephoned to Paul Reynaud with the news of the dual nationality plan. As we know, this came too late, and on June 16th Philippe Pétain called on all Frenchmen to lay down their arms. Charles de Gaulle's response to this was the renowned BBC broadcast of June 18th, the gist of which was "France has lost a battle, she has not lost the war". It has been argued by some that this was not only a challenge to Pétain, but even an

act of insubordination. From a strictly constitutional point of view, Philippe Pétain had been voted into office and consequently was exercising power legitimately. He was in fact rapidly surrounded by men who had always been hostile to the Popular Front and who saw in the tragic events of 1940 an opportunity to lead France back to a conservative Catholic world of rural, not to say feudal values. Thus, over the next few weeks, the *Etat Français* was to emerge. This authoritarian régime, whose watchword was "Travail, Famille, Patrie", demanded obedience to the leader. Oaths of fealty were sworn to "le Maréchal" by officers not only of the French armed forces, but also of the administrative corps, be they metropolitan, or within the then considerable French empire.

But de Gaulle's mission, it will be recalled, was "to save the honour of France" as he conceived it. The story of his determination to create a resistance movement is well known, as is the generous support he received from Churchill, who recognised him as leader of the Free French. This was a most tactful definition of his war-time status. In fact de Gaulle knew, rather like the young Bonaparte after the Coup d'état du 18 Brumaire, that by sheer personality, he had to persuade his fellow countrymen that he henceforth embodied that mystic entity, *la France*, and hence, had legitimacy.

Although Jean Monnet may not have been overwhelmingly sympathetic to this latter-day Joan of Arc stance, he did understand quite clearly that different chains of command would lead to stalemate or even civil conflict, and it was he who reconciled the Vichy elements and de Gaulle in Algiers in 1943 following the Anglo-American landings in Morocco. This reconciliation was tenuous and suspicious and rumours regarding de Gaulle's ultimate ambitions were never far from the surface, particularly in the American camp.

In fact, de Gaulle's prime aim was to make sure that France itself was ultimately liberated by French troops. This would not only vindicate his own position, giving him the *de facto* legitimacy he had been claiming since June

1940, it would also put France among the victor powers. Hence the text of his speech at Notre Dame in August 1944, with its leitmotiv, "Paris libérée par elle-même" is crucially important. As we know, this strategy worked, thanks not only to de Gaulle's prescience, but also to the courage of Leclerc's second Armoured Division, and Churchill's unflinching support. France became a member of the UN Security Council and a "great power".

***Several major crises
have already been
caused by the implicit
contradictions
between the Delorian
Social Chapter and
the entrepreneurial
character of the
Single European Act.***

However, de Gaulle's legitimacy had less impact on post-war France than he had hoped. Communists, Christian Democrats, and his own R.P.F. (*Rassemblement du peuple français*) vied with each other, and the new Fourth Republic soon came to be portrayed as "le manège infernal" — the hellish merry-go-round, with ministries rising and falling at an almost predictable rhythm. De Gaulle, disgusted, retreated to his eyrie at Colombey-les-deux-églises, a forbidding, grey village on the old German invasion route, half-way between Paris and the Rhine. There he pondered and waited.

In 1958, the bitter war in Algeria broke the back of the enfeebled fourth Republic, and the French turned to "le grand Charles". One wonders whether he was troubled by memories of the way in which "le Maréchal" was hailed as the man of the hour in June 1940. He assumed power in June 1958 and in September presented the people with the Constitution of the Fifth Republic which they duly approved by referendum. This constitution has been variously described as being the solution to

the naturally centrifugal nature of France, or by François Mitterrand (before he became its President in 1981!), as "un coup d'état permanent". In fact, it established a strong, centralised state, based on a powerful executive and served by an obedient administration. The particularist demands of groups and parties would be kept at bay, and the *Assemblée Nationale* almost reduced to a mere talking shop. Yet de Gaulle deeply resented portrayals of himself as a vulgar would-be dictator, whether such affirmations came from the contemporary French left or from the Americans ever wary of their war-time associate's motives. More than ever, he wished to incarnate eternal France, a concept which did not necessarily correspond to the aims of the signatories of the Treaty of Rome, who under the aegis of Monnet, were already envisaging supranational bodies and ultimate political union.

Henry Kissinger recalls in his book *Diplomacy* that in November 1956 when the Suez débacle had thrown the French into anger and despair, Konrad Adenauer, visiting Paris, whispered to Christian Pineau, the foreign Minister, "Europe will be your revenge", and indeed it was to the German chancellor that de Gaulle turned to share his vision of Europe. This vision, based on forgiveness, atonement and redemption, could not have emerged had France been seen as merely a defeated and ultimately a collaborationist country. Thus, the mystic nature of de Gaulle's concept of France was extended to include the Catholic, conservative Rhineland, whose erstwhile capital was Aix-la-Chapelle (now Aachen) where Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day 800 A.D.

Small wonder then, that in January 1963, within one week, de Gaulle signed the Franco-German treaty and vetoed Britain's application to join the Common Market. Our purely commercial aims, and strong links with the USA must have been seen as the attributes of cynical ruffians in a world of such soaring metaphysical political aspirations!

Such language may seem dramatic, but one should not underestimate the

depth and strength of Franco-German understanding. Initially based on the shared need to recover self-esteem and mutual trust, it has become a major political and spiritual force in Europe. Indeed from 1963 until today, this entente has been nurtured in France to the extent that it has become a veritable creed, taught in schools, fostered and sponsored by numerous "Stiftungen" and associations. Its totems include Charlemagne, Strasbourg, de Gaulle and Adenauer, and latterly Francois Mitterand, only too pleased to be photographed hand in hand with Helmut Kohl. National political affiliations have no part to play in this truly supranational relationship, a conservative like former President Giscard d'Estaing being a close ally of socialist Helmut Schmidt.

The most dedicated apostles of this creed are the *énarques* who not only hold the key decision-making positions in both French government departments and State run or subsidised industries, but also represent France in Brussels. So close are links that young German graduates also attend the ENA. At the present moment, Helmut Kohl is advised on foreign policy by Joachim Bitterlich, a Saarlander who is also an *énarque*.

Thus, however Eurosceptical successive French deputies may appear on taking office, they have always been rapidly and discreetly drawn into line by the Franco-German eurocrats whom Sir Humphrey could only regard with open-mouthed amazement and envy.

Yet, of late cracks have begun to appear in the Franco-German edifice, and it is no longer regarded as heretical to point them out. Several different elements are contributing to a cautious reappraisal of the long-standing entente, the most important of these elements being the approach of EMU. The Germans and French had different but complementary aims about a single currency. In line with the tacitly accepted redemption theory, Germans were encouraged to see it as a concession, not to say a sacrifice, required of them in order to attain the sunlit harmony of a Europe politically united "à l'allemande", that is to say, a happy

federal entity, replacing the dangerous sovereign states of yesteryear. More prosaically, German businessmen came to see EMU as a sensible up-dating of the de facto D-mark zone, with the new currency being managed as efficiently by the European Central Bank as the

one should not underestimate the depth and strength of Franco-German understanding...from 1963 until today, this entente has been nurtured in France to the extent that it has become a veritable creed, taught in schools, fostered and sponsored by numerous "Stiftungen" and associations

mark by the Bundesbank.

For the French, EMU was undoubtedly originally seen, as was the very EU itself, as a means of controlling German economic forces: some might say a long term and elegant version of war reparations. This has emerged clearly over discussions about the management of the currency. Whereas the Germans envisaged the ECB as an independent body of bankers and possibly economists, the French have recently insisted on the setting-up of an "economic government" to balance the ECB. This is to be a committee of politicians drawn from the participating countries, who will oversee monetary and fiscal policy, and possibly (taking rueful lessons from the Federal Reserve Bank), social policy too. This has caused squeals of alarm in Bonn, but the French have worked hard to gain support for their plan from the

"Club Med" countries of southern Europe, whom they desperately wish to see locked into EMU. A weak lira or a weak peseta outside EMU could cause havoc in several key areas of French industry.

Since the period of de Gaulle and Adenauer, there has been a tendency to see Europe in terms of political initiatives to France, and economic guarantees from Germany. This simplistic equation worked quite well as long as Germany was prosperous and secure. This is no longer the case, thanks to both the unexpectedly tough challenge of incorporating the eastern Länder, and an increasingly outmoded social and economic structure. This latter defect is shared by France, whose present government is exacerbating inherent weaknesses by unrealistic "old socialist" policies, combined with the strivings to attain the Maastricht criteria. It is arguable that neither France nor Germany is economically ready to face the unknown thrills and spills of EMU.

Overt opposition to it exists in Germany; in France it is more covert. Few feel any affection for the French franc. Until relatively recently, socialism and Catholicism combined to make money a disparaged and distasteful subject; even today, the single currency is often described in terms more philosophical than economic. However, the blunt truth is that there is no credible alternative to a "Europe at all costs" policy for the French. The loss of face involved in any change of direction would be quite unacceptable to a populace which has submitted to what has recently been called the "purgatory of preparation for EMU", in other words, policies which have generated unacceptably high levels of unemployment and increasing numbers of bankruptcies.

Some urbane Frenchmen will try to tell you that Europe is a rampart against the worst excesses of French socialism! In 1983, it was the failure of "maxi-socialism in one country" which triggered François Mitterand's decision to "go for Europe": hence his seemingly impossible alliance with the Christian Democrat, Helmut Kohl, and

the long struggle to create and maintain a strong franc, a franc indeed as strong as the D-mark. Jean-Claude Trichet, the Governor of the Banque de France, is the hero of this saga, and not surprisingly, his name has recently been put forward as a candidate for the Presidency of the ECB, notwithstanding strong support from Bonn and the Benelux countries for the Dutchman, Wim Duisenberg: a further rift in the entente.

On the whole, concern about the feasibility and sustainability of EMU is muted. In any case, that particular debate is overshadowed by deep concern about strictly domestic issues. Urban violence is becoming a serious threat to everyday civilian activities. Many schools now have police guards, buses have been stoned in cities like Orleans and Montpellier, and passengers and drivers alike attacked on suburban trains. The recent debates in the National Assembly concerning nationality and immigration have revealed violent feelings with calls for a referendum from the Gaullists, who, like the Germans, favour the "droit du sang", while the Socialists and Communists adhere to the 1789 concept of France as a land of ideas, rights and asylum, open to all. No-one seems ready to raise the question of overarching European citizenship. Despite this government's "creation" of youth jobs, unemployment is painfully high among the under thirties. Taxes rise regularly; indeed the whole French fiscal system is impenetrably opaque, with the burden of income tax falling on less than half of the working population! Pensioners are mercilessly taxed too, so that many of them live on less than the official minimum wage.

A golden opportunity one might think for the centre right opposition, but its credibility has been severely damaged by the crushing electoral defeat in June, endorsed by Socialist Prime Minister Jospin's current approval rating of 60%! The right, or more correctly, the several centre right parties, seem unable to co-operate, perhaps because they spawn so many brilliant young lieutenants, like Nicholas Sarkozy or Alain Madelin, who upholds the novel

notion of the moral value of work! The Gaullist RPR party, redefined by Jacques Chirac in the 1970s, is finding it particularly difficult to regroup enthusiastically after the deeply unpopular premiership of Alain Juppé — who seemed to many to personify the increasingly arrogant and remote character of the Fifth Republic, which, tailored for de Gaulle, translated a certain concept of the State into a working constitution. The weakness of the main representative body, the National Assembly, and the overwhelming power of the executive, headed by the President, are only balanced by the censureship of the Senate, the upper house whose members are elected for nine years by local dignitaries and are, in the main, attached to rural and traditional values. At the present moment, they are delaying bills issuing forth from the socialist-communist legislature, with guile and determination.

There is little doubt that enthusiasm for the Fifth Republic is waning, as is national confidence. Chirac's periodic efforts to give a moral lead seem increasingly inadequate or controversial. Is the Gaullist vision, based on a certain interpretation of events, on a mystic affinity with Germany and on an adamant opposition to civil disorder, still credible?

Conjecture as to the disturbing possibility of its demise has arisen in the brouhaha surrounding the trial for crimes against humanity of Maurice Papon, a civil servant of the Vichy regime who was in charge of Jewish affairs in Bordeaux during the Nazi occupation and post 1945 had a modestly distinguished career in several ministries. Papon's defence, predictably, rests on the fact that he was doing his duty as a servant of the State. Once more, the traumatic question of the status of the Vichy regime with its anti-semitism and nascent, if not fully-fledged fascism, has arisen.

The Catholic church, doctors, and other groups have publicly expressed remorse and requested forgiveness for their war-time attitudes. This outpouring of emotion has solved nothing, but has inopportunely served to focus at-

tention on the nature of traditional Gaullism. Many contemporary Gaullists, like Philippe Seguin, leader of the RPR, are essentially secular in outlook, and there is a distinct danger that the metaphysical concept of "eternal France" will fall from the hands of the Gaullists into those of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the truculent leader of the National Front who annually pays homage at the statue of Joan of Arc! The National Front is currently credited with 16% of electoral support. It is very well organised and funded and has an increasing middle-class membership. Among its policy-makers and candidates are academics and graduates of the Ecole Polytechnique, the NE PLUS ULTRA of French grandes écoles. Its para-military elements and the crude xenophobia of Le Pen himself are being played down at the moment in preparation for the regional elections in March, when an increase in the National Front vote could wipe out the Centre Rights's tenuous hold on the 22 influential regional councils.

If such were to be the case, France would be split between the present government coalition, which is in effect a latter-day Popular Front, and a growing far-right. Le Pen has a network of friends in Central Europe and Germany, where the general election in October 1998 may well see the end of the long reign of Kohl and a victory for the Social Democrats. If Gerhard Schroder, rather than the "Old Socialist" Oskar Lafontaine, is confirmed as the latter's leader, we shall almost certainly see the emergence of a London-Berlin axis which would finally destroy France's European leadership role and force her to see herself as others see her.

Gillian Bardinet is writing a book, *J'ai mal à la France*, which will analyse the current ills of the country.

Aspects of Euphemism

Ralph Berry looks at today's Newspeak

I want to bring together some diverse phenomena under a single theme. It is the growing media demand to speak well of certain issues, and persons, and to exclude from public discourse any challenge to the prevailing view. A key weapon in this struggle is euphemism with all the implied social sanctions that accompany its use.

A furore early in 1997 was centred on the robust words of David Maclean, Harold Evans, and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and it missed the point. The point was euphemism. This is a nation which, in its politer strata, finds it hard to name certain realities. In refusing to name them, people are in denial of those realities. Euphemism has long been an English trait, essentially of Victorian origins. There were earlier sightings. Captain Marryat makes one of his moneyed West Indians shy away from 'breast of chicken' at a dinner party, and that was in the 1830s. The formation has remained. 'Breasts' are now admissible, but sex is under a cloud. Many cannot bring themselves to name 'sex' as a biological category, in part because of its associations with 'sexual congress', and prefer the more refined 'gender'. That term proposes that male-female differences are the result of social conditioning. 'Gender' is a genteelism.

When the German reporter wrote of 'der Jude Rifkind' the roof fell in. The phrase does not of course translate directly into English. 'The Jew Rifkind' is impossible with us: a British reporter could only approach the matter timorously, with 'Mr Rifkind, who is Jewish...'. The switch from noun to adjective has long been noted. (Jonathan Miller used it for a sketch in *The Establishment*.) All the German did was to register the irony of an

Orthodox Jew quoting from the Protestant (and anti-Semitic) Luther. But English shies away from certain nouns. And irony is hostile to euphemism.

Then, Mr Harold Evans. He spoke of 'bastards.' The word's meanings are lodged in its history. For us, it is a term of vehement reproach. It derives from the literal fact of illegitimacy, and the stigma it once bore. For good social reasons, not least the rise of illegitimacy rates, this meaning of 'bastard' is played down today. It has not disappeared. Shakespeare offers a telling reminder in *King Lear*. Edmund is handsome and capable, sired by a great noble out of wedlock. He confronts the Duke of Albany, who is mild and even-tempered, a force for good.

Albany: The let-alone lies not in your good will.

Edmund: Nor in thine, lord.

Albany: Half-blooded fellow, yes.
(5.3.79-80)

I doubt if Albany's reproach has disappeared from the playgrounds of England. Mr Evans was merely pointing out that the word 'bastard' exists and is used. Actions will have consequences. Those who find the consequences for their children distasteful have an easy prophylactic, or remedy. It is called marriage.

Nowhere is social euphemism more pronounced than in race. Noel Malcolm has pointed out that 'racism' is everywhere, while 'race' has all but disappeared from polite discourse. In part, this stems from limits on the free flow of information. It is not a matter confined to newspaper photographs of criminals. Not long ago I went to see *Guys and Dolls* at the National, where Sky Masterson was played by the black actor Clarke Peters. I consulted the reviews, which are conveniently available in *Theatre Record*. Of sixteen reviews only one referred to Mr Peters'

ethnicity, and that in connection with another production ('the black Mr Snow in *Carousel*'). And yet the stage, of all departments of society, deals openly with physicality and appearance.

'Black' is a convention, which like all conventions has its uses and deficiencies. It is at its most apparently foolish in bringing together Tamil and Parsee under one umbrella. More seriously, 'black' leads to a tabu: degrees of colour or race are now unmentionable. A century ago, 'quadroon' and 'octoroon' were freely used. Today they have disappeared. (Such distinctions are however re-emerging in the USA. See 'Mixed races demand new identity,' *Sunday Telegraph*, 16 March 1997.) Another zone of reality has sunk beneath the over-world, the world of polite discussion.

It is not necessary to advocate freer use of 'scum' (of IRA adherents), 'bastard,' and so on, or to make gratuitous reference to ethnic origins. But there was something disquieting about the media reaction to Messrs Evans and Maclean. The *Times* editorial of 15 March 1997 levelled that most damning of charges against them, 'vulgarity.' A people that cannot name things has lost control over itself, for control must confront the realities of naming. Euphemism is all very well for polite society. It is civilization itself. But euphemism now verges upon tabu, and that is primitivism. One ought not to have to choose. But if pressed, I would take the language of the bar-room over high table. It is more real.

The triumph of euphemism reached a climax in early September, and the felt need to speak well of the late Diana, Princess of Wales. This astonishing period has not been properly assessed, but a few points stand out. It

is evident that the people of Britain divided roughly into three groups, whose proportions cannot be measured: those who felt keenly the loss of an idol, those who abominated idolatry, and those who were indifferent. All felt pity for the young Princes. But otherwise, to speak as the *Sunday Times* did of 'a nation united in grief' was an absurdity.

This was not however the impression conveyed by the media. Day after day the nation viewed walls and gates buttressed with flowers, and long lines of mourners waiting to sign a book of condolence. In itself, the spectacle suggested a comparison with a crowd on the way to a football match: those in the crowd, heading for the match, are by self-definition deeply involved in football. The rest of the community gets on with its life, indifferent to the contention between Rovers and Wanderers. In this case though the rights of the indifferent were abrogated. All had to subscribe to the act of mourning, and thus of homage.

The most striking instance came in the Radio 4 Feedback. That programme received thousands of letters deriding the mass hysteria promoted over the airwaves. The producer later stated that 98% of letters received had been hostile. The BBC management stopped the reading of these letters, and Feedback had to scramble a last-minute

programme together. The following week the producers were permitted to read one or two of the protest letters.

Not all media commentators succumbed. Some grovelled, and ate publicly the words they had lately written against the Princess. But some, including Simon Jenkins, John Lloyd, Keith Waterhouse, and Richard Littlejohn, maintained a certain detachment from events. The hero of the Resistance was *Private Eye*: and the role of that journal repays study.

The issue of *Private Eye* dated Friday, September 5th appeared on the newsstands on September 3rd. It must therefore have been put together on Tuesday, September 2nd. The Editor showed great hardihood in featuring a mocking editorial by 'Lord Gnome', and a selection of quotations from columnists before and after the death of the Princess. On the following issue, September 19th, *Private Eye* reported that the surge of letters they had received following the September 5th issue had broken 10-1 in their favour. And *Eye* did not flinch from what all its readers knew as the supreme test. They published the fatal words 'So. Farewell Then Princess Diana.'

What is happening? *Private Eye* started out, in the early 1960s, as an anti-Establishment journal. It still is. But the Establishment has changed beyond recognition. Then it was Con-

servative, now it is Liberal-Left and absorbed into the agenda of the media. The picture, which was occluded by the unpopularity of the late Conservative government, has now cleared and come into focus. Government and Establishment are not identical, but they pull together. Essentially, they are of the Liberal-Left. *Eye* has therefore become an organ of the Right.

In recognizing this, one may have to shed some intellectual and cultural baggage. Tastelessness is not a traditional virtue. Civilization is in part a story of rising standards, of greater sensitivity to others and of more appropriate conduct. Members of the French nobility behaving today as they did at the Versailles of Louis XIV would be thrown out of any restaurant. But in this context, tastelessness is not at all mere barbarism. It is the raucous English voice, the authentic accent of the people, that bellows out against the pieties, the genteelisms, the suffocating correctness of the new order. For a long week, this nation was not free to speak its mind. Euphemism is censorship.

Ralph Berry's latest book is *Shakespeare in Performance: Castings and Metamorphoses*.

St George's Day 1998

Salisbury Review readers are welcome to attend a St George's Day Dinner

Wednesday 22nd April

at St Columba's Upper Hall, Pont Street, London SW7 at 7.30 pm

Christopher Booker will propose the toast of St George

Tickets will cost £16 to include three courses and wine

Please apply to the Managing Editor. Cheques should be made out to the *Salisbury Review*.

Education and Ethnic Groups

Ray Honeyford

Two years ago the most exalted educational bureaucrat in the country made an important pronouncement. At a headteachers' conference in Shropshire Dr Nicholas Tate, chief executive of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, declared that all children in our schools should be taught what it means to be British: Christianity should be taught, and children should be made familiar with British history and English literature. Moreover, Dr Tate rejected the fashionable view that all cultures are equal, and implicitly attacked the "cultural cringe" by means of which British culture should, at best, be respected, or even mentioned, only when accompanied by a breast-beating apology in respect of this country's imperial past.

The fact that this statement had to be made at all will have puzzled the general public. Why, they will have asked, does this influential man feel it necessary to insist that British schools teach an essentially British curriculum? But those of us who have laboured from within a state education service committed to politically correct, egalitarian dogma knew why: he had come to realise that the educational establishment had for many years been attempting to force schools to reject the whole notion of there being an identifiable British cultural heritage, and to adopt instead the so-called multicultural curriculum — a concept which is intellectually incoherent, wildly impracticable, and totally incapable of preparing young people for life in this country. And this latter restriction is particularly serious for ethnic minority pupils struggling to make sense of the cultural divisions between school and home. I, and many others, rejoiced in Dr Tate's stand against educational perfidy.

However, relief was short-lived. Just as we began to feel that the multicultural

myth and its attendant imperatives could be put behind us, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) — a powerful quango founded in the hope that it could inject some much-needed common sense and realism into state education — this organisation decided that there must be an enquiry into how ethnic minority children are faring in English schools. This concern with ethnic minority children was ominous. For it meant that OFSTED had abandoned its original aims, and had been won over by the ideologues of the education service whose thinking and vested interests dominate education. OFSTED now supported the politically correct view that children should not be perceived as individual pupils, but as separate groups whose average educational performances ought to be equal — and if they were not, then this signalled a defect in the system which should be rectified by appropriate forms of intervention. Now this egalitarian fantasy has been shown repeatedly, and in many parts of the world, to have no convincing evidence to support it. Multifarious societies coping with different ethnic groups are always characterised, not by equality, but by disparity of outcome. We have known for many years that ethnic minority groups perform in housing, employment, the entertainment industry, sport and crime in markedly different and significant ways. So why should educational outcomes not be complex and various? The uneven and quirky variations amongst different groups are precisely what should be predicted.

Moreover, it is not true that in an allegedly racist, white society, white pupils always do better than other groups. Many surveys have shown ethnic minority groups doing better than their white counterparts. Last year Christopher Woodhead, the chief inspector of schools, said that the worst

performing group at school is that of white, working-class, inner-city boys. They leave school earlier, and with fewer qualifications than black or Asian pupils. So, if an enquiry on egalitarian grounds were necessary, one might argue that these white boys should be the target. But these children, unlike their black and Asian classmates, have no powerful race relations lobby to articulate their concerns.

The suspicion that OFSTED was pursuing the egalitarian line was confirmed when it awarded the contract for conducting the enquiry to the London Institute of Education, the biggest and most politically correct teacher-training organisation in the country. The result was published in September, 1996, under the title, *Recent Research on the Achievements of Ethnic Minority Pupils* (London, HMSO). Predictably, the researchers discovered ethnic variations. And, equally predictably, they saw this as a "problem". Inequality of outcome must signify unequal and unfair treatment: "Where differences are significant, it is likely that the lower achieving group does not enjoy equal educational opportunities." If the researchers had attempted to link their assertion with evidence, then they would have discovered that rather more in the way of funding has been devoted to ethnic minority than to white children over the past thirty years.

The report indicates that ethnic minority pupils are somehow under-performing and being in some way disadvantaged by an alien system. The solution offered is three-fold: the schools must "address ethnic diversity" — which appears to call for more intensive multicultural approaches and commitment to the moral inanities of anti-racist education; then the schools must eschew the "colour-blind" approach — which seems to suggest that

multi-racial and, indeed, all schools, must be regularly drawing their pupils' attention to race and ethnicity ; and of course, finally, there must, be "more research".

Achievement

The authors' pessimistic conclusions are not in fact derived from the evidence they have culled from the literature. The report implies that ethnic minority pupils are doing badly in our schools. Yet I have counted no fewer than twenty-six instances where black or Asian pupils are performing as well as, or better than, white pupils. Here are some typical findings:

"In secondary schools Asian pupils make rather better progress than whites of the same social class background..."

"Participation in post compulsory education is higher for all major ethnic minority groups than for white groups... by age 18 Asians are the most highly qualified of all groups (including whites)."

"Chinese young people are more likely to be admitted (to university) than other groups."

Racial violence

The authors concede that "the incidence of bullying and violence in schools is notoriously difficult to research...". They also acknowledge that a survey of 18 multi-ethnic comprehensives found "little indication of overt racism in relations among pupils". They make no reference to Dennis O'Keeffe's research into the behaviour of a large representative sample of pupils who truanted from school — not one of whom mentioned racism as a pre-disposing factor.

However, they do claim that something they call "qualitative research" has revealed racial bullying in the schools, and blame teachers for reacting to such behaviour as though it were "simple boisterousness". The teachers, who are in daily contact with the culture of the classroom and playground, probably have a better understanding of these matters than clip-board sociologists who come looking for racism. Teachers have to cope with pupil relationships, whatever their nature, whilst the visiting sociologist makes a rapid exit armed with the data he has come to gather. If such sociologists had to live

with these problems as teachers do, then they might be less inclined to impugn the teachers' perceptions.

Interestingly enough, we learn nothing about the experiences of those white children who constitute the ethnic minority in a growing number of inner city schools.

Suspensions and Expulsions

If the authors' negative view of ethnic minority achievement is less than convincing, their attitude to serious misbehaviour in relation to race is even less persuasive.

Black pupils, particularly those from an Afro-Caribbean background, are far more likely than other children to be suspended or expelled from school for serious misbehaviour. The most recent literature, cited in this report, confirms this. Whom do we blame ? The authors take the standard race relations lobby's stance, and blame the teachers: "Research in infant, primary and secondary schools has recorded an unusually high degree of conflict between white teachers and Afro-Caribbean pupils.... despite their best intentions, teachers' actions can create and increase conflict with African Caribbean pupils." They do not emphasise, however, that most Asian children are less likely than whites to be excluded.

Since this fact undermines any simple-minded teacher-racism explanation, the authors declare that the huge black over-representation in serious misbehaviour reflects "processes within the school". Teachers are caught up in forces of whose existence they are unaware, and which disadvantage black pupils. Teachers perceive and respond to black pupils, not in terms of reality, but in terms of images distorted by inappropriate expectations and stereotyping. Black pupils misbehave because white teachers make generalisations based on flimsy, misunderstood evidence. This kind of argument is not only offensive to teachers and schools but ignores the teachers' actual daily experience. There have been ethnic minority children in our schools for decades. Over that time teachers have established that there are real differences both in behaviour and achievement amongst the different ethnic groups. That conclusion is based on

both empirical data and observation over the whole school age-range.

Teachers see pupils regularly — in primary schools every day. They also interact with them in a myriad out-of-school activities. Teacher judgements are based on hard experience, and to suggest otherwise displays a wilful ignorance of the reality. However the authors do, rather feebly, concede that, "as a group black pupils (it might be argued) simply break school rules more often than their peers". Well, yes, it might, but only if one takes off one's egalitarian spectacles, and stops blaming the teacher.

The authors are somehow determined to provide black youths with an excuse for bad behaviour, based on the conviction that they are victims of white insensitivity and prejudice. It is always unwise to provide wrongdoers with excuses and doubly so when impressionable ethnic minorities are involved. Black children exposed to this idea are likely to develop a chip on the shoulder, and to perceive any disciplinary procedure in which they are involved as evidence that they are being picked on unjustly. This generates an attitude of resentment and defiance — an attitude which may have life-long consequences. Instead of encouraging black pupils to respond to the undoubted prejudice which exists in the world at large as a challenge, the victimhood attitude merely justifies misbehaviour.

Whilst the authors seem anxious to locate the black child's problems within the school, they make little or nothing of home background, even though this has been shown to be associated with both behaviour and achievement in school. Dysfunctional families are more likely than stable family environments to produce children who fail to achieve their potential. If there are salient differences between ethnic minority groups in this respect, then one can predict that there will be differential outcomes in educational performance and behaviour. And the fact is that there *are* such differences. In 1993 the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys stated that 43 per cent of Afro-Caribbean families are headed by a single parent. The figure for Indian families is 9 per cent, for whites 13 per cent, and for the total

population 14 per cent. In the vast majority of cases the head of the family is the mother, i.e. the father is absent.

There is another cultural factor which the authors do not mention. When the Afro-Caribbean father is present in the home, discipline is severe — physical chastisement tends to be the norm. This is in marked contrast to the school, where the cane is banned. In moving between home and school, the black child might be confused by the two very different ways of enforcing rules of behaviour. This lack of consistency which might well encourage the child to see teachers as a soft option, and to respond accordingly. Schools have been compelled to reject swift punishment, and have now to rely on bureaucratic and pseudo-scientific counselling approaches to maintain order — approaches which have no real meaning for most youngsters: does any sensible person believe that a “behaviour contract” is going to restrain a big black lad, used to physical punishment at home,

and out to impress his mates?

If the egalitarian sociologists who have compiled this survey are worried about ethnic educational variations, then it is these sorts of cultural differences they should be investigating. But cultural explanations, it seems, are still taboo. The Swann Report of 1985 — the bible of the anti-racist establishment — actually suppressed cultural research which it, itself, had commissioned; and this despite the fact that it was able to state, “.... the reasons for the very different school performances of Asian and West Indians seem likely to lie deep within their respective cultures”.

What is even more depressing than the ideological assumptions which lie behind this unfortunate report is the response made to it by the former Conservative education minister, Cheryl Gillan. She instantly issued a “ten-point plan” which included the following: collecting baseline statistics on the ethnic composition of each school; monitoring ethnic minority pupils’ progress

through National Curriculum assessment; ethnic monitoring of post-16 qualification achievements; data on ethnic origin of pupils excluded from school; skills required to respond to the needs of ethnic minority pupils; additional specialist support for ethnic minority pupils.

Is it likely that the new administration will reject the politically correct approach, when the last one — ostensibly conservative — failed even to notice it?

Ray Honeyford is a writer and former headmaster.

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Editorial

When the late Sir Michael Tippett was in his prime, it seemed wholly natural that a composer whose music was widely regarded as difficult should be honoured with a knighthood. In those days there was, among educated people, a residual awareness of the distinction between art and entertainment. It was recognised that the true national culture, in which the spiritual inheritance of our country is preserved and continued, might be quite distinct from the images, literature and music that appeal to popular taste. And because the establishment was composed of educated people, honours were bestowed on those, like Sir Michael, who truly deserved them. People who understand music know that works like the Double Concerto, the Corelli Fantasia, *The Midsummer Marriage* and *A Child of our Time* are of enduring significance, and that like all great art, they expand our emotional horizons. They will also know that a song like 'Candle in the Wind' is of no lasting significance, except as exemplifying the catastrophic narrowing of emotional horizons that comes, when maudlin sentimentality is marketed as music.

Today it is the popstar who is knighted. In Sir Michael's day, the honours system was a means to endorse those painful and laborious endeavours which are seldom rewarded on earth in any other way, but which are nevertheless our best proof that life on earth is worth it. The system was not always fairly used - Britten was properly recognised only on his death-bed and Robert Simpson ended with a consolation prize. But the errors resulted from an ongoing attempt to define, in educated terms, the true high culture of our country. Harold Wilson's gesture in recommending the Beatles for the MBE was widely regarded as a tasteless innovation, an attempt to curry favour with an increasingly philistine electorate. In fact it was the first step towards what has become normal practice — the use of the honours system to reward those already rewarded by the

market, while reinforcing the message that education and high culture are no longer of any special account. Pop has become the official culture of New Britain.

At the time when Sir Michael composed *The Knot Garden* much was happening in the world of popular music. Rock 'n Roll was on the wane, and Elvis had become a squidgy heart-throb for the terminally middle-aged. The Beatles were in full flight, the Rolling Stones were following fast behind them, and the pop group, with its electric guitars and drum-kit, its simple diatonic harmonies and its blues-engendered tunes, had established itself as the normal machine for making cheap and expendable music. Sir Michael was among the first to include the electric guitar in his compositions, providing a context that would give the enduring meaning of the ephemeral sound. He was an open-minded and eclectic composer, who hoped always to give a musical blessing to what was genuine in popular taste. In this he was no different from Britten and Messiaen, though a long way from the arid experiments of Darmstadt. But, like Britten and Messiaen, he recognised that the great tradition of Western music also stands in judgement over popular taste. A society in which pop receives the same respect as the classical tradition, is a society which has lost its musical culture.

It is important to understand how recently things have changed. At the time of *King Priam*, musical adolescents would be greedily absorbing the classics, and developing a taste for Stravinsky, Walton and Bartók. But they would also play piano or guitar in jam sessions and croak out the silly words. They did not regard the result as serious music, or indeed as music at all. Those who bought records of this stuff, who attended concerts where it was performed, or made po-faced critical comparisons of products uniform in their platitudinous sentiment and cheesy harmonic progressions, merely seemed to prove, by these habits, their lack of

musical awareness. Of course, all musicians loved the Beatles, with their cheeky attitudes, their singable tunes, and their instinctive understanding of voice-led harmony. But they were regarded as a unique, or near-unique exception in the wasteland of popular culture. Among those who knew music, pop was recognised for what it is: music easily made, and made to be discarded.

People of the post-war generation did not invent this attitude; on the contrary, they absorbed it as a part of common sense. The distinction between high culture and popular entertainment was taught to them at school, endorsed by the Third Programme of the BBC, and confirmed in all their daily listening. Understanding this distinction was an essential part of being modern; only by committing yourself to high culture, young people were taught, do you assume the burden of the past. And, thanks to Elliott and Leavis, they assumed the burden willingly. What future is there, after all, for a nation which denies its past?

It was inconceivable in those days that the Third programme should broadcast pop music; inconceivable that politicians should strive to enhance their standing by declaring a taste for it; inconceivable that a government should bestow its patronage on pop-stars or include them among its advisors. For the aristocratic idea was still alive in public life, and politicians deferred to it, hoping to preserve moral virtue and aesthetic excellence against the constant erosion of commercialised entertainment. Only now has true democracy dawned on the British people — and with it the belief that all tastes are equal, and that the final judge among them is the market. Margaret Thatcher was often blamed for making the market into the sole criterion of human value. Surely the accusation is more fairly levelled against the current regime, which sees music in terms of the music industry, and measures its value as an export, polluting the soundwaves of the world with the noise of New Britain at play.

Letters

Sir

What is perhaps most objectionable about the Government's "British nations and regions" programme for devolution is the cynical assumption that England can justifiably be expected to make whatever sacrifices are necessary in order to preserve the British state, even if this means promoting the national identities of the Scots and the Welsh, and at the same time denying the English any further identity as a nation. Under this odd and decidedly retrograde constitutional set-up it is apparently assumed that the Scots will be Scots and the Welsh will be Welsh, but that the good-natured English can be gently manipulated into being forever British, their English national identity gradually submerged in the perilous mire of regionalism.

The only honest and impartial way of devolving power to the people of Britain in terms of nations and regions would be to divide the island *either* into regions *or* into nations. This is indeed the only just and reasonable way of avoiding the obvious abuse of power so evident in what has come to be known as the West Lothian question: the problem of Scotland's Westminster M.P.s speaking and voting on matters which concern only England. However, if the devolution is designed to divide the country up into partly autonomous *regions* then Scotland, with an area 6/10ths that of England, should obviously have two regions, North Scotland and South Scotland. Equally Wales could most conveniently be divided into North Wales and South Wales. On the other hand, if it is decided that devolution must be concerned with dividing Britain into partly autonomous *nations*, then the English, by far the largest of the three nations, must also have their own national parliament. After all the English have every reason to be no less proud of being English than the Scots are to be Scottish and the Welsh to be

Welsh.

Unfortunately the die has now been cast in terms of Scottish and Welsh nations and English regions. Civil servants in the Constitutional Unit of the Constitutional and Community Policy Directorate in the Home Office are already busily occupied on the Government's programme of directly elected regional assemblies for England, including a Mayor and strategic authority for London. In these circumstances all who love England should make it quite clear, as loudly and as often as possible, that they are not prepared to allow the English nation to be carved up into a number of partly autonomous regions. They should continually stress the political dishonesty involved in creating English *regions* merely to form a balance in terms of population with the partly self-governing *nations* of Scotland and Wales. It should be emphasised that very few English people have ever considered the destructive idea of having partly autonomous regional assemblies or parliaments. Since there are no clearly defined regional cultural identities to be defended and since England has only approximately the same area as New York State, this is really not surprising. Moreover, to divide a small country with an area of only 50,085 square miles into seven or eight regions, each with its own parliament or assembly, would not increase democratic participation. It would only encourage a growing conflict of regional interests and the gradual decline of national unity. From an administrative and financial point of view, such devolution would be unnecessarily complicated and would inevitably result in an increased burden for all taxpayers.

Raymond Tong
Bristol

Sir

I have one reservation to make on an

otherwise excellent article by Mr Pryce-Jones (*SR* Winter 1997): his attention to opinion polls of German businessmen about the Euro is unwarranted.

What businessmen believe to be good for business is not necessarily good for the economy, much less for the nation. It is good business for corporation executives to displace British workers by importing cheaper labour from East Europe or the Third World. Moreover, it is undoubtedly good business to sell vital materials that strengthen the economy and military capacity of unfriendly countries and of those countries that shelter and sponsor terrorist organisations; good business also to sell them implements of torture for use on their political prisoners.

The primary commitment of the business and financial world is to profit, not to the interests of the country in which they operate. Considerations such as Britain's unique constitutional history; the growth of liberty under the law over the past 300 years, which has produced a nation of greater political maturity, restraint, and experience, than any other European country, are simply not agenda for business companies located in Britain. Nor are such intangibles as the sentiments, the character, and the pride of the British people.

Would businessmen here have any objection to Britain's becoming the 53rd state of the U.S.A., if they believed it would provide larger markets for their wares? And if they were convinced that some commercial gain might be expected, would they hesitate to endorse a proposal that Britain abandon Sterling and instead adopt the Yen as the national currency?

Even on economic grounds alone CBI members are naive to believe that adoption of the Euro will stabilise our trade with EC countries. How many of them realise that stabilising the exchange value of a currency — either through fixing its exchange rate or through membership of a common currency area —

necessarily acts to destabilise the domestic economy? For example, a persisting balance-of-payments deficit in any one of the Euro-Area countries can no longer be eliminated through an adjustment in its exchange rate. Equilibrium is ultimately restored only by relative deflation; in effect, by a painful decline in income and employment.

Once we surrender control of monetary policy to a European Central Bank, we necessarily foreclose the option of lowering, or raising, domestic interest rates to meet the needs of the domestic economy. In this regard, as in others, we have perforce to march in step with other members of the Euro Area whether or not it is in Britain's interests to do so.

E.J. Mishan
London N.W.11

Sir

A. W. Purdue, in his review of "The Tainted Source. The Undemocratic Origins of The European Idea" quotes Laughland as agreeing that (it would be absurd) "to imply that most modern pro-Europeans are fascists... Modern pro-Europeans are obviously neither racist nor militarily aggressive." Purdue then observes that "It is important in any case to distinguish between National Socialism and fascism." Precisely! It is the failure to define Fascism — Marxists have only "analysed" it — and to distinguish it from Nazism which leads to the confusion and hence to the failure to see the Fascist nature of the E.U. Fascism need be neither "Racialist", "Militarist" nor "anti-Semitic" (and largely was not) since it is essentially a concept of the State. Let us look at the championship of the E.E.C. by one of the most erudite of Fascist leaders, Oswald Mosley (I quote from his *Mosley Right or Wrong?* Lion Books, London, 1961):

"I would go further: common government as well as common market. Ever since the war I have stood for the policy of 'Europe a Nation'."

"Today to make a common market without a common government is rather like putting the cart before the horse. It will be found that you cannot really

organize a common economic system without a common government."

"Did we cease to be Englishmen when we joined with the Scots to make Great Britain? And did the Scots become less Scottish because they joined with us English?"

"Do you really think we still have our national sovereignty? We lost it long ago.... the only way to regain an effective sovereignty is to enter Europe."

"First of all, a completely united Europe will provide a market of about 300 million people. It will also contain all the foodstuffs and raw materials we can possibly require... There will be no need either to buy or to sell on world markets unless we wish to do so."

"This will enable us both to raise wages and reduce prices,... that is the first and outstanding advantage of the united European market. But, as we shall see, there are many other advantages."

"First give industry a large market for which to produce. That will be provided by the purchasing power of 300 million united Europeans. Then give industry a sure market for which to produce... Industry can then confidently install modern machinery, and mass produce for a large assured market."

Anthony Cooney
Liverpool

Sir

It is generous of Alexander Boot to have written about my book *Edmund Burke and Our Present Discontents* in *The Salisbury Review* as well as in *The London Miscellany*, and I hope he will continue reviewing it wherever he can. A little research and verification, however, would add weight to his opinions, as when he recommends that "a conservative should not be quite so eager to turn all his -ise endings into ize, even — or perhaps especially — if such usage is sanctioned by the Times Style Manual".

The -ize suffix is the traditional English ending used by the family of Oxford dictionaries, on the explicit recommendation of the greatest of all lexicographers, James Murray, who explains at

length under "-ize" in the OED why the z is to be preferred on etymological and phonetic grounds. As well as being the house style of Oxford University Press, it is the form used by Johnson in his Dictionary and by Burke (or his printer) in the *Reflections*.

Contrary to what Boot suggests, -ise is now, sadly, the style also of *The Times* (as a glance would have shown), and has been so since the paper's longstanding practice was changed in 1992 by Simon Jenkins, who also supposed -ize to be Americanism.

Jim McCue
London

*A party...
is not a faction
or club of
individuals who
associate for
mutual assistance
in acquiring and
attaining office.
It is a body of
persons who hold,
advocate
and desire to bring
into effect certain
political principles
and policies.*

Enoch Powell

Reviews

The Anti-Historians

Ann Glyn-Jones

The Idea of Decline in Western History, Arthur Herman, Free Press, Simon and Schuster, 1997, £20.

"Idea" is the salient word. Arthur Herman believes that for the last two hundred years a string of observers have concocted a series of false theories about civilisations in general and western civilisation in particular, and his book investigates the extent to which these distortions have become self-fulfilling prophecies.

There are two chronologically overlapping strands. "The historical pessimist sees civilisation's virtues under attack from malign and destructive forces that it cannot overcome: cultural pessimism claims that those forces form the civilisation process from the start. The historical pessimist worries that his own society is about to destroy itself, the cultural pessimist concludes that it deserves to be destroyed".

Historical pessimists, among whom Spengler is pre-eminent but far from unique, view civilisations as having an organic Being or Reality transcending the human beings through whom they are manifested. For Spengler civilisations (or rather, cultures-as-evolving-into-civilisations; the distinction is important) have a childhood, youth, maturity and old age; an analogy readily employed by commentators not just through the centuries, but across millennia. Youthful vigour equates with "Kultur", and is rooted in rural pursuits, harmony with nature, and a shared "Volk" history, all progressively destroyed by urbanisation and the enervating processes of "Zivilisation". Spengler did not em-

phasise race, in the sense of blood-kinship, as a component of this vigour, but others of course have done so, and Herman is illuminating on the succession of nineteenth-century thinkers, such as J.A. Gobineau in France, Paul de Lagarde in Germany, and the British Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who elaborated the racial theme, and whose ideas, fertilised by Nietzsche's glorification of the superman, paved the way for Nazism. As Herman shows, white racist theories had already, before the end of the 19th century, spawned mirror-image dogmas of the evolutionary priority and pre-eminence of the black races, Kultur metamorphosing into Black Soul, as elaborated in the work of the black American W. E. B. Du Bois, and such 20th century exponents of the cult of Negritude as Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan. Aligned with them are the contemporary multiculturalists in whom, says Herman, sustained hostility to traditional European and white American culture takes precedence over any serious celebration of alternatives — a syndrome not without echoes in Britain.

Nietzsche, however, is as much a cultural as a historical pessimist, for he countenances the possibility of reconstruction, provided the effete timidities of "civilisation" are abandoned by the "Overman" who has the courage, unsupported by any other buttress than the knowledge of his own moral autonomy, to pursue

the total overthrow of the *status quo*. Cultural pessimists, including Karl Marx with his doctrine of a historical necessity arising out of property relationships, should perhaps not be classified as "pessimists" at all, for they prophesy liberation, improvement rather than cyclic decay, once the *status quo* has been destroyed. In a particularly instructive section, Herman traces the flight from Nazi Germany of the Marxist Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, including Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm, who with fellow members of the Institute gladly availed themselves of liberal American academic refuges from which to pour out their highly influential clarion call of destruction — and of de-construction: with Freud's "unmasking" of the family a helpful weapon in the fight against bourgeois values. Hence the promotion, in Art as in Life, of violence, cruelty and sexual abandon.

Later in this century have come the multiplicity of Green social critiques, of varying degrees of severity but all burdened with the same apocalyptic message: contemporary society is doomed. The hyperbole (as he sees it) of their threats, their scientifically dubious statistical projections and their predilection for statist and totalitarian solutions destroy their credibility in Herman's eyes.

Common to all those whom Herman investigates is at best a loss of confidence in, at worst a detestation of, the

liberal, humanist, democratic, rational and scientific society fostered by the Enlightenment, just the sort of society with which Herman's own loyalties are engaged. "What if" he concludes "society is not an organism with a predetermined course and lifespan, but is made of up individual organisms, each with the power to more or less shape his own destiny? Then society's future is not the product of some inevitable law of Progress, or Decrepitude; it is what the society's members decide to make of it. At one stroke ... the cycle of disillusion and despair [is] dispelled — not out in the world, but where it actually exists, in the minds of men and women".

When Francis Fukuyama, in 1992,

published *The End of History*, he was confident that democratic consumerism, as exemplified in American society, was the world's preferred option. His later publications have been more cautious. Herman's book contains no glimmer of understanding of those "minds of men and women" who have serious criticisms to make of a western science devoid of reverence, serving no goal but human anthropocentricity. He seeks to discredit, by tarring them with the brush of Nazism, such challenges to conventional orthodoxy as organic husbandry or an interest in animal welfare (Himmler introduced antivivisection regulations and experimented with organic farming; Rudolf Hess was a vegetarian; the whole Hit-

ler Youth Movement enjoyed rambling in the countryside, etc.). Nor is there any mention of such ecological disasters as Chernobyl, the genetic devastation of Kazakhstan, world-wide pesticide poisoning, global warming or the many other perils of scientific hubris which so alarm the Greens. The concerns of those distressed by the impotence, in our society, of the poor, by mounting levels of psychiatric disorder, by crime and its outward-rippling impact — communities mutilated by fear and distrust — these find no place in his analysis. Ultimately, then, though trenchant in its exposure of western society's adversaries, this book exudes a complacency about ourselves which I, for one, cannot share.

The Global Family and "Big Sister"

Patricia Lança

The Family in Global Transition, Ed. Gordon L. Anderson, PWPA, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1997, \$19.95 (obtainable from Washington Institute Press, 2700 University Avenue West, Suite 47 St. Paul, Mn. 55114-1016 USA).

The Gender Agenda: Redefining Equality, Dale O'Leary, Vital Issues Press, Lafayette, La., 1997, \$11.95 (obtainable from Vital Issues Press, P.O. Box 53788, Lafayette, Louisiana, 70505 USA)

...so long as societal members worry over the decline of the family, we may be fairly well assured that the family is in reasonably good shape. And conversely, when members of Western societies stop feeling concerned about the quality of their family life, then decline will probably already have begun in earnest.

This is the comforting conclusion reached by the author of Chapter 13 of the collection edited by Gordon Anderson. William Garrett, a sociology professor, examines the "Decline-of-the-Western-Family" thesis and remains optimistic despite the numerous facts and figures regarding divorce, out-of-wedlock births and other indicators marshalled by so many observers. His fellow-contributors to this volume do not all share his views.

The Family in Global Transition assembles twenty papers originally developed for an international congress on the family held in Seoul in 1995. The result is wide-ranging and eclectic and covers three areas: The Family in History; Family Transition in the World's Cultures; and Family Change, Family Stability and Public Policy. The contributors are as varied in their approaches as are the subjects covered, from the family in the ancient world to its problems in post-communist societies. The majority see the family — father, mother and their offspring — and its health as essential for society's well-being. Two of the twenty dissent: one shares the views of "gender-feminists"; the other discusses same-sex unions as a positive innovation. Mitchell B. Pearlstein's

"Fatherlessness in the United States" is perhaps the most comprehensive contribution of all in its catalogue of frightening statistics and its examination of differing contemporary opinions and the remedies proffered by policy-makers.

Jean Bethke Elshtein provides a welcome relief from statistics with her "Philosophic Reflections on the Family at Century's End". She writes with indignation at the panorama of present-day America and concludes with a number of questions needing to be answered if democratic life is to be preserved.

If we are not up to the task," she concludes, "the twenty-first century will be a tale of further coarsening of social life and deepening pressure on democratic

society to enhance its coercive powers in order to save us from ourselves. If we hope to forestall this unhappy prospect, we must tend to our social ecology before it is too late. The family belongs on the list of endangered species."

For an overview of what is at issue in the "culture wars" (not only in the USA) and the differing positions of their protagonists this book is an invaluable manual.

The intention of Dale O'Leary's volume is more specific. It deals in lively detail with what constitutes, at least in academia and international forums, that most aggressive frontal attack on the family yet witnessed: the ideology and practice of the "gender feminists". The author is a well-known activist in pro-family campaigns and attended the United Nations World Conference on Women, held in the Chinese capital in 1995. This is a personal account of what the author saw and heard and provides an antidote to the very poor coverage of this event given in the world Press. She describes, with a wealth of quotation from speeches and documents, how a small and unrepresentative group of women who have taken over Women's Studies departments in American universities have also succeeded in penetrating international organisations. What Christina Hoff Sommers calls "gender feminists" certainly do have an agenda. O'Leary shows how their main concern was to divert the Beijing conference from pro-family issues and the genuine problems of women throughout the world. They wanted UN consecration of their own relativist view of sexual identity and the programme implicit in it. In other words, they wanted world recognition of homosexuality and, especially, lesbianism on equal terms with heterosexuality while the traditional family and religion were to be decried. As though such questions were foremost in the minds of millions of ordinary women! Ignoring the moral convictions of representatives of millions of women from Catholic Latin America or the Moslem world, they openly attacked religion and wanted to see abortion-on-demand, adolescent sex and quotas to receive the blessing of the United Nations. (These are already blessed by the European Parliament!).

When these intentions became clear

the pro-family delegates in Beijing discovered that the use of the word "gender" by English-speakers was by no means innocent. It was not, after all, a strange euphemism used by bashful Anglo-Americans to mean "sex". Dale O'Leary provides a variety of quotations from leading "gender feminists" and describes how she and her friends made these available in Beijing to less well-informed women. These returned to their countries with a clearer idea about "gender feminist" aberrations, but they had been ill-prepared and badly funded in comparison with the adversary. Accordingly, although the final Beijing documents were somewhat toned down, the "gender feminists" had their way and the loaded word continued to appear — at least in English-language documents. For the very odd thing about the new use of "gender" is that it is untranslatable except as a category of grammar.

Dale O'Leary's book deserves to be widely read. The quotations it contains come from such "gender" gurus as Shulamith Firestone, Judith Butler, and Adrienne Rich. Elucidative in themselves, they might even encourage readers not to buy (money can be better-spent!) but at least to browse through the original works in libraries and book-shops. One or two such disagreeable sessions should make it blindingly obvious how much more dangerous is feminist "gender" theory than its fraternal counterpart, "queer" theory.

Male homosexuals by definition cannot, after all, hope to lead mass men's movements did such exist. And they must necessarily compete for public office with members of that vast majority of their own sex: heterosexual men. Lesbian ladies, on the other hand, possess an immense advantage and because of it have already won leading positions in some powerful women's movements, in the universities and in government. This, of course, is that they are able to make the most of a fact which they dislike and try to deny about the essential nature of female identity: the vocation for motherhood. Most women, whether they have successful careers outside the home or not, usually have little time or inclination for political activity and activism. Most lesbians, however, are childless and free of family

commitment. It looks very much as if their insistent demands for quotas and affirmative action (which, if put into effect, can only discredit competent women) are intended mainly to benefit their own kind. In the United States "gender feminists" now want an amendment to the Constitution to provide for four senators from each State: an obligatory two men and two women.

It is not difficult to foresee where many such lady senators would stand on some key political issues. For "gender feminism" is a potent brew of neo-marxism and fashionable deconstructionism, with the main enemy seen as the "white European male" who imposes the *bourgeois* order on society. Part of that order is "compulsory heterosexuality", the nuclear family and religion. "Gender feminists" want to see all these replaced. By what? Some frankly favour State intervention to replace family functions in a system where there would not be the old-fashioned dictatorship of the proletariat but the dictatorship of women, the real under-class. Just as middle-class Bolshevik intellectuals came to power on the backs of the Russian proletariat, their female epigones want power on the backs of ordinary women. So it looks as though Orwell was not as prescient as we believed. The real enemy today is Big Sister. By comparison Big Brother is a benevolent figure. But Orwell was quite right about Newspeak, and the word "gender" needs to be added to its lexicon. Even the innocent use of this word, currently so fashionable, is evidence of having been brainwashed. "Gender" like other members of the same set, "partner" and "Ms", require to be banished from decent vocabulary. Dale O'Leary concludes her book with a clarion call:

...it will take calculated rudeness. The feminists have relied on the politeness of men. They have demanded that dangerous nonsense and utter stupidity be treated with respect. The Gender Agenda cannot be defeated until people are willing to stand up and say, "No more inclusive language, no more politically correct speech." We must refuse to say "gender" when we mean "sex". Those who are offended by reality and human nature will just have to live with it.

Journey to the Centre

Helen Szamuely

Borderland: A journey through the history of Ukraine, Anna Reid, 1997, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £18.99.

One of the unexpected but somehow symptomatic consequences of the break-up of the Soviet Union is the transmogrification of *the* Ukraine into a plain Ukraine. As an insistence on designation of statehood this is meaningless. Slavonic languages have no articles, while English can accommodate the idea of a country's name with a definite article. *The* Netherlands is acknowledged to be a state, whereas most British politicians and commentators are still having problems with understanding that Ukraine is a potentially rich, strategically important country with a population of something like 50 million. Presumably, the article was omitted in order to make this concept widely acceptable.

It is not just western observers who find it hard to view Ukraine as a separate entity. Most Russians have not yet come to terms with it, and nor have many Ukrainians. The muddle became evident in 1988, during the arguments over the statue of Saint Vladimir, first Christian ruler of Kievan Rus. Because of internal fighting within and between the various Russian communities in Britain, it was the Ukrainians who organized a proper celebration of the conversion of Rus and a statue went up in Holland Park of the man who is now known as St Volodymyr. A dissident Russian nationalist writer, who happened to be in England, reacted with fury. "There was no Ukraine even at the time," he thundered. Indeed not. The area did not acquire a separate political and social identity till the sixteenth century and its very name is a problem. *Ukraina* or *okraina* means the edge, the periphery; by implication, the centre is somewhere else.

Most of the history books since 1989 have concentrated on Russia, further perpetuating the confusion that has already existed in many Western minds between Soviet and Russian. Attention has gone to the countries of Eastern Europe because of the desire expressed on both sides to "reintegrate" them into Europe and to Russia as the largest and most important of the successor states. The countries in between, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, even the Baltic states, have been swept aside. Yet they are of interest. Ukraine, in particular, is of enormous strategic importance as the country that will be sandwiched between an expanded NATO and a discontented Russia. It is surely in our interest, even if there were no other reason, to ensure that she should survive and flourish as a European-minded, secure and democratic country.

There is, however, another reason why we should study developments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Historical events, as Marx said, occur twice, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. The tragedy of the Soviet Union is repeating itself as the farce of the European Union. Britain is in the process of losing her unique political and constitutional structure, her very existence as an independent state. To facilitate this process, the people, or some of them, have elected a government whose aim is to detach the country from its own history, to "rebrand" it as if it were a new toothpaste or washing powder. We are entering a bleak period, best described by George Orwell in *Nineteen eightyfour*, when past and present can be rewritten at a moment's notice in accordance

with the latest whim of the rulers. But again, tragedy has turned into farce. The guiding motivation of our rulers appears to be the glitz of show business and public relations. The basis of the new political structure is to be advertising and media relations. And somewhere behind all that looms the shadow of integrated Europe, whose ideologues find Tony Blair amusing and useful but whose aims and ideas are very different from his own frothy ones.

The people under Communism knew that their best weapon was a determined attachment to their own history, their own culture, each unique in its way. They hid books, when it was dangerous to publish, and published, when that became possible; they passed on knowledge openly or secretly; if history had disappeared down the memory hole, they revived it or, let us be honest, reinvented it. The present and future of a people or a country depend on knowledge and understanding of the past. One day Britain will have to learn this lesson. In the meantime, it is worth looking at what is going on in the countries that have been through the process of annihilation and have resurrected themselves.

Anna Reid's book, *Borderland*, is thus very welcome as the first British attempt for some years to give an account of Ukrainian history. She was the Kiev correspondent of a number of Western publications, has clearly travelled widely in the country and has spoken to many different people. She has also delved into past publications and has attempted to make sense of the convoluted and contradictory network of relations between the different peoples who inhabit the "borderland"

between Russia and Europe. The difficulty of comprehending even modern Ukrainian history in the West is shown by a sequence of three photographs: the first of peasants dying of starvation during collectivization, the second of NKVD victims in Lvov in 1941, the third of naked Jewish women and children being driven towards a death pit in Volhynia later in 1941. What can one say about a country which went through all that in the space of ten years? What can one say when one remembers that this sequence does not include the many massacres of the civil war, the ferocious purge in eastern Ukraine in the mid-thirties or Ukrainians and Russians being deported for slave labour by the SS? Nor are there any photographs of the renewed Soviet purges in the late forties or of whole nations like the Crimean

Tatars being deported to almost certain death. At different stages those who were victims became executioners and executioners turned into victims. It is very much to Ms Reid's credit that she describes the horrors and tries not to demonize any particular national or political group.

She also manages to give some historical background to the whole mess, reaching back into the Kievan past, the Cossack wars, Mazeppa's rebellion and the complicated tangle of religious groupings and rivalries. It is unfortunate, that the structure of the book — description of a place, interviews and discussions conducted in that place, then description of a historical event or series of events also vaguely connected with that place — make this "journey through history" episodic rather than sequential. The fault is probably not

Ms Reid's, who shows herself to be more than capable of producing a real history. Against all evidence, publishers still seem to believe that the reading public can digest history only when it is fed in small gobbets, sweetened with entertaining travel accounts and quaint personalities. The best way to write history is to follow Humpty Dumpty's instructions: "Start at the beginning, go to the end, then stop". There is obviously a demand for that kind of work. How else are we to explain the popularity of Norman Davies' *Europe* and Orlando Figes' *A People's Tragedy* as well as of numerous other, smaller works? Perhaps Ms Reid could be persuaded to follow up her travels through the borderland by giving a proper account of Ukraine's attempts to journey to the centre of events.

Tiger at the Gates

Peter Bassett

Language is Power: The Story of Standard English and its Enemies, John Honey, Faber & Faber, £8.99.

Once I built a tower
To the sun:
Brick and rivet and lime.
Once I built a tower, now it's done —
Brother, can you spare a dime?
A popular song of the 1930s
Depression.

The Bible tells us that at another time and place men determined to build a tower so tall it would reach to Heaven. But the Almighty thwarted their overweening ambition by making every man speak a different language so that no one could understand his neighbour. This swiftly brought the whole enterprise to a standstill.

The thread that runs through Professor Honey's new book is the potential of Standard English as a means of

universal communication. To the man on the Clapham omnibus the advantages of being able to communicate effectively to anyone, anywhere, seem obvious. But the academics whose malign dogmas powerfully influence the teacher-training colleges do not travel on the Clapham omnibus. As Honey shows us clearly, far from doing everything in their power to ensure that Standard English is taught to all schoolchildren so that they may one day be able to share in the advantages of universal understanding, these 'sociolinguists' (dread word) place obstacle after obstacle in the way, advance theory after theory why children should *not* be taught it. 'There's no such thing as Standard English', they stoutly

maintain (always in impeccable Standard English); and 'You can't teach children grammar', which comes as a surprise to those of us who were at school in the 1930s and 40s and were taught the parts of speech and how to parse a sentence.

But having denied the very existence of Standard English, the aforementioned academics immediately contradict themselves, acknowledging its existence by heaping opprobrium on it as the 'authoritarian creation of a small and self-serving élite'. (We encounter the word 'élite' many times in the story of English teaching, always used pejoratively. This seems a strange inversion of thought since, historically, 'élites' have always been groups of

people who did things exceedingly well.) Standard English, so these academics say, is the property of a privileged, dominant social class and is used by them to maintain oppressive class relations. The Kingman Report (1988) on English teaching provoked the bitter hostility of the education establishment when it recommended that Standard English should be taught in school. Professor Honey quotes the view of one critic, Dr Deborah Cameron, as being that 'Standard English is a form of language which covertly represents the particular standpoint of a homogeneous social group — male, white (indeed Anglo-Saxon), heterosexual and originating from the most privileged social class.' Another linguistics professor, James Tollefson, maintained that Standard English is essentially associated with 'hegemonic domination of society by groups having control of economic resources and political power'.

Professor Honey questions, most pertinently, why, if Standard English is so self-evidently desirable, something to be gobbled up by every child capable of it, the leaders of the teaching profession are so adamant in their refusal to countenance it. 'Standard English', they say, 'is not for them', meaning the children of working-class or sub-class parents. Children so taught, they argue, will become disloyal to their social group, their peers: such an education performs a grave act of oppression, of exploitation. As Janet Batsleer et al wrote in 1985: 'Systematic training in the use of Standard English has proved one of the most effective ways in which the exploited classes, children and adults, have been induced to consent to the conditions of their own cultural subordination.'

The can of worms that Professor Honey has opened for our delectation quickly shows us the extent to which left-wing ideology has invaded and corrupted the teaching of English. The man in the street will wonder what on earth politics has to do with the education of the very young, how Marxist dogma can possibly impinge on school lessons in reading and writing. He will soon find out.

Professor Honey draws our attention to the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who argued (though Honey does not explicitly refer to this) that 'any revolutionary class, in addition to seizing political power, must secure *cultural* hegemony over its opponents. To seal its victory, such a class must do more than break the political, military and juridical strength of its oppressors, crushing their armies and transforming their states; it must also challenge and oust them in the realms of religion, philosophy, art, morality, *language* and manners.' Honey points out that there are therefore the best of ideological reasons why the academics of whom we have been speaking, many of whom identify themselves clearly as 'socialists', should want to denigrate Standard English and do their utmost to prevent its acquisition by non-standard speakers.

Honey traces the historical development of what today we have come to refer to as Standard English, a term that first saw the light of day in the early part of the nineteenth century. However, notions of the standardisation of one particular form of English hark back at least as far as the eighteenth century, with earlier indications as long ago as the fifteenth, when the dialect of the central Midlands began to be recognised as the language of government documents. This incipiently authoritative form of English was, incidentally, extremely valuable to Caxton when he introduced his printing press in 1476.

Professor Honey discusses the theories of the American scholar, William Labov, who held that in America the Black English vernacular, with its seemingly contemptuous disregard of Standard English, is not only *not inferior* to Standard English but actually *superior* — 'quick, ingenious, decisive', instead of 'enmeshed in verbiage' and 'cluttered up with qualifications like "I think" and verbs like "may" and "might"'. Labov's work, Honey shows, became enshrined throughout British educational thinking: textbooks written by English academics inspired by Labov are widely accepted by the educational establish-

ment as essential reading. Honey exposes the shaky or non-existent foundations on which this whole theory stands.

One of the most powerful and influential figures in twentieth-century linguistics, Honey explains, was Noam Chomsky, who advanced the belief that the human race is genetically disposed towards the acquisition of language, that the capacity to use language is essentially inborn. This idea has filtered down through the strata of sociolinguists and led to the notion that all human languages and dialects are 'equally good', though Chomsky did not particularly concern himself with this kind of linguistic theorising. Honey points out that one of the more harmful consequences of Chomsky's own work is the postulate, avidly seized upon by the teaching establishment, that all children naturally speak grammatically. The child who says: 'Me and my mates was here' is, according to this theory, speaking with perfectly correct grammar, i.e. the grammar with which he habitually speaks.

This kind of circular argument may seem strange to the layman: but it lies at the very heart of today's educational theory and is widely adduced to support the idea that not only can conventional grammar *not* be taught, it *should* not be taught, for it brings the child into conflict with his own naturally-inherited notions of grammar. This weird theory has provided the teachers with the perfect let-out, a heaven-sent excuse for not teaching grammar. Perhaps it explains why England today has earned itself the label 'The Thick Man of Europe'.

Professor Honey makes reference to the writings of George Orwell, and it is worth taking the opportunity to remind ourselves of the appendix to Orwell's novel *Nineteen eighty-four*. This should be compulsory reading for everyone who cares for freedom of speech, even freedom of thought, in a society under an authoritarian and oppressive government. Orwell explains how our ability to think, to conceive ideas, is utterly dependent on the range of intellectual concepts we possess: it is chilling to read how

effectively an evil government can systematically 'air-brush' out of existence all concepts it regards as inimical to itself.

Honey's book must be seen as uniquely important. Alone among his professional colleagues he has had the

courage to stand up and point to the gaping holes in the emperor's new theories of education that are so greatly admired by the educationist rank-and-file. It is small wonder that *Language is Power* has been received by the education establishment with extreme

hostility. Everyone who cares about our children's education should read Honey's book and get the full measure of the devastating social-engineering trick that has been played, *and is still being played*, on an unsuspecting public.

The Art of Provincial Vision

Alexander Boot

Dostoevsky and Soloviev, The Art of Integral Vision, Marina Kostalevsky, Yale University Press, £21.00

Provinciality isn't a geographic notion, it's a disease of the mind. The causes include a myopic inability to see beyond one's neck of the woods, a sense of inferiority in need of concealment, and ignorance. The symptoms are so unsavoury that it's best to name just one: belief in one's own innate superiority to those of demonstrably higher spiritual and moral attainment. Add to this a commitment to ram this belief down people's throats, and you've completed the picture of the provincial savage. Blow this picture up to the size of a large country, and you get Russia.

That the Russians love to clamour spiritual ascendancy over the West is to be expected from a country where peasants still jump over fires on high holidays, and which has lived most of its history in self-imposed isolation. What defies comprehension is the West's readiness to become a Russian groupie, accepting, for example, a situation where provincial second-raters like Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov are performed much more often than the universal geniuses Bach and Mozart. The subjects of the reviewed book were among the first, or at least the most influential, preachers of the Holy Russia sermon; and its author, by not exercising any critical judgment

whatsoever, acts as their loudspeaker. "The great Russian writer and the great Russian philosopher united by the Christian vision of unity," "The philosophical and artistic work of both Soloviev and Dostoevsky [is driven] by faith in God and faith in man," such is the angle from which she views her subjects.

Now, I share Nabokov's view of Dostoevsky as a mediocre artist. His novels are so turgid that some Russians prefer to read them in anodyne translations. Produced without the benefit of not only a second draft but even a second look, his narrative meanders at sea before reaching its usual harbour of didactic sentimentality. His characters range from neurotic to psychotic, their actions from unlikely to unbelievable, and their thoughts from pseudo-profound to banal.

Still, since many people I respect think otherwise, I am prepared to accept Dostoevsky's yarn-spinning facility, knack at satire and an occasional accurate observation as proof of greatness. Soloviev, however, definitely wasn't a great philosopher. He wasn't a philosopher at all, but a brilliant, if slightly nutty, essayist. Alas, not every brilliant essayist is a philosopher, and — as any reader of Hegel will tell you — vice versa.

For a philosopher, Soloviev's world is too parochial, his thought too focussed on Russia and its role in the world. He believed that the Russian people would "give life and wholeness to a broken and benumbed humanity by uniting it with the eternal divine element". Russia would thus act as the ultimate agent of "the universal synthesis of science, philosophy and religion".

This echoes Dostoevsky's belief in the Russians as "the sole 'God-bearing' people on earth who are destined to renew and save the world in the name of a new God and who have been vouchsafed the keys of life and of the new world". "Russian thought," according to him, "is paving the way for the great spiritual regeneration of the whole world". Such views, far from reflecting philosophical depth, could be proven silly even by the facts available at the time of writing. Repeating them uncritically today, despite the benefit of hindsight, is indefensible. But never mind the facts — our heroes never did. "The achievement and the entire significance of people like Dostoevsky lies in their refusal either to worship or to serve the power of the fact," writes Soloviev.

That Kostalevsky shares this Russian predilection can be shown in one

tiny example: the way she treats her subjects' views on the 'Jewish question'. She mentions, briefly, Soloviev's attitude to it, but ignores Dostoevsky's altogether. One could get the impression the former had a passing interest in the subject, but the latter none at all. That impression would be wrong: Soloviev was a nice chap who would welcome with open arms anybody, even Jews — always provided they converted to his brand of ecumenical Christianity. By contrast, Dostoevsky's sermons of universal love were belied by his virulent hatred of everything non-Russian, and particularly the 'Yids', his preferred term. This hatred wasn't even religious by origin. For example, it was strictly on racial grounds that he attacked Disraeli: "Israel, the new judge of honour in England". "Spider, spider, *piccola bestia*, he really does resemble it enormously...". A few more examples (out of hundreds) of his 'Christian vision of unity': "The Yid and his bank are now reigning over everything," "When will people finally realise

how much the Yids and perhaps the Poles are behind this nihilist business?" "Alone, not a single familiar face, nay, only those repulsive mugs of the Yids," "This time, there's nobody, just those disgusting Yid and English mugs," "The hearts of thousands of European Yids began to quiver, and the heart of Beaconsfield began to quiver...". Add to Dostoevsky's philosophy his devotion to the Arian race and socialism (albeit of the 'Christian' variety), subtract the theocratic element, and the only way to gloss over its similarity with Hitler's is to ignore it.

That is precisely what Kostalevsky does, bent as she is on elevating her subjects to Olympian heights. But perhaps her selective treatment of the subject-matter is redeemed by her sparkling style? Sorry. In the acknowledgements she thanks several American academics for "*helping with the deficiencies of my English*". Those gentlemen would have deserved gratitude more had they told Kostalevsky not to render Soloviev's lucid prose as "The cog-

nized is not other to the cognizant, but he himself and thus this inner cognition is a spontaneous self-distinguishing and self-cognition of a psychic being." They should have suggested that she follow in her translations Twain's advice to use 'the right word; not its second cousin.' At random: '*obrazovannost*' means education, not knowledge; '*narodopoklonstvo*', people-worship, not nation-worship; '*raskol*', schism, not dissent; '*nezavershennost*', inconclusiveness, not unfinalizability (?), and so forth.

Kostalevsky's American colleagues should also have told her that the word 'man' (rather than *the* man) isn't the opposite of 'mankind', and that it is vulgar to quote the Bible from any other than the Authorised Version. But they didn't, having succeeded only in leavening Russian provinciality with American earnestness. Having said all this, Kostalevsky's work is really not so bad, as far as such books go. The trouble is, such books don't go very far.

Enigma Variations

David Edelsten

Obstinate Heart, a biography of Jane Austen, Valerie Grosvenor Myer, Michael O'Mara, £18.99.

Jane Austen, David Nokes, Fourth Estate, £20.00.

Jane Austen, a life, Claire Tomalin, Viking, £20.00.

It must be unlikely that any new Austen biography will amount to more than a form of stock taking, the dusting and rearranging of a collection of cherished objects, the bringing forward perhaps of some half-forgotten items, and the setting of others in a different light. The biographer needs to have an answer to the challenge of "It's all in the inventory, why bother?"

Valerie Grosvenor Myer, who has a number of books of literary criticism to her credit, would I think claim that she

has tried to bring Jane Austen to life, in a way not done before, and for the benefit of rather less than sophisticated readers. Who else would need to be told, for instance, that Shylock is a character in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, or that Lyme Regis is "Latin for King's Lyme" — latter-day Janeites, recruited by TV perhaps? I enjoyed the book, it helped me to visualise its subject in a new way. I recommend it to students and devotees of Jane Austen. But I feel obliged to

warn *Salisbury Review* readers that they may be irritated by, for example, being told six times, albeit in six different ways but on facing pages, that Chawton Cottage stood adjacent to a busy road, twice, in more or less identical terms, and within less than twenty pages, of the chemical properties of calomel, and seemingly countless times that Fanny Austen/Knight/Knatchbull was the great author's favourite niece.

David Nokes claims to give us a "portrait which... is less saintly and

serene than the one with which most readers are familiar". He stoops rather too low, in my opinion, in his search for feet of clay among the Austens. We are not to like Edward Knight, the brother who had the good fortune to be adopted by wealthy cousins; nothing is too bad to be believed of him, he was "unaccountably prevented" from attending his father's funeral, but, on the following page, "could not find the time" — hardly an objective supposition.

In similar carping vein, we are invited to tut-tut over the treatment of Jane's mad brother, George; not because the family's handling of this presumably fairly common tragedy was out of kilter with contemporary practice — we are offered no evidence as to that — but because it looks bad to modern, Dianistic, eyes.

Nokes tries too hard to make his case. I question that it worth making anyway, we are not all naive: does anyone believe that Jane Austen was a personification of the sugar-plum

fairy? But there is a lot in this biography that repays reading. I particularly liked the detail he gives us of Frank, the Admiral of the Fleet, Jane's longest lived and most successful sibling: one longs to know him better. The coverage of the Leigh-Perrot prosecution — such a revealing piece of social history — is also excellent.

Anyone who thinks or writes about Jane Austen is likely to be deceived by her light-heartedness, and by the enigma of her irony: you persuade yourself that for a moment you have a suggestion of a sight of her, only to hear her laughing at you from around another corner. Notoriously, we do not even have a credible likeness of her, and, in the only depiction of her full-length figure, her face is hidden by her bonnet — a metaphor surely, and a hint. Biographers do well not to strain too hard.

Claire Tomalin does not make that mistake. There is no 'spin', nor is there any cardhouse of Heath Robinson

conjecture in her 'Life' of Jane Austen, whose "... sharpness and refusal to suffer fools makes you fearful of intruding, misrepresenting, crassly misreading the evidence": how one applauds her forbearance. This "... is an attempt to tell the story of her (JA's) life...(of)...the girl whose imagination took off in startling directions ...the energetic young woman who loved dancing and jokes... the loving sister and aunt... who befriended governesses and servants... the publishing author... (and)... the dying woman with the courage to resist death by writing in its very teeth".

It is a straightforward but notably sympathetic and original account of her subject's life and writings, a wonderful book that totally enchanted me. It is also generously and helpfully illustrated, and has delightfully poignant end-papers: have a look for yourself. If I had to save only one of all my books on Austen from a fire it would now be this one... new readers start here.

You can't say that!

Antony Flew

Dysgenics: Genetic Deterioration in Modern Populations, Richard Lynn, Praeger, Westport, CT, and London, £47.50.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century many biological and social scientists came to recognise that, thanks to the progressive relaxation of the pressures of natural selection upon our species, there was, in the absence of any countervailing pressures, bound to be consequent deterioration in what they were not yet able to characterise as its gene pool. The present book is an extremely thorough and conscientious study of the evidence accumulated in the subsequent century. Concluding that such deterioration is indeed oc-

curring, the author promises a subsequent volume in which he will consider not only how the deterioration of the human gene pool might be checked but also how it could be positively improved.

The book begins with four historical chapters. The first deals with the rise and fall of the eugenics movement. The high water mark seems to have been the emergence of an impressively supported 'Geneticists' Manifesto' from an international conference held in Edinburgh in 1939. After the war

the movement collapsed, being effectively discredited "by people who maintained that eugenics inevitably led to the gas chambers". The other three historical chapters treat 'Natural Selection in Pre-industrial Societies', 'The Breakdown of Natural Selection' and 'The Genetic Deterioration of Health' in modern societies.

The next eleven chapters are all concerned with the relevant scientific studies. The crucial challenge to the dysgenic deterioration thesis arose from findings which first began to be

reported in 1942. Since then numerous further studies have definitively established that the average IQ in several economically developed nations has in fact been rising during most of the twentieth century.

Many have mistaken these findings to constitute a decisive falsification of that thesis. But this would only be true if there were no difference between genotypic intelligence (the quality of the genes) and phenotypic intelligence (the scores obtained on the tests). It is quite possible for the phenotypic intelligence of the population to show an increase while the genotypic quality is in decline. To take an agricultural parallel, it is possible to sow seeds of deteriorating genetic quality in successive years and to pump in so much more fertiliser that the size of the crop actually increases.

The author believes and, given the compelling character of the evolution-theoretical argument, he is surely right to believe, that this possibility is being actualised, that the actual "genotypic decline has been masked by environmental improvements consisting principally of nutrition, which have brought about the phenotypic increases". If this is indeed correct then "diminishing returns to the improvements in nutrition will occur as the quality of nutrition reaches its maximum".

The final chapter consists of 'Counter-arguments, Rejoinders and Conclusions'. Its main value lies in its revelation of the intellectual and moral poverty of those presenting those counter-arguments. They almost all insist on making a polemical assumption which it must be very difficult for them not to know to be false. They assume, that is, that the proponents of the dete-

rioration thesis maintain that the genes are the only relevant causal factor, that the genotype is the sole determinant of the phenotype.

This is, of course, the very opposite of the truth. For while there really are many professing social scientists and others who believe that all differences between the capacities and behaviours of different individuals are to be explained only by reference to differences between their respective environments, no-one believes that all differences between individuals can be explained exclusively by reference to their respective genetic constitutions. It is precisely because so many of "the researchers in epidemiology, sociology and demography" are committed to an extreme environmentalism of this kind that, as Lynn says, "intelligence and character have become taboo concepts" among them.

The counterarguers do not only misrepresent their opponents. They also refuse to examine the evidence which they deploy. Thus Lynn quotes a statement by Stephen Jay Gould that there is no "direct evidence for genetic control of specific human behaviour", and comments: "The only conclusion that can be drawn from this statement is that Gould has never bothered to read the research literature on these issues."

Had *Dysgenics* been written a little later Lynn would have been able to notice the almost simultaneous reissue of Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man*. The most remarkable — and utterly scandalous — fact about this supposedly revised as well as expanded edition is that Gould throughout systematically ignores all the relevant findings which have become available in the fifteen or more years since the book's original publication, findings

which tend strongly to confirm the politically most incorrect contention which Gould was, and remains, most passionately eager to discredit. The most accessible review of these more recent findings is provided by the 'Afterword' in the paperback edition of J. Philippe Rushton's *Race, Evolution and Behaviour*.

It is noteworthy, though not here noted by Lynn, that all the four natural scientists who have during recent decades written most extensively against the idea of a substantial genetic factor in the production of the capacities and behaviour of individual human beings — Gould, Leon Kamin, Steven Rose and Richard Lewontin — were all in their politics, at least at the time of writing, vehemently leftist. Gould himself once confessed that he learnt his Marxism at his father's knee.

But in 1939 things were very different. Of the six signers of 'The Geneticists Manifesto' whom Lynn mentions three (H.J. Muller, J.B.S. Haldane and Joseph Needham) were at that time members of Communist Parties. In 1937 a collection of Haldane's essays under the title *The Inequality of Man* had appeared as one of the second ten Pelican paperback titles. But Haldane was never to suffer assaults by student thugs howling 'Racist!', 'Fascist!', as was H.J. Eysenck when, with appropriate acknowledgements, he borrowed Haldane's title for a book published in the early nineteen seventies. Someone should ask the geneticist Steve Jones, who was appointed as head of what was then known as the Galton Laboratory in 1990, and who described Galton as "a fascist swine", whether he would apply the same epithet to Haldane and, if not, why not.

Notes on Reviewers

Peter Bassett was Vice-Chairman of the Queen's English Society.

Alexander Boot is Creative Director of an advertising agency.

David Edelsten is Hunting Correspondent of *Country Life*.

Antony Flew's most recent book is *Darwinian Evolution* published by Transaction (New Jersey).

Ann Glyn-Jones' book *Holding up a Mirror: how civilizations decline* was published by Century in 1996.

Patricia Lança is a writer and former Deputy in the Portuguese Parliament.

Gerald Russello is a lawyer and writer in the United States.

Helen Szamuely is a translator and journalist.

Martin Tyrrell is writing a book about the politics of George Orwell.

The “New” Conservatism in America

Gerald Russello

Neo-conservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea. Selected Essays 1949 - 1995. Irving Kristol, Free Press, 1997, \$25.00.

The Neo-conservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars. Mark Gerson, Madison Books, 1997, \$27.95.

Much has been written about the neo-conservatives, a prolific and contentious band of intellectuals who deserted liberalism in the 1970s. Even as they have been responsible for a renewed interest in conservative ideas, they have also been the focus of controversy within American conservatism. More important, perhaps, than the internecine feuds is the question of whether their ideas will continue to influence American political and social discourse. Irving Kristol notes that the original neo-conservative impulse was a phenomenon of his generation, the result of a unique set of historical circumstances. To remain effective, the principles they espouse must be incorporated into a larger, more general conservatism.

Irving Kristol is generally recognised as the “godfather” of neo-conservatism. Born into an immigrant family in New York City, Kristol went from apprentice machinist and young Trotskyist to one of the most prominent American intellectuals of the twentieth century. The essays collected in *Neo-conservatism* demonstrate the reason for his prominence. Kristol’s style is sharp, sparkling at times and often marked by a sense of humility uncommon in intellectual writing. The selections themselves span the entire range of Kristol’s career and cover the most important social and political issues during the last half-century.

Through an impressive amount of research, Gerson identifies several themes that he sees as the bases for neo-conservatism. First is the belief

that life is infinitely complex, which explains the neo-conservative opposition to central planning, whether of economics or of culture; second, a theme derived from Tocqueville, is that community is a natural feature of human life; and last, neo-conservatives stress the importance of ideas in the life of a society. As Kristol notes in “On Conservatism and Capitalism”: “What rules the world is ideas, because ideas define the way reality is perceived; and, in the absence of religion, it is out of culture — pictures, poems, songs, philosophy — that these ideas are born.”

These themes are the result of the neo-conservatives’ struggles with the old socialist-inspired left and the more recent New Left, which emphasised an irresponsible individualism and vulgar anti-intellectualism. They are likewise evident in the neo-conservatives’ description of the so-called New Class and in their defence of capitalism, which may prove to be their most enduring legacies.

The New Class, in the neo-conservative critique, is a shifting group of intellectuals in the media, the arts, journalism, entertainment, government agencies and (especially) education. Kristol finds that the common characteristic of the New Class is their disgust at the rampant freedom a capitalist democracy provides, and the lack of rewards such a system renders to persons such as themselves. Gerson agrees, advising that the term applies only to “anticapitalist intellectuals and bureaucrats.” While such a class may

be necessary to run a huge, complex society, it is “an ambitious and frustrated class,” which has a disproportionate influence. These intellectuals have failed to realise that it is the excess wealth and leisure created by capitalism that enables the New Class to exist at all.

As critics have charged, the description of the New Class could apply just as easily to the neo-conservatives themselves, because they hold similar positions. Gerson states that the “crucial difference” between the New Class and the neo-conservatives is that “they hold different ideas”: the former are hostile, and the latter are friendly, to a capitalist system. This is only partially convincing, however, because the role of the intellectual in the Western tradition has not been merely that of a cheerleader for the dominant ethos. For example, there is a long tradition in America of non-Marxist critics of capitalism and its excesses; these critics would have no sympathy for the types of programmes admired by the New Class. Gerson passes over this school as inconsequential at best; but this points to a gap in the neo-conservative approach. If some anticapitalist intellectuals were never tempted, as the neo-conservatives were, by an extreme leftism, they would be able to provide substantive criticisms that were untainted by the New Class desire for power.

While the neo-conservatives were correct in their general assessment of the New Class and its weaknesses, especially its disdain for tradition and

inclination toward totalitarianism, the ideological divide between themselves and the New Class does not exhaust the spectrum of possible criticism. Indeed, the strain of neo-conservative criticism which concentrates on the importance of religion or civil society has parallels in the work of earlier critics who were not neo-conservatives.

Although they came late to an appreciation of economics, despite their leftist background, the neo-conservatives soon emerged as vigorous defenders of the capitalist system. Such a defence was understandable when the West was threatened by a hostile collectivist system, and is a mirror-image of neo-conservative attacks against the New Class. Some neo-conservative writers have gone beyond a defence of capital-

ism as a necessary corollary to a free society, to imbue the system of economic transactions itself with moral purpose. Kristol, especially in his *Two Cheers for Capitalism*, has sounded a cautionary note.

Other neo-conservatives, such as Daniel Bell, have recognised the “cultural contradictions” of capitalism, specifically that it erodes the very non- or pre-capitalist virtues that it needs to survive. Kristol and others have called for censorship or prohibition of various types of “morally degrading” goods, such as pornography, but have failed to elaborate fully their understanding that not all capitalisms are alike, and some of them are less damaging to non-capitalist norms than others.

Thus, the neo-conservatives have

defended “corporate capitalism” in the 1970s against those who would transform corporations into quasi-public institutions, as well as the modern, entrepreneur-driven, “creative” or “global” capitalism that presents a qualitatively different type of economic system, albeit under the same name. In addition, the neo-conservative defence of non-capitalist virtues sometimes does not clarify whether they are independently valuable, or valuable only insofar as they support a capitalist system (however defined). The neo-conservatives, led again by Kristol, have been moving recently toward a more nuanced consideration of the “cultural contradictions” idea. Whether neo-conservatism will be flexible enough to accommodate a new paradigm remains to be seen.

Keep the Aspidistra Flying

Martin Tyrrell looks at the current film version

George Orwell's stint as a film reviewer for the magazine *Time and Tide* in the early 1940s proved to be something of a career low. With hindsight, it was never promising; mismatches of man to job never are. Aside from a few exceptions — notably, Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* — Orwell loathed the cinema. The disdain in which he held it, clearest in his comments on American *film noir*, also surfaces in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, written a few years before he became a reviewer. When that novel's central character, Gordon Comstock, at one point contemplates going to see a Greta Garbo film, Orwell is careful to inform us that it is not “the flickering drivel on the screen” which tempts him; merely the comfort and the drug-like escapism of it all. How, after all, could any self-respecting aesthete, however down at heel, enjoy something as ersatz as cinema?

Times and, indeed, tides, change. What counts as high culture is these days determined in advance, not as in Orwell's day, in retrospect. Career aesthetes decide. And cinema, they have agreed, is no longer ersatz. It can be high culture too. Some of it anyway. Robert Bierman's film of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, for instance. Orwell, the 1930s, Helena Bonham Carter — what could be more worthy, less Hollywood? Premiered at last year's London Film Festival, it went on general release in January. It is not Merchant-Ivory and it is not particularly George Orwell either, but it is not bad.

Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* has Gordon Comstock abandon a promising career as an advertising copywriter in order to become a poet. But what poetry he produces is mediocre and soon it is clear that Comstock's nature is more destructive than creative; self-destructive in particular. A spite-fuelled underachiever, his down-

ward spiral takes him close to destitution. Only when his long-suffering girlfriend Rosemary becomes pregnant is he drawn back to advertising and, finally, to the very suburban respectability he had sought to escape. A pastiche of Gissing's *New Grub Street*, Orwell's book lacks the earlier novel's crafted understatement, psychological depth and downbeat brooding fatalism. It is primarily a flimsy pretext for its author's many, lifelong prejudices. These latter read like a Who's Who of the sacred cows of contemporary enlightenment: Scotland, Gandhi, vegetarians, gays, pacifists, abortion, birth control, the working class, feminists and women. On such subjects, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* finds Orwell less guarded than in any of his other works. If nothing else, it is a useful reminder of how prickly and cantankerous a writer he could be. On things Scottish, for example, it is Orwell as knowing author who deplores the

"Scotchification of England" and Orwell, through the decidedly autobiographical Gordon Comstock, who gloats at Robert Louis Stevenson's waning literary reputation: "You're cold meat if ever Scotchman was". Likewise, both seethe at how marriage — "this woman business" — lures men away from the discipline of creativity and into a female world of social climbing and philistine commercialism. A "trap set by the money god", it props up the materialistic society Orwell and Comstock reject. At base, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* is a harangue rather than a work of art. A little later, Orwell would discipline his tendency to sermonise and excel, not as a novelist, but as a columnist, in which capacity he has had a lasting influence.

To be fair, Orwell himself appreciated better than most that *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* was significantly less than the masterpiece he had planned. It is one of several works he subsequently disowned and tried to keep out of print. Now, with the inevitable film tie-in edition, it will attract a whole new readership. Those who come to the book via this route are in for a surprise. Bierman's film varies in style between romantic and situation comedy. In scope, it is romantic, focusing on the relationship between Comstock and Rosemary and making Gordon's return to advertising a happy, even desirable, turn of events, not the bittersweet outcome Orwell wrote. (Mike Batt's attractive score emphasises this by transforming itself into a soulful ballad over the closing credits, romantic comedy convention for happy ever after). The film's humour, on the other hand, owes much to British television comedy, both recent, and less than recent. Thus, Mrs Meakin, Gordon's landlady in squalid Lambeth, announces that she takes a bath once a year whether she needs one or not whilst upper class characters call one another "Darling" and "Sweetie" like Patsy and Edina from *Absolutely Fabulous*. And Richard E Grant plays Comstock as a kind of younger Victor Meldrew, a mildly irritated rather than angry young man; a figure of fun, not the earnest social critic of Orwell's diatribe.

Inevitably, Orwell's prejudices are a

prominent casualty of Bierman's treatment. A cadaverous Scottish bookseller who hires then fires Comstock is, for instance, all that remains of the book's anti-Scottish feeling whilst the author's dislike of homosexuality has been similarly pared down to a few oblique references to a literary mafia of gay, Oxbridge Communists. And Orwell's misogyny is completely absent. His (mild) misanthropy too. "Our civilisation is dying", he eagerly predicts in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. "But it isn't going to die in its bed", he goes on. "Presently, the aeroplanes are coming. Zoom — whizz — crash! The whole western world is going up in a roar of high explosives". A few years later he would relish the Blitz with unconcealed delight. No such sentiment is expressed in the film.

Although Orwell would eventually acknowledge the propagation of socialism to be one of his strongest literary motivations, his formal commitment to the Left — his time in Spain, his membership of the Independent Labour Party, his wartime propagandist writings — inspired writings of only limited literary merit. His reputation rests on books which, far from propagating socialism, put people off by depicting it as something inherently illiberal and dictatorial. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* predates the post-war *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-four* and is a reminder both that Orwell was a sceptic towards socialism before he was a socialist and that his scepticism outlasted his socialism. It is, for example, Orwell as knowing author who, in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, informs us that "every intelligent boy of sixteen is a socialist... at that age one does not see the hook sticking out of the rather stodgy bait", and Orwell as Comstock who envisages that socialism will prove to be all routine work in model factories, rationing, communal eating and community hikes, a truly dystopian vision and a foretaste of the books which made Orwell's name.

The bitter denunciations of money, commerce, conventional employment and capitalism with which *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* is filled are not, then, arguments for socialism. Orwell did not

make Gordon a revolutionary. Comstock wants a different career for himself, not a different kind of social order. Although he tirades against money, he is quite happy to accept a cheque from the *Californian Review* and to use it to buy himself an unashamedly upper class night on the town.

Bierman's film, freed from the need to present everything through an Orwell/Comstock filter, makes the book's confused attitude towards money still more obvious. Gordon seeks to become "a poet and a free man" but, in practice, literature leaves him unfree, reliant upon the goodwill of editors and patrons, on *Californian Reviews* and *Primrose Quarterlies*, and on a talent he clearly lacks. In contrast, his job in advertising provides handsomely. As an advertiser, he is good at what he does, does not need to exert himself in order to perform well and has the genuine respect and admiration of his employer and his colleagues. A very modest effort indeed sets him up in considerable affluence. Poetry, in contrast, cannot even maintain him in squalor and eventually costs him the respect of everyone he knows. It is working in advertising, not writing poetry, which finally proves liberating. Comstock the advertiser — "Head of Creativity" — is a far freer man than Comstock the poet. Where Ravelston, his aristocratic patron, ends up denouncing him as a parasite, the head of New Albion Advertising values Gordon's abilities and spends the entire film asking after him, hoping that he might someday return to the firm. And when he does return, he receives a warmer welcome than he has received from anyone in literature.

It is Ravelston, incidentally, who is the only socialist in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*. A trendy lefty *avant le mot*, he is well-meaning, but his politics betray a basic insincerity. While in theory an advocate of working class insurrection, in practice, even the physical proximity of working class people unsettles him. Thus, a posh restaurant suits him better than the working man's pub to which Gordon takes him, whilst his bohemianism is ultimately down to affectation, not necessity. The film makes him a much less

sympathetic character than the novel. A "Hooray Henry" in every respect except his politics, Ravelston is, quite literally, a champagne socialist; in almost every scene in which he appears there is a bottle of Veuve Clicquot alongside. (His girlfriend Hermione is still more left-wing *à la mode*: "We are all socialists", she says, "but it doesn't mean that we have to like everyone".) But Comstock, here as in the novel, is ultimately just as much of a humbug. How many of the millions of unemployed men in the 1930s could, like he, have walked voluntarily from affluence to poverty then back? And how many of those unemployed would have concurred with Orwell that a man in a well-paid job and a villa in the suburbs was somehow hard done by simply because he had failed, quite deservedly, as a poet? Comstock's poverty is, in its own way, as relative and as self-imposed as Ravelston's. Orwell's too. The destitution he underwent in *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* was recreational; his family, more affluent than he ever admitted, tided him over these initial, impecunious years of his writing. Few in 1930s Britain were so privileged.

Certainly not the almost comical working class which features in many of his books. The Brookers, for exam-

ple, at the start of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, are, to Orwell, less human, more "like black beetles in an endless muddle of slovened jobs and mean grievances". The few proletarian characters in *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* (book and film) are no less Pythonesque ("Ju buy books? I gossome lovely books here") whilst, in *Animal Farm*, the working class is at best the dullard cart-horses who think Comrade Napoleon is always right, at worst, the sheep with their endless chants of "Four legs good, two legs bad". And by *Nineteen Eighty-four* they are the wretched "proles" whose apathy leaves the dictatorship unmolested. Orwell's working class, Raymond Williams once wrote, "is the world of working people before 1914 as seen by prep-school boys" and, in this respect, it has a great deal in common with the world of working people as seen by many other left-wing writers: Wells and Shaw, for example, or Oscar Wilde who found among the poor "no grace of manner, no charm of speech", scarcely, in fact, life at all. When Wilde took up socialism, it was principally because he believed that socialism might provide, not only liberation for the working class, but, and more importantly, liberation from the working class. Though Orwell says nothing quite so blatant,

some of his writing at least suggests a similarly patrician disdain for life as it is lived by approximately 95% of the population. "The great mass of human beings are not acutely selfish", he wrote. "After the age of about thirty they abandon individual ambition — in many cases, indeed, they almost abandon the sense of being individuals at all — and live chiefly for others, or are smothered under drudgery".

But Orwell did not mind putting his livelihood in the hands of such people. The general public he considered to be "the best and least exacting patron". Wilde, in contrast, favoured art for arts sake, independent of public taste. He commended the kinds of official subsidy for the arts which Orwell rejected. It is Wilde's view which has prevailed. Today's Comstocks, for example, benefit, if they are in favour, from public largesse; their mediocre poetry appears through what amounts to a form of vanity publishing only with someone else's money — the general public's. But if the general public is a good patron, then it is a sharper critic. Fifty years of subsidy have not made the public any more appreciative of the unreadable, the unlistenable or the unwatchable. Confronted with official high culture, it votes with its feet. Or with its popcorn.

Obituary: The Rt Hon J Enoch Powell

The death of Enoch Powell has removed the last uncompromising defender of our kingdom and its ancient rights and privileges. Powell disturbed his opponents not because he threatened them, nor because he wished to stir up trouble. He disturbed them because he said the truth at a time when no-one wanted to hear it. It was true, and remains true, that the peace and stability of our country have been threatened by immigration; it was true, and remains true, that our national sovereignty is undermined by the European Union; it was true, and remains true, that the Crown of England is the *fons et origo* of our political institutions, and that the growth of centres of power outside Parliament undermines the legal order of our kingdom.

The calumnies spread against Powell derive from a speech dubbed the 'rivers of blood', in which he used no such phrase, quoting rather from Virgil — *Et Tiberim multo spumantem sanguine cerno* — by way of reminding his audience of the process that brought the Roman Empire to an end. It was typical of Powell's romanticism that he should imagine the British media still capable of understanding the context of such a literary allusion. It was indeed an error of judgement, which he repeatedly and generously made, to suppose that he lived among people able to interpret the speech of an educated person. And that is Powell's real claim to heroism: that he addressed the British people and their appointed guardians as though they

possessed a national culture, and as though that culture were identical with the one that he — the most educated parliamentarian of his time — also possessed. In retrospect this was naïve. But it was touching, too, in the respect that it showed towards those who so ignorantly decried him.

Powell was a symbol of much that we now must lose — the traditions of our law and politics, along with the religious, literary and artistic genius which justified our history and our language to the civilised world. We will not see the like of him again. But in the troubled times to come, young people will read the fading archive of our period and ask themselves why such a man was so slightly regarded.

In Short

Climate Change: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom, Ed. Julian Morris, IEA Studies on the Environment, 1997, £12.00

As a child I learned that there had been several ice ages, and wondered if there would be another one soon. Later it became clear that none was likely in my lifetime, so I should not worry.

Lately there has been more panic (in the media) about global warming. In *Climate Change* the IEA Environment Unit looks at the science behind the alleged warming or cooling, and the politics and economics driving these allegations. Some research has found correlation between greenhouse gases and global warming, but other research shows better correlation between sunspot activity and global warming. However, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is dominated by the greenhouse gas lobby, who in their day jobs do government-financed research on global warming. This can be explained using 'public choice' economic theory, which tells us that bureaucrats will try to enlarge their budgets, and that 'ecology groups' want income to spend on climate research, etc.

Most green eco-agitators assume that today's climatic equilibrium is the best of all possible climates, for most of the world, when averaged out. They therefore adopt the "stupid conservative" position that all change should be resisted. This book shows that it would cost much more, both directly and in reduced economic growth, to stop the growth in greenhouse gases than it would to relieve any adverse effects of global warming. A historical survey of climate changes in the last few millennia shows that a warmer climate brings prosperity, and that global warming, if it happens, would be broadly beneficial. We can look forward to global warming followed by another ice age, or maybe another ice age followed by global warming.

Robin Cave

Dark Heart. The Shocking Truth about Hidden Britain, Nick Davies, Chatto & Windus, 1997, £16.99

The sub-title of this book is significant; it should be read because most people are unaware of the scale of the problem unless they have direct contact with it like doctors or teachers. It describes the tragic lives of the underclass, with which readers of Theodore Dalrymple are familiar in outline, in exhaustive and graphic detail.

Here among many others are the stories of the brave woman who tried to organize resistance to the child thugs who were ruining her estate in Leeds, and who was forced to leave her home; of the rent boys and child prostitutes — some of them casualties of social service failure and its Dickensian standards of child care — and of the teenage mothers who reproduce to give some purpose to their chaotic lives.

Unfortunately Davies' analysis and proposed solutions are naive. This disaster has been looming for over thirty years. Between the 1930's and the 1970's, because of slum clearance, employers and landlords fled the inner cities, followed by the more ambitious families who moved to the suburbs or the new towns. Immigrants moved in, competing with those left behind for the worst jobs. Local authorities and housing associations now house the old, the unemployed, the low paid, and single mothers. The moral relativism and hedonism of the sixties, with which even some middle class families have had problems, the abolition of sin and shame and the invention of the 'victim' all contributed to the destruction of peoples' dignity. The collapse of the educational system in these environments abolished ladders of escape. I have seen men of over thirty in prison learning to read for the first time. Above all, the immorality of the welfare state, the wanton expansion of which has been fine job creation for the middle classes, has been the most po-

tent element in this poisonous mixture.

Only a Labour government can reform the welfare state and restore it to the purposes for which it was intended. So far the signs have not been very encouraging. Ministers should learn some lessons of the past and look at the Victorian reformers' achievements, particularly in the East End settlements.

Merrie Cave.

The Australian Nation: Its British and Irish Roots, Geoffrey Partington, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne.

Until the Whitlam period the Britishness of Australia was taken for granted. This British identity had been easier to achieve than in America because of the contrast with the Aborigines and the predominantly British and Irish emigrants in the 19th century. In the nineteen seventies and eighties various influential people like the novelist Thomas Keneally set out to denigrate their British past. Key posts in educational institutions and the media were captured for this dubious cause, persuading the young that Britain was a racist repressive country, which sent innocent people to Australia as convicts and later involved the country in unnecessary wars.

Paul Keating famously explained that Britain had deliberately decided not to defend the Malay peninsula and to put Australia under threat of Japanese domination. In reality, of course, ALP opposition to rearmament meant that the government in 1941 refused to send conscripts outside Australian territory.

In rebutting these myths and denunciations Geoffrey Partington has provided a readable and comprehensive introduction to Australian history, ranging over themes rather than periods. Politicians, religion, education,

literature and sport are examined and the Aboriginal problem is given special attention. Critics of British Australia in the past, like Republicans John Dunmore Lang and Joseph Furphy, always used a British framework for their criticisms. Roman Catholics demanding equality with Protestants looked to the Bill of Rights not to the customs of Catholic states. Partington concedes that it would be sensible to end the legal role of the Crown in Australia because it has long ceased to have any effective influence. His prodigious and meticulous research strengthens the monarchist cause and ought to engender pride in the achievements of earlier generations of Australians, who created a free and open society in an empty land.

Merrie Cave

Prophet of Orthodoxy, The Wisdom of G.K. Chesterton, edited by Russell Sparkes, Fount, £7.99.

Russell Sparkes has performed a double service in making available to a new generation some of G.K. Chesterton's most important religious writings and in providing an illuminating introduction to them. Sparkes has no doubt that "GKC's writings now seem prophetic rather than antiquated." Chesterton possessed in abundance what our post-modernist world, in its ironic detachment, lacks: "the ability, or the confidence," to recognise "the need for ethics in politics, business and society generally." Ethical considerations and distinctions are just too hard to sustain in a period of vertiginous change. How much easier, then, simply to "go with the flow", as this banal siren-call now bids us. In complete contrast, Chesterton excoriated the fashionable ideas of his time, not least its creeping relativism, since grown rampant. For Chesterton, the idea — born of a lazy indifference though trumpeted as tolerance — that a man's philosophy does not matter, stops thought. We become less not more human by sloughing off "one doctrine after another in a refined scept-

icism." Chesterton famously defined the human brain as "a machine for coming to conclusions". It is a capacity which Chesterton himself exercised to the full, as this splendid treasure-trove of his thought amply demonstrates.

Ian Crowther

Democracy's Discontent, America in Search of a Public Philosophy, Michael J. Sandel, Harvard University Press, £15.95.

What has taken forty years of Supreme Court rulings to accomplish in America, may take rather less time to accomplish in Britain as a result of the incorporation into our law of the European Convention of Human Rights. For on both sides of the Atlantic the same liberal idea is in the ascendant, namely that rights "function as trump cards held by individuals". Before them, all other moral or institutional obligations (for example, the Catholic Church's proscription against the ordination of women priests or the Army's against the recruitment of practising homosexuals) must give way. Government has no business protecting or promoting any particular conception of the good life. Instead, it should merely provide a framework of rights that is neutral with respect to moral ends. The procedural state is founded on the Kantian view of the person as "the freely choosing, unencumbered self" (the subject of Sandel's first book, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, a brilliantly argued rebuttal of John Rawls). This is "a self given prior to and independent of its purposes and ends." In his eloquent account of American constitutional debates and judgements, Sandel demonstrates how the application of a minimalist liberal ethic to such issues as abortion, gay rights, the welfare state and the teaching of religion in schools has created an impoverished political discourse and a "moral void" in the American polity. The parallels with our own dispirited politics are all too evident.

Ian Crowther

New Gods for Schools: Self, Society, Relationships and The Environment, Nick Seaton, Campaign for Real Education, 18 Westlands Grove, Stockton Lane, York. £4.

It was welcome news when David Blunkett announced that the National Curriculum would be simplified in primary schools and more emphasis put on the three R's. However these laudable aims may be undermined if the government follows the lead of the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) which would require schools to concentrate on changing pupils' attitudes and values. Hitherto 'values', now a weasel word, have only been taught through Religious Education and daily worship, often ignored by many schools, from which parents have the right to withdraw their children. The promotion of Personal, Social and Health Education by the QCA would deny them this right. PSHE lessons are the preserve of the progressivist, politically correct educational élite. "The core theme of values clarification is that there are no right or wrong values. Values education does not seek to identify and transmit 'right values', but to help children to discover the values that best suit them personally in a particular situation." These views do not reflect the beliefs of the general population. A Cambridge Survey found that 79 percent of the British population consider themselves Christian even if they do not attend church. Most of the QCA's proposals have a New Age flavour and would introduce new subjects like citizenship and European awareness. The worst fear is that children will be tested for political correctness and daily worship would disappear replaced by some secular mishmash. David Blunkett's instincts appear to be sound. He should resist the siren voices of the secretive revolutionaries around him and put a stop to these sinister developments. Otherwise we shall soon be living in a society from which right and wrong have disappeared.

Merrie Cave

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