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The 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, 1830 -1903

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'DICTATORSHIPS TAKE OVER WHEN THE PEOPLE HAVE A VOTE BUT NO CHOICE'

The Brent by-election was disastrous for the Conservatives – but predictable since the Conservatism for which even the voters of Brent once voted in large numbers is now a stranger to the Party. This has fatal consequences not only for Conservatism but for democracy itself because elections rely on choice and the Conservative Party is not providing it.

In 1987 the Conservative Party was led by Margaret Thatcher, who managed to combine liberal economics with Conservative social and constitutional policies – despite the 1986 Single European Market and its catastrophic constitutional implications. The resulting legislation was the creation of those who misled her – Douglas Hurd and Geoffrey Howe. Mrs Thatcher was still seen, at least by the electorate, as the strongest defender of our national sovereignty.

An increasingly corporatist Conservative Party has embraced all those policies which have destroyed family structures, the nation state, sovereignty, the savings of individuals and entrepreneurship. Even the basic assumption that mass immigration is destructive both of the cohesion of British society and of the self image of the new colonisers themselves has apparently now gone by the board. The Party seems too incompetent on drugs, sexual morality and even property rights to offer the slightest authoritative defence of Conservative philosophy.

After two disastrous election results the solution – a return to real Conservatism, was obvious. Unfortunately a small minority of Conservatives have divorced themselves from their constituents and instead do the bidding of the Blair-Kennedy State and the Franco-German Euro-State.

The British people do not want three 'centre' parties. They do not want three 'social liberal' parties – with massive state expenditure to correct the crises which the State itself causes. They do not want three federalist parties. They do not want three parties which excessively tax the people they flatter – in order to feed the parasite State.

In foreign and constitutional affairs the situation is the same. Conservatives daily witness the propaganda of the European Commission in our schools and universities, the pro-EU propaganda of the BBC.

But all these shameful attacks on Conservatives and patriots in Britain are the fault of the Conservative Party itself. These disfigurements of our national life rely on the apparent 'cross party consensus' that corporatist Europe is the new country and democratic Britain is being abolished. And until one party breaks ranks with the British political Establishment, then such activities can be pursued in the name of 'information' or 'education' or 'national security'.

Democracy collapses and dictatorships take over when the people have a vote but no choice. In Britain today the Tory Party must decide – will it provide that choice or will it consign itself to the dustbin of political history?

Rodney Atkinson

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Oppressive government, financial mismanagement and mass poverty constitute an historically ancient ensemble. An implicit theme of Orwell's *1984* is that this is the standard condition of humanity. On this reckoning, early nineteenth century Great Britain and the United States, with their financial discipline, widening freedoms and great potential affluence, were novel and probationary, though subsequently they were widely and successfully emulated.

Unfortunately, in the twentieth century, over-mighty government reasserted itself, first in the totalitarian anomaly, then, from mid-century, in free societies too. Today, excessive government mostly means *bad* government, a signal threat to freedom. For us British, gone are those modest times when governments assumed rather few tasks beyond maintenance of the currency, public peace and defence of the realm, leaving people free to create and prosper.

In today's continental Europe, where individual independence is a weaker idea, people have seemed, till recently, unruffled by gigantic public debt and the resulting excessive taxation, described here in the French case by Guy Millière. Fortunately there is now an increasing European Union concern about the constitutional Behemoth taking shape. Ominously, though, taxes are today rising faster in Britain than in Europe. As Barry Bracewell-Milnes points out, in his instructive exposition, we British have an acute indebtedness, embracing government *and* people. Indeed these two debts are causally linked. Government expenditure soars while economic growth, and subsequently tax-revenues, are sluggish. The average household now pays £4000 per annum more in taxes than in 1997. Taxation is excessive, but cheap money brings excessive borrowing too at all levels, even if some economists claim that private borrowing is shoring the economy up. For pensioners and poorer people there is a 'welfare trap'. Benefits are too high and increasing too rapidly and, being means-tested, diminish the incentive to work and save, thus inhibiting economic adjustment. Conservative policy, which is to restore the links between benefits and earnings, should be opposed as irrational and cowardly.

Governments go astray in two ways. They do good things badly, or they simply do bad things. The British state does

both on a huge scale. Inevitably, we demand education and health services. Our state versions, supplied at zero price, are scandalously costly and inefficient. Governments, prey to the politics of guilt and envy, also spend heavily on the agitations of race, sex and culture. The swollen budget of modern government stems substantially from the confused notion of rights, dissected here by Anthony de Jasay, these 'rights' driving fiscal promiscuity as well as political confusion. Modern rights are argument stoppers; their assertion ends rational considerations of cost.

Recent British governments have compounded their uncontrollable addiction to public spending, often by deficit finance, by allowing an unparalleled undermining of traditional moral order. Prudence, duty, sobriety, patience: all have been undone. The hungry no longer confine their eating to homes and restaurants, so streets are lined with litter. No one is seriously urged to be temperate – hence the foreign reputation of our drunken, brawling tourists. No one is urged to work hard at marriage, so couples part as fancy takes them. But how can a government, which has itself incurred vast debts, preach restraint? No wonder many households have fallen into the kind of debt recounted so chillingly by Catriona Kay. Myles Harris even predicts that the industrious middle classes will suffer for the sins of the irresponsible. The Commons Treasury Committee at present investigating credit companies is thus most opportune. The advice on avoiding credit which the Chief Executive of Barclays gives his own children, should be relayed to the general public, especially via the schools.

Schools have been forced to bleat on endlessly about race and multi-culture, yet as Ray Honeyford argues, they fail their black pupils. Young people have not been taught the Ten Commandments, nor even a proper secular substitute. Moreover, the arbitrary character of contemporary moralism is irksome. Smoking is dangerous, but no more than promiscuous sexual activity, now effectively tolerated. The government's carelessness with the public's money is of a piece with its levity in regard to the moral order. Conservatives should display no such indifference.

Containing Debt

Barry Bracewell-Milnes

In the summer of 2003 there were a number of signals and warnings that personal and public debt in the United Kingdom were rising too fast and were indeed out of control. This article describes the factual background and notes the signs of danger and (without attempting to predict the future) recommends a number of policy changes which would lessen the risk of disaster if Government and people are overborrowed but would be desirable in themselves even if in this instance over-borrowing turns out not to be a problem.

The factual background

Incontinence of spending and borrowing have been characteristic of both the government and the household economy in the recent past; the household economy, not the private economy, since the business sector is subject to financial disciplines from which government and households are largely immune. This lack of restraint by government and households has been widely remarked; but it has generally been treated as two separate phenomena, whereas in reality the two are intimately connected.

The government's total managed expenditure (defined as the public sector's current expenditure plus net investment plus depreciation) is projected to reach £516.5 billion in 2005-2006, as compared with general government expenditure of £317.9 billion in 1997-1998, the present Government's first year of office. This is an annual growth rate of nearly 8 per cent simple and over 6 per cent compound. The average household is paying £4000 more in tax than it was six years ago. But tax revenues are currently increasing at much less than this, as little as 1 per cent a year. The difference is accounted for by increases in public sector net debt, which was £311.4 billion at the end of 2001-2002 and is projected to rise to £472 billion in 2007-2008, an increase of more than half in six years. Part of the problem is the congenital over-optimism of the Treasury: thus, the surplus on current budget of £3.2 billion predicted for 2002-2003 in Budget 2002 turned out to be a deficit of £11.7 billion, a targeting error of about £15 billion.

To put these figures in perspective, gross national income at market prices was £279 billion (seasonally adjusted) in the first quarter of 2003. Thus 1 per cent of annual gross national income is a little over £11 billion. Gross national income includes capital consumption (depreciation) and is used for convenience rather than truth: the figures for capital consumption are more difficult to compute than the other constituents of national

income and arrive later. The figure of true or net national income is a tenth or more lower than the gross. Another accounting trick is to exclude borrowing through the private finance initiative from the published figures of borrowing by government; Lord Saatchi has estimated these sums at almost £100 billion and has compared the procedure with the accounting practices of the collapsed US energy trader, Enron. The Adam Smith Institute have computed Tax Freedom Day, the day when the average taxpayer stops working for the government and starts working for himself, as falling on 2 June in 2003; this implies that the government are appropriating nearly 42 per cent of the nation's income.

For household debt, it is important to distinguish between the average and the vulnerable. In the first quarter of 2003, households and non-profit institutions serving households had financial assets of some £2583 billion and financial liabilities of £935 billion and thus an excess of assets over liabilities of some £1648 billion. These liabilities include long-term loans secured on dwellings, and so the value of real property owned by households is additional to this figure of £1648 billion. Nevertheless, the causes for concern extend beyond the vulnerable and imprudent. In particular, the household saving ratio (gross saving as a percentage of total resources), which is an average figure, fell by more than half from 10.8 in 1993 to 4.6 seasonally adjusted in the first quarter of 2003; and, as was shown by the phenomenon of negative housing equity in the 1990s, financial misfortunes affecting a significant proportion of the population can have economic and political repercussions for everyone.

What causes concern about household debt is rather the speed of its growth. Loans secured on dwellings rose from £421 billion at end-June 1997 to £691 billion at end-March 2003, a rise of nearly two-thirds in less than six years. The total is expected to rise further to some £750 billion by the autumn.

At this rate of growth it would soon surpass total take-home pay for the first time ever. In addition, total consumer credit has risen from £82 billion at end-June 1997 to £164 billion, exactly double, at end-June 2003, and by a further £17 billion in July. Debt is on average about £15,000 for every man, woman and child in the country.

Concern about low interest rates causing a boom in personal borrowing was expressed by Sir Edward George, Governor of the Bank of England, when he gave evidence to the House of Commons Treasury Select

Committee in November 2001. In August 2003 the Council of Mortgage Lenders said that the rapid growth rates of lending to individuals could not be sustained indefinitely. In the same month Paul Tucker, a member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, warned about the hidden dangers of the UK public's debt-to-income ratio, which had risen by a quarter over five years to record levels. In September the International Monetary Fund warned that high government spending in the United States and Europe's main economies could put unbearable strains on public finances and debt burdens. Many borrowers are exposed to risk if interest rates rise significantly; and the negative house equity of the early 1990s (caused by Britain's membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism, the 'euro' of the day) had repercussions for the whole economy and for the Government.

The causes

The principal cause of the debt mountain is the Government's policy of tax and spend, perhaps more accurately described as tax and squander. Net personal income is currently less than last year's, since more than the whole growth of incomes has been taken in tax. But government spending has been rising so fast that the public sector net cash requirement (the former public sector borrowing requirement), which was zero in 2001-2002, and was projected at £27 billion in 2003-2004 at the time of the Budget, may turn out to be some £10 billion higher. Consumers are borrowing to maintain their standard of living. The Citizens' Advice Bureau has found that one in five people is borrowing just to pay the household bills; the accountancy firm KPMG makes this figure one in four.

The situation has been aggravated by the longest bear market in shares (though not the sharpest fall in share prices) since the War of 1939-1945. British and American experience over the last fifty years (though not Japanese experience over the last fifteen) indicates that ground lost in a bear market is regained and more than regained in a few years' time. If the present recession in share prices follows this pattern, it makes sense for those dependent on shares for their finances to borrow rather than sell when prices are low. Pension funds have sustained substantial losses in the bear market, and their losses have been much increased by the Government's abrogation of their tax refunds, which were worth £5 billion a year. For anyone with a choice of retirement date, it may be preferable to postpone vesting equity-related funds in the hope that prices will continue to recover (as they have already done substantially from their low point early in 2003); on this basis it makes economic sense to finance a temporary shortfall by borrowing.

While shares have fallen substantially since end-1999,

house prices have continued to rise. The increased value of residential property has provided additional security for what is quaintly called *remortgaging*, the mortgaging of property already owned by contrast with mortgaging in the course of purchase. A boom in remortgaging has contributed to the rise in loans secured on dwellings mentioned above: remortgaging now accounts for half of all mortgage borrowing, as compared with 35 per cent a year ago. Interest-only remortgages, with no provision for the repayment of capital during the mortgagor's lifetime, leave the debt to be repaid from his estate on his death. This arrangement has the advantage of reducing the value of the estate for purposes of inheritance tax, an important consideration when the rise in property values is bringing more and more estates within the ambit of the tax: the number has risen from 19 thousand in 1998 to an estimated 29.5 thousand in 2003. 1.5 million homeowners are now at risk of inheritance tax. Many homeowners have gone further and released a proportion of the equity in their homes. This arrangement saves interest payments during the homeowner's lifetime and is even more tax-efficient because a larger debt is accruing to be set against the taxable estate for purposes of inheritance tax; but there are or can be corresponding disadvantages, and certain forms of equity release are no longer marketed on the ground that they are inflexible and oppressive for the homeowner.

Underlying the attractions of these various forms of borrowing is the fact that interest rates are at their lowest for some 48 years. This makes more debt affordable at any given level of income and makes borrowing less expensive

Their indebtedness is now more acceptable to the personal debtor, and the idea of saving for what cannot yet be afforded is less acceptable to many who expect instant gratification of their desires, even when these desires are frivolous.

and saving in monetary assets less rewarding. There has also been a cultural shift over the last generation: indebtedness is now more acceptable to the personal debtor, and the idea of saving for what cannot yet be afforded is less acceptable to many who expect instant gratification of their desires, even when these desires are frivolous.

On the lenders' side, increasing competition between financial institutions has led to the more aggressive marketing of loans to individuals. Unwanted credit cards are a significant proportion of many people's junk mail: they are attractive to the issuers because many of their customers are barely aware, if they are aware at all, of the high rates of interest they are charged on outstanding balances. For similar reasons, store cards are pressed on customers without the formality of a status check. Low rates of interest make a higher ratio of home loan to borrowers' income acceptable to lenders than in previous decades. Innovation has brought new financial products to market: equity release has been important only in recent years. And any loan repayable only on death is repaid as to 40 per cent by the government and as to only 60 per cent by

the borrower if inheritance tax is payable: although entirely legal, this arrangement has the same attractions for lender and borrower as a householder's paying a supplier in cash to escape value added tax and other imposts.

Policy

Government debt and personal debt are interconnected. In particular, personal debtors are ultimately responsible for government debt, since the government has no money of its own; and government overspending and incontinent increases in spending lead to increases in borrowing by government and individuals: by government, because spending is partly funded by borrowing, and by individuals, because borrowing is a response to increases in taxation.

Both governments and individuals may be underborrowed. In a growing economy, national debt should increase absolutely, though not as a proportion of national income, since prudential increases in national debt are a preferable alternative to taxation. The root problem is government spending, not its financing through borrowing. Underborrowed individuals may miss investment opportunities or pay too much inheritance tax. The cost of underborrowing is generally an opportunity cost and thus largely invisible.

The cost of overborrowing can be all too visible. Individuals are overborrowed when they are vulnerable to changes in circumstances, such as a rise in interest rates or a fall in employment. Since governments can raise money by force through the tax system, they are less exposed to such hazards; but profligate governments can find themselves able to borrow only at prohibitive rates of interest or unable to borrow at all.

Thus, the first remedy for overborrowing by government and individuals is a reduction both in the rate of increase of government spending and in the ratio of government spending to national income. These two reductions will reduce government borrowing directly and individual borrowing indirectly, through the tax cuts they make possible. These two reductions are compatible with an increase in government spending, even though an absolute fall would be preferable. And the two reductions are compatible with the maintenance and improvement of public services. It has been widely noticed that the huge and unprecedented increases in government spending since 1997 have led to no improvement in the quality of public services, if anything the reverse. They have been absorbed in pay increases, administration and red tape. Public sector inflation has recently been computed by the Office for National Statistics as running at 6.4 per cent a year.

The second remedy is the easing of the poverty trap and other related traps. These traps result from the means-testing of welfare benefits: work and saving

become barely worthwhile, if worthwhile at all, because income generated by the efforts of the individual is negated by the withdrawal of means-tested welfare benefits. A recent example is the pension tax credit, which makes saving for old age futile for the poorer half or more of the population. It is apparently the present Government's policy to make an increasing majority of the population financially dependent on the welfare state. Here again, the problem is government spending (including the pension tax credit and other tax credits, wrongly passed off as tax reductions). Welfare benefits are too high and rising too fast. Ideally, they should be frozen in monetary terms. At worst they should be indexed for inflation. They should not be indexed for average earnings. If benefits are frozen, or even increased by less than the rise in earnings, the poverty trap and other related traps will become gradually less oppressive and the population at large will once again have an incentive to save.

Finally, taxes on saving can be cut, to increase the attraction of saving relatively to spending and borrowing. Taxes are as discouraging to saving at the top of the income scale as is means-tested benefit withdrawal at the bottom. Any adviser on inheritance tax will tell his clients that the most effective means of tax reduction is to borrow and spend, spend, spend. This is not a good policy background to demographic changes by which people are living longer and it is becoming

more and more urgently necessary for the elderly to be financially independent and look after themselves. Moreover, the tax burden on saving and personal investment is the cumulative result of all the taxes levied on capital and capital income.

If investment income is taxed at 40 per cent (gross), and inheritance tax is levied at the same rate, income saved and bequeathed is taxed at 64 per cent ($= .4 + .4(1-.4)$); and many forms of saving are subject to other imposts, such as capital gains tax, stamp duty and council tax. It would be a move towards economic sanity, and not expensive in terms of conventional budgetary arithmetic, if the cumulative taxation of saving were moved towards parity with the taxation of spending.

The rise in government debt, and more particularly the rise in personal debt, have attracted attention in recent months; but they are best seen as part of the wider problems of government spending, means-tested benefits and the cumulative taxation of capital and capital income. If these problems are resolved as they should be, the incontinence of government and personal borrowing need not be separately addressed.

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The Dictatorship of the Bankrupt

Myles Harris

In England of the 1930's Colonel Brown could always borrow a few bob from his local Martin's Bank if he was short. Money and debt was a class thing. Upper class people borrowed from the bank, lower class people went to the pawnbroker. But managers were always looking for people who wanted to better themselves, that is move from one class to the next. The manager, himself a curious intermediate figure in the class structure, a eunuch of money who rarely borrowed, had an acute ear for accent, dress, politics and the state of your nails. Like Captain Mainwaring of *Dad's Army* he could smell class. He would have had no trouble in lending money to Diana Mosley, but with the lower orders a slight nuance of counter jumping, an over-eagerness to please, could see credit refused.

But by the 1950s the deserving lower middle classes were being lent more money. My father, an engineer, was able to borrow £5000 to buy a small farm. He believed implicitly in authority and never missed a penny payment. It took the whole family from the lower middle class to the middle class. My grandfather was a railway carriage painter, my brothers went to Oxford, Cambridge and Exeter. I went to medical school.

Then in the seventies came the credit card. The high street bank and the manager lingered on for a couple of decades but by the nineties banks had become boutiques and managers 'investment' advisors selling certificates in the tech boom. Day to day money lending, or banking, was done by phone and cash dispenser. The bank manager was replaced by voices with Scottish accents in call centres. Scottish accents, marketing experts assured the banks, implied honesty. Debt was 'normalised'. Money became a commodity. Credit card companies sold it to anybody who asked. Most people managed to pay the price asked, about 27% a year. Those who couldn't were expected to go bust. One way round disaster was to buy money from another credit card company to pay off the first and so on. In an era of tumbling interest rates it was easy.

Now economists assure us that interest rates are to rise. That those who have saved, who have always paid their credit cards on time, who have only a few hundred pounds left on their mortgages, can soon expect their reward. They should look forward to taking their seats on the Last Day of Borrowing, when interest rates will rise, and those who spent too much will cry 'Lord Lord I did'na ken.' And Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of England, will say 'Well ye ken the noo.' It is not

going to happen yet. We are first going to have to pass through a valley in which the middle classes will see their wealth expunged. A type of Marxist revolution is afoot, with a Dictatorship of the Bankrupt in view.

The conventional wisdom is that in a world of low interest rates those who hold cash are king. The price of goods, fuelled by the miracle of globalisation will fall, so those who have been prudent and hung onto their money will now reap their reward. 'Come unto me all ye who have saved and I will give you a half price Caribbean Cruise.' Half price because the crew will be made up of Tamils to whom £12 a day is riches beyond compare, half price because the ship will have been built by near slave labour in a Chinese shipyard at a fraction of the price of anything similar made in Europe.

Left behind will be the overpaid debt-ridden workers of Britain, often to be found in Labour's most desperately sought constituency, floating voter land. These are people who have been given no warning of the consequences of debt. Instead on TV and through their letter boxes they are encouraged daily to ruin themselves on credit cards, assume second mortgages that will, if interest rates rise, take their houses, or enter debt consolidation schemes that have only one exit, the bankruptcy courts.

A whole generation has being brought up to believe that the low cost, cheap credit, global bonanza will go on for ever. They have not been told that to be in debt and facing lean, poor hungry economies who can sell their labour at a tenth of yours is to face destitution. But as our major companies shift their call centres, factories and transport to cheap third world countries, many workers will be left with falling wages or the dole. As I write HSBC has announced plans to close 4000 jobs in the UK, 10% of its workforce, and transfer them to Malaya, China and India. What better time for such companies to start taking to the lifeboats. With many of its employees strangled by debt, few are in a position to strike.

At present there is no shortage of jobs. But what lies ahead? Britain is being flooded with labour, both illegal and legal. This year the government issued 150,000 work permits virtually on demand. It plans to issue more next year, and all permit holders are effectively guaranteed a permanent home in Britain. Apostles of globalisation say that an expanding labour market coupled with the growth of free trade is a win win situation. We can all only go on getting richer.

But globalisation could be the pyramid sale of the century, a South Sea Bubble to end all bubbles. Do we really believe that some of the most repressive and corrupt countries in the world hold the secret to a universal expansion of world trade and wealth for all? Do we really think that importing a large non-tax-paying black market labour force coupled with an open door policy on work permits will protect the jobs of the indigenous British? And if these are not solutions, what is likely to happen to a country burdened with personal debt, not only among people who eat hamburgers and watch daytime TV, but to its backbone, the careful middle classes, who believe globalisation was the final cure to poverty, mortgage and remortgage?

Until a couple of years ago few people worried, but now those of us with experience of modern management know that people live not in constant hope of increasing wealth, but in fear of the suddenly summoned meeting at work in which they are told that due to global conditions, they are going to be 'downsized', and are so much in debt they have to accept less money or just meekly leave. No wonder globalisation is trumpeted through city boardrooms as the wealth creating engine to end all wealth creating engines. It is for the rich. Who is going to pay for a coming army of the dispossessed and unemployed who find their jobs have, at the magic touch of globalisation's wand, being lifted from Crawley to Lahore, or snatched from under their noses by brickies from Bosnia? Not the waiter on the Caribbean cruise, the work permit shark working out of Liechtenstein at £3000 an application, the sweatshop workers in the east end who do not know what income tax is, or the call centre worker in Calcutta hugging £25 a week to his chest and thinking himself rich beyond the dreams of avarice. It will have to be by taxes. Taxes that keep interest rates low and credit card demands bearable. Taxes that will fund the dole and keep Labour in power for another term.

Big companies will not pay. They will just threaten to go overseas, and with virtual seats at Blair's cabinet table they will be listened to. Instead it will be the thrifty and the law-abiding middle class of Britain who will be milked. Those who have paid off their mortgages, saved for their pensions, insured themselves against illness, or despite government regulation, run small businesses. You bought a private medical insurance policy a few years back? The government already takes a small cut of the premium, why not a slice more? You have provided

for your family after your death? How unfair. Let's increase inheritance tax for the middle income earner by 25%. Council taxes? Not quite the political dynamite they might at first appear. Why not cap them for people over 65 and increase them by 15% for anybody else with a house over £300,000? You have a son at private school? Let's add a ten per cent education deduction to the fees. Free travel for everybody in London? Means test it.

But why stop there? Regulation is an even better way of financing debt. It is attractive because it relieves unemployment at the expense of those in work. You own a successful florists shop? We'll send somebody round to check on disabled access at your expense. It will only cost £300 for the first visit and £125 a year thereafter.



You employ a handful of people in the business? Let us burden you with the same mass of regulation as a multinational. You complain that the cost of administering your employees' tax and family benefits will drive you out of business? All the better. One of Labour's big corporate donors can buy you up for a song.

In time these corporations will be all that are left. Then they will put away their cheap credit cards, their discounts, their special mortgage offers. The offers of free credit cards falling through the letter box will cease. The only thing on offer will be pittance wages. Then the true meaning of globalisation will hit us as the middle class vanishes,

wages tumble, true deflation sets in, and Britain becomes, along with the rest of Europe, a sleazy economic annexe to the mighty capital engine of the US. Blair would then go down in history as Britain's Eva Peron, promising everything to everybody in return for adulation. After the Perons came an army of the dispossessed, and eventually, a day when the banks closed and savers stood in the streets wondering from where their next meal would come.

Ecologists know that destroying a habitat leads to the destruction of the species. Our habitat: work, rectitude, a horror of debt, independence in old age are all under threat. No country can survive without a stable middle class. Blair's Britain may be incubating a dreadful version of Weimar and the Reich.

Myles Harris is a practising doctor

Britain's Mortgaged Economy

Vivian Linacre

Successive Chancellors of the Exchequer routinely proclaim their fraudulent policies to end the chronic cycle of 'boom and bust' that peculiarly afflicts our national economy, overlooking the fact that this cycle is mainly propelled by the extreme volatility of our residential property market, generated by fluctuations in demand for mortgage finance.

Only the UK suffers an avaricious obsession with 'home ownership' – although it isn't really ownership if the title deeds are held by a bank or building society as security for a mortgage – although it isn't a mortgage either, but merely the security against a personal loan, to be redeemed prior to a sale. (A proper mortgage, as in some other countries, is attached to the title itself, even with a subordinate mortgage, all such outstanding burdens being directly transferable to a purchaser. The amount advanced is governed by the actual resale value of the property and only incidentally influenced by the beneficiary's personal circumstances, whereas the opposite applies in Britain.)

The vaunted benefits of the Bank of England's independence in fixing interest rates are of limited value because – such is the inherent instability of our economy owing to its domination by the rumbling volcano of housing debt – the City is in a state of perpetual speculation from one month to the next and the Monetary Committee is constantly preoccupied with the likely counter-effects of any change arising from its impact on the mortgage market. Government ministers are equally concerned; since the property crashes of 1973-4 and 1989-90 contributed crucially to the downfall of Mr Heath and Mrs Thatcher respectively, and another crash next year could well destroy Mr Blair.

One symptom of this economic malaise is the £350 billions which accounts solely for some 10 million mortgages that were backed by endowments, whose value has fallen in line with interest rates, so that on expiry of the mortgage term most of those householders will remain heavily in debt. Another symptom is the fact that, while economists might argue about a notional global valuation of Britain's entire inventory of physical assets, they would all agree that, as a proportion of such an audit, the residential property sector has grown spectacularly throughout the last half-century, and continues to do so, and that it already accounts for more than half the grand total.

Yet such calculations beg the essential question as to the merit of property market valuations which they

assume; for it is the *cost* of money – the supply of mortgage finance – that determines the price of building land, which in turn determines the price of new houses. But the pressures are always inflationary; because, paradoxically, when the authorities wish to stimulate the economy, interest rates are lowered, cheapening mortgage finance, thereby making house-purchase more accessible, so increasing demand and hence driving prices upwards. Conversely, when the economy is overheated and interest rates raised, demand will slacken and activity in the market diminish, but generally prices will simply stagnate; for sellers will tend to stay put, awaiting a recovery, rather than take a loss. Immobility of labour, one of the perennial curses of the UK economy owing to large-scale public commitment to long-term mortgage contracts, is merely worsened. Either way the economy suffers because investment funds clamour to channel maximum resources into mortgage finance rather than into industry where it might do some good. Above all, the human motivation is tax-free capital appreciation at the expense of the national economy – a game of 'beggar my neighbour'.

The only way to exchange fantasy finance for sound money, drastically curtailing private housing debt, restoring real market values for building land as well as labour mobility, and ensuring a steady supply of new accommodation of all types across the country designed to meet people's needs rather than the dictates of the money-men, is to free the rented sector completely, not on the present restricted, short-term tenures but on a proper institutional leasehold basis. In Switzerland, 80 percent of new housing is provided for long-term letting, yielding a safe, satisfactory return, in Germany and the USA overall about 50 percent. In Britain in 1914, 90 percent of our entire housing stock was privately rented; in the 1930s – after a prolonged slump – new houses were offered for sale at £400 or to rent at 17s/6d a week. Have we learnt nothing since then?

Vivian Linacre is President of the British Weights and Measures Association and a surveyor based in Perth

The Good Life

Catriona Kay

On the surface of it, I live a pleasant life. I'm 27 years old, happily married with two children who attend private nursery, live in South West London in a lovely Victorian house and my husband and I together earn in excess of £160,000 a year. So why do I wake up at least three times each night in a sweat? Well, we are deeply, in debt – to the not insignificant sum of £110,000.

Two years ago, our finances were in a very different state. My husband had just sold a Start-up Company (for some cash and a lot of paper) to a small Venture Capital Fund. Within six months, they were in trouble as the Dot Com World ground to a halt and he lost his job. Sitting in a five-bedroom house having just had my second child, I found the future looked bleak. Without him working, we couldn't, on my salary, cover the mortgage, never mind the childminder, the car and the credit cards. We sold up and moved home up North in the belief that we could cash in on the equity that we had made on our London property and begin again – this was a grave mistake.

Yes, life is indeed cheaper North of the Watford Gap, but we hadn't banked on my husband becoming unemployed for a second time – this time a period that lasted ten months. During this time, we had to sell the new house we had bought and move in to a small flat – a move that greatly unsettled the children – never mind hurt our already battered egos. Once nursery fees and the smaller mortgage were paid, there was nothing left of my salary. We made concessions such as selling our cars and buying one cheaper one. We existed solely on credit cards and increased our overdraft as far as possible. It is truly amazing how many credit cards one can apply for at anyone time. Simply transfer balances around and you have an instant cash flow. Our bank was happy to oblige as they had seen our earnings in the past and we kept indicating that things were about to change. And besides, they were making a lot of money out of us.

During this period a certain amount of deceit crept in on my part. As the stress began to mount and the situation seemed as if it would never get any better, I dealt with the situation in a very harmful way. Unbelievably, I found the only way to relieve my tension was to shop. And I really did go to town. I got a rush of euphoria when I had made a purchase and it made me feel better about what was really happening. It was as if by handing over a Gold Credit card to the shop assistant in Selfridges, I was proving to the outside World that I was still a 'player' and that I had money. The more my

self-esteem plummeted, the more money I spent. My husband had (and still has) no idea of how much money I had spent and he certainly had no idea that I had around ten credit cards in my pocket at that time. Credit card applications arrived daily despite the fact that we already owed those institutions a vast amount of money. Didn't they check their databases?

The pressures on the household were untold. Not only was I unable to tell my husband the extent of my personal debt, we were unwilling to discuss the truth with our family as we didn't want the lectures about our stupidity and lack of foresight. We knew what we had done but we had moved to London just out of our teens, and, as our salaries doubled each year for four years, we could not see that this trend might change. My father used to say that you cannot put old heads on young shoulders – the young will not listen – especially when they have money in their pockets. Our home became an unpleasant place. Every piece of furniture or item of clothing became a reminder of our extravagance. Photos of past times became reminders of how steeply we had fallen; it is hard to explain how fearful you are when your partner is devastated that he has 'failed' the family twice.

With no job opportunities presenting themselves for my husband, we took another gamble. We both took well-paid jobs back in London and moved once more. You would think that we would now be sighing with relief. Hardly. Every penny we earn goes directly in to the hands of a variety of banks. The large overdraft and the credit cards must be repaid. We have a hire purchase agreement on our car because we had to sell the old one to raise the cash to move. We own a property that we cannot sell; the rental income doesn't cover the mortgage. We have an old home improvement loan that we failed to repay years ago. My husband has no idea of the amount of credit that I am paying back each month and I cannot find the words to tell him.

When times were good, we looked around London and saw young people, like us, living life like us. We thought we had a never-ending supply of money and those in the Dot Com World just knew that millions were theirs for the taking. Banks were falling over themselves to give us credit; cards, home loans and mortgages. On one unforgettable occasion, we decided to buy a top of the range Jeep. One call to the bank and the money had been transferred. Three hours later, the car was ours. It is not right to blame the banks – I work in the city! We were young

and stupid and now we are paying for it.

Those good times in the past leave me with a knot of worry in my stomach every day. My husband was given a pay rise last week and we did not celebrate – just worked out where we would deposit the money each month in order to lessen our exposure. I wake up calculating what I should pay next and agonise about when my daughter goes to school next year – will we really be able to afford it? I pass people in the street and, if they look relatively well heeled and relaxed, I wish I could exchange purses. I looked at the cleaner in my office bathroom yesterday and wondered if she had more money in her bank account than I did. Each purchase I make brings no pleasure but rather the unease that we will never get out of this hole. I never dreamed that when my husband and I were earning an annual six-figure sum that I would be so consumed with fear.

We are not alone. The latest figures show that alongside homeowners borrowing four or even five times their annual income to get on the housing ladder, unsecured personal debt in the UK on credit cards and loans has now reached a record £153 bn. The Leeds based debt charity, the Consumer Credit Counselling Service, a charity that helps people with chronic debts, recently said that their clients' average personal debt had reached £3200. While I sympathise with those who owe this amount, I would willingly change places with them. Their debt is nothing to the amount of red that I see flashing

across my bank statement each month.

The FSA warned consumers last year that borrowing was progressing at an unsustainable rate and that some segments of the population (six million families) were already having difficulties meeting their debt commitments. In a warning issued last week, they warned that 'the effects of a correction (to the economy) could be rapid and disorderly'. The resultant effect would be lower economic growth, hardship for consumers and increased credit risk for lenders. It is a distinct possibility that negative equity looms, but I try not to ponder that for long.

We will continue to chip away at our massive amount of debt. We know that it will take us years, as we barely deal with the present outgoings – never mind the extra. I will continue to wake each night sweating with the terror that we will end up bankrupt and homeless. I shall still sit at my desk each lunchtime, consumed with dread as I calculate how much money is left over each month. I shall continue to ignore my bank statement showing the extent of my never-decreasing overdraft. I will continue to try to find the words to tell my husband how much I personally owe and I shall hope that the truth is not that final straw that breaks our marriage. In our late twenties, we are victims of our own greed, naivety and stupidity. Failing an economic crash I shall be in my mid-thirties before I get a good night's sleep.

Catriona Kay was a merchant banker

Tidy China and New Labour New Europe

Jonathan Story

It is a curious feature of contemporary history, that our leaders are in such a passion to 'tidy up' the institutions which we inherited from the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and place them firmly under an EU legal system with clear federal intent. There can be no doubt that the judges at the European Court of Justice have imperial ambitions to apply a unified code across the whole of Europe, just as the economists and politicians who launched the monetary union were convinced that a one-size-fits-all interest and exchange rate was the answer to Europe's multiple currencies.

The central feature of the Giscard draft constitution is Article 1.10, worth quoting in full: 'The Constitution, and law adopted by the Union's institutions in exercising competences conferred on it, shall have primacy over the law of the Member States. Member States shall take all appropriate measures general or particular, to ensure fulfilment of the obligations flowing from the Constitution or resulting from the Union's Institutions acts.' Aside

from the point that Queen Victoria might feel quite at home in the Union's partiality to deploy Capital Letters at any and every opportunity, the least that can be said of this clause is that it justifies a more complete description of the draft constitution than that provided by our own Mr.Hain's offering, that it is purely 'a tidying up exercise'. Clause 1.10 is a supremacy clause. It is the foundation clause of a new sovereignty.

What characterizes the Euro-project is its inability to accept the existence of other ways of doing things, let alone its opponents' conviction that consent and a de-centralised market society, the two key lessons of the Glorious Revolution, have any validity. Consultation, not consent, is the top-down preference of the EU method. The locals are consulted, in the sense of being informed, and markets have to be regulated by bureaucratic fiat. It is not for nothing that the EU has often been described as a conspiracy of insiders acting as self-appointed guardians of the European interest.

Ten years ago, I published an article in *Politique Etrangère*, the house journal of the French Institute of International Relations, on public opinions in Europe. The internal market programme, and the single currency, had taken the whole Euro-project far beyond its origins, and the old method of doing deals behind closed doors in smoke filled rooms would no longer do. Citing the Commission's own opinion poll data, I showed that France and Germany, the two engines of the Euro-project, had the least supportive publics as far as the internal market was concerned. But without free markets for labour, products and finance, the monetary project – enthusiastically backed by public opinions in the weak currency countries of southern Europe – would be hobbled from the start. Europe, in other words, has no *demos*, and could not be governed as one unit.

Put more bluntly, there was no consent in the EU for free markets, while Mitterrand demanded that Germany abandon the DM in exchange for French support for unification. The whole package was a Napoleonic stitch-up, and justified in terms of defending the European 'social model' against the Anglo-Saxons. The paradox was, and is, that the Euro-project can succeed only if the continent adopts those deplorable Anglo-Saxon methods and institutions, like consent and de-centralised markets, not to mention parliamentary government and a legal system based on precedent. Having created a single currency, and capital market, all the incentives are in place for companies and individuals to operate as if a United States of Europe was in existence. The only thing left in this European construction is a constitution, which Giscard d'Estaing is now serving up for inspection.

As a Chinese friend observed, Europe must be the last corner of the world to try to implement utopia. In China, he continued, we have definitely put utopia behind us. Mao went to his deathbed with 50 million deaths on his conscience — assuming he had one. Mao ranks with the greatest of utopian tyrants. His was a vision both of a renovated China, and of a communist society peopled by human beings, whose natural goodness had been released by discarding their feudal and capitalist chains.

A number of devastating consequences flow from revolutionary dreams to implement *Utopia*. Revolutionaries have to 'Wipe the Slate Clean' of inherited social arrangements, considered intrinsically worthless precisely because they are old. Then, populations have to be hustled into making a Great Leap Forward in order to put as much distance as possible between the past and the desired objective. The revolutionary project is inspired, too, by theoretical and abstract reasoning as the primary input for the Design of society's new arrangements. Not least, once policy is adapted, and changes introduced, they are irreversible. And because utopian thought and

action is abstract, intimate knowledge of its language and secrets are known only to the initiated.

Putting Mao's utopia behind them required China's leaders to acknowledge that much valuable knowledge was disseminated through Chinese society about how to proceed and was no longer the secret monopoly of the communist party. This was Deng's achievement. Indeed, my contention is that the Chinese communist party — one which can lay claim with some justification to be among the most radical of all — has become a Sinicised version of the British Tory party. This is meant as a compliment. The Tories are the oldest political party in the world, and have a stock of experience on which to draw. Their origins are in the Celtic fringes of the British islands, where they learnt the arts of survival well.

The traditional Tory approach to the affairs of men is a deep scepticism: ameliorism, the doctrine that we all bring our pebble and add it to the beach of progress, is laughed out of court, as the happy assumption of enlightened brothers and sisters who believe in Improvement and Progress. There is, of course, the possibility, indeed, the record of Improvement and Progress with regard to the sum of human knowledge as applied to science, engineering or medicine. There are bad and better methods of governance. But there is strictly no change whatsoever in the moral domain. To consider,

with Marx, that all that people have to lose is their chains for their innate goodness to emerge, is a tragic delusion.

It is one that the Chinese people, and with it, the Chinese communists, have paid very dearly to learn. But it is my contention that they

have learnt their lesson well. Not for them, the heady conviction that their doctrine provides them with a guide to action. Not for them, the certainty that they are Marxist. At most, the Chinese communists know that they have a lease on power in China from the Chinese people, and that it is they who will ultimately decide what to do about who wields authority there. So they keep the future at bay by determined tinkering with inherited problems.

Just as I was concluding the final chapters of *China: The Race to Market*, (London, FT/Prentice Hall, 2003), this point was brought home to me with force. The French Presidential elections of 2002 were in full swing. It was the run up to the first round, and we were treated to an extra-ordinary spectacle on TV of various brands of socialism. There was champagne socialism, bubbling away at how well the Jospin government had reconciled justice and efficiency. There was Republican Socialism, which gave the thumbs down to Brussels and all its works. There was watered down French communism on display, a couple of Trotskyites who proposed nationalising everything that moved, in addition to a clutch of

socially concerned écolos. In short, it was entertainment of a kind.

Zheng Ruolin, correspondent of the Shanghai newspaper, *Wenhibao*, could hardly contain his amazement. 'When I write for my newspaper in Shanghai, he wrote in the radical-chic newspaper, *Libération*, that more than 10% of the population of France still votes for the communist and far left parties, I can hardly believe it myself. And yet it's a reality. For a journalist from one of the last countries which continues to pretend to be communist, this fact is as surprising as it is moving'. 'I respect', he said, 'the various communist politicians for seeking to defend the interests of poor people, which would otherwise not be so well defended. At least they believe in what they do and say, which is more than can be said for certain communist countries'. But he ended up, 'I prefer Chirac to the left.'

Chirac is elected, and the Chinese communists are not. They won power over 50 years ago, when over 75% of the present 1.3 billion Chinese were not alive. Chirac won eventually in 2002 with over 80% of the French vote. He'll be in office for five years, during which time he will no doubt experience '*l'usure du pouvoir*', a decline in his stock of political capital. Putting the two examples side by side illustrates, perhaps too vividly, the challenge facing the Chinese communists. That challenge is to answer effectively the question which is being asked of them: By what right do you rule? The answer which I consider they are making is that they know that they have none which can stand up to examination.

If we wish to understand, and then act on that understanding, of where China may be heading, we should examine the logic that is informing the actions of the Chinese communists. We should as it were observe their collective body language. This is saying: Be careful; We'll deal with that one when it comes up; Nothing is

out of the question; We'll consider it.

But the Chinese communists are Tory in another sense: they are used to power and privilege, and they are clearly reluctant to abandon it. Sharing it, maybe. But not abandoning it. That would mean surrendering the mandate of heaven, which is theirs, they consider, by conquest. It would precipitate China in all probability into civil war and worse. Foreigners would then carve up China, the fear is, as they have done in the past. In short, China's communists are a collective Louis XV, who is said to have stated famously, '*Après moi, le déluge*'.

The power of this statement resides in the belief that the Chinese people confer on it. They, too, do not want experiments. They have had enough of Big Leaps to accelerate the advent of Utopia. They prefer a post-heroic world where the buzz words are gradualism, step-by-step, and perhaps instead of certainly. The Chinese communist party now explores the future tentatively, looking backwards for precedent rather than forwards for imaginary vistas. Like George W. Bush's Dad, they are not very good at the 'vision thing'.

That is why China's leaders are so formidable. They are more than aware of how fragile the whole edifice of China still is, of how recent tragedy remains to hundreds of millions of Chinese, of how important de-centralised markets are, and not least of what they have to learn from the UK's legal tradition. They have abandoned Utopias with a vengeance. Perhaps New Labour could learn something here.

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Sophist's Corner

I am a believer in bankruptcy. It draws a line under a series of mishaps or disasters and leaves one free to sort things out with the help of an expert, and move on. Bankruptcy is like losing your virginity – it doesn't hurt the next time. When I suggested to my students that they use this device for their student loans, the government moved the goal posts on tuition fees and turned them into a graduate tax they can't get rid of.

Clarissa Dickson Wright in the Daily Telegraph

What's Happening To France?

Guy Millière

Not since the time of General De Gaulle has French politics generated as much commentary as it has these last few months. People could easily think this just a matter of temporary disagreement between France, Great Britain and the United States concerning Iraq. They would be wrong: it was, and it is, much more than that. It is the outcome of a policy that started a long time ago: the time of General De Gaulle in fact. As many people now realise, General De Gaulle did not like Great Britain and the United States. He preferred other kinds of alliance. He wanted very much to build strong ties with Germany. He once said: 'Germany will be the horse, France will be the horseman.' He wanted other alliances too. He is the godfather of what has been called France's 'Arabian' policy. His final aim was a Europe dominated by France, and enjoying close ties with Arabian kingdoms and dictatorships.

For years, France came closer to fulfilling this aim. The Franco-German dual alliance had a leading position in Europe from the seventies until a few months ago. France signed contracts with many kings and many dictators in the Arab world. More and more Arab Muslims came to live in France. And the French government did everything to push the young Arab Muslims to keep close ties with their culture. France had to pay a price, certainly: she had to abandon Israel and to weaken her ties with the United States. And France did pay this price. No country in Europe is so full of anti-Israeli and anti-American resentment.

France is still paying this price when she supports Arafat against all odds. France paid the price recently when the French government did everything to save the régime of Saddam Hussein, and tried to create a Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis, a policy which proved very short-lived.

But we are approaching a time when France risks having to pay much more than the price she expected to pay. When you gamble, sometimes you lose. The defeat of Saddam has been a defeat for France. She lost many contracts already signed with the former Iraqi régime, and other Arab Muslim countries have seen what the United States and their allies can do. An old Arab proverb says: Kiss the hand you cannot bite. Arab Muslims and dictators all over the Middle East know now that it is very risky to antagonise the Americans. All the indications are that France will lose other contracts. What is worse is that in Arab eyes France looks weak, frightened by the numbers of Muslims living in France already (around 10 per cent of the population) and she looks ready to

surrender. She deserves no respect. Maybe some Arab leaders hate George Bush, but we can be quite sure they respect him too.

If the peace process in the Middle East succeeds this time (and it has many more chances of succeeding with the Bush-Sharon team than it had with the Clinton-Barak team), France will be a big loser again. Israelis will remember that France was not on their side, and Palestinians will see France as a voice lacking the authority to make itself heard.

The current enlargement of Europe is not a good prospect for France given her political objectives. France could dominate a Europe made up of fifteen countries. She will be unable to dominate a Europe of twenty five countries. You will still have French-style technocrats in Brussels, but fewer of them will be French. During the last few months it has been easy to identify France and Germany as isolated odd-men-out in a Europe where most governments understand that the ties between Europe and the United States have to stay strong. The tide of recent developments is not running in a way that is helpful for France.

The new Europe is supposed to have a Constitution too. This Constitution just shows how preposterous the idea of European construction has become. Europe will have a President, who will have the same powers as the Queen in Great Britain. The big difference will be that the Queen belongs to a dynasty and has a legitimacy the President of Europe will not have. Europe will have a Foreign Affairs Secretary, but he will be expected to do exactly what the Foreign Affairs Secretaries of the other European countries will allow. Even if, by chance, he is French, he will not be able to express the anti-American arrogance we have seen from Hubert Védrine or Dominique de Villepin. France will be a part of Europe. A big part, perhaps, but a decaying one.

The sad reality is that economic growth has slowed down in France these last years, and if you look clearly at the statistics, you will see that France is in a condition of stagnation, maybe in depression. France had the fourth GNP per head in Europe fifteen years ago. Now she is twelfth. What a fall! Unemployment is around ten per cent, but if you add the people who have never worked and who are not counted in the statistics, or the people who receive the Guaranteed Minimum Income and are therefore also not counted, the figure reaches eighteen per cent easily. The budget deficit is exploding

and year after year, to keep up appearances, the French government bases its calculations on rates of growth that are obviously overestimates. The French retirement system is on the verge of collapse, and the reforms made right now by the government will solve the problem for a couple of years only. Because of these timid reforms, France suffered strike after strike and protest after protest in May and June. And if the protests and the strikes have stopped, it is just because of an old tradition that exists in France: protesters and strikers take a break in July and August. They have to be in good shape for the next protests and the next strikes in September. Everywhere else in Europe, retirement systems have been reformed, and the populations concerned understood the necessity. This is not the case in France.

The explanation is simple: since the sixties, when France has not been governed by Gaullists, she has been governed by socialists. Not the British kind of socialist you find in the Labour Party, no: genuine Marxists. While genuine Marxists could govern France, they let the leftists infiltrate trade unions, schools, universities, newspapers and television stations. France now is a country where you have alternation only between Gaullist governments and Marxist governments. If a Margaret Thatcher existed in France she would never have a chance to leave the margins of political life. If a Margaret Thatcher existed in France, she could not speak in the national media. A pluralist talk show in France now is a talk show where you have one anti-American Gaullist (the tolerable extreme right), one moderate socialist (the middle of the road position), and four or five Marxists.

Among the main daily newspapers, one is Gaullist and the other ones are directed by leftists. Among the daily magazines, it is the same. Conservative papers are underground papers. France has become a semi-totalitarian country.

And like the Arabian policy of France, it all started with General de Gaulle too: de Gaulle created the French Fifth Republic, and the French Fifth Republic is not a 'check and balance' system. The President is above the laws. If the majority in the National Assembly disobey the President he can decide to call for new elections. Justice depends strictly on the Department of Justice. France does not know what the Rule of Law is. The rule in France is 'a law may always be replaced by another law'. Twenty years ago, a deputy made a remark that is a good sample of the French way of thinking: 'you are legally in the wrong because you belong to the minority of the assembly.' The remark shocked many people outside France. Only a few people noticed it in France.

De Gaulle created a network of national industries belonging to the French state or having strong ties with it. These national industries had one aim: to create polit-

ical dependencies in the industrial sphere. For de Gaulle, radio and television stations were strategically too important to have any kind of freedom: they had to be the 'voice of France'. The beginning of freedom for radio and television stations in France has been in fact in the gap between the submission to Gaullists and the submission to leftists. De Gaulle actually wanted to control the press in France too, and the death agony of the free press in France started almost exactly when de Gaulle became President. The main newspapers and magazines became the property of politically dependent businessmen. These businessmen have been mostly Gaullists for years, though now a large minority are socialist.

The explanation of the decay of France is simple in fact. And now France is locked into its decay. Bold reforms are impossible. To stay in the present situation is impossible too. The best we could wish for is that France is diluted in the larger Europe. But the dilution could also mean pollution for the rest of Europe. The main Marxist anti-globalisation movement in the world is French and you can see the result almost every time a summit of Heads of States is held, somewhere in the world. The movement is called Attac (in English, it would have to be Attack). Its leader is a member of the French Communist party and a 'professor of economics' at the University of Paris. (In France, you can be a university professor dur-

ing the week, and a street fighter during the weekends). France is so deeply anti-American, from the far right to the far left, that Jean-François Revel calls it 'the anti-American obsession' in his latest book.

And now there is the problem of Islam: radical Muslims are to be found elsewhere in Europe. There are some in Germany, in The Netherlands, in Great Britain. But France has the largest Muslim community in Europe and radical Muslims are everywhere. If you listen to what the radical Muslim leaders says, you hear this: *time works for us*. It is a fact: the French population is growing old. Muslims are young and have a very high birth rate. Within twenty years, demographers say, the Muslims in France will be around twenty five per cent of the population and will represent an even larger percentage among those under twenty years old. A large proportion of the non-Muslims will be fifty years old or more. France is locked into its decay, and in danger of sinking. France is in danger of becoming a Muslim country.

It is incontestable that the heritage of de Gaulle is a very heavy one. It is so heavy France is now on the verge of collapse. If you think I exaggerate, take a plane, land at Roissy-Charles de Gaulle Airport, and look around. International airports, in general, are a symbol of the country where they are; they project an image of the place. I know many airports in the Third World that are

The main Marxist anti-globalisation movement in the world is French and you can see the result almost every time a summit of Heads of States is held, somewhere in the world.

cleaner and in better shape than Roissy-Charles de Gaulle. If the airport bears the name of de Gaulle, there must be a reason for it. France is on the verge of collapse. Many French citizens feel it, but they cannot say it politically, they cannot say it in newspapers or the mass media. They feel they are hostages to Gaullists, socialists and leftists. As in many Third World countries, they are pushed by corrupt leaders to despise those who are more successful, such as the Americans. They see Islamism rising in France and France decaying, but they are too tired and too old to fight: so, they think if they cooperate, the Islamists will direct their rage toward someone else, such as the Americans and Israelis. Strange alliances

start to appear. Radical Muslims and members of the extreme right have discovered they have many things in common: after all, they have the same enemies. Members of the extreme left have discovered many worthwhile qualities in the speeches of radical Muslims. They have the same enemies in this case too. Socialists and Gaullists merely follow, each in their own way, the lethal movement they have contributed so much to creating. They know they do not control it any more.

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Updating Tom Stoppard

Roger Sandall

Many people do not realise that anthropology has taken over their world. Stoppard's 1972 play *Jumpers* is all about the evils of relativism, and why it is that the old values we once believed in — standards of goodness, beauty, or truth — have been swept away. Sir Tom thought it was largely done by bent philosophers in universities.

He was right about the doctrine, but dead wrong about the source. *Philosophical relativism* — the sort he worried about in 1972 — is above all *intellectual relativism*, a somewhat anaemic two-dimensional form of the disorder found mainly on the printed page and in the heads of academics. As a social group or potential constituency, philosophical relativists consist of a few hundred lecturers, students, and books, and even if you throw in the writers and journalists who subsequently became infected, it is hard to see them having the political weight to capsize a whole nation.

Anthropological relativism on the other hand is the three-dimensional doctrine of large and muscular groups of people, millions strong, who have arrived in Britain over the last fifty years and who couldn't care less about logic or ethics or epistemology. What they care about is power, and what their political guides and mentors in the UK promote is multiculturalism. Aided by enthusiastic members of the host society keen to see the demise of the West, they get elected to public office, form institutions for their own advancement, and employ the huge political leverage to be obtained by combining ever-expanding 'rights' with the view that tribal views are the only views that count, and that establishing the supremacy of tribal notions of the good, the true, and beautiful (which the enlightened describe as multicultural notions) is what the whole world needs.

After *The Coast of Utopia*, the recent revival at the National Theatre of *Jumpers* reminded us vividly of what Tom Stoppard does best. Simon Russell Beale was splendid in the demanding role of philosopher George Moore, and the supporting cast was more than adequate — though it's unclear what is gained by having an allegedly faded musical comedy star named Dotty Moore played by an exceptionally nubile recruit from the Sydney stage. She appeared half naked much of the time and this certainly ensured that the men in the theatre stayed awake. However, casting Essie Davis in the role made nonsense of the character and nonsense of many of her lines. But what a joy it was, as waves of laughter washed over a delighted audience, to hear again the gaiety of yesteryear when puns flowed trippingly off the tongue, ideas sparked wit, and the wit seemed never ending.

In his historical pageant *The Coast of Utopia* Sir Tom offered High Seriousness, along with a nine-hour production that gave a new meaning to *longueurs*. In my view this betrayed his own gifts. For what he did best in the past was Low Seriousness, something nobody else ever did so well before. He had learnt from both Shaw and Wilde. From the dismal example of Shaw he learnt cunning: it was plainly not advisable to let everyone see the moral coming from miles away. Nor was it enough to be clever or known as a wit. A stealthy obliqueness is needed by those bearing unwelcome news — so Stoppard mixed it up, combining songs, striptease, gymnastics, magical wordplay and mysterious murders, in ways which only those who have seen productions of *Jumpers* or *Travesties* can ever know.

Asked what a nude lady on a trapeze had to do with moral philosophy, Stoppard once replied that it was an

'isolated image I wanted to drag in. I love the idea. It's very theatrical. The only way I really work is to assemble a strange pig's breakfast of visual images and thoughts and try and shake them into some kind of coherent pattern.' The effect of shaking up a 'pig's breakfast' of thoughts and images is to divert and distract the audience so it never knows what to expect. The curse of Shavian instructional drama is that the entirely predictable pedagoguery never lets up. But in successful didactic art unpredictability is all. With classic Stoppard you've no idea what will be next, and digression is raised to the level of high art. The technique is insidious. Low seriousness gets under our guard — the armour we wear against didacticism — and operating behind a screen of laughter it knocks us out.

At the same time, in terms of its engagement with current issues, a production of *Jumpers* in 2003 is unmistakably a bit passé. The relativism which 30 years ago may have been confined to a handful of university departments and their staff is now a dogma imposed at every educational level. What this means is that in important ways the argument presented by Tom Stoppard in *Jumpers* needs to be brought up to date, redirected, and expressed in a way reflecting the passion for anthropological tribalism in our time.

Since tribalism is an unpopular word which makes people feel uneasy I at first thought of inventing a harmless substitution — troobalism. Troobalism seemed to me to have a number of advantages, and lent itself to being elaborated in various ways, for example, Troobs Rule OK? But at the same time it seemed cowardly to run away from the issue simply because people are scared of words. On the whole I think it is healthier and more honest to face facts and call things by their proper names. And tribalism is tribalism, however you spell it. Let us therefore see how the anthropological apocalypse affects the arguments presented by Stoppard in *Jumpers*, in the specific cases of the astronauts on the moon, the donkey's bray, appointments in the Church of England, murder, and the philosophical justification for the existence of God.

The Astronauts

In *Jumpers* Dotty Moore is a retired musical-comedy queen who in the course of a mental breakdown sings a medley of songs about the moon: when television shows Astronaut Scott pushing Astronaut Oates off the steps of a damaged lunar lander so that he can make it home by himself ('I am going up now. I may be gone for some time' says Scott to Oates from his departing space-ship) she falls into a downward spiral of despair. The 1973 assumption being that both astronauts share the same ethical universe, one in which they recognise shared rights

and duties, and for Dotty these are cruelly ignored by Scott at the expense of Oates.

By 2003, fair employment rules ensure that men of different ethnic background (and neither of them European) are sent together into space. When a representative of Tribe X is pushed off the steps of the lander, his counterpart from Tribe Y explains through an interpreter that in his culture that is what they always do, that a UN edict on cultural autonomy gives him the right to do so, and that there cannot be any such thing as an 'ethical universe' because Tribal Rights Rule. No punitive action is taken against the Astronaut belonging to Tribe Y by the Multicultural Space Agency which employs him, but soon after his return to earth the court at the Hague initiates vilification proceedings against those who accused the member of Tribe Y of homicide.

The Donkey's Bray

In *Jumpers* Professor Duncan McFee denies the universality of euphony, while his adversary George Moore argues against musical relativism on the grounds that there is a world of difference between the sound of Beethoven, the sound (say) of a donkey braying, and the sound of a brass trumpet falling down a flight of stairs. The first is music, the second and third are noise. But this of course assumes a hierarchy of musical forms and harmonies from the natural up to the most artificial, climaxing in those we regard as civilised, in contrast to those that are not.

By 2003 it has become clear how absurd it was to imagine an aesthetic measure distinguishing the bray of a donkey from a Beethoven quartet. The doctrine of cultural equivalence requires a frank and sincere admission that in donkey culture brays are considered melodious, while the doctrine of equal respect demands that we ask what donkeys themselves think of the matter. Don't they have rights? And surely it's unfair to rank donkeys last? Any traveller will tell you that there are much more limited musical examples than the bray of an ass. An outburst of hees and haws testifies to the joys and sorrows of asinine existence: it has its own expressive eloquence. In contrast, in the year 2003, there are places where men solemnly blow through hollow logs making a whooffling noise — logs with no stops, no keys, no possibility of scales or arpeggios, nothing expressing either thought or feeling, nothing but whooffling on a single note — and admiring citizens listen with awe to this example of ethnic art.

The Archbishop Of Canterbury

In *Jumpers* the political spokesman for agriculture, Samuel Clegthorpe, is made Archbishop of Canterbury. This is presented as an act of political 'rationalization' in the play, and stuns George Moore, who protests that Clegthorpe is an agnostic.

What happens when the inhabitants of the tropical rain forests move into the Home Counties, and ensure the passing of laws that protect their right to carry on their own unsalubrious practices? Including the importation for mysterious purposes of children, and the consequent fishing of headless bodies out of the Thames?

Dotty agrees with George: because Clegthorpe doesn't believe in God 'nobody is going to have any confidence in him. It's like the Chairman of the Electricity Board believing in gas.' George concludes: 'Archbishop Clegthorpe! That must be the high point of scientism; from here on the Darwinian revolution declines to its own origins. Man has gone ape and God is in the ascendant, and it will end as it began . . .'

In 2003, Stoppard's artillery falls way short of the target. Rationalization has been a very minor factor in the destruction of the Church of England, an institution which tribalistic trash — ethnic, religious, literary, and sexual — long ago brought to its knees. But since in church affairs reality has long outstripped both satire and farce, perhaps all one can do is quote from *Yes, Prime Minister*. In one episode a certain Canon Stanford is being proposed for a bishopric, his credentials including a church in South London which dispenses orange juice, family planning pamphlets, and information about organizing demos, but has no place for holy communion. Asked about God, Canon Stanford considers Him an 'optional extra', and affirms his own preference for Islam. 'When some smart Alec asked him on television if he knew what the Bible was, he said it was a Christian version of the Koran'. Yet even this barely approaches the unresisting madness described by Peter Mullen in the Summer 2003 issue of *Salisbury Review*, where Shere Hite and Foucault are proposed as our religious mentors and guides.

The Existence of God

Not surprisingly, in *Jumpers* this is the most important question discussed. In contrast to primitive religions with all their nebulous forces and inexplicable effects, Christian scholasticism was analytically concerned with the nature of Being, Essence, Cause, and End. The growth of logical analysis within a theological context is said to have led to the growth of rational enquiry in the sciences too. Stoppard's mouthpiece George Moore reviews the arguments pro and con the existence of God, and the ultimate source of moral values, summarizing over two millennia of ingenious and highly productive western thought.

In 2003 the mere framing of the question in a public theatre invites a sense of the ridiculous. This does not mean, however, that the deep issues with which western minds have struggled for so long have gone away. When religions decline, cults proliferate — and today the Culture Cult, with its admiration for the prelogical and the socially primitive, proliferates in all directions. The effect has been to sweep the entire intellectual tradition from Aristotle through Aquinas to the present day into the dustbin, replacing it with a Californian mudslide of sentimentalism about 'spirituality'. This legitimates a reversion to tribalistic animism, astrology, and entrail reading.

Murder

There are two murders in *Jumpers* and a discussion of the cannibalistic eating of aged parents. Informed that his colleague Professor Duncan McFee has been shot, Vice-Chancellor Archie adopts a tone of jesting pragmatism. He cautions Dotty that 'There's no need to get it out of proportion. Death is always a great pity of course but it's not as though the alternative were immortality.' Before his death McFee himself had argued that moral rules are indistinguishable from the rules of tennis — merely a social convenience without which life would be shambles: you'd be fishing headless bodies out of the Thames every day. Dotty (who is mad) and Inspector Bones (who is dull) are the only characters in *Jumpers* who think murder unequivocally wrong.

Again the year 2003 has brought large changes, mostly because of the multicultural apocalypse. Yet there are also passages in *Jumpers* which now ring all too true. When McPhee cites 'the tribe which eats its aged parents' as justifying a relativistic view of murder, Moore objects that this ignores the different circumstances prevailing in the Brazilian rain forest on the one hand, and the Home Counties on the other — peoples in contrasting 'climes and cultures'. But what happens when the inhabitants of the tropical rain forests move into the Home Counties, occupy them, and ensure the passing of laws that protect their right to carry on their own unsalubrious practices? Including the importation for mysterious purposes of children, and the consequent fishing of headless bodies out of the Thames? It is in these circumstances that Dotty's vision of a morally deracinated world, its values in disarray, drifting directionless in a directionless universe, has come true. After seeing one astronaut condemn his own shipmate to die, left behind on the moon, she cries:

Well, it's all over now. Not only are we no longer the still centre of God's universe, we're not even uniquely graced by his footprint in man's image... Man is on the moon, his feet on solid ground, and he has seen us whole, all in one go, *little — local*... and all our absolutes, the thou-shalts and the thou-shalt-nots that seemed to be the very condition of our existence... are like the local customs of another place. When that thought drips through to the bottom, people won't just carry on. There is going to be such... breakage, such gnashing of unclean meats, such coveting of neighbour's oxen and knowing of neighbours' wives, such dishonourings of mothers and fathers, and bowings and scraping to images graven and incarnate.

Roger Sandall is a Sydney writer and author of The Culture Cult, Westview Press, 2001.

Permission, Prohibition, Presumption: Three Ps in Political Philosophy

Anthony de Jasay

How has it come about that 'rights' became the master word of political discourse? How did 'rightism' overwhelm us? I believe that by unravelling the tangled thought that lies at the base of most rights talk, one can lay bare some simple truths, incorporated in the three Ps of the title, that are to political education as the three Rs are to the ordinary business of life.

The word 'right' is blithely employed to convey at least two different meanings, one that makes perfect sense and another that does not. The latter leads to several kinds of muddle, which are best investigated by restating, and setting on one side, the former, sensible meaning with which we have no quarrel.

A right properly speaking is a logical relation between two persons and an act. It signifies that the first person, the right-holder, has the option to require the second person, the obligor, to perform the act (or to forbear from performing it). The second person has a binding obligation to do as required. Right and obligation are not, as is usually asserted, 'correlative'. They do not just 'go together'. Still less can they be conceived of separately from one another, – as is also sometimes asserted when politicians talk of conferring new 'rights' to various aspects of human well-being and advancement. They are two different terms describing one and the same relation, albeit from two different points of view, from the right-holder's and from the obligor's. A right is either acquired by contract (in the wide, Humean sense of reciprocal promise) or conferred by authority. Symmetrically, the obligation is either assumed, as in a contract, or imposed, as in the tax code.

No one can assume an obligation to perform an act at another's bidding unless he was free to perform it in the first place. He cannot let a house that is already let, or undertake to give you what is not in his gift. Nor can he meaningfully promise to forbear from doing something, – say, not to slander you – that he must not do anyway. Likewise, it is otiose to impose an obligation on someone to do something he must do anyway.

One class of the putative 'rights' born of semantic confusion, implies obligations that could, for the above reason, neither be assumed nor imposed. It is gross nonsense to say 'I have a right that you do not wrong me.' It surely suffices to say that you must not wrong me, or anyone else. Interfering with a person's peaceful pursuits by (literally or figuratively) shackling, blindfolding or gagging him is wrong, not because that person has a right to peaceful pursuits, but because shackling, blindfolding and gagging are prohibited by ancient conventions and

more recent laws. There are rules against them that must be observed for some reason, perhaps because they are enforced, perhaps because we think rules originating in a certain way from a certain source deserve respect, or perhaps because they express what game theory calls coordination equilibria, spontaneously emerging best responses by nearly everybody to nearly everybody. Admittedly, it could at a pinch be argued that these rules have been conceived and put in place to protect the rights in question. They are what they are because the rights are what they are. This argument, which is often made, though seldom explicitly, is defective for several reasons. The main, and sufficient, one is that the assertion that we have a right to peaceful pursuits (and other convenient and desirable facilities of life) is supported by no intersubjectively verifiable evidence, but only by a particular moral intuition many share but which is woefully subject to interpretation and twisting, contestable in a way that plain wrongdoing is not. How can one possibly know that this right to this particular pursuit really exists, or rebut an assertion that it does not? All we do know, in a manner that can be ascertained and defended against any *bona fide* challenge, is that there are commonly recognised conventional or statutory rules against doing significant harm to person or property. One result of obedience to these rules is that our peaceful pursuits will not be interfered with. Never mind whether we have a right to them. If we do, it is flagrantly redundant.

The other class of putative 'rights' is empty, or more precisely a fake, because the pseudo-rights that form this class are bereft of the obligations whose discharge would permit them to be exercised. The 'right' of consenting adults to same-sex intercourse means no more than that such intercourse is not prohibited. It does not mean that for each consenting adult, there is another consenting adult obliged to lend himself or herself to the desired intercourse. It does mean, though, that since the act is not prohibited, interfering with the happy encounter of such adults would be a breach of the rules against unwarranted interference – the same rules that prohibit interference with peaceful pursuits in general.

Our two classes of pseudo-rights, then, are really just permissions. They are conferred with diverse effect by any and all who claim an entitlement to do so. The claim may be made by crusading intellectuals, by interest groups and, more pertinently, by the judicial or legislative authorities. Assuming, for simplicity, that all such claims are equally recognised, they create a class of a few

billion permitted acts. What, then, of the remaining few trillion that are not explicitly designated as 'rights'? Are they permitted or prohibited?

Jacqueline should like to perform one of the few trillion acts that did not get onto the Bill of Rights. She contends that her act, too, is permitted and was left off the list of permitted acts by inadvertence or by virtue of its small significance. Her contention is opposed by Digby. He argues, reasonably enough, that since the act is not (explicitly) permitted, it is prohibited by implication. One of the two opposing contentions must bear the burden of proof. The other benefits from a favourable presumption if the burden of proof fails to be discharged. In other words, either Digby must prove his case and if he fails, Jacqueline can go ahead, or Jacqueline must prove her case and if she fails, she cannot go ahead.

However, placing the burden of proof is not a matter of consensus, agreement, taste or love of liberty. Its place is decided by the laws of epistemology that determine how we can find out what is the case. A contention that something is the case can be verified, or falsified, or both, or – if the contention has no descriptive meaning – neither. For Digby to prove his case, he would have to falsify Jacqueline's contention that her proposed act deserves to rank with the acts that are permitted, i.e. that she should have a 'right' to perform it. It is logically impossible for Digby to falsify this, for there are indefinitely many reasons Jacqueline could advance, each unknown before she advances it, and though Digby could falsify many of them, he can never, in a finite span of time, falsify all. Consequently, he cannot reasonably be charged with the burden of proof. Jacqueline, on the other hand, can verify her contention by producing a conclusive reason if she knows of one. Epistemology dictates that she must bear the burden of proof.

The upshot is that if society, or rather those who have the privilege to speak on its behalf, choose to make permissions explicit by proclaiming pseudo-'rights', a presumption is generated that acts not explicitly permitted must surely be prohibited. More briefly, there will be a presumption of unfreedom.

The presumption of unfreedom will, in turn, engender a drive for additional 'rights', each as nonsensical and fake as the one preceding it, so as to narrow the domain over which the presumption of unfreedom holds sway. Within that narrowing domain, however, the presumption of unfreedom will progressively harden and become progressively less easy to overcome. We will wade waist-deep in pools of 'rights', and hardly risk stepping on the grass between the pools.

A process of unravelling the logical implications of a system of permissions uncovers the breeding ground of the presumption of unfreedom. By an identical process, a system of prohibitions invites the presumption of freedom. The oldest and most important prohibitions originated as conventions and date back to the birth of societies. They have since been supplemented, and often

superseded, by statutory rules. Of the few trillion acts feasible for humans to perform, they single out a few billion that must not be done. Digby and Jacqueline have occasions to dispute over the residual. Jacqueline proposes to perform some act that is not explicitly prohibited by a rule, and Digby objects. There are indefinitely many potential objections. No matter how many Jacqueline manages to falsify, there will always be indefinitely many left. Therefore the burden of proof cannot be placed on her. However, if an objection is valid, it can be shown to be valid. Digby's case, in other words, is verifiable, and hence it is he who must assume the burden of proof. Until and unless he can discharge it, Jacqueline enjoys the presumption of liberty.

There is a symmetry between the derivations of the two opposite presumptions that is almost awesome. Are they of equal logical validity, so that one cannot prevail over the other on the strength of the respective supporting arguments? Is the choice between them, which of course is also a choice between types of society, a matter of taste alone? – or can it be decided on grounds that can be ranked, one above the other, in terms of their truth or falsity? Do we have to love liberty in order to opt for liberty, or do we do it because it is the obvious thing to do, while opting for 'rights' is the sort of deviation that the often perverse workings of collective choice brings about without anybody particularly seeking it?

An answer – albeit only an answer of sorts – is again provided by liberty's good friend, epistemology. Consider this sketch of a simple theory of alternative rule systems. Imagine all of a society's feasible acts ranged side by side and forming what shall serve as a baseline. Move some of them off the baseline by making them differ from the others, i.e. by prohibiting them. The residue left on the baseline is the set of acts over which the presumption of liberty prevails unless they are shown to be exceptions. Imagine next that all feasible acts are ranged along a different baseline. Some will then be moved off it by permitting them. The residue on the baseline is the set of acts to which the presumption of unfreedom, i.e. of prohibition, applies unless they are proved to be exceptions. Clearly, the second baseline has a property the first baseline lacks, namely that acts along it are prohibited acts while acts along the first baseline are just that, acts without any restrictive lien upon them. For the theory to be coherent, we need the assumption that acts along the second baseline are all prohibited to start with, that being prohibited is, as it were, every act's state of nature bar only the exceptions. The second baseline, in other words, requires that the nature of the acts along it be specified as being lien-bearing. If we are to take it that all acts bear a tag around their necks that reads 'forbidden', we must also take it that someone has hung the tags on them, or that all acts come with such a tag that must first be removed before they can be performed. Needing more elements of knowledge than the first, the second baseline is epistemologically on a weaker footing. Moreover, for

the theory to be valid instead of merely coherent, a universal prohibition applying to all acts bar the exceptions must actually exist, which is of course nonsense.

This article argued that rightsism, besides being a product of thorough mental confusion, is also a defence mechanism against the very presumption of unfreedom that it engenders and invigorates. 'Rights' are demanded, among other and less excusable reasons, because, being really permissions, they provide immunity against the very presumption of prohibition that a system of explicit permis-

sions calls forth. In the face of the seemingly irresistible rise of rightsism, the presumption of liberty, itself promoted by a system of explicit prohibitions, may for now be in retreat.

It is perhaps no more than a matter of sheer good luck that the contest between permissions and prohibitions, and consequently between the presumptions of unfreedom and of liberty, is also a contest between muddled thought and clarity. Muddled thought usually wins all the battles, but one should nonetheless back clarity to win the war.

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Regions of Government

Bill Hartley

With the English local authority elections behind us, the prospect of regional government is now being run up the political flagpole. The government's plans for devolution in England consist of splitting the country into nine regions and for referendums to be held for elected regional assemblies. Not that the deputy prime minister has troubled to wait for a vote. Quietly and behind the scenes 'Government Offices of the Regions' have been established, allowing civil servants to practice the art of devolved administration.

The only people who know about their existence tend to be other civil servants who are now required to go and talk to them. There are even civil servants experienced in the arcana of these new offices whose job it is to act as go-betweens, explaining to their colleagues how they work and how to get money from them. In public administration creating a fresh hurdle for cash seekers, is a sure-fire way of letting them know you are there.

Then there are the sham regional assemblies where local politicians can be pretend to be governing their fiefdoms. The message put out is that the assemblies will have a grasp of the regions' 'problems' in a way that Whitehall cannot possibly manage. For all this talk of regions, geographical knowledge does not, it seems, extend to an awareness that England is a small country. Regional propagandists like to talk up this idea of remote uncaring government, as if we were being run from Istanbul.

But what exactly is a region? An American economist once described the US state of Maine as, 'the last region in the country'. By this he meant a part of the United States where settlement patterns and economic activity was more or less uniform. That definition of a region in England just does not work! Politicians have been using the term as a catch-all description for so long that they have lost sight of its meaning. The trouble is that politicians are not very good at drawing maps either.

The regional map, incidentally, may not be generally available but millions have been printed. Most civil service offices use them since national organizations have had to abandon boundaries created for their own operational convenience and shoehorn themselves into the new structure. The result is a dog's breakfast that has little to do with how people live, work and communicate.

In the South East even the most avid regional government enthusiast will concede that it will be very hard to get the 'right' result from a referendum. The South East has a huge population and it is hard to envisage any commonality between people who live in the Medway towns and, say, Milton Keynes, even though they are grouped in the same region. And the 'capital' of this bogus entity? Mighty Guildford, a town whose standing as a focal point for inhabitants of the region, probably extends little further than a 50p ride from the local bus station. The South East does, of course, have a dominant centre, a place where people go for all sorts of things. It is called London and unfortunately it doesn't happen to be in the region.

In the north, Yorkshire or rather Yorkshire *and* Humberside as the regionalists call it, is also earmarked for an assembly. There is a phantom talking shop already in place in the city of Wakefield, although Leeds is planning to make a bid if it becomes a reality. Expect resistance in Sheffield and Bradford, since there is already plenty of antipathy between the big cities of the county. More importantly some perceptive individuals have spotted the potential drawbacks for them, should the rural north be run from the urban south. This is the problem when creating new boundaries. There are always some inconvenient bits. I once put it to a senior official of the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Development Agency that a true region (fitting the American example mentioned earlier) would run from Liverpool to Hull along the M62 corridor. There was no disagreement with

this and we both smiled at the prospect of the politicians ever going for such an idea.

The Yorkshire region is not the only one to come with a pre-packaged imbalance. The North West encompasses Liverpool, Manchester and the more densely populated parts of Lancashire. Rural Cumbria which really is the North West, has been tacked on to a region where Manchester and the other urban centres will inevitably dominate. A regional official wishing to visit one of the remote towns on the Cumbrian coast, faces a seven hour round trip by road from Manchester.

Cumbria of course has the bad luck to be an awkward bit that needed to be stuck on somewhere. No doubt the citizens of Carlisle will be confident that Manchester can meet their needs. Across in the North East MPs like Derek Foster have been enthusiastically talking up regional government, as if it were a new dawn for this hugely deprived part of the country. Whilst the Government Office is situated in Newcastle, Nick Raynsford MP favours Durham for the assembly. It seems the county council has generously earmarked a

building as a temporary home. Note the use of the word temporary.

Regional assemblies are not envisaged as an additional tier of local government. Where an assembly comes into being, county administration is meant to disappear. Don't bank on it. All those local government workers whose employer's NI contributions have been driving up council tax will have to be accommodated in the new structure. On top of which regional government is likely to bring with it the same 'personalized number plates for the chief executive' approach that characterized the 1974 reform of local government. The assembly will need a secretariat, research assistants and all the other paraphernalia to mirror that found in Westminster. Unless the voters catch on, then the most over-governed country in western Europe may well be about to embark on another expensive exercise.

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A Nation under Construction

Lessons from Belgium for Iraq and Europe

Paul Belien

Winning the war in Iraq was easy for George Bush; winning the peace will prove impossible. In order to bestow a stable and democratic Iraqi state upon the world, Paul Bremer, the American administrator in Baghdad, has to succeed in a task of nation-building. Turning an artificial state into a genuine nation, has never before been accomplished. Such states lack the national consciousness that acts as a 'civic glue' binding the various peoples living on its territory.

Unlike normal states, artificial states are states which have been *constructed* (in Friedrich Hayek's sense of constructivism: according to more or less specific plans or rationalist schemes) in places where no similar state had ever existed and where the people had no common identity that would enable them to acquire a national consciousness and, hence, become a genuine nation. Artificial states are either established through violence or drawn up at conference tables. They unite diverse peoples of different cultural, linguistic, religious or ethnic backgrounds and are by definition multinational states. Until the late 1980s, Europe had four of these artificial states: Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Today, only Belgium is left.

Though artificial states may be exceptional in the Western world, the majority of the member states of the United Nations are artificial states. One needs only to

consider the many states in Africa that obtained independence in the 1950s and 60s, but which originated within borders drawn by the European Powers at the 1885 Berlin Conference. Indeed, Africa, with a few possible exceptions (such as Egypt and Ethiopia) is composed predominantly of artificial states. The continent was divided by the Powers into colonies with boundaries that ignored traditional ethnic groupings and cut across regions forming natural units. At the first meeting of the Organisation of African States in Accra in 1958, the African leaders explicitly stated: 'Artificial boundaries and frontiers (...) divide African peoples (and) operate to the detriment of Africans and should therefore be abolished or adjusted; frontiers which cut across ethnic groups or divide peoples of the same stock are unnatural and are not conducive to peace or stability. Leaders of neighbouring countries should cooperate toward a permanent solution to such problem states.'

Despite this declaration, the borders were never adjusted. As a sad result Africa has known neither peace nor stability in the past four decades. Countries inhabited by peoples grouped together without any conception of allegiance to their common state, were bound to fall victim to rent-seeking individuals or clans who looked upon the state merely as a vehicle for personal enrichment. As a result, almost the whole of Africa today belongs to the

category of the so-called 'failed states' run by criminals or mafia clans that colonise the state for their own purposes. Asia, too, has many of these artificial and failed states, that are unable to generate a genuine 'civic glue' binding the nation. Iraq, established by the Anglo-French Sykes-Picot agreements of 1916, is an example. Within its borders three large ethnic groups (Kurds, Arabic Sunites and Shi'ites) were randomly thrown together. Only a dictator can keep them together. Artificial states can never become democracies. The obvious solution for Iraq would be to divide it into three units which each have the potential to become the nation-state of the people living within its borders. Unfortunately, the United Nations, which is basically a lobby group of the ruling clans in the present states, will object to such a measure as it could act as a precedent for a worldwide rearrangement of borders.

All this said, the need for patriotism is unanswerable. According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, patriotism is a virtue. It is the generous love for one's state or nation. We need this love in order to be truly human and humane. Artificial states are unstable institutions because they lack genuine national patriotism. The only patriotisms existing within their borders are the patriotisms of their various peoples, but as these undermine rather than reinforce the state's unity, the authorities try to eradicate them, thereby turning a virtue into a crime.

Iraq persecuted Kurdish and Shi'ite patriots; the Soviet Union persecuted Ukrainian nationalists; Yugoslavia did likewise with Croatian nationalists. Belgium, too, has always looked upon the Flemish nationalists as its mortal enemies, considering every declaration of affection for Flanders to be a threat to Belgium. In the early 20th century, the Belgian authorities censored a poem by the author Guido Gezelle because it contained the words 'dear Flanders'. References to Flanders were not permitted unless Belgium was mentioned too. The situation can be likened today to one where all references to England or Britain that did not simultaneously mention Europe were prohibited. Perhaps if the Europhiles ever succeed in abolishing the old European nation-states and establishing Europe as an artificial state, the reader will live to see that day. Perhaps the Eurosceptic reader will then be considered a subversive, dangerous 'extremist' by the state authorities, just as the author, who is a Fleming – hence a Dutch-speaking Belgian – is considered in his own country to be a subversive, dangerous 'Belgosceptic'.

Belgium is currently the only remaining artificial state in Europe. To Europhiles and post-modernists alike, however, it serves as a role model for the multinational, or rather non-national, European super-state in the mak-

ing. Belgium is a nation of rent-seekers. It was established as an independent state after a historical accident that only in retrospect came to be known as the Belgian Revolution. Indeed, the new state was unwanted not only by its Dutch-speaking majority, but also by its Francophone minority. In the autumn of 1830, Francophone radicals had rebelled against the Dutch Kingdom of the United Netherlands, whose most populous provinces later came to constitute Belgium. The rebels wanted to join France. The establishment of an independent state had not been their intention. It was the result of an international compromise between the Great Powers in the summer of 1831. The same compromise turned Belgium into a kingdom and established the non-indigenous Anglo-German prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg (the widower of the late British Crown Princess Charlotte, the maternal uncle of the subsequent Crown Princess, later Queen Victoria, and the paternal uncle of her husband, later Prince Consort Albert) as the first 'King of the Belgians'.

The Powers, however, were sceptical about the viability of their artefact. The French diplomat Talleyrand described the new country as 'an artificial construction, consisting of different peoples'. According to his Austrian colleague Dietrichstein, the Belgian nationality was 'a political attempt rather than an observable political reality'.

Nevertheless, Britain decided to give Belgium a chance. Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, liked the prospect of a weak and internally divided bogus state on his doorstep. But the grand old men of 19th century European continental diplomacy, from Metternich to Napoleon III to Bismarck, were all convinced that Belgium could not last longer than one or two generations. King Leopold surprised them all by cleverly holding together his new state. To this end he directly bought the adherence of the Francophile revolutionaries who had made the so-called 'Belgian Revolution' by offering them well-remunerated positions that they could never have dreamt of if their country had been annexed by France.

In 1865, Leopold I was succeeded by his son, King Leopold II, a figure as shrewd and imposing as his father, who established himself a private Empire in Central Africa and let the Belgian establishment share in its spoils. Early in the 20th century, the third King of the Belgians, Albert I, became the real constructor of his artificial country by making corporatism the foundation of his state, thereby assuring the loyalty to Belgium of all those at the receiving end of an ever-expanding state welfare system. The 20th century Belgian welfare state, that has extended (or 'democratised' if you will) the number of rent-seekers from a small clan to a fairly large group,

The obvious solution for Iraq would be to divide it into three units which each have the potential to become the nation-state of the people living within its borders... The United Nation will object to such a measure as it could act as a precedent for a worldwide rearrangement of borders.

has for the past decades obscured the fact that Belgium, too, is a failed state. Today, however, we are witnessing the unravelling of this welfare state.

It is plain for all to see that the Belgian state is no longer able to fulfil its basic duties: to guarantee law and order, provide justice and protect its citizens. Mafia clans are again colonising the state. In this environment, a child dealer such as the notorious Belgian paedophile Marc Dutroux was free to operate.

Leopold I and the five descendants of his House who succeeded him since 1831, acknowledged the artificial nature of Belgium and the fact that it was unloved by the large majority of its citizens. Belgium was the Saxe-Coburgs' tragedy. Its crown was their livelihood, but at the same time they came to loathe the country and its establishment with, as Albert I wrote, 'the decadence of its administration' and 'the ruinous abuses'. They were constantly in search of unifying elements that could compensate for the lack of nationhood and the absence of genuine and generous patriotic feelings in their country. Belgium's history is a dramatic search for the civic glue that bonds 'normal,' i.e. non-artificial, countries.

The rule of law is the pre-condition of civilisation. Belgium is sometimes compared to multilingual Switzerland. While Belgium is an artificial and multinational state, Switzerland is not. Switzerland was not constructed but grew organically, thereby gradually creating a Swiss national consciousness. In this respect Switzerland is more akin to the United Kingdom, where historic accident brought together two of Europe's oldest nations, the English and the Scots, but where their subsequent common history was able to foster a British national consciousness, thereby creating a British nation encompassing both the English and the Scottish nations in a common home. Belgium is a state in which two peoples were forced to live together and where no common Belgian national consciousness developed. On the contrary, instead of becoming the nation-state of its Dutch-speaking majority as it could have if the state had not consistently pursued an anti-Flemish policy, Belgium instigated an anti-Belgian Flemish national consciousness.

Though it is not inconceivable that an artificial state originating in violence, historical accident or planning at a conference table, could over time acquire a genuine, encompassing national consciousness that either obfuscates (Switzerland) or supersedes (Great Britain) pre-existing communal or national adherences, this has rarely ever happened. Once a previously artificial country is able to survive as a state under a democratic regime respecting the rule of law, it is clear that it has become a genuine, non-artificial, state. The Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia all failed this test. They

fell apart as soon as democracy and the rule of law were introduced. Belgium does not stand the test either. The rule of law in Belgium is often sacrificed to the requirement that the state survive. Because of the artificial nature of Belgium, its king also has greater power than any of his colleagues in the European monarchies. This power is not vested in the Constitution, but chiefly in the fact that the Belgian politicians implicitly, and (except for the Flemish separatists) almost unanimously, accept that the King, because he is neither a Fleming nor a Francophone and, hence, the only *real* Belgian, is a political arbiter who can actually make policy decisions and interfere in the political process.

Nevertheless, Belgium appears to be a rather stable country. If there is no national consciousness binding it, what has managed to keep it together? The answer to this question has a significance beyond Belgium, because European politicians are at the moment trying to create, through constructivist planning at conference tables, a pan-European super-state. The European State currently in the making will resemble a 'Greater-Belgium' in that 'Europe' is also going to be an artificial, multinational construct, but it will hardly be a 'Greater-Switzerland'. Those who want to learn what the future of the European Union as a single state might be, should study Belgium and the way in which the Belgian kings and the leading establishment in Brussels have kept their country together.

Belgium is the prototype of the Europe at present being planned. Belgium's nature as an artificially constructed multinational state offers relevant insights into present-day developments. In 1989, the

then Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens called his country the 'prototype of Europe'. 'The Federal Belgian State,' he said, 'is a prefiguration of a Europe of Peoples, united in their organised diversity'. Martens also stressed that an artificial country like Belgium 'must have a transcendent project to commit itself to, otherwise it becomes very difficult to keep it together. For me that project is: Europe.' Based in Brussels, and sharing its capital with Belgium, the European Union is greatly influenced – even infected – by Belgian political attitudes and habits. But, more importantly, Belgium acts as a model for the EU in the latter's efforts to 'construct a nation' out of different peoples with separate languages, cultures and traditions. Belgium foreshadows 'Europe.'

Interestingly, the Belgian establishment realised already one hundred years ago that Belgium could survive only if it were to become the nucleus of a European State. In this sense, *Belgicism* and *Europeanism* are the same thing. 'Have we not been called the laboratory of Europe,' the *Belgicist* ideologue Léon Hennebicq wrote in 1904. 'Indeed, we are a nation under construction. The problem of economic expansion is duplicated perfectly

patriotism is a virtue. It is the generous love for one's state or nation. We need this love in order to be truly human and humane. Artificial states are unstable institutions because they lack genuine national patriotism.

here by the problem of constructing a nationality. Two different languages, different classes without cohesion, a parochial mentality, an adherence to local communities that borders on the most harmful egotism, these are all elements of disunion. Luckily they can be reconciled. The solution is economic expansion, which can make us stronger by uniting us.'

In the first half of the past century people like Hennebicq inspired Albert I to turn socialism and corporatism into the foundation of the Belgian State. Belgium was built on a principle that was later, in the 1960s, described by Public Choice theorists as 'rent-seeking': 'the resource-wasting activities of individuals in seeking transfers of wealth through the aegis of the state'. Belgium became basically a system of financial redistribution. According to Mancur Olson 'distributional coalitions slow down a society's capacity to adapt to changing conditions, and thereby reduce the rate of economic growth.' Belgium's history during the past decades confirms this. Economic stagflation and social rigidities have turned the 'national' conflict between Flemings and Walloons, which was until the 1960s mainly a linguistic conflict, into the ever deepening socio-economic conflict that it is today. In other words: an artificial state, based on rent-seeking, can survive in a more or less democratic environment, so long as the economy performs reasonably well. Once the economy stagnates, however, tensions grow. The Belgian establishment is hoping that the transplantation of the Belgian model to a larger-scale European level, will boost the economy, thereby averting the danger of the model imploding.

King Albert I's son, Leopold III, and the latter's sons, Baudouin and Albert II, continued their predecessors' policies. The rent-seeking mentality of the Belgian establishment has, however, led to corruption. In the case of 'normal' states, one can argue that these states have managed to become voluntary organisations resulting from generous motives of mutual concern and co-operation. They are based on the virtue of patriotism. In the artificially constructed state of Belgium, however, the absence of any patriotic feelings has forced the Belgian monarchs to make hard-headed calculated self-interest the foundation of the state.

Contemporary Belgium has become the very model of unscrupulousness, hypocrisy and corruption. It is the 'land of a thousand scandals'. Many political, social and economic problems affecting Belgium today – including the failures constituting the Dutroux affair and other cases of corruption to which the international media devoted a great deal of attention in the late 1990s – stem from Belgium's corporatist institutions that undermine individual morality.

As one might predict, a 'Post-Modernist' interpretation of Belgium's condition has been advanced. The lack of genuine patriotic feeling means that the Belgians are unwilling to bring sacrifices for the common good. Throughout its entire history, Belgium has been extreme-

ly unreliable to its international allies, while the Belgians at the same time came to see themselves as morally superior. In an Open Letter in 1998, a group of Belgian intellectuals wrote that they cherish the Belgian flag 'because the latter does not represent anything,' and that Belgium, precisely because it has no national consciousness, is 'an antidote against nationalism' much needed by the post-modern world. According to the Belgian historian Louis Vos, 'a non-ideological post-modernism has become the predominant fashion in intellectual life, more eager to deconstruct the national identity than to make a contribution to it. Some go so far as to deny that the "invented" concept of national identity and community refers to anything real'.

These 'postmodernists' claim that Belgium's lack of identity constitutes a supreme morality. This was also the opinion of Belgian King Baudouin, who in 1993 stressed the importance of 'the European construction,' which, in following Belgium's lead, 'can best help us resist the temptation of egotism and narrow and disastrous nationalisms.' King Albert II reiterated this message in 2002 when he warned against 'a repetition of the disastrous 1930s'. With these words, he was referring to the growing electoral appeal of Flemish Separatists who loathe Belgium because of what they call its 'identity of non-identity'.

The question must be asked whether states that were established as artificial 'constructions', according to rational constructivist schemes, can really be morally superior. Hayek has pointed out that owing to the limitations of factual knowledge, it is hardly possible for intellectuals to order society, let alone influence public morality in the intended beneficial way, because the '*Machbarkeit*' or 'makeability' of society is limited. He queries whether 'anything produced by evolution could have been done better by the use of human ingenuity' and concludes that the latter view is untenable. The same question can be posed in relation to states by researching the connection between the artificial nature of the Belgian state and the morality of its political culture. Which of the two views is more likely to be correct: that of the artificial 'non-national' state as the root of political and civic immorality, or, instead, as the root of supreme morality? This question should not only be worrying the Americans in Baghdad, but should also be at the heart of the debate about the future European super-state.

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Fictional Figures and the Historians

The Politics of James Bond

Jeremy Black

Fictional characters that have a long lifespan provide an opportunity for the historian to study change for, at the same time that the use of the character requires consistency, there is also a need to respond to the shifting expectations or concerns of the audience. This can be seen in the most surprising of characters. In the mid-twentieth century, Sherlock Holmes was translated afresh to the screen by Basil Rathbone, but the corpus was brought up to date as Holmes was taken to new destinations – Canada and the United States – and given contemporary concerns and foes, in particular the Nazis. In *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942), Holmes thwarts a Nazi programme of sabotage and an attempted invasion whose mastermind is the head of the British Intelligence Coordination Committee, Sir Evan Barham. As a reminder of the usual rule of detective fiction – that the detective intervenes to restore a harmony disrupted by the hubristic evil of crime – Barham is not really the Home Counties gent he appears to be, but a German agent who took his place when the real Barham was shot in cold blood while a prisoner in World War One. Barham is also over-confident: he brings Holmes into the case in order to appear to be doing everything possible to thwart the Nazis.

Holmes richly repays a treatment in terms of his politics. Even in Doyle's hands, he changed, eventually thwarting German invasion plans. In addition, he subsequently was reinterpreted by other writers, for example to include a married Holmes, and he has been extensively interpreted on television and in film, not least with greater interest in his drug addiction.

The same is true of Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Ian Fleming's James Bond. Poirot might apparently be a timeless figure, but he records shifting concerns and assumptions, as well as the details of life, such as the role of servants. In a number of interwar novels, Christie notes the standard fears of affluent society, and adds the paranoid conviction of an underlying conspiracy. In *The Big Four* (1927), readers were told about

'The world-wide unrest, the labour troubles that beset every nation, and the revolutions that break out in some ... There is a force behind the scenes which aims at nothing less than the disintegration of civilization ... Lenin and Trotsky were mere puppets'.

Technology was seen by Christie as at the service of this force: 'a concentration of wireless energy far beyond anything so far attempted, and capable of focusing a beam of great intensity upon some given spot... atomic energy', so that

the Big Four could become 'the dictators of the world'.

This links earlier concerns with the world of Bond. Number one among the Big Four is an all-powerful Chinaman, who echoes the sinister orientalism of Dr Fu-Manchu. The creation of the British reporter Arthur Sarsfield, who wrote under the pseudonym of Sax Rohmer, Fu-Manchu, 'the greatest genius which the powers of evil have put on the earth for centuries', and the foe of British civilization and empire in *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu* (1913) and *The Devil Doctor* (1916), combined great cruelty with advanced scientific research.

In his account of Macao in *Thrilling Cities* (1963), Fleming referred to his 'Doctor Fu-Manchu days ... the adventure books of one's youth', and in *Dr. No* (1958) he created in Julius No his own Fu-Manchu. Like Poirot in *The Big Four*, Bond has to hunt the villain down in his base hidden within a mountain.

Bond is the most successful adventure hero in history, thwarting 'the instruments of Armageddon' in the film, *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) and saving the world as the seconds tick away in the film *Moonraker* (1979). Other victims saved on different occasions more modestly include London (novel *Moonraker*, 1955); American rocketry (*Dr. No*); Miami (*Thunderball*); Washington (film *Diamonds Are Forever*), and so on. Certainly the most successful film franchise, Bond also offers an opportunity to record and reflect on change; though not to persuade the tax authorities that Bond videos rank as a tax-deductible research expense.

There is an extensive literature on Bond, though most of it is of the exploitation type and makes scant attempt to consider context and change. This was also true of the most distinguished discussant, Umberto Eco. He highlighted the creation of a recognisable and potent type through the use of consistent narrative structure, although the comparisons with mythic status in the operas of Wagner might surprise some readers.

I became interested in writing about Bond as a result of my work on maps. Having published *Maps and History* (Yale, 1997) and *Maps and Politics* (Chicago, 1997), I thought I would take forward my concern with geopolitics by writing an essay on 'The Geopolitics of James Bond'. This was designed to focus on two issues, first the range and nature of the settings of the stories, and how these changed in accordance with historical developments, and, secondly, the image of the globe in the films, as both demonstration of range (*Thunderball*) and target for megalomaniacal attack (*Diamonds are Forever*, *The Spy Who*

Loved Me, GoldenEye). Instead, I wrote a book because the narratives of the books, films, and (a crucial source that is generally neglected), the many books involving Bond published by others after Fleming died in 1964, provide such a fascinating source for changing views about the world. Both novels and films drew on current fears in order to reduce the implausibility of the villains and their villainy, while they also presented potent images of national character, explored the relationship between a declining Britain and an ascendant United States, charted the course of the Cold War, offered a changing demonology, and were an important aspect of postwar popular culture, not only in Britain but more generally, particularly after the Americans created and financed the filmic Bond.

The cultural role can be taken further by contrasting Bond with spoofs (the epicene James Bond in *Carry On Spying* (1964), *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997), etc), and other agents who in some way seek to emulate him (Schwarzenegger in *True Lies*) or very obviously differ (Michael Caine's Harry Palmer in the films of the more ambivalent Len Deighton stories).

In addition, the emphasis on the role of the individual in the Bond novels and films provides not only the last-minute cliff-hanger but also a cultural clash. The villains believe in planning and, indeed, represent a conflation of plutocratic and bureaucratic man, the last understood by Fleming as a characteristic of Communism. In Weberian terms, Bond was the persistence of charisma against the iron cage of rationalism and bureaucracy. In opposition to Bond, planning is necessary, not only for the villains' schemes, but also because they are control freaks, seeking order even as they pursue disorder. In the films, Stromberg and Drax are unhinged utopian planners. In *The Spy Who Loved Me*, Stromberg claims that modern civilization is corrupt and decadent, that it would inevitably destroy itself, and that he is merely accelerating the process when he plans a nuclear holocaust followed by the construction of a new civilization under the sea.

The mechanistic megalomania of many of the villains and the sadistic evil of their agents, is contrasted with Bond's sensuality. There is much male fantasy here, but it is central to the image of Bond's sexuality that he gives as well as receives pleasure, an ability and desire that can be imagined of few of the male villains, while Fleming's depiction of women who were not constrained or defined by the search for matrimony and motherhood contrasted with the women in the adventure stories of his childhood, many of whom were honorary chaps.

As a sign of the times, however, the sexuality of the Bond character has recently been under discussion from critics keen to suggest that he is at least partly gay ('archly flirts with homeroticism', Barbara Ellen, *The Times*, 21 November 2002). The response to the latest film in the series, *Die Another Day*, highlights the problem of how best to relate individual works to current issues. Cultural historians of the future may wish to relate the film to 'the crisis in masculinity' currently on the table for critics (and government ministers concerned about social mores), while the

contrast may be noted between a Britain with global reach, whose fictional star agent prevents a laser-aided North Korean invasion of the South, and the real situation where a large part of the country's armed forces were dealing with the consequences of a fireman's strike. Indeed, the gap between fact and fiction has rarely seemed wider as far as Britain was concerned. Far from our having time to worry about 'the crisis in masculinity', there were more immediate problems in the shape of appalling weather, trade union militancy, a big hole in public finances etc. Doubtless this encouraged escapism, but what is the difference between that and entertainment? As the latter, however, the latest continued the regrettable trend of recent Bond films: mass-ess of violence, and little by way of atmosphere or wit.

And what will critics make of the scriptwriters' take on the world situation? A Harvard education both leads the son of a 'moderate' North Korean general to become decadent and, also, an enabler of the expansionist plans of hardliners, and a beautiful British agent to betray, then bed, then betray Bond anew. So much for higher education. No wonder the British government is letting its universities go bankrupt. The talented American agent (Jinx played by Halle Berry) is under the orders of a craven boss, one who smokes a cigarette no less, who bullies the British, lacks talent and relies on rockets. Bond, himself, is distrusted by his own side. Will Victor Hanson write pages to denounce the character who remarks that one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter? And what about the villain having good political connections. A knock at Blair?

Class, place, violence, sex, race, all are themes that can be scrutinised through the shifts in characterisation and plot. So also can both popular culture, and the relationship between fiction and fact. The interview with Oleg Gordievsky (who, as head of the KGB station in London and earlier, was an agent for the British, who eventually defected in 1985), was the item in the BBC Radio 4 programme 'The Politics of James Bond' (January 2001) that I planned and narrated, that excited most press comment. Gordievsky claimed that the Central Committee of the Communist Party watched Bond films, that he was instructed to secure a copy as soon as one came out, and was also asked by the KGB to obtain the devices used by Bond, and, more significantly, suggested that the Bond stories contributed to the reputation of British intelligence; which indeed had been compromised by Soviet penetration in the 1940s. Such comments are a reminder that popular culture is not a distinct subject, widely-separated from the real world of politics, but rather, a factor that helps to shape the latter just as it is shaped by it. If only for that reason, the politics of Bond rests in large part on the perceptions of those who read and/or watched the stories.

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The Magic of Interpretation

Against Post-modernist Babble

Hadrian J. Wise

In 1996, Alan Sokal, Professor of Physics at New York University, caused a stir. He submitted to a respected 'cultural studies' journal, *Social Text*, a 'post-modernist' article, 'Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity'. He then revealed the article was a hoax, riddled with errors of fact, logical flaws and generally vague and incoherent, hoping thereby to prove that much post-modernist writing was indistinguishable from pretentious gibberish. In this, alas, he was naïve. Instead of admitting their foolishness, two of the journal's editors, Bruce Robbins and Andrew Ross, published a vigorous defence of their decision to publish Sokal's article, in a manner faintly reminiscent (though without the accompanying irony) of Swift's campaign to convince the world that the astrologer Partridge, in spite of his protestations, was dead. One of the editors, they said, refused to believe the article a hoax; the others thought it valuable 'symptomatically' as a scientist's attempt to explore the philosophical implications of quantum theory. Sokal has since written many articles critical of post-modernism, as well as a book, *Intellectual Impostures* (1997), with the Belgian theoretical physicist Jean Bricmont, which I warmly recommend to anybody who knows rubbish when he sees it but lacks the leisure to explain how.

The editors' response to Sokal's hoax, illustrates something important about post-modernism, viz., that, through deliberate defiance of all standards of quality, it destroys communication. Nobody who has read passages (whole books would be asking too much) by such post-modernist luminaries as Baudrillard, Kristeva, Lacan, Latour, and Virilio, needs to be told that communication is far from being their strong point, but the characteristic impenetrability of these writers is a natural development of their ideological presuppositions. These presuppositions, surprisingly enough, can be simply stated: First, no reasoning can be understood without knowledge of the hidden agenda it is invariably reducible to: Second, all truth is relative.

The connection between the two is obvious. If my meaning depends on my hidden agenda, then the truth of what I say must depend on it too. Thus, the truth in any statement is relative to the speaker's hidden agenda. This, in all consistency, must apply just as much to the statements of post-modernists as to ours, but then, our belief in 'consistency' is itself reducible to our hidden agenda (as white male middle-class Western oppressors who need to justify the rules we have 'constructed', or

whatever the latest cliché is), and is therefore just as relative as everything else, as is the otherwise fatal objection that no rational relativistic account can be given without some objective, non-relative specification of what the truth is relative to. In this, the post-modernist goes one step further than the sceptics of the past, who were refuted by Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Wittgenstein: they always wanted to win the argument, and, in committing themselves to rational argument, they eventually contradicted themselves and lost – whereas the post-modernist, keen to avoid defeat, wants to make rational argument impossible by refusing to accept its most basic rules. If there is a third nostrum of post-modernism, it is that all rules are arbitrary.

This desire to avoid producing arguments would be enough to explain the incoherence and meaninglessness of post-modernist writing, but it is far from being the whole story. If all truth is relative and all rules arbitrary because no justification of any rule can be taken at face value, then everybody is free to do, say, and think whatever he likes, not merely in the liberal sense that he won't be arrested for it, but in the positively anarchic sense that no reason for doing or not doing anything has any force. 'Why does anybody need a reason for anything?' the post-modernist will ask; and we know it is vain to point out that he himself is asking for a reason, for he holds even the laws of logic to be 'arbitrary', leaving him no obligation to be rational or consistent. As a result, his relativism collapses into subjectivism, the extreme position that the truth is relative to the individual, that, in other words, the truth is whatever anybody thinks it is. This simple idea informs 'deconstruction', perhaps the most characteristic product of post-modernist thought, a theory that justifies any interpretation of any text, no matter how daft, on the grounds that no text has any core 'meaning' – i.e., there is no truth about what the text means – and so all texts mean whatever the reader wants them to mean. If this is true, there is no point in the writer's trying to mean anything in particular when he writes, a conclusion post-modernists seem to have drawn with unusual logical acumen.

Here we return to the editors of *Social Text*, and their – on the face of it, absurd – attempt to explain why Sokal's hoax article was nonetheless of value. If they believe in post-modernist ideas, it is easy to see how they could be so ridiculous; for Sokal's opinion of his article could have no more authority than anybody else's. The article means whatever the reader wants it to mean; and if the reader wants the article to be a valuable contribution to physics and the social sciences, then – hey presto! – that is just

what it is. This magic of interpretation bears analogy with R. D. Laing's account of schizophrenic phantasy in *The Divided Self* (1959). According to Laing, the schizophrenic, in isolating his 'real' self from the self that interacts with the world and thereby detaching himself from the constraints of reason and matter, achieves a delusory omnipotence in his own mind while dooming himself to impotence and incomprehensibility in the minds of others, just as the post-modernist, in detaching his thought from the rules that make it meaningful, is able to say anything he pleases while being unable to communicate it to anybody else. If you think this analogy too harsh, then consider this extract from Lacan (quoted by Sokal and Bricmont):

'This diagram [the Möbius strip] can be considered the basis of a sort of essential inscription at the origin, in the knot which constitutes the subject. This goes much further ... because you can search for the sort of surface able to receive such inscriptions. You can perhaps see that the sphere, that old symbol for totality, is unsuitable. A torus, a Klein bottle, a cross-cut surface, are able to receive such a cut. And this diversity is very important as it explains many things about the structure of mental disease.'

Here we can understand that Lacan is drawing analogies between topological concepts and mental illnesses, but, in the absence of any explanation of those analogies – none is given – we have no way of understanding why, and so are impelled to retort, 'So what?' and move on to something else, just as we must do after a few minutes' conversation with a schizophrenic. This, incidentally, is Lacan's 'clarification' of his analogies, in reply to a question from a student:

'Analogy to what? 'S' designates something which can be written exactly as this S. And I have said that the 'S' which designates the subject is instrument, matter, to symbolise a loss. A loss that you experience as a subject (and myself also). In other words, this gap between one thing which has marked meanings and this other thing which is my actual discourse that I try to put in the place where you are, you as not another subject but as people that are able to understand me. Where is the analogon? Either this loss exists or it doesn't exist. If it exists it is only possible to designate the loss by a system of symbols. In any case, the loss does not exist before this symbolisation takes its place. It is not an analogy. It is really in some part of the realities, this sort of torus. This torus really exists and it is exactly the structure of the neurotic. It is not an analogon; it is not even an abstraction, because an abstraction is some sort of diminution of reality, and I think it is reality itself.'

Here it looks as though Lacan is saying that the whole of reality is literally a Möbius strip. Why? Don't ask: for the post-modernist, *anything* goes.

I hope we can see why post-modernist writing is so often so bad. In an effort to conform to their own irrationalist beliefs, post-modernists have relieved themselves of the responsibility of explaining themselves and justifying their assertions, choosing instead to write unreasoned nonsense.

This tendency is compounded by their weakness for neologistic jargon, a weakness stemming from the dogma that everything everyone says has a hidden agenda. Concepts do not mean what they purport to mean; upon every idea is imposed the post-modernist's idea of the motive for the idea's being entertained; and when ideas are reducible to conventional signs for particular motives, jargon-words naturally sprout like weeds. If the customary word for the idea were used, then people might think of the old idea, which used to be discussed in the light of reason, but which now is known to be 'arbitrary'; they might imagine that the idea had some kind of life of its own, beyond its reducibility to whatever the post-modernist has reduced it to. A new word is required – one that retains enough trace of the old idea for us to recognize what is being made to disappear, but which superimposes upon it the explanation why the idea used to be seriously entertained, and why it no longer should be. Creativity has never been the post-modernist's strong point, so, when he runs out of new words, either he comes up with a blanket term (e.g., 'ideology', 'patriarchy', 'false consciousness', 'hierarchy', 'internal subversion') to cover all his opponent's ideas, or he resorts to parenthesising familiar words with inverted commas. And since post-modernism, like everything else, is also 'arbitrary' – as the post-modernist readily concedes – the post-modernist's explanations as to why people used to believe in the ostensible content of particular ideas are arbitrary as well; and either it will be impossible to discern which arbitrary explanation is intended by a particular writer in his use of a particular jargon-word, or else each post-modernist writer will develop a jargon peculiar to himself. Either way, it is hard to see how they can meaningfully communicate, either with each other, or with anyone else.

This, of course, does not matter a jot to the post-modernist; for when there is no reason for anything, then nothing, not even communication, matters. So what is to be done? There is no way of winning the argument with him, since, as we have seen, rather as a chess-player might make himself invulnerable to defeat by disregarding the rules and insisting he can move the pieces however he likes, the post-modernist refuses to join the argument. But although we cannot beat such a player, we can refuse to play with him. The post-modernist has deliberately made himself incomprehensible, so why bother trying to comprehend him? The rest of us, who want to communicate with each other and who abide by the laws of reason accordingly, are free to carry on talking and arguing intelligibly, knowing that, if we cannot beat the post-modernist, he cannot beat us, confident that he will find it increasingly difficult to get a game and will either come to his senses or have to resort more and more to playing with himself, ignored by everybody else. Even when, as the post-modernist does, I rely on utterly subjective criteria and consider only what I want, I find I choose reason and communication rather than post-modernism and isolation, and I doubt I am alone.

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Ostalgie

Helen Szamuely

We hear rather a lot about nostalgia for Communism or, at least, the old order in Russia, the rest of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, mostly from western writers and journalists, many of whom are nostalgic for the old certainties themselves. Just occasionally, there is a sigh or two from the old artistic and intellectual establishment in the post-Communist countries. It is fair to assume that the Left has not completely recovered from the body blow that the collapse of Communism has dealt to its assumptions, particularly as it did not collapse under a direct onslaught from the capitalist west but from its own people. It was not wanted by those whom it was supposed to benefit and that is hard to accept if one's entire world-view was built on the assumption that with all its faults Communism tried to provide what people were supposed to long for in life. And then it was all over. Communism did not and could not, as its opponents said, reform itself. It simply collapsed, leaving behind an economic and political mess.

Surely that was a mistake. Perhaps, we could have a replay. Surely, the people who so thoughtlessly brought that supposedly good, though, alas, often misguided system crashing down are regretting it all. Surely, they must by now be tired of the tawdriness of Western 'culture' which, as they have surely realised, consists of little more than McDonald's golden arches and pornography. Alas, this does not seem to be true. The people of the post-Communist societies seem no more disgusted or enamoured with McDonald's than people anywhere else and it is somewhat arrogant of well-meaning Western intellectuals to assume that somehow East Europeans and Russians would be incapable of dealing with the problem of hamburger joints or Starbucks. They, too, can exercise their freedom to choose. Freedom means far more than just eating hamburgers or watching pornography. Interviews in the former Soviet Union or Eastern Europe always seem to come to the same conclusion. People complain about difficulties, economic restructuring, understandable bewilderment, but all too often, to the almost audible disgust of the interviewer they add: 'Yes, but it is good not to have to watch what you say any longer.' Or they talk artlessly about the pleasure of being able to buy what they want to buy when they want to buy

it, not when the factory decides to produce it. These pleasures are incomprehensible and, even, unknown to Western intellectuals who have never had to go without anything much in their lives.

Nostalgia is part of the human condition; people always look longingly to the past when things were easier or more interesting. In the depths of one's nostalgia one knows that the picture painted by the imagination is not entirely accurate but that matters little. It is inevitable that the sort of economic, political and intellectual upheaval that Eastern Europe experienced in the last fifteen years should have left many people bewildered and with a feeling of *fausse nostalgie*, recently dubbed in East Germany or, at least about East Germany, as *ostalgie*. I came across its first manifestation even before the upheaval truly happened, in about 1986 at a conference organised by PEN International in London on translation. Among the many different discussions and presentations there was one about the changes in the circumstances of East European translators as other conditions changed. I remember an East

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German translator, whose loudly and extensively voiced complaint was that in the new capitalist culture he and his colleagues had to compete with West German translators who worked to contracts and, therefore, produced translations faster and more smoothly. The implication of his complaint was that these West German hacks were clearly inferior but he showed no evidence of this. The main problem was clearly that he could even then foresee a period when he would have to produce work in accordance with his contract or not get paid; he and his colleagues would have to say good-bye to their comfortable existence as salaried members of the Union of Writers and Translators. Creative freedom was all very well but a good flat, guaranteed holidays and a very acceptable regular income may well be more important. I heard similar complaints when I went to the then Soviet Union a couple of years later. One writer (unpublished for reasons unknown) who lived in the second flat belonging to his father, a high-ranking member of the Writers' Union, suggested that I might like to translate his book. I pointed out that translations in Britain were paid for and if I did not get paid I could not live. He

was clearly shocked by such capitalist mercantilism. He could afford to be then. One wonders whether he is now suffering from a Russian form of *ostalgie* or whether he has managed to come to terms with actually having to work for money rather than, as the old East European joke had it, to pretend to work for pretend pay.

It did not, therefore, surprise me when I first read about the latest supposed manifestation of *ostalgie*, Wolfgang Becker's film *Goodbye Lenin*. Critics fell over themselves to praise the elegance and political understanding displayed by the director and by the actors. I went to see the film fully prepared to come out declaring that if they want the Wall back, well, let them have it. But the film turned out to be unexpectedly better and worse than described. I wondered whether I was watching the same film that the critics had seen. It showed no nostalgia for the old order at all, for the shabbiness of life under Communism was made as clear as the general happiness about the collapse of the Wall, the improved living conditions and, even, the acquisition of 'real' money, Western marks. The only people who grumbled about the changes were a few old curmudgeons, clearly well past retirement age, who, nevertheless, adjusted to the new conditions well enough to watch western TV and wear western clothes.

The plot of the film is well known: Alex, a rebellious East German teenager, is arrested during the brutal breaking-up of a demonstration. This is witnessed by his mother who has a heart attack. The police are too busy carting youngsters off to the hoosegow to pay attention to a middle-aged woman collapsing in the street and by the time she gets to the hospital she is in a coma. There she stays for eight months while the world changes utterly. When she wakes up, the doctor warns Alex and his sister that she must not be subjected to any shocks. She had been an obnoxiously good Communist and Alex decides that to prevent her having a second heart attack he has to recreate her familiar living conditions. This necessitates all sorts of entertaining subterfuges, retrieval of old furniture, mock pioneer songs (sung by a couple of suitably bribed young boys), transference of new western goodies into old East German jars and so on.

As the film progresses it becomes clear that Alex has, indeed, recreated the Communist system in his own little enclosed world, not by using old East German pickle jars

or making everyone dress in what his sister describes as 'the crap we used to wear' but by building a system that is based entirely on a lie. His sister calls it creepy; his highly intelligent Russian girlfriend points the facts out to him: once you start lying it grows on you. And it does. The lie gets bigger and bigger as Alex drags more people in by a combination of self-centred bullying and heavy doses of emotional blackmail. Outside, people rejoice while feeling a little scared but in Alex's little world obsessiveness and lying predominate. He no longer allows any kind of deviation. When his sister announces that she is pregnant and intends to move to another flat with her boyfriend and existing child he launches a vicious attack of the kind that would, in the real world, deserve a slap. Interestingly, he never manages to win a reasoned argument with the sister's wessie boyfriend, who shows himself to be a much nicer and more accommodating personality than the supposedly kind and sensitive Alex.

It is Alex who makes the derogatory comments about the ridiculous 'benefits' of the reunification but when the film pans out into the world outside the flat the benefits are real. In fact, economic difficulties are not shown at all. Maybe the sister works at Burger King but there is no indication that she ever liked studying economics and what use is a Marxist economics degree anywhere except, maybe, a western university. There is an interesting little vignette, not mentioned by the critics, but unlikely to have gone unnoticed by East Germans. Alex's sister, when pregnant, has an ultrasound scan. Her delight and amazement indicates clearly that she had had nothing like that with her first child

a year or so previously. Standards of ante-natal care under Communism made one's hair stand on end.

The film remains unsatisfactory for a very ordinary reason: the plot goes nowhere after the first hour. Two thirds of the way through, Alex, his sister, his girlfriend and the sister's boyfriend find out that the mother has a secret of her own: she knew that her husband was going to stay in the West and had intended to join him with the children. In the end she was too scared to apply for a visa. The world Alex was trying to re-create for his mother, the world for which he has forfeited his own soul and truth, turns out to have been based on a double lie even before his efforts: that of the system and that lived



by the mother within the system. Either the film should have finished there on a note of savage irony or it should have explored what the mother's admission really entailed. It does neither but meanders on to an unlikely and sentimental conclusion in which Alex creates an artificial 'alternative' reunification for his mother's benefit so she can die happy. It is this 'alternative' reunification that has appealed to so many critics in the West, who do not seem to like the reality of the true people's power that swept away the Wall and all that it had involved. There is, as it happens, a modicum of doubt in the film about the mother's final attitude: does she believe Alex or is she going along not to upset him? This, too, remains unexplored. In the end, by taking Alex's side and accepting his mutterings about how East Germany ought to have ended the film appears to create a lie of its own. It succumbs to a certain ideological explanation in the teeth of its own evidence. Could it be that Becker is now using the famous Aesopian language that writers, artists and filmmakers employed to circumvent Communist censorship,

to tell the truth but also to gratify those western critics who still dislike the truth about Communism and its collapse? After all, if Alex creates a more fitting end for the German Democratic Republic than the one that really happened then the conclusion is inescapable: the fitting end is one that is surrounded by lies. As the country lived so it should die – not in an outburst of popular joy and songs of freedom but in a rather mean and shabby, distorted little claustrophobic world, created for possibly the best of reasons but built on untruth. If that is what Becker meant then his film is understandably popular in the east of Germany – the people there have always known and understood this. It is also understandably popular with the *bien pensants* of the West, who are less capable of reading Aesopian language. And yet, who knows? Perhaps they are right and I am wrong in my interpretation. Perhaps, German filmmakers are suffering from *ostalgie* to the point when they are ready to make films that start off as the truth but fall into a sentimental and untruthful trap.

Helen Szamuely is a writer and researcher

Black Boys In School

Ray Honeyford

On the 11th May this year the *Sunday Telegraph* carried a report of a conference about the education of black children in British schools. The report carried this quote from the speech of a participant in the conference: 'I'm talking about naming and shaming schools, and that's only going to be the beginning. People used to say the most dangerous thing in the world was a nigger with a gun. Well, a black man with the power of law and the ability to put schools in the High Court is a pretty dangerous thing.'

Clearly the person who spoke these words was complaining about something with considerable bitterness. The tone is pessimistic and accusatory. This is not the language of harmony and reconciliation. It is the rhetoric of victimhood and resentment. The use of the taboo word 'nigger' is particularly revealing. There are very few people outside the ranks of, say, the BNP who would in the present intellectual climate dare to use the term; and to link it with an image of black criminality is quite shocking.

The essence of this complaint is that Afro-Caribbean children are achieving less in school both academically and in terms of behaviour than other groups of pupils. This is true. Black youngsters get poor examination results, and are disproportionately suspended or expelled for bad behaviour, though this is less so for black girls. Research over many years, and in many places, has

confirmed this. So there is no argument about black 'under achievement'. What is in dispute is what causes this. Why do young blacks fail to develop their potential? The standard response of those employed in the race relations lobby is, of course 'racism' in the schools. This accusation is repeated with tedious regularity. This closed mentality means that the debate just goes round and round getting precisely nowhere. 'Racism' has a self-interested value, and those who fail to respond to its alleged explanatory powers are incorrigibly wrong.

Yet there are other factors to be considered. Perhaps the most telling one is simply this: for teachers to be biased against any group of pupils is for them to cut off their noses to spite their faces, for it is in the very nature of teaching that the rewards come from seeing all pupils thrive under the teacher's guidance and demands.

Black pupils attend the same schools, have the same teachers and study the same curriculum as pupils from other ethnic groups, many of whom do comparatively well in school; the most successful pupils in our schools are probably children of Indian origin. Do teachers really favour such pupils over their black class mates? As for the 'institutional racism' ideology, this ignores what has been happening in schools over the past thirty years or so. They really have bent over backward to cleanse their practices and atmospheres of any hint of unconscious

bigotry. In the five state schools in which I worked, the staff examined themselves with forensic seriousness. And for the race relations bureaucrats to allege otherwise is both ignorant and offensive. So to 'name and shame' will just not do. Not only will such a misguided policy generate justified resentment in the teachers, it will undermine parental belief in their children's schools, and so make matters worse.

If the schools are not responsible for black educational failure, what is? There are those who would argue that the reason is genetic. Different groups have varying levels of intelligence, and, as a result, blacks are at the bottom of the educational ladder. I reject that explanation. It may be that different groups specialize and excel in different activities and areas of life. Blacks excel in sports like the Jews in medicine. But that does not, in any way, indicate variations in I.Q., or, if you will, educability. I believe that the problem is explicable from factors functioning outside the school.

For instance, dysfunctional family life is positively correlated with educational failure. And the sad fact is that Afro-caribbean children suffer from this factor perhaps more than any other group. A huge proportion of black children come from homes from which the father is absent, and parental guidance and discipline devolves upon an overworked mother. It needs little imagination to see what an impossible job this must be, especially when teenage rebellion is often directed against both home and school.

The 'coconut phenomenon', i.e. black outside and white inside, is a factor whereby cooperative and hard-working black pupils are jeered at by their black class-mates, and made to feel they are letting the side down and succumbing to white authority and conforming to the notion of obedience in the service of academic success. The influence of the peer group can be enormous in adolescence and only the bravest of youngsters are able to resist its power over their negative attitude to school work. This factor will exacerbate difficulties over homework, a crucial matter when so much of exam success depends upon the completion of projects. There can be few black pupils who enjoy home circumstances conducive to success in this respect.

We also need to look at the effect of a significant factor in the culture of the black teenager – rap music. Though there is some evidence that white youngsters are being attracted to this, it is a much bigger influence in the life of the black teenager. A study of the lyrics makes it clear that defiance of authority in general and the values of the school in particular are significant themes. The attempt to cope with the stresses and strains of getting a decent education must be a daunting prospect for a youngster fed on the promises of money and fame

inherent in the rap view of the world. The likes of Niggaz with Attitude, Puff Daddy and Tupak Shacur are viewed as heroes by many black youngsters, yet their teachers are attempting to instil very different values. Black educationists both here and in the U.S. have expressed concern at the malign influence of rap on black youngsters. There is surely a link between this factor and the disproportionate number of black pupils who are suspended or expelled from school. If your hero hates school and all it stands for, why should you and your mates respect it?

The standard anti-racist allegation is that the teachers are picking on young blacks and treating them unfairly, or are misinterpreting Caribbean behaviour; again this is highly unlikely. If a school expels a pupil, it loses the money he would add to the school budget. And what sane school would want to do that in the days of tight budgets? My lengthy experience strongly suggests that the schools get rid of a pupil as a very last resort, and after every other measure has failed. An expelled pupil's bad behaviour has to be both serious and chronic. And if a particular group of pupils produces a disproportionate number of pupils who engage in such behaviour, then, inevitably, a disproportionate number of pupils from that group will be banished from school. And we have known for years that that is, indeed, the case with regard to black

pupils. A study issued as long ago as 1985 clearly indicated that West Indian pupils were much more likely than white pupils to have engaged in the more serious bad behaviour, both as a prelude to suspension and over time. The authors of the study acknowl-

edge this, 'All West Indians thus continued to be over-represented in the areas of direct confrontation with teaching staff, including actual violence, with the greatest over-representation being verbal abuse of staff. As with other reasons for suspension, all West Indians were over-represented in aggressive behaviour.' (Birmingham Local Education Authority and Schools: Referral and Suspension of Pupils', CRE.)

We badly need a more open and objective debate about all the possible factors which may have a bearing on this important problem. It is very unlikely that such a debate can take place, so long as the vehement bitterness which informs my opening quote continues to dominate the anti-racist climate from which we all suffer.

And the author of my opening quote? Mr Trevor Phillips, Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality.

A huge proportion of black children come from homes from which the father is absent, and parental guidance and discipline devolves upon an overworked mother.

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Conservative Classic: - 12

R.L. Stevenson's 'Treasure Island'

Dennis O'Keeffe

Like much great art, *Treasure Island* is deeply conservative. It breathes the air of an age of un-blurred categories of right and wrong. The characterization, consistent with Stevenson's subtle sense of human psychology, is highly nuanced. The moral and social order the book both reflects and espouses is, on the contrary, unquestioned in its lack of ambiguity. It is as starkly black and white as the Ten Commandments in old fashioned Christian pedagogy, Protestant or Catholic. Even in the case of some of the minor figures, Israel Hands (bad) and Ben Gunn (good), their characters, vicious or virtuous, are sketched in unforgettable vividness.

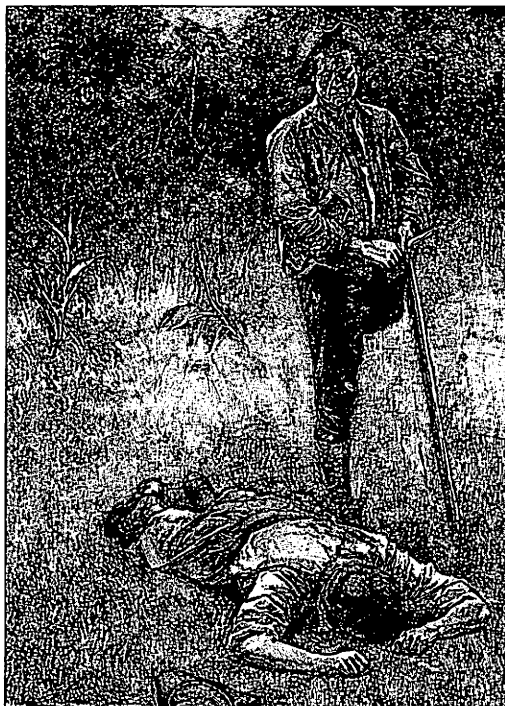
Stevenson is peering back into the past a little, to an age mostly harsher than his own late Victorian times. Of his approval of the general procedures and values of eighteenth and nineteenth century British civilization, however, there is no doubt. People should obey the laws and the commandments, and submit to the conventions and obligations of a sharply stratified order.

Social hierarchy is an intractable fact in *Treasure Island*. Our own age, by foolishly denying this datum of human experience, and also sneeringly dismissing those who truly understand morality and law – teachers and priests of the old-fashioned sort, good parents, and all virtuous people really – has handed over many of the higher reaches of prestige and power to ignorant and unschooled celebrities and dubious technical 'experts'. Hierarchy has not in the event, been eliminated, merely reshaped in a far more inhumane and menacing form.

In *Treasure Island*, we see in the relationship between the extravert and impetuous squire Trelawney and his taciturn servant Tom Redruth, a perfect microcosm of the social rules and gulfs, as well as mutual obligations, of early British modernity. People should be proud to serve their social betters faithfully and well, and in turn their employers owe them a duty of loyalty and care. Redruth is outraged at Dr Livesey's attempts – precautionary on 'not in front of the servants' lines – to restrain Trelawney's

ebullient and careless chatter, though the Squire's indifference in the company of men he wrongly takes as honest English seaman, is, significantly, what opens the way both to the plot by the former pirates and the mutiny they subsequently mount. They hear his 'blabbing' as Livesey puts it.

More important socially, though, than ingenuous folly on the part of the landed classes, is that genuine love and regard also flourish within a social context now alien to us. Trelawney is consumed with grief when Redruth is killed by the mutineers. Then there is the perennial question of reckless youth. In the case of the wilful behaviour of Jim Hawkins we see the dangers – today observable on a scale almost beyond measure – of undisciplined adolescence, though Hawkins also demonstrates a redeeming bravery and resourcefulness most juvenile rebels seem to lack today. In Captain Smollett we witness the indispensable operation of a severe but fair



moral code. In Livesey we see the charm, grace and moral perceptiveness which all civilisation necessarily demands from at least some of its *dramatis personae*. We might, indeed, say of Smollett and Livesey that they both display an exemplary commitment to a timeless professionalism.

The book is in the moral sense an unadorned study of the conflict between good and evil. It is not Manichaeian, there being a tacit understanding that in the end virtue is stronger than wickedness. The centre of the masterpiece, however, is the character of Long John Silver. This is a masterly study of evil. Silver has almost every conceivable social gift. Though uneducated and superstitious he has a brilliant mind. His constant rumination on past, present and future, his ability to ponder the dynamics of action, to shift his focus from the short to the long term, mark him out as someone fit for a higher station than life has allowed him. He knows he has superior judgement to the other men who have been his coequals in wickedness. He does not intend to die a beggarman like Pew or of rum, like Flint. His personality is magnetic and he dispenses a bluff,

rough and ready and witty charm which would fool a saint. He is a born leader of men, immensely courageous, resourceful, and prudent. He is not socially envious like Iago nor does he seethe with ill-will against a world from which he feels excluded. His animus against Trelawney is purely personal; he in no sense hates the latter because he is a squire. Silver is a conservative who wants to be rich enough to go riding to Parliament in his carriage. He is no opponent of the law or Christian morals; rather he is their corrupt, knowing infractor. Moreover he knows himself. He is not lying or boasting when he claims that the dreaded Flint himself was feared of him, merely assessing himself accurately.

Silver terrifies us in the intensity of his sordid pursuit of money, to which aim his manifold talents are prostituted. He will seemingly perform any wickedness to this end. We are appalled at his cynical flattery of anyone likely to be able to serve his boundless greed, which renders all his gifts nugatory. His very soul is mortgaged in the search for gold, as we see in his calm pronouncement that once they have secured the treasure, the pirates should kill all the innocent parties, 'dooty' being 'dooty'.

Indeed, Silver abuses the word 'duty' to reinforce his intentions. He really means 'expediency'. What Silver finds expedient is in constant tension with the theme of *duty* proper, which is the endless motif of the book. Servants should obey their employers; there must be

authoritative masters, captains, squires, doctors and magistrates; the young should heed their elders; sailors should not mutiny; robbery of anyone in any station of life, is theft. Indeed, some of this social catechism Silver still clings to after a life of crime. He tries to make his fellow mutineers somewhat less of a rabble. He respects Captain Smollett's seamanship and believes that the mutiny should be postponed until they are back in comfortable waters.

Stevenson's world-view is as conservative as Shakespeare's. Silver *knows* he is failing in his duty; this makes him pre-modern, since the characteristic of modern ideological murder since 1917 has been its denial that there exists in the first place any such duty or moral code to be infringed.

The moral architecture of *Treasure Island*, is not entirely satisfactory. This is not a matter of a priggish dismissal of Stevenson because of his alleged fascination with violence. The prurient concern with sexual activity on the part of many renowned writers today, is much more objectionable. It is not obvious, however, that a Squire and country doctor have an unchallengeable right, on finding a treasure accumulated by ruthless murder and theft, to retain it. Even so, the good side comes out on top, which is a salutary lesson for the children who still read the book, the bad people are mostly slain, and the fascinating and immortal villain of the piece, though he does make off with a bit of the money, is foiled in his vast avarice.

Reputations - 3

Hilaire Belloc

Michael Wharton

The rise and fall of literary reputations can often seem arbitrary and unfair. When Hilaire Belloc died in 1953, aged 83, he could be praised as 'the last of the giants of the Golden Age of English Literature' and 'the Catholic Dr Johnson'. Now he is remembered, if at all, as the author of the *Bad Child's Book of Beasts*, as a tireless and often tiresome propagandist for the Catholic faith and a hearty eulogist of beer and Sussex. These are now deeply unfashionable causes, and to make matters worse, he is commonly branded as an anti-semite.

As a recent well balanced biography makes clear, (*Old Thunder: a Life of Hilaire Belloc*, Joseph Pearce, St Austin Press, 2002) there is much more to Belloc than this. He was a complex and self-contradictory character, which may account for his failure, for all his prodigious talents,

*Now that the doom he prophesied seems
almost upon us, he may be remembered
as he deserves to be, as hero and prophet,
one who swam with all his strength
against the tide.*

prodigious energy and prodigious output, to create any single work of the highest class. With an English mother and a French father, he was born in France, in the midst of a tremendous thunderstorm (hence the nickname 'Old Thunder') in July 1870, a week after the outbreak of the

Franco-Prussian War. The victory of the hated Prussians soon led his parents to flee with him to England, where he lived for most of his life, for ever half French, half English.

There can have been few undergraduates who before going up to Balliol had crossed the Atlantic, tramped across America to woo a future bride and served a year's military service with the French Army. Already a romantic, even legendary figure, he took first class honours in History and became president of the Oxford Union. Henceforth his life was one of almost frenetic activity. He entered politics as a Liberal. But he was a Liberal of

a special kind. He belonged to a strand in English political thought that descended from Cobbett, the great radical Conservative who held that Old England had been undermined by the plutocracy that emerged from the Protestant Reformation. His ideas were reinforced by his friendship with GK Chesterton, incarnate in the 'Chesterbelloc', the composite figure of literary Catholicism, endlessly at war with the scientific materialism of Shaw and Wells. He believed that socialism and capitalism were equally evil, and that property instead of being collected into the hands of a privileged few, whether private plutocrats or public bureaucrats, should be returned to the hands of the many, creating a society of small properties bound together by co-operatives ('Distributism').

Although Belloc was inclined, partly from the need to make a living and raise a family, to dissipate his energy on journalism, novel writing, lecturing, politics and so on, he always wrote best about himself and in 1906 produced one book for which he will be remembered, *The Path to Rome*. This account of a journey on foot from Toul, in France, where he had done his military service, to Rome has a wonderful freshness and a keen eye for the odd incidents and encounters of the journey. It can stand with the writings of solitary travellers like George Borrow, Edward Thomas and R L Stevenson.

Belloc's passion for his adopted county produced another idiosyncratic book which could not have been written by anybody else: *The Four Men*, an imaginary walk from end to end of Sussex by Belloc himself and three other characters who are really different aspects of the author. It has a feeling of melancholy which for all Belloc's often too noisy *braggadocio* was always there below the surface, a realisation that a time must come when the countryside he loved and all its people would be as though they had never been.

Meanwhile the practical Belloc had got himself elected as Liberal MP for Salford South. But it was not long before he found himself disillusioned, not with the humble people he represented and always championed, but with parliament and the party system. Out of his disgust with fake democracy and the corrupt rich men who controlled it came one of his most important books, *The Servile State* (1912). He argued that the welfare state then coming into existence for the supposed benefit of the needy meant that everybody would be forced to surrender their freedom to the power of politicians, in return for 'insurance' against poverty. For us today, the

warning is more than ever urgent.

The death of his wife Elodie in 1914 was a blow from which he never recovered. But he continued his hyperactive life, speaking and writing in the service of the Catholic faith which he believed could alone ensure a truly just society. His prophecy at this time is still resonant: 'Europe will return to the Faith, or she will perish. The Faith is Europe. And Europe is the Faith'. Eighty years on, how does that sound to the secular bureaucrats of the European Union, who have excluded the very name of God from their deliberations?

With middle age, Belloc's flamboyance began to harden into dogmatism and pomposity. Embracing the politics of the Right, though opposed to Fascism, he declared his approval of Mussolini and of Charles Maurras's



Action Française. To the same post-war period belongs his book *The Jews*, execrated for its supposed anti-semitism by those who have not read it. The Nazi persecution of the Jews has made them virtually immune from criticism for fifty years, so that Belloc's balanced and rational account of the 'Jewish problem' is made to seem an anti-semitic manifesto. We have reached a stage where it can be held 'anti-semitic' even to think there is a Jewish problem at all, just when, ironically, the problem seems to be emerging in the Middle East in an apocalyptic form!

HG Wells' preposterous work *The Outline of History* (1922), laying down the doctrine of scientific materialism and endless

industrial progress, set off a famous controversy with the 'Chesterbelloc' which neither won. For his part Belloc prophesied that unless distributism prevailed, one of two things must happen. 'Either the industrial system will break down and lead to nothing but a desert, or it will lead the mass of men to become contented slaves, with a few rich men controlling them.'

A severe stroke in 1942 virtually ended his working life. The fiftieth anniversary of his death has brought few tributes. He seems to represent the most hopelessly lost of all lost causes. Yet his time may come. Now that the doom he prophesied, the new world order of plutocracy and slavery, seems almost upon us, he may be remembered as he deserves to be, as hero and prophet, one who swam with all his strength against the tide.



Statues & Monuments

Andrew Lambirth

The Public Monuments and Sculpture Association (PMSA), which was founded in 1991 with the aim of raising and maintaining general awareness of public art, has undertaken the mammoth task of cataloging all the public sculpture in Britain, with the exception of works in churches, cathedrals and museums. The idea is to provide a series of illustrated reference books to encourage not only the appreciation of public sculpture, but also its conservation. So far, six volumes have appeared, with the areas covered as follows: Liverpool; Birmingham; North-East England; Leicestershire and Rutland; Glasgow; Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull. The present volume, devoted to the City of London, is thus the seventh.

Public Sculpture of Liverpool by Terry Cavanagh University Press, 1997, £47.95 hb, £19.95pb), the first book in the series, is a weighty tome of 371 pages and 280 black-and-white illustrations. This established the series' format: introduction, followed by catalogue arranged alphabetically by location, and then culminating in artists' biographies and index. So we go from Albert Dock to Wood Street, from an abstracted confection of cast-iron horns and bollards juxtaposed with two blocks of granite, by Tony Cragg and dated 1986, to a classical style bas-relief done in 1994 by Jim McLaughlin. That of course gives the false impression that much of the sculpture recorded here is contemporary. Far from it. Liverpool's greatness as a city belongs to the Victorian and Edwardian periods, when it was the principal port for trade with the Americas. And it is to these eras that most of the public sculpture belongs.

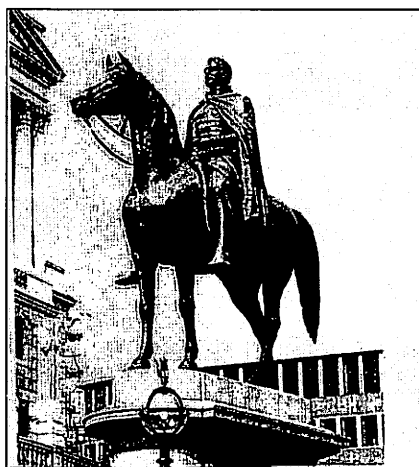
Liverpool is second only to London in the richness and profusion of its sculptures and monuments. There are some truly grand set-pieces, such as the Wellington Memorial on the site of the old Islington Market, in Commutation Row, the monument to Queen Victoria in Derby Square, and Richard Westmacott's granite, marble and bronze 'Monument to Lord Nelson'. (Liverpool had good reason to be grateful to Nelson, for with the destruction of the French fleet at Trafalgar, international trade could continue unhindered.) From a different era altogether comes the over-optimistic bronze figure by Epstein called 'Liverpool Resurgent' (1956), on the facade of Lewis's store in Ranelagh Street. Interestingly, this composition seems to have inspired Michael Sandle's recent London sculpture, the 'Seafarer's Memorial' on Albert Embankment, where its

proportions are reversed – ship looms larger than figure this time – and the optimism is commuted to dogged endurance.

More modest, but perhaps more generally engaging, is Sir George Frampton's bronze sculpture of Peter Pan in Sefton Park, though sadly it has been 'extensively' vandalised. And that's not just a product of our current yob culture – the vandalism started in 1935, a mere seven years after the statue was unveiled. Here is the other side of public sculpture: the constant exposure to mindless vandalism. I know of ceramic and resin sculptures being smashed, and when replaced,

smashed again. Three bronze standing figures by Barbara Hepworth were stolen from the grounds of my old University in Nottingham, but were thankfully recovered from a junk yard just prior to being melted down. Does the public deserve the art that is lavished on it?

Well, yes, when you examine the general enhancement of an exclusively mercantile environment such as the City which the commission and placing of public sculpture can achieve. The City of London volume '*Public Sculpture of the City of*



London, Philip Ward-Jackson, Liverpool University Press, 2003, £62.50 hb, £29.95 pb' describes the sculptural glories to be found from Aldermanbury to Widegate Street. At the former, in what was once the churchyard of St Mary and is now a public park overlooking Love Lane, is Charles J Allen's 1895-6 'Memorial to John Heminge and Henry Condell'. They were fellow actors and personal friends of William Shakespeare, who collected the Bard's scattered works into the First Folio. The statue is sited here because Heminge and Condell lived in this parish, and it was paid for by a Victorian devotee of Shakespeare, Charles C Walker, manager of the Midland Ironworks in Donnington, Shropshire. It consists of a bronze bust of Shakespeare, and thus celebrates his two friends very modestly indeed – and rather charmingly. At the latter venue, in Widegate Street, four ceramic reliefs of bakers by P Lindsey Clark furnish a witty social realist shop sign for the bakery that once, in 1926, existed on this spot.

Describing how sculpture is distributed throughout the City, Philip Ward-Jackson stresses 'the often ad hoc quality of its siting', and the fact that individual works would be shifted around from one available site to another, like a more expensive game of musical chairs. Until the recent Barbican and

Broadgate schemes, there were no great open spaces in which to position and admire sculpture. If you think of 'The Monument', that magnificent memorial to the Great Fire of London, it is half-hidden in the surrounding development, not placed at the end of some grand vista. And yet it is still the largest column ever erected in Britain, though its surroundings actually diminish it. Other sculptures have been displaced at the dictate of fashion or politics. For example, the vast statue of William IV by Samuel Nixon (1844) was removed from King William Street and transported to Greenwich Park in 1936. The only extant City Gate, Temple Bar, was moved to Theobalds Park, Cheshunt in Hertfordshire, in 1878, because it was thought to obstruct the traffic. When it comes to public sculpture and its siting, nothing is writ in stone.

Mr Ward-Jackson's book contains an introduction which traces the history of City patronage in outline, and a catalogue which supports it in scholarly detail. There are useful biographies of the artists, an index and a glossary explaining precisely what words such as *acroterion*, *cipollino*, *pavonazzo* and *voussoir* mean. Besides the obvious statues of great men (such as Oscar Nemon's bronze sculpture of Churchill in The Guildhall), and the great collections of single historical figures at such key edifices as The Bank of England, The Old Bailey, The Mansion House, The Royal Exchange and the exterior of St Paul's, this book also mentions poignant architectural details and street furniture. So we are treated to a description of the capitals of the granite columns of the stanchions of Blackfriars Bridge, the Portland stone pedi-

ment of the former Billingsgate Market, and the distinctive cast-iron lamp standards with dolphins by G. Vulliamy and CH Mabey which, with the equally distinctive 'laden camel' seats, punctuate the Embankment.

This book is a celebration of art on the streets, and on the facades of buildings great and small. A lot of the more recent sculptures to have appeared all over Britain, and particularly the figurative ones – of ordinary people going about their business, or of melodramatically rearing horses – are artistically undistinguished, not to say third rate, and they give public sculpture a bad name. But there are top quality new things out there, besides the hundreds of commemorative statues, war memorials, architectural and decorative sculptures, dating back to Medieval times. These are very firmly in the public domain, yet so many of us walk with eyes averted, never look up, nor pause to study a fountain (however beautiful it may be), as we hurry by as if pursued by the hounds of Hell. Our cities are outdoor art galleries if we take the trouble to realise it and are prepared to look. What's more, entrance is free, and there will be no Curator of Interpretation (chief spin doctor at the Tate Gallery) to tell you what to think. But if it's information you want, this book and its fellows (with more to be published) are thankfully there to be consulted.

The PMSA has recently launched a campaign 'Save Our Sculpture'. Members of the public are asked to report instances of neglect or vandalism. More information from PMSA: SOS Campaign, c/o Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, The Strand, London WC2R 0RN, or see www.pmsa.org.uk

YOUNG HITLER AND OLD WODEN

Somebody appears to have made a film about the young Hitler, showing the lad as a crazed loner who developed his dislike of Jews from dealings with the art-dealers of Vienna.

I once opened *Mein Kampf* at random and read Hitler's opinion that Jews are terrible people with whom to argue, as when they start to lose the argument they change the premise. (How like my cousin Yushik!)

If I knew how to make films, my version of the youthful Hitler's artistic days would be quite different. I would not make him a crazed loner. I am a crazed loner, but the youthful Hitler was obviously a very talkative young man, surrounded by company in coffee house or beer cellar. Drunk on words, he would obviously stay up till late at night, in rooms thick with tobacco smoke, shouting passionately and waving his hands around, just like his art student companions. What did they talk about? Folklore and legend, I should imagine. In Ireland, Celtic Revivalism and misty legends of old gods became the vogue, and in Germany a similar movement took place. Folklore in the early 20th century, had become booklore, and as such had a peculiar effect on young intellectuals. My own English generation of pale ex-grammar schoolboys became steeped in American Negro folklore which added to our general battiness.

You might think that if Germans became steeped in German folklore it could have done them little harm. Ah, but the young men in smoky rooms looked back to a savage pre-Christian Germany. Why should coloured people be the only ones to leap about wielding spears when we have Nietzsche's blond beasts to reckon with? What glory when Germans were savages, worshipping Woden!

At this point in the film, the camera would cut to a painting of war god Woden riding out with his wolves. Hitler would gaze at the god in awe, and Woden would seem to gaze back. Did Woden's face begin to resemble that of Hitler, or was it the other way round? Perhaps in a dream sequence, perhaps not, Woden would step down from the frame and possess Hitler. 'Where is the old purity of our savage forest life?' the god would ask. 'Who are these strangers in our land? Germany, discard ignoble capitalism and return to your old gods! Lead your people to war and feast with us in Valhalla!'

Some dramatists portray Jesus asking 'Am I really the Messiah?' I take Jesus's Messiah-ness as given, and present a Hitler who wakes up gasping 'Am I Woden?'

The answer is: yes, probably. Christian missionaries to Saxon England portrayed Woden (or Grim) as the devil. Place names with the word 'Grim' refer to the worship of Woden.

Roy Kerridge

ETERNAL LIFE



The letterbox at my Rectory is stuffed full daily with junk mail, much of it from institutions offering to lend me money. This activity is not the prerogative of banks alone. The other week I was offered a substantial loan from the gas company. Or again I am tempted by the offer of a new car or hi-fi: 'Delivery today – Pay Nothing Until 2005!' Never has that old film title been more apt: 'Live Now, Pay Later'. The whole nation seems to live on tick.

The Church should certainly take time off from its wholesale condemnation of fashionable imponderables such as institutional racism, to condemn the loan sharks who advertise in the popular tabloids, in the commercial interludes in the TV soap-operas and in those magazines which are read mainly by what used to be referred to as 'the working class'. These operators prey on the panic and anxiety of people who have already unwisely contracted too much debt. 'Have peace of mind. Borrow as much as £50,000 and pay off all your outstanding debts in one go.' Yes, and if you are so tempted, bear in mind that you will be agreeing to pay back four or five times the sum you borrowed.

For hundreds of years the Church outlawed this sort of extortion under its general ban on usury – lending money at a rate of interest. This condemnation was justified by the medieval view of money as solely a medium of exchange for articles of consumption, the use of which was adequately repaid by the return of a sum equal to that which was lent. This doctrine, founded on Aristotle's theory of the 'barren' nature of money, was upheld and developed by the great scholastics, including St Thomas Aquinas; and it was restated as late as 1745 by Pope Benedict XIV.

The Protestant Reformers responded to the rise of capitalism by allowing moderate rates of interest because, according to the new economic system, they came to regard money no longer as a barren means of exchange but as capital productive of wealth like any other property. Since that time, the charging of a reasonable rate of interest has been tolerated by most theologians and the term 'usury' reserved for extortionate rates.

The whole 'Live Now, Pay Later' lifestyle is the very opposite of biblical teaching. We are not meant to set our hearts on earthly things – still less to mortgage ourselves up to the hilt to pay for these trifles. But it is precisely upon this realisation that many slide into an equally crippling heresy: Puritanism. This heresy has never lain far from the surface in the whole history of Christian spirituality. Even in New Testament times there were those who claimed to follow Christ but who really lived by the code 'spirit good; flesh bad'. The Manichean error, which declared that the material world including the body is an

irrelevant illusion, has ever been a threat to orthodox faith; and at the time of the Cathars it came close to replacing Christianity altogether.

A moment's reflection reveals that the denial of physical pleasure almost inevitably leads to something perverse, masochism. There is the perpetual danger of actually coming to enjoy the hair shirt, as some northern monks discovered, that to stand in the cold sea for a long time can generate sexual orgasm. Worse still, the denial of physical pleasure often produces the far more serious sin of spiritual pride – which St Paul regarded as the chiefest of sins – really an unseemly self-obsession. The refusal to allow physical pleasure leads to the logical contortions occasionally found in St Augustine.

Scripture is full of injunctions to eat, drink and be merry. It speaks of 'wine that maketh glad the heart of man'; and we must suppose that the party who gathered to welcome home the prodigal son actually *enjoyed* eating the fatted calf. Men and women are told by God to 'be fruitful and multiply'; and Jesus himself must have enjoyed life conspicuously for, as he himself said, he had the reputation – no doubt exaggerated – for being 'a drunkard and a wine-bibber'.

The world of physical pleasure is not evil as the Puritans and Manichees vainly believe. God does not resent our annual fortnight on the Costa del Sol or a day at the races. The modern social-gospellers who are always harping on Our Lord's followers among the poor should read the Gospels with more care, and they will find many accounts of his dinners with his rich friends.

We should not deny the body, but we must not *set our hearts* on the things which please the body and pamper the egotistical appetites. Pampering the fleshly desires is the besetting sin of British society as revealed in the glossy adverts which deluge us with injunctions to relentless hedonism as the only response to the gift of life. It is this 'consumer lifestyle' – the life lived, as Carlyle said, as 'patent digesters and Mayfair clothes-horses' – for which so many are willing to plunge themselves into the bottomless pit of debt.

We should avoid that temptation and enjoy the physical pleasures of creation and the material benefits of the Incarnation and the sacramental way of being. Only we are not to make physical enjoyment our god. 'Lay not up for yourself treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, neither do thieves break through and steal.'

It is a fine line, but Christians are commanded to walk it.

Peter Mullen

LETTERS

Sir,

In his essay 'A Defence of Political Realism' (SR, Autumn 2003), Simon Anglim states: 'The assumption that others may wish to live in Western-style democracies is also parochial and smells of cultural imperialism, both likely to be counterproductive in practice'

The operative word here is 'may'. People want above all else to up sticks and settle in the western democracies. There are now reckoned to be 23 million people from all parts who aspire to live in Britain alone. If a new form of colonialism were adopted, taking the best from the old and leaving out the worst, we would not need to worry about cultural imperialism, nor of the risk of counter-productivity. Already we are seeing to our benefit the action taken in Afghanistan and Iraq. There is now a noticeable decrease in asylum applications from those two countries. Not only do national statistics provide evidence. At a local level, Kent social services and the people of Dover have felt the pressure lifted.

The other advantage would be the absence of weekly appeals for one area of poverty or another around the world. Poverty-stricken countries are in such a state because they are run either by seventh-century primitives, corrupters or incompetents, or, as in Zimbabwe's case, any combination of all three. In that light, moral interventionism looks increasingly attractive, and more relevant than AJP Taylor's banal generalization. Why did Simon Anglim consider this silly quotation appropriate for the end of his scholarly article?

Edward Thomas, Eastbourne

Sir,

Francis Bennion is right to say that the opinions of a novelist's characters are not necessarily his own. It would have been fairer to add that the opinion of Mr Bumble was absolutely that of his creator. Dickens did not merely think the law was a ass: he thought it was thunderously destructive, existing at its worst more for the benefit of its owners than of those it was supposed to assist. Read the Jarndyce case in *Bleak House*, and *Bardell v Pickwick* in *The Pickwick Papers*, and see.

Whether the situation has changed enough in consequence of Dickens's strictures is a matter that worries us today. Lawyers are unpopular, and courts seem to

find it very difficult to reach correct judgments. Every time someone is accused of misconduct I hear that his or her case is due to be heard some time next year. That person may be innocent. How long is the hell of stress and suspicion expected to be tolerable? Justice delayed is justice denied.

I should like to read some straightforward analysis, unclouded by lawyer-speak or political prejudice, to help the reader understand why more is not done, not merely to stop the law being a ass, but to stop it from being essentially the sort of ass it was in Bumble's day.

Paul Griffin, Southwold

Sir,

I was fascinated to read Dr Gammon's article (SR Autumn 2003) 'The NHS – An Unsuitable Case for Treatment'. Most of us could afford to pay for health-care and our children's education if we did not have to pay income tax as well. Gammon suggests that it would take twenty-five years to replace the NHS but it could be speeded up by displacing the PAYE section of the Inland Revenue at the same time; which might be particularly fitting as that department has the appearance of suffering from the same disease.

I was particularly attracted to the term 'bureaucratic displacement' which epitomises the last five hundred years in the West except for this country in the eighteenth century where the absence of bureaucrats permitted the Industrial Revolution.

Few people know that income tax has fallen from 50% of total revenue in 1976/7 to 26% today, and half of this is paid by the top 10% who are subject to self-assessment. So PAYE on 23 million taxpayers, 90% of the total, seems to raise only 12% of total revenue at great cost and inconvenience. The £52 billion raised is about 80% of health and education which could be paid personally if there were no PAYE while the State could pay for the remaining 20% out of indirect taxes or higher rate income tax. Only those with high incomes (say over £35,000) would pay income tax and it could be collected by self-assessment, thus preserving the principle of redistribution which seems to be generally approved by all voters.

Tony Leach, Hereford

BOOK REVIEWS

Gulag revisited Alexander Boot

Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps,
Anne Applebaum, Allen Lane, 2003,
£25

One cannot fathom Russia with the mind,' wrote the poet F. Tyutchev, and few Russians would disagree. The country had a conspiratorial air even before 1917, when it actually did become a conspiracy. So a standard rationalist framework does not suffice for the explanation of twentieth-century Russia, since one is grappling with the dialectic of modern evil, of which Russia is but one manifestation.

Anne Applebaum is not wholly successful in her truth-seeking, even though her *Gulag* does shift the balance of modern writings away from the Holocaust, modernity's equally characteristic but numerically less accomplished contribution to history. One of Applebaum's most perceptive remarks deals with the reason for this skewed historiography: the proclaimed goals of Bolshevism, unlike those of Nazism, were not reprehensible to most western intellectuals.

They are reprehensible to Applebaum; she is a card-carrying anticommunist. Alas, this may mean simply a communist with the opposite sign: someone who rejects communism but still gives it credence by taking its words seriously. In 1937-38 Stalin culled all those who took communism at face value, and since then the people who see in communism anything other than a bureaucratic arrangement of pure evil, have been found only in the west. Since 1938 the Soviets have used commie-speak only for tactical reasons. When their tactics changed, so did the cant. Applebaum's belief that it was communism, rather than merely its jargon, that collapsed in 1989, makes it hard for her to explain the camps in a broad historical context.

Applebaum's world is straightforward. 'The Gulag has antecedents in Tsarist Russia...', she writes. Even before the revolution Russia was a nasty place where 'with a

vengeance that shocked all of Europe at the time, the Tsar sentenced five of the Decembrists to death.' Once they took over, the Bolsheviks went the Tsars a few million better but, while butchering the people Lenin described as 'particularly harmful insects', the Bolsheviks realised that some of the insects could be made to toil in camps based on the old regime's *katorga* (hence 'antecedents'). '...The primary purpose of the Gulag... was economic,' writes Applebaum, whereas Nazi camps were strictly for extermination. Deaths in Soviet camps were a corollary to the main objective, not the objective as such. After Stalin died, the Soviets realised the camps were uneconomic and began to disband them. That process was started by Beria, and 'to this day, Beria's motives for these rapid changes remain mysterious.' Khrushchev got rid of Beria and delivered his famous speech (made available to 20 million Party members in what Applebaum believes was strict secrecy). The camps seemed on the way out. However, Khrushchev was replaced by the neo-Stalinist Brezhnev and his grey eminence Andropov. The camps spread out again, only to be banished by Gorbachev. Even though an unreconstructed communist, Gorbachev was a grandson of purge victims and thus hostile to the system that had spawned Stalin. He put paid to the Soviet Union and set Russia on the road to a democratic future. 'Sadly, the new Russia was not destined to become a paradigm of ethnic, religious, and political tolerance, but that is another, separate story.'

That, alas, is the whole story, and had Applebaum realised this, her book could have become more than merely a lucid compilation of known facts. For what happened in 20th-century Russia (and Germany) had little to do with communism, fascism or any other isms. Both countries were taken over by creatures for whom evil was not only the sole motivation but also the sole purpose.

Whatever smokescreen they lay, murder is always the only purpose of mass murderers. Naturally, the Soviets tried to conceal their evil animus from western observers, and their effort in this undertaking has so far been successful.

Evil is timeless and universal; but some periods and countries make it easier for evil to conquer. Along with Germany, Russia in the 20th century was unmatched in that respect, and it is wrong to look for its main antecedents in Nicholas I's sternness towards the Decembrists. Applebaum, like many narrow specialists, has learned her immediate subject from *m* to *p* but displays a shaky knowledge on either side of her range.

Otherwise, she would not have repeated the clichéd view of the Decembrists. Rather than staging a ‘feeble rebellion’, these precursors of the Bolsheviks led an mutiny against the government, with the declared intention of murdering the upper classes, the clergy and the royal family. Had they succeeded, the bloodbath known as Bolshevism would have occurred a century earlier. A mere five death sentences for that outrage represents the acme of liberal restraint. If Europe indeed was shocked by the Tsar’s ‘vengeance’, it shocked too easily, and Applebaum should not repeat historical falsehoods originated by the rulers of the Gulag.

Evil in Russia had international ambitions. Turning just one country into hell, with the Gulag as its inner circle, was never enough. The whole world was to be transformed into a camp, and it is logical that the same organisation that ran the camps was made responsible for softening the world’s resistance. Therefore, the secret police, in various guises and under different monikers, from VCheKa to FSB, has always had a vested interest in portraying its playground as something other than a killing field. From its early steps, such as Operation Trust and the Popular Front (KGB memoirists now openly refer to it as ‘our operation Popular Front’), the secret police has always attempted to trick the west into believing Russia was run by proper human beings.

In that task, disinformation could go only so far. Sooner or later the west was going to demand more tangible evidence before accepting that the Soviets deserved respect – and billions in aid. That is why, once the Soviet regime stabilised in its post-communist shape, every KGB chief, from Beria onwards, advocated liberal reforms. The only group in Russia that knew the west, the KGB knew its adversary could never be bludgeoned into submission. It could only be tricked. So Beria’s motives in having put forth the original programme of ‘perestroika’ can ‘remain mysterious’ only to those whose understanding of modern history is insufficiently deep.

Following his neo-Stalinist *coup d’etat*, Khrushchev got rid of Beria but kept his policies. However, his quasi-liberal reforms were mostly for foreign consumption. The creatures never changed their spots – or their urges. For example, having initiated the ‘Thaw’, Khrushchev ordered execution of all camp inmates sporting politically incorrect facial tattoos, such as ‘slave to the CPSU’. (Applebaum mentions the tattoos but not the fate of their bearers.) The policy of bogus liberalisation was passed on like a relay baton to Andropov, Beria’s faithful disciple, and from him to Gorbachev, who owed his whole career to Andropov.

Applebaum misunderstands the roles both characters performed. Andropov, while tightening the screws on the types of dissent he did not favour (and allowing those he did), was prevented from effecting ‘glasnost’ only by his untimely death. Critically, he secured an orderly succession by elevating his Stavropol stooge Gorbachev to the Politburo. To create the vacancy, the old-fashioned

Minsk supremo Pyotr Masharov had to die a mysterious death, and he is still missed by those Byelorussians who do not think Lukashenko is hard enough.

Applebaum’s encomiums of Gorbachev are ill-advised. Known in his native Stavropol as ‘Envelope Mishka’ in reference to his business practices, Gorbachev put in place the KGB reforms conceived by Beria and fleshed out by Andropov. The long-term goal was to secure a wider arena for the creatures, and that they have abandoned lip service to communism should not be lauded as a triumph of the west, as Applebaum maintains. To her credit, she realises that Russia, along with her satellites, is slow in becoming a larger copy of Denmark – and in doing so she already goes further than many of her journalistic colleagues. To her debit, she is unaware of the menace a Russia run by the KGB still presents. ‘Russia is ultimately fated to become the Zaire of the north, a land populated by impoverished peasants and billionaire politicians...’ writes Applebaum with the sorrow of someone betrayed by the early promise of perestroika. Not quite. Unlike Russia, Zaire does not possess one of the two largest nuclear forces in the world. If a mere suspicion that Iraq had a few antiquated rockets was a sufficient *casus belli*, then perhaps more attention should be paid to a KGB Russia armed to her teeth.

Now that the KGB has taken over, Russia is run with more subtlety, and, for some, it is a better place to live. But the democratic institutions there are as bogus as the erstwhile Supreme Soviet, and most independent media have been closed down. More of Applebaum’s colleagues there are being killed for what they write than under Brezhnev. But these days, with laudable frugality, the ruling élite saves the legal costs by having the fourth estate quietly bumped off. That fate has befallen a few dozen since Putin took over and also a few politicians who took the idea of opposition seriously. This does not prevent western leaders from indulging in televised foreplay with Putin, but it produces twitching in sensitive political antennae.

Applebaum does not really understand what is behind the Gulag; so what is left? A painstaking compilation of anecdotal evidence, memoir fragments and some archival data that add little knowledge to anyone who has read Solzhenitsyn’s earlier and much better *The Gulag Archipelago*. Solzhenitsyn is not Applebaum’s favourite person, and he is not mine either: most of his post-Gulag writing is unpleasant and unreadable. But his *Gulag* is a masterpiece that both invented and perfected its genre. So it is wrong to suggest, as Applebaum does, that Solzhenitsyn is no better than many others but luckier in getting his work published early. Solzhenitsyn’s book has its faults but it shows a groundbreaking literary power, something beyond the reach of Shalamov, Ginzburg or Razgon, writers Applebaum admires. Solzhenitsyn did not have the benefit of access to the archives, but how much of a benefit is that?

Applebaum claims her book is ‘testimony to the abundance of newly available information’. For example, ‘it

now appears that the vast majority of prisoners were not intellectuals at all.' That was clear to anyone who has read Solzhenitsyn's book of 30 years ago, or anyone who can add up: no country boasts tens of millions of intellectuals. So what good are the newly opened archives? Not much, as Applebaum herself hints. Access to information in Russia is controlled by the same people who have had almost a century to perfect the technique, and the juicier archives are unlikely ever to be opened. So most of the 'newly available information' comes either from memoirs published recently or from interviews Applebaum had with camp survivors. However, new information does not always equate to new knowledge.

Interviewing a few octogenarians is unlikely to add much to thousands of interviews already conducted by others, though presence at the scene after the events is a journalist's stock in trade. Seeking verisimilitude, Applebaum had to visit the sites of defunct camps – and speckles her narrative with Russian words. Verisimilitude, however, requires precision, and here Applebaum is remiss, though less than is normal for the genre. For one thing she is thorough in research, and has a fair amount of Russian, not something to be assumed in writers on Russia.

Most of her problems come from the insufficient knowledge of areas adjacent to her immediate topic. Some of the inaccuracies do not compromise the main subject, but they do compromise the verisimilitude she values. Thus, General Vlasov did not 'desert the Red Army'; he was taken prisoner. 'Man is wolf to man' may have been used in the camps but it is not a 'camp saying'; 'homo homini lupus est' has a more ancient provenance. The Germans did not 'draft Tartars into the Wehrmacht – just as they drafted the French and the Dutch...'; foreign nationals usually served not in the Wehrmacht but in the Waffen SS. 'Latyshskiye strelki' means not 'Latvian sharpshooters' but simply Latvian Rifles, an ordinary infantry regiment. Putin was a KGB officer, not 'agent' – an important distinction. 'Blatnoi' means not 'thief-in-law' but any old thief, and the latter term is a dubious translation of the Russian 'vor v zakone', which is closer in meaning to 'godfather'. The Russians do sometimes refer to people by patronymics only, but never, as Applebaum does, in an emotionally neutral context, such as 'Vasileevna said' or 'Andreevna mentioned'. Nor would any Russian describe either Solovetsky Islands or the camp there as 'Solovetsky'. They would be either named in full or referred to as 'Solovki'.

The worst mistake is the low number Applebaum gives for the camp victims. She mentions 'twenty million deaths... others cite numbers closer to ten or twelve million'. Still others cite numbers closer to 100 million, but twenty million was first divulged by Khrushchev in his 1956 speech. That figure, not to mention lower ones, has been proved false by, among others, Prof. R.J. Rummel. His superb *Lethal Politics* (1990), uses statistical analysis and other scientific methods to arrive at a

number of 61,911,000. We ought to give the Soviets full credit for their accomplishments.

'Russians know little about their own history,' claims Applebaum, a gap her book is meant to fill. However, the subject of Gulag has not been off limits in Russia, which has produced a whole genre of camp literature with hundreds of volumes saturating millions of minds. The Russians are not ignorant of that part of their history; they are jaded. Then again they may sense that the camps are only a small part of the story.

The valves in the Gulag-literature pipeline were first opened by Khrushchev, and though the pumping rate has varied it has never slowed to a trickle. Various Soviet rulers have had their own reasons for keeping the flow going, but the reason they all share is innocence by disassociation. The falsehood they peddled to the west (successfully) and at home (rather less so) was that the amount of evil in the Soviet Union was proportionate to the number of camps. As that number declined, Russia could be seen as becoming more virtuous by inference. Applebaum's book describes the camps as a thing of the past, which unwittingly promotes the falsehood. The main point about the camps was not just their horror. The camps were not a problem in themselves; the problem was the system that could – still can, should the need arise – make them possible. Applebaum describes the beastliness of the Gulag well enough, attaching a great deal of importance to fluctuations in the numbers of inmates and the conditions under which they were kept. In doing so, she aims at the bullseye of the main point – but misses it by a wide margin.

What is so Funny about Communism? Helen Szamuely

Koba the Dread,

Martin Amis, Jonathan Cape, 2002,
£16.99

Interesting Times,

Eric Hobsbawm, Allen Lane, 2002,
£9.99 pb

Stalin's Secret Pogrom, The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee,

Joshua Rubenstein and Valdimir Naumov
(eds), Yale University Press, 2001
£25

In his much discussed book Martin Amis tries to analyse the difference with which the two monstrous

political systems of the twentieth century are viewed by the intellectuals of the West, particularly (though not exclusively) those on the Left. Mr Amis is, famously, a *bien pensant* himself and in writing this book he found himself in trouble with various of his erstwhile friends and comrades. He finds it quite interesting and even repugnant that people can laugh at Communism and be amused by old Communists while they find Nazism and the Holocaust intensely serious and moving. There is nothing wrong with laughter. One could argue that the people of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (and possibly of China, Vietnam and Cambodia) survived and stayed sane by making savage and merciless jokes at the expense of the system, the rulers and themselves. In my ultra-serious adolescence I accused a very well known expert on the Soviet Union, who had, as so many of them, himself suffered from the system, of being heartless and embarrassingly flippant when he made jokes about numbers murdered in prisons. 'You have to laugh at it,' – he explained to me – 'If you do not, if you really seriously think about what happened, you will go mad.' Possibly you will commit suicide like Bruno Bettelheim, Paul Celan, Primo Levi and other well-known and not so well-known survivors of the Holocaust.

It is curious why, despite our knowledge of what Communism did to people and societies, we should be so lenient towards its practitioners and supporters. Why do we allow someone like Eric Hobsbawm to pontificate about the goodness at the heart of his beliefs and the dread with which he faces the post-Communist world? At the end of David Irving's libel case the judge gave a harsh summary, in which he accused Irving of many crimes against the truth. Yet, if one substituted the words Communism for Nazism, collectivisation and purges for the Holocaust, one could use the same harsh words against Professor Eric Hobsbawm, who managed to write a book about the twentieth century without placing too much emphasis on the catastrophic policy of collectivisation repeated in all communist countries or the number of people murdered by Lenin, Stalin, the East European Stalinoids, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Pol Pot or Mengistu. In his autobiography he sighs the odd sigh about the system he slavishly supported through the years of purges not quite coming up to scratch but fails to express any regrets for his own behaviour and the propaganda that all too often masqueraded as serious writing and speaking. Nevertheless, when this disappointing and depressing book came out he was interviewed by all and sundry, his views analysed and, at worst, there was a little bit of headshaking. Tut-tut, the man just will not acknowledge that far from a harbinger of universal justice and happiness Communism was an evil system that murdered people in their millions and destroyed the lives of hundreds of millions. But really, he is such a grand old man, one cannot be too angry with him. How different from the outpourings of venom towards the wretched Lady Mosley, who may not have

been particularly likeable or admirable but was also not very important.

Martin Amis's book is annoying and its title is misleading. Stalin, as a subject, comes a long way behind Martin, his father, and the rest of his family and friends. Much of what he writes about Stalin himself is of little interest as it is lifted from other books. However, if *Koba the Dread* is read by people who do not usually read nasty anti-Soviet propaganda, that is all to the good. Why did Amis write this uncharacteristic book? The inescapable conclusion is that he felt guilty about his own unthinking light-hearted attitude to what was, as he perceives much more clearly than Professor Hobsbawm CH, and is an evil system. This book is his penance. It is not particularly harsh but then his sins were not particularly bad as one surveys the numerous more vocal and influential apologists of mass murder.

Here I must declare an interest, for me and mine appear in both the books. My father is cited extensively by Martin Amis, as the man, who, together with Robert Conquest, brought the light of anti-Communism to the Amis household and who, furthermore, provided much of the information that underpins the book. I appear in one rather odd episode, which I remember very differently from Amis. He is, of course, a novelist and entitled to flights of fantasy. But his flights of fantasy are harmless compared to the overt and covert untruths in Hobsbawm's autobiography. He, too, describes the appearance of the Szamuely family in Britain, mentioning that he had, some years previously, spent a convivial Christmas with us and a good friend of the family, the master spy Alex Rado. He shakes his head in sorrow at the deterioration of friendship between the two, putting the blame on my father and his anti-Communist crusade. Oddly enough he does not mention the time my father asked him whether he knew about the purges and if he did how could he go on supporting the system. Hobsbawm said very firmly: 'We did not want to know. We did not want to hear.' Like Amis but with less justification Hobsbawm gets some of the family history wrong and, unforgiveably, makes the following comment: 'He [Tibor Szamuely] himself, after almost starving in the siege of Leningrad, claimed also to have had the usual spell in a camp during the dictator's final lunacies.' In fact, my father was nowhere near Leningrad and never claimed to be. He did spend some time in the camps, though not very long and thereby hangs another tale, too complex for the leading historian. But the worst of that comment is the sneering and dismissive reference to the 'dictator's final lunacies'. This is far worse than Amis's view of Stalin through the prism of his friends and family. This is a blatant dismissal of the sufferings of millions of people as something barely worthy of mention.

As it happens several books have appeared recently on the subject of 'the dictator's final lunacies'. These included the rearrest of thousands of those released in 1948, the deportation of whole nationalities, the

infamous 'doctors' plot' and a large anti-semitic pogrom, the last of which would, one might imagine, interest Professor Hobsbawm. Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir Naumov have put together the transcripts of the trial of members of the wartime Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, together with other related documents, and have provided the volume with an extensive and detailed introduction that gives an overview of the Jews in the Soviet Union, potted biographies of those on trial (all but one executed secretly), an account of their often brutal interrogation and the related attack on the Jews. It is said that if Stalin's plans for the Jews had gone ahead European Jewry would not have survived this second and more devastating blow.

Rubenstein and Naumov also tell of the cowardly and unhelpful behaviour of the many Western communists and fellow travellers who had known many of those who disappeared in the second purge but would not speak up, allegedly because they were afraid of exciting ultra right wing sentiments in the United States. Presumably Professor Hobsbawm at the time felt the same way. None of them heard what Whittaker Chambers describes as 'the scream in the night'. It is, to give him his due, that that so upsets Martin Amis. Perhaps, it is not as funny as all that.

A Spiritual & Outward Grace

Roger Homan

Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible,
Adam Nicolson, HarperCollins, 2003,
£18.99

The Bible in English: Its History and Influence,
David Daniell, Yale University Press, 2003,
£29.95

The apostle Peter counsels against 'that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold'. 'But let it be', he urges, 'the hidden man of the heart..., even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.'

One is bound to be wary, therefore, of sumptuous dust covers, of pastiche, of the gilding and distressing of new books as though they were items of furniture. Gladly, such suspicions are not warranted in the case of Adam Nicolson's *Power and Glory*, even though they are prompted; its covers enclose a literary treasure executed in a quiet spirit. Let alone its historical insight, the

text is a compelling observation rendered in an elegant style that sustains its reader.

Nicolson takes up the story with the accession of James I in 1603. James comes from Scotland to London as Moses through the wilderness to Canaan. But the land flowing with milk and honey is soon teeming with plague. One in five Londoners dies before the end of the year. The making of the King James Bible is then a story of scholarship in the shadow of sickness and of Puritan commentators citing the pestilence and the rightful punishment by God of a wicked establishment. It follows also in the wake of the convocation at Hampton Court in February 1604 to consider the future of the Church of England. While we may wish to take or leave Nicolson's earlier note on the size of the King's tongue, its contribution to an impassioned and at times acrimonious debate 'among graue, learned and reuerend men' evidences the influence that the King brought to bear. In Nicolson's account, therefore, the defining context of the King James version is Jacobean England, a power struggle between religious factions personified in bishops and played out under the eye of the King. It yields 'the greatest creation of seventeenth-century England... England's equivalent of the great baroque cathedrals it never built'. But such an inheritance is due not only to the scholarship of the 'companies' formed to undertake the work of translation. It owes much to the condition of the English language that had emerged from the awkwardness of the medieval period and had not yet striven for the fussy precision that mars some later versions. Moreover, it was written to be heard rather than read privately and in conditions without amplification. So the epistle to the Hebrews favoured by Cranmer for Christmas Day has about it the power of proclamation:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

See how this compares with the Jerusalem Bible nominated in modern lectionaries:

At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets, but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son.

Fluency and readability are achieved at the expense of close reference to sources. The account is accessible but not the primary documents on which it is based. Citations of contemporary material are always worthwhile but are used sparingly. We have to trust Nicolson's scholarship and indulge his taste for colour and vitality in the way that we excuse television historians.

One of the treasures of *Power and Glory* is its selection of colour illustrations. There are sober portraits by unknown or little known painters. Each affords an intimate insight of its subject, thanks to the accompanying annotations. The anonymous portrait of Archbishop Bancroft testifies not merely to his existence but to the

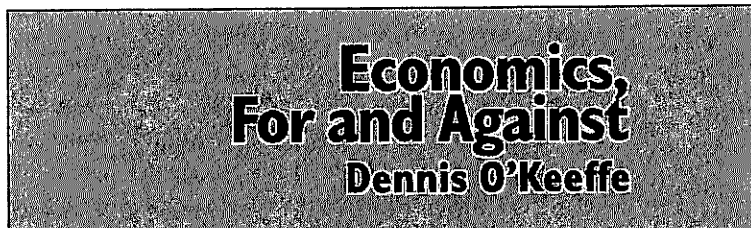
toll that was taken of him by the relentless challenge of extreme puritanism. The feeling with which the text is written is that with which the illustrations are chosen: we are made to view the austere interior of Longwood meeting house as appreciatively as we behold the richness of Knole and Hatfield.

For Nicolson the qualities of the King James translation – ‘dignity, immediacy, a sense of deep, musical rhythm, an intuitive and poetic understanding of the connection between present and the past’ – owe much to contemporary influences, to the scholars engaged upon it, to the rules set out by Bancroft and to a contemporary aesthetic that he observes in Jacobean art and architecture. Embedded in the text are some attractive vignettes such as the appreciation of Hatfield House and an insight of Jacobean portraiture said to be characterized by the same unshadowed light with which the King James version is suffused. Nicolson is also an engaging story-teller: when we reached November 1605, I was minded to close down my computer lest Guy Fawkes should do it for me.

If Adam Nicolson treats lightly of the broader historical and linguistic context of King James, it is David Daniell’s theme and one of the meanings of his title *The Bible in English*. It weighs in at little short of half a million words and cannot be read at the bus stop. It is remarkable for its scope and magnitude. Daniell’s historical account begins with translations from Hebrew and Greek in the fourth century or thereabouts and tells the story to the present day. During that time the Bible has been translated into English as a whole or in part over three thousand times. Five chapters are devoted to the period before the advent of the printing press; among the surviving treasures of this time are the beautiful manuscript Lindisfarne Gospels of 698, to which we pay a virtual visit in the opening pages. In 1536 William Tyndale, in comparison with whose work Professor Daniell assesses subsequent versions, was martyred for translating the Bible into English and two decades later the likes of Derek Carver were executed for reading or possessing it. An index of thirty pages at the end of the volume defies the reviewer to spot any omissions from this extensive account.

Since 1945 there have been over twelve hundred translations into English. Small wonder, therefore, that I could not find reference to my favourite Aunt Sally, the rendering of Paul’s epistles by Two Brothers of Berkeley that appeared under the title *Letters to Street Christians*. Many of the twelve hundred are reworkings of earlier versions, like Hollywood remakes. Prof Daniell, declaring a distaste for the ‘bizarre and reprehensible’, settles on a small number of the more serious postwar productions and treats each in turn. Though, on his own admission, ‘laughably’ brief, these reviews afford an observation of recent trends. He develops the point noted above about public and private readings. While the earlier translations, typified by that of King

James, were intended to be read aloud to an audience, more recent versions reflect a loss of the capacity to hear and remember. In the desire to become ‘relevant’, he notices a loss of the theology that was intrinsic in earlier works. He recognises in the production of Bibles a motive to sell to customers rather than to nurture those who seek: the English Bible, it seems, is attractive not because it is more accessible than the Latin but by virtue of its stature in the market where it is recognisable by its rich apparel more than for the imperishable ornament within. It is up there with the Highway Code.



Economics and its Enemies: Two Centuries of Anti-Economics,

William Oliver Coleman, Palgrave, 2002, £60

This is a brilliant book, conceived on a vast and daring scale, and argued with magisterial conviction and comprehensive erudition. Dr Coleman holds that the modern science of Economics, during its short two and a half centuries of developed life, much the most inspiring corpus of social theorising ever accumulated, has been persistently dogged by a relentless *doppelgänger*, an ‘anti-Economics’, bent not only on sneering and jeering the subject down but on dismissing it altogether from the intellectual stage. One of the most pitiless and condescending of hostile voices, Carlyle, was responsible for the denigratory and grossly false soubriquet which has since attached itself to Economics: ‘the dismal science’.

Anti-Economics is not, however, simply the stock-in-trade of Marxisant nihilism, though with the collapse of international Communism some of its versions certainly embrace that residual mania. Rather it is a powerful presence in most forms of modern ‘radicalism’. Every time the student and adult fanatics rage against ‘globalisation’, they are really attacking free enterprise and its incomparable intellectual supports. More upsetting is the sad reality, pointed out by Coleman, that there are significant strands of anti-Economics even in the complex fabric of conservative thought. Anti-Economics tends also to feature prominently in modern humanism, which often puts humanity before people, and in modern church thinking, which prefers interventionist government to God. Quite predictably anti-Economics is a major presence in the hubris of atheistic rationalism,

though this is a contingent and not an inevitable feature. As Coleman stresses, anti-Economics is also a noisy element in modern feminism and greenery. Here the errors are especially strident. Only capitalism could achieve the emancipation of women. It is the free market alone which stands a chance of protecting the environment, given the scale of the wealth required for that task.

Coleman makes it clear that anti-Economics is rooted in intellectual error. There is, for instance, a strange conceit, almost unthinkable outside those economies which capitalism has so transformed in the last 200 years, namely that the state is an unfathomable well of resources and that government can abolish scarcity. This is an example of a way of thinking that is possible only because many citizens do not understand wealth-creation. People can cleave to it only because there is a huge private, but not bottomless, flow of production, which the state greedily plunders.

On the more specialist explanatory front, the anti-Economic opposition has largely failed to absorb the marginalism which is the core achievement of modern economic theory. This explains the survival beyond their proper shelf-life of the multiplex theories of exploitation associated with the misunderstanding of the market order. Once it is understood that prices tend to fluctuate around the level of marginal productivity, theories of exploitation simply evaporate. Then only envious perversity is left to engage in a kind of theoretical embalming, preserving the socialist corpse in a state of advanced decay, a process exemplified at its worst by what often passes for Economics in many universities in France. Coleman is effortlessly at home with French theorising and stresses that anti-Economics is very much at home in France. Indeed that marvellous country is now engaged in a salutary learning process. She is absorbing the harsh truths about what happens in the long run to those who despise the market and its clear-sighted theorists. Coleman may be wrong to cite Frédéric Bastiat as not belonging to the Great Tradition (*la Grande Tradition*) of Economics, in the sense of having had no subsequent influence. French free market economists are now publicising the tragedy of Bastiat's eclipse for a century and a half. He was, indeed, a victim of the intellectual triumph of socialism and collectivism in France from the middle of the nineteenth century. His restoration to a celebrated position in the history of French Economics is already underway. No thinker in history has more eloquently described the state for the wasteful plunderer it usually is, even in free societies like France.

One theory especially favoured in France, and featuring in the work of the late Pierre Bourdieu, as Coleman notes, is that supply and demand are universal forces only by allegation. Market phenomena are for Bourdieu no more than provincial constructs of particular social structures. This view is falsified by the most elementary knowledge of economic history. Poverty throughout the ages has been caused by the sluggishness of supply

mechanisms, by sudden collapses in production or by uncontrollable shifts in demand, resulting from plagues or huge population increases. As William Baumol once said, supply and demand are among those elemental forces which will ultimately overwhelm all barriers erected for their suppression.

One particularly notable tack, as Coleman points out, has been to argue, as did Lord Balogh, that it is man's *engineering* achievements which remainder poverty. This is nonsense in view of Communist history. Russia and China employed modern engineering. The Soviet Union surpassed the United States on many critical supply indices. The proof that the market apparatus is indispensable is precisely at its most acute in this case. It was failure of *demand* that doomed Communism. Supplies of cement and steel accumulated to useless effect, alongside un-gathered harvests, whilst Communism's unfortunate people went without elementary consumer goods. It is a savage irony that a reading of Marx's false critique of capitalism, as riven by problems of overproduction, a critique popularised in the 1960s and 1970s by Baran and Sweezy, was in those decades the nearest many Sociology students ever got to studying Economics. The thesis fits Communism far more exactly than it does the market economy.

The book insists that Economics is provenly superior to anti-Economics. This is witnessed in its tendency to successful integration. There is a powerful consensus among many economists around a substantial corpus of explanation and practice, a corpus dominated by market theorising. No such substantial corpus obtains, by contrast, in Sociology or Psychology, which both still remain hopelessly fractured into competing paradigms quite remote from each other. Indeed professional sociologists are often grossly deficient in Economics, History and Philosophy. Whatever their other literary merits, anti-Economists like Ruskin, Carlyle and Coleridge seem in their views on the economic aspects of the world merely crabby eccentrics. On the other hand, where anti-Economics set out its stall as a rival to 'Political Economy' (what today we call 'Economics') as in the case of Marxism, the result was in the long run a dismal failure theoretically and practically. Most of the ills of the twentieth century are direct outcomes of the vanity and folly of the Marxist pseudo-vision.

The intellectual history of Marxism is characterised, in opposition to proper Economics, by disintegration. In all their versions and subdivisions the Marxoid obsessions soon splinter and die. Between the 1960s and 1980s hundreds of thousands of students in America, Great Britain, France and Australia were indoctrinated in the neo-Marxist Sociology of Education. The whole exercise collapsed along with the Communism its exponents professed not to believe in. Common sense would suggest some linkage between these two collapses. What is left of Marxism now is really only a hatred of the human world such as we find in Political Correctness, where it

nestles alongside the absurd life-denying theories of Foucault and Derrida.

I have two reservations about this book: first what counts as Economics; just what the Grand Tradition consists in; and who deserves entry to the Pantheon, are questions not sufficiently spelled out. Presumably we should expect a central focus on scarcity and choice. Bastiat does not make the grade because he did not influence posterity. His substantive concerns, however, were totally central to economics. There seems to me to be a conflation in Coleman's argument between influence and rightness. Maybe this is a kind of confusion. Smith and Ricardo and Marshall and Friedman *et al* get in the Book of Heroes because they were right and/or influential. Murray Rothbard is excluded for reasons not entirely clear to me. I did not like his political isolationism or his Holocaust and Gulag revisionism. I thought his hatred of Adam Smith was ridiculous and his willingness to be treated as a guru deeply offensive. But he was centrally focussed on voluntary exchange, prices, and scarcity and his economic erudition was staggering. Moreover, for all Keynes's intellectual brilliance and vast influence, does he warrant a creditable or discreditable evaluation? Is the Institute of Economic Affairs wrong to identify him as a major architect of inflation? Did he not influence the spend your way out of trouble school? And finally, in relation to this first worry of mine: I do not remember coming across Israel Kirzner's name in the text, and it certainly is not in the (rather thin) index. Yet surely Kirzner is one of the greatest living social scientists.

My second doubt concerns an old preoccupation. Coleman's book seems thin on the functional status of Economics in the advanced societies. One could readily enough work out that a rich society, with a specialised division of labour, with knowledge of the routine poverty and despotism which have been the standard experience of mankind in most eras, a society whose scholars were becoming increasingly schooled in the scientific outlook, and possessed growing expertise in mathematics and statistics, would inevitably *evolve* an economic science. Some thinkers would be fascinated, as they are, by the strange order and symmetry of the economic world. So the emergence of the subject seems inevitable. What part does it play in public affairs? How important is it functionally? Do we need more Economics or less, more economists or fewer? How much Economics do people know without knowing they know it? Is the conscious knowledge which experts have of the economy as important as the unconscious and tacit economic knowledge citizens have as they go about their business? If Dr Coleman writes more books, I hope he will deal with these issues.

A Joke's a Joke

Matthew O'Keeffe

The Mirth of Nations,

Christie Davies, Transaction Publishers,
2002,
£33.50

This book would be enjoyable simply for its collection of wonderfully incorrect jokes. Christie Davies is an authority on ethnic jokes and he explores this world to discover what exactly it is that creates mirth. The usual answers to this search have invoked theories of underlying hostility on the part of joke-teller to the butt of his joke. Davies's book is perhaps best seen as a reply to such 'hostility' theorists. Davies's common-sense approach yields many interesting conclusions, mostly undermining the hostility theories. These theorists make a childish mistake: confusing real aggression and mere playing with aggression and failing to see jokes as, precisely, jokes.

Davies has suggested before that the largest body of jokes, worldwide, involves two opposed qualities: stupidity and caniness. The familiar criticism that capitalism has engendered a world obsessed with economic success and failure may be on target here; Davies makes the further suggestion that enthusiasm for stupid and canny jokes reflects this obsession. Canny jokes did not emerge until after the Industrial Revolution. Stupidity jokes are certainly much older but have in common that their butts today are those on the margins of society. This 'metro centric' analysis of stupid jokes fits especially well with modern capitalist societies where the canny tend to move towards the commercial or intellectual centres of society and are quite likely to regard the people they leave behind as stupid.

An entertaining introductory table breaks down twenty-four countries according to the butts of their jokes. 'Stupid' and 'Canny' jokes are told in all 24 countries although it is jokes about the Scots, the Jews, the Australians, the Canadians, and the Poles which are singled out for special investigation in the book's seven core chapters. Perhaps more intriguingly, the targets of jokes around the world are often the same. The Scots are considered canny in 14 countries, the Jews considered canny in 15. A cursory inspection of this table contradicts any notion that jokes entail hostility: sometimes there has been hostility on either side of the comic divide (the English and the Irish) and sometimes not (for instance the Canadians and the Newfoundlanders).

Hostility is an irrelevance. Davies rightly insists that ideology is a far better medium for hostility and hatred than humour can ever be.

Comparisons between Scottish and Jewish humour reveal the origins of self-mockery. The hostility theorists have pointed to anti-Semitic prejudice as the driver behind self-mocking Jewish jokes – a sort of decision by the Jews to join in rather than be beaten down. Initially plausible, this insight cannot stand generalisation since it becomes untenable applied to the Scots. There has never been an oppressive ideology of anti-Caledonianism comparable to anti-Semitism and yet the Scots have a vein of humour every bit as self-mocking (if not as well known) as the Jewish one.

An interesting feature of Jewish humour is its source in Jewry itself, an effective 'ownership' casting further doubt on the connection with anti-Semitism. There is also no Scottish equivalent of the jokes about Jewish women. They appear to be a unique feature of Jewish humour and are compared with Australian jokes about men precisely on the grounds that they are opposites (the one joke humouring the all-powerful woman, the other the all-powerful man).

The Mirth of Nations also identifies jokes as one of the simple remaining pleasures not totally under siege from the politically correct. Nor is the debate about humour and hostility totally academic. We learn that Umberto Eco favours censoring jokes (as he sees a direct link between Jewish jokes and the Holocaust). Davies may be against such censorship but he does not claim that jokes are a force for good. They may not have caused the Holocaust but nor did they bring down the Iron Curtain: 'It is just as plausible to argue that the jokes were a safety valve and a substitute for political action that delayed the eventual collapse'. As Davies neatly puts it, humour is time off from serious life.

The comparison between wealth creation and mirth creation is also thought-provoking. Adam Smith identified free trade and the division of labour as two ingredients for a prosperous world; Christie Davies identifies stupidity and canniness as two qualities likely to raise a smile the world over. Beyond these first principles, however, the comparisons falter. True, the countries that have followed Smith's advice have everywhere tended to become wealthy. It is not so clear that jokes which create mirth in one country will create it in another. Reading *The Mirth of Nations* one is struck by the richness of some comic traditions and the relative poverty of others (Australian jokes about drinking and – more specifically – vomiting merit seven pages of discussion).

The study is perhaps a little anecdotal and therefore incomplete. There is no discussion of Irish jokes, for example, despite their appearance in a quarter of the sampled countries. However, all studies of jokes will tend to be anecdotal. Given the polycentric way that jokes are invented, no one humour scholar could ever

compile more than a small handful of them. Even if he could, the compilation would be obsolete by the time it was finished given the way that jokes, once invented, are changed in the re-telling.

The anecdotal objection is also blunted by a methodological point from Davies: 'Why have certain jokes that could exist or could have existed never been invented or circulated?' This is just as important as any question about actual jokes. There were hardly any jokes about the Japanese, for example, during WWII and this should raise serious questions for the hostility theorist.

Davies also re-iterates that a joke is a joke – against those who would try to reduce a joke to an objective, unambiguous statement. It is only in the world of humour that A and not A can be true simultaneously, he suggests. If this is correct, jokes in some ways elude academic explanation. *The Mirth of Nations* should nonetheless be judged a fine scholarly effort.

Terror for All **Penelope Tremayne**

No End to War

Walter Laqueur, Continuum, 2003,
£16.99

The title of this book seems mischosen, for surely no-one expects an end to war, and further the book is not about war, it is about terrorism, which is quite another matter. As an overview of many of the best-known terrorist campaigns of the last half-century it is detailed and clear and, more importantly, frank in demolishing some of the current misapprehensions about the causes and continuing popularity of terrorism. It is scholarly and unsensational, with occasional glimpses of a nice sardonic candour about sacred cows. I fear it may not be as widely read as it ought to be.

Long experience of his subject provides Professor Laqueur with valuable observations: that Arab solidarity, however much discussed, has not so far shown itself real except in solidarities of hatred; or that the pseudo-heroic image of terrorism is much helped by the reluctance of editors and others to call a terrorist a terrorist ('activist' or 'guerrilla', a word trailing clouds of glory, is too often preferred); or that in several countries terrorism has become a way of life. He is not kind to the CIA or FBI, pointing out, for example, that they knew of bin Laden in 1996 but did not list him as a terrorist; 'nor were [his] financial assets included in official lists

of terrorist resources, so.... no attempt was made to seize them.' In December 1998 George Tenet, the then Director of the CIA, wrote that terrorist action within the US 'seemed inevitable and that its scope could be larger than previously experienced. We are at war. ...I want no resources or people spared in this effort'. Laqueur tells us that 'these instructions were either not followed up or they failed to have an impact on the President and his close aides.' The FBI meantime refused to accept information about bin Laden offered by the Sudan, and expressed the view that terrorists 'kill relatively few people'. Readers may think that in such a climate Mr Tenet was doing rather well; and later still, in July 2001, he warned the upper tier of his government that Osama bin Laden would launch a significant attack against US facilities or interests within the next few weeks, that would be spectacular and scheduled to cause mass casualties, that preparations for the attack had been made, and that it would occur with little or no warning. Not bad, surely, for a department which had for years been hamstrung not only by constant cuts in funding but, much worse, by strict prohibition on contacts with people who were or had been in touch with terrorists – that is, the only people with new information to give. These and other follies were surely not the fault of the CIA but of the mindless enforcement of Political Correctness.

The book emphasizes the long-running *trahison des clercs* throughout the West. The 'Old Orientalists' (who did have first-hand knowledge of their subject) were condemned as hopelessly tainted with 'imperialism'. (Professor Bernard Lewis, who made public the text of bin Laden's 1998 *fatwa* which called for the indiscriminate murder of Americans, was pelted with abuse and scorn from assorted *bien pensants*.) The post-Imperialists asserted that 'the Islamic threat' was largely or even entirely, a figment of imagination, and Islamic fundamentalism (this from an American academic) was 'largely a liberating force', not a danger. Another, the author of many books on the Holocaust and its effects, is quoted: 'Should not observers and academics keep sceptical about the US government's assessment of the terrorist threat? To what extent do "terrorist experts" indirectly perpetrate [*sic*] the irrational fear of terrorism by focussing too much on far-fetched horrible scenarios? Does the terrorist industry, consciously or unconsciously, exaggerate the nature and degree of the terrorist threat to American citizens?' (Beirut *Daily Star*, March 12, 2001)

If academia has been unteachable, so have the media. Journalists and professors alike have flattered terrorists and called them by soft names, from fear of antagonising 'peaceful' Muslims, or from left-wing political bias. Laqueur reminds us of the dangers of 'idealism', and seems at times to accept the great prevalence of fanatical religion. I am not quite so sure of that: mullahs in Manchester are one thing, but the big-businessmen

(and many are very big) who pay for both words and weapons are quite another. But certainly the risk from fanatics is real, whether the fervour is heartfelt or assumed for convenience; and young people in love with suicide can always be found, whether in teeming city hothouses or leafy suburbs.

No End to War is historical rather than analytical, and has little to say about the nature of terrorists as it affects or may affect the progress of terrorism. Even a casual acquaintance with such people suggests that very marked traits go with the job – such as enormous vanity and an unslakeable thirst for power. I hope that before long someone suitably qualified may write a text-book on the subject; it is one very well worth studying.

There are fashions in both morality and immorality. In the sixties for example the ruling moral fashion was for 'compassion' meaning being sorry not for victims of crime but for criminals; adultery (having become safe at last) became a fearless commitment to honesty, not a breach of faith; and so on. I am not sure that anyone has touched on terrorism as a fashion statement since Jillian Becker did, in the 1970s, reminding us that a famous Paris dressmakers had brought out a new perfume called Mau-mau. The de-civilising power of such fashions strengthens rather than weakens them. In the '90s the most admired accessory at a very grand birthday ball in a country house was a Kalashnikov. Dear old AK47: the trouble today, another fifteen years on, is that NBC are likely to be the next 'in' thing.

Laqueur is quite clear that terrorism flourishes best in the relatively easy-going democracies of the west, not under dictatorships or military rule. This may be obvious but is remarkably little perceived, and deserves all the attention it can get. So I rather wish he had had not cited the Greek 17th November group (Trotskyist), which was set up in 1968 but did not become active until 1975, after the 'Colonels' had been disposed of: 'only when democracy had been restored.' For the Colonels had not in fact abolished democracy: they called quite presentable elections and were freely voted back in. What they abolished later was the monarchy, which Greeks rightly saw as their own business, not their government's; and finally they allowed an attempt at clandestine intervention in Cyprus. That was what sealed their fate; and the inept governments that followed them enabled the amateurish 17th Novembrists to get their noses above the freeboard. (As Laqueur remarks of the perpetrators of 9/11, 'Since no-one was after them, since no-one was aware what they were up to, since ethnic profiling was strictly forbidden, there is a reasonable chance that even a group of village idiots would have succeeded.' It took courage to write that, in the climate of today's worship of violence.)

No-one is likely to feel more secure, or more sympathetic towards 'liberation struggles' for having read this book. Not that Professor Laqueur is the least a

scare-monger; on the contrary. But he has rationally few illusions, and allows himself – as many other writers do not – to show that the ‘Noble Terrorist’ of modern mythology, be he suicide-bomber or mass-murderer, is no less a creature of half-baked fantasy than Rousseau’s Noble Savage. Perhaps he is a trifle lenient towards Israeli terrorism, and perhaps gives a little too much time to distinguishing ‘extreme Left’ and ‘extreme Right’ activities; surely by now we all know that the two are like Siamese twins. But he neatly demolishes the old argument that terrorism is the natural product of poverty, pointing out that it arises from the socialist requirement that equality be imposed, by force if necessary, and is sustained by the capitalist wealth it declares itself dedicated to destroy. A neat natural irony: the suicide bomb to end all suicide-bombing?

Rights of Birth & Choice

Norman Barry

Natural Rights and the Right to Choose,
Hadley Arkes,
Cambridge University Press, 2002
£20 or \$28

The abortion debate in America shows no sign of abating. We British might feel a little smug about our lack of concern. There have been no deaths at abortion clinics or big demonstrations here, as in America, as a consequence, probably, of abortion’s parliamentary legislation in 1967. But the United States, with its complex system of judicial review and great power of the Supreme Court, has endured at least three decades of torment over the issue. As Arkes somewhat regretfully notes, a real problem in the country is that the public representatives have been anxious to distance themselves from the issue and to leave it to the courts.

He himself is clearly anti-abortion but he has written a fine scholarly book on the subject which is bound to take the debate even further. There are two aspects to his argument. First, a deep position in jurisprudence which sees the American legal system, since the Founding, as embedded in a universal morality which embodies natural rights. According to Arkes, the country’s problems derive from the declining importance of this jurisprudence. And second, a detailed and complex analysis of the changes in American law on abortion since the groundbreaking *Roe v. Wade* (1973) case, which illegitimately took away the power of the states

to legislate on the subject and created a constitutional ‘right to choose’.

The second part of this excellent book is much more persuasive than the first. Arkes seems to think that ‘reason’ can demonstrate a set of absolutely binding principles (and the natural right to life would be one) which proper law reflects. Indeed, he thinks that the current malaise in American law stems from the alleged dominance of ‘legal positivism’: law can be anything which the legislatures and, in America especially, the courts, say it is. He repeatedly quotes James Wilson, a signatory to the Declaration of Independence, a representative at the constitutional convention in Philadelphia and an early Supreme Court justice, on the superiority of the moral law.

While Arkes argues his case lucidly, I do not think it is plausible. The pro-choice advocates who emerge from the smart law schools are not normally positivists. They are people like Ronald Dworkin (mentioned briefly) who have made their reputations arguing against English legal positivists like Herbert Hart. But they have a different set of morals from Arkes’s, and all would claim that their positions are validated by a correct interpretation of the American experience and general ethics. But this is the nub of the positivist’s position: unless a clear distinction between law and morality is produced, we cannot make a proper moral judgement about a particular piece of legislation or court decision. Instead, there is endless argument about what the law really means in moral terms. Positivists do make moral judgements but they insist they embody principles to which the law *ought* to conform. And that action has to be taken by legislatures.

Arkes’s account and critique of the behaviour of the American Supreme Court since *Roe*, is quite brilliant. It has been shamelessly compliant to the wishes of the liberal elite with its incessant demands for an extension of ‘civil liberties’. *Roe v. Wade* did not completely eliminate state regulation of abortion, and some of that authority was confirmed in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992); yet the right to abortion has become almost the right to infanticide because of the Court’s striking down of successive state laws. Despite its probable approval of some elements in *Roe*, American public opinion is very much opposed to the killing of a foetus (a baby) that survives an abortion.

As a legal positivist myself, I have always been opposed to the unconstitutional usurpation of legislative authority by the Supreme Court in *Roe*. Like Arkes, I regret the abdication of responsibilities by the state legislatures in the face of its imperialism. Most people forget that before *Roe*, only three states (New York, California and Hawaii) had excessively liberal abortion laws.

Arkes’s own political position is actually rather moderate. Although against abortion in principle, he recommends a ‘modest first step’ to change the law. He wants

a proper public debate about what 'life' is, so that judges cannot arbitrarily say that a fully-formed baby is not properly entitled to the protection of the law merely because its complete birth would be inconvenient to the mother. A legal positivist, distrustful of the universal applicability of a contentious morality, would not deny the strict applicability of (following David Hume) a binding *convention* here. But as Arkes acutely points out, the stress on the rights of the mother, has allowed dangers to her health, which have always validated some abortions, to be extended to mean her 'mental' well-being. The last restraint has thus been removed so that they now have abortion on demand in America : as we do here, though by a permissive parliamentary statute rather than an activist judiciary.

Much of Arkes's book is taken up with the struggle, in which he has been involved, to get Congress to pass a law ('The Born Alive Infants Protection' bill) which would outlaw partial-birth abortions. All actions by the states were effectively scuppered by the *Sternberg v. Carhart* (2000) case outlawing a Nebraska statute. And in his discussion, Arkes rebukes some well-known conservative jurists. Even Justice Scalia, one of the most articulate sceptics of the validity of *Roe* on the Supreme Court, is admonished. His argument that the matter should be returned to the states would, according to Arkes, fail because the judiciaries in them would soon find quasi-legal grounds to return to the liberality of *Roe*. This is why Arkes wants Congressional action to open up the 'conversation' between the branches of government in America in the hope, presumably, that there will be national action to limit severely the right to abortion and, ultimately, to restore the right to life as a constitutional principle.

It is perhaps here that my positivism departs significantly from Arkes's sophisticated moralism. I am deeply disturbed by the horrific accounts of botched, but legal, abortions that he quotes and by the acquiescence of the political class to the liberal elite. But the problem can be alleviated only by positive American constitutional law; and that means the overturning of the outrageous *Roe v. Wade* decision by the regular methods. To go for anything more ambitious would prolong the debate endlessly, lead to more violence by the opposed groups and further discredit the law in America.

Hadley Arkes has written a brilliant book but I do fear that his commitment to an intrusive and contentious natural law can ultimately only preserve the influence of the judiciary, which he rightfully wants to replace by the considered actions of public representatives. And that must mean the reassertion of states' rights. America is still a federalist system, is it not?

A Real Cop-Out Christie Davies

A Brief History of Crime,

Peter Hitchens, Atlantic, 2003,

£16.99

Peter Hitchens' history of crime in England and Wales is concerned with the decline of order, justice and liberty in our country. It is a book that boldly links the violence, disorder and squalid yobbishness of Mr. Blair's Britain with the government's systematic attacks on the traditional liberties of the subject and his or her right to be treated justly. He shows that the slogan 'tough on the causes of crime' assumes that those who commit crimes are unable to choose to refrain from wickedness and that being 'tough on crime' does not mean heavier sentences for convicted criminals or a rougher treatment of the disorderly but is an excuse for a further extension of the powers of the state. The industrious, respectable members of society are thus squeezed between the two jaws of the socialist pincers. They are both robbed, assaulted and harassed by a youthful underclass that the state declines to, or is unable to punish and yet are denied their traditional rights to bear arms, to freedom of speech and to trial by jury. The depredations and disorder of the criminals provide the very justification for removing the rights of their victims.

Hitchens shows that in the past Britain was able to combine order with liberty because the police were ordinary citizens and shared their responsibilities and moral outlook. Now they are the servants of the state and are instructed to mediate between the respectable and the malefactors as if they were equal parties. The growing use of the term 'civilians' by senior police officers to describe those who are not policemen shows how far things have moved as does their hysteria when victims 'take the law into their own hands'. Why shouldn't they? It is after all their law and it existed long before the invention of the police.

Hitchens has drawn upon a great deal of unpublished as well as published material about the gradual and mendacious imposition of gun controls upon the British people. In the past the respectable man was allowed to keep a gun at home for its defence, particularly if he lived in a remote rural area, but criminals rarely used guns; they knew that if even one member of a gang killed a victim or passer-by they would all hang. Today gun control has disarmed the respectable citizen while criminals use

them with impunity. Once again the entire balance of power has shifted to the detriment of the respectable citizen who has a home, a job, an income and a standing in the community, who is subject to increased control by the state, and to the benefit of those who have no real place in society and who now need fear neither punishment by the law nor the reprisals of the respectable. In a just society the respectable and the deviant would not be treated equally; the former would be supported and the latter subjected to the pains of formal exclusion. All our problems stem from a pervasive socialism that at best regards them as equals and at worst favours the unruly and deviant. Hitchens has shown this quite clearly, citing a number of cases in which villains have won, or come close to winning, damages from their victims for injuries received while committing crimes. No wonder that the public has come to regard so many of the rulings of its judges with contempt. Whose side are they on? Do they no longer recognize that no just claim can arise from an evil activity?

Hitchens is at his best when taking apart line by line the inane reports to which carefully chosen judges have appended their names – Auld, Macpherson, Scarman et al. Auld seems to believe that juries can not and should not acquit simply because they disagree with the law or with a particular prosecution. Yet that is what they have always done and indeed what they are for. They are not servants of the state but our safeguard against a state that would otherwise be an elected dictatorship; no wonder that Mr. Blair wants to get rid of juries. The problem rather is that the state has abolished all qualifications of age, property or education for sitting on a jury and in grossly criminal areas such as Caernarfon the acquittal rate in contested trials is now 66.7% compared with a mere 21.1% in Salisbury. The answer, as Hitchens cogently argues, is not to abolish juries and give even more power to the state but to reform

them in the direction of inequality by excluding the unsuitable from serving on them.

Hitchens suggests, probably correctly, an alternative possible explanation to the Brixton riots that led to the Scarman report. Hitchens writes 'lawless people, angered by a brief return of proper policing to what had become almost an outlaw zone, seized an opportunity to drive the police from the streets and to loot the local shops.... political opportunists later sought to use the riots as a pretext for restraints on the police in the future'. It sounds far more plausible than the official version which has prevailed. The Scarman and Macpherson inquiries have as Hitchens puts it, 'succeeded in their less obvious purpose, which was to impose on the police of England a new kind of law, the law of the elite state rather than that of the common people'. It has led to 'the complete defeat of Sir Robert Peel's original conservative concept of a police force ranged on the side of the public, sharing its morals and culture'. Indeed this is the central theme of Hitchens' powerful and comprehensive book.

Peter Hitchens is to be congratulated for his forthright attack on the conventional nonsense of the twenty-first century and his call for a return to the institutions of the past which served us well. Tony Blair's modernisation by contrast means the indefinite extension of the very changes of the last half of the twentieth century that created our disastrous present. *A Brief History of Crime* is less about crime than about policing and the criminal justice system but it is illuminating on both these topics. Peter Hitchens has written an insightful and innovative book that all right-thinking people should read. It has the further merit that it is sure to annoy the members of our hegemonic liberal elite who have managed to silence and exclude all criticism of their narrow ideology and fatuous policies. It is good to know that they have not been able to silence Peter Hitchens. Long may he goad them.

NOTES ON REVIEWERS

NORMAN BARRY IS PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT BUCKINGHAM UNIVERSITY

ALEXANDER BOOT IS THE CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF AN ADVERTISING COMPANY

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MATTHEW O'KEEFFE IS A RETIRED INVESTMENT ANALYST WHO CONTRIBUTES TO THE ALEX STRIP IN THE *DAILY TELEGRAPH*

HELEN SZAMUELY IS A WRITER AND RESEARCHER

PENELOPE TREMAYNE'S BOOK *NO IRON BARS A CAGE* DESCRIBED HER EXPERIENCES WITH TAMIL TERRORISTS

IN SHORT

Peter Simple's Domain,
New European Publications, 2003, £12

Forty years ago I discovered my mother in a helpless state of mirth over the *Daily Telegraph*. It was General 'Tiger' Nidgett, one of the characters in the Peter Simple column, which has remained a family favourite since, while the successive anthologies of the column are sought after in times of distress or gloom. Over the years, to Michael Wharton's chagrin, many of his characters like Dr. Heinz Kiosk and Dr Spacely Trellis have escaped from the column into real life while we actually have many institutions like the Marylou Ogreburg and Marmite Peoples Multi-Racial Street Dance Theatre, the Nerdley Aztec Centre or the Pelmet and Curtain Ring Authority. It is a measure of Wharton's genius that unlike many other satirists, the acerbic Swift for example, he has dissected the idiocies, inanities and tragedies of our mad world without upsetting us too much.

This latest anthology, an ideal Christmas present, was published to coincide with Wharton's ninetieth birthday. As AN Wilson said, 'it is funnier, sharper and truer than all the works of his contemporary journalists put together'. Incidentally, unlike most geniuses Michael Wharton is a delightful person.

Merrie Cave

The Twilight of Britain: Cultural Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and the Politics of Toleration,
G. Gordon Betts, Transaction Publishers, 2003, £33

I have reviewed several books on third-world immigration into Britain for the *Salisbury Review*, or in plain English, the colonisation of Britain by the third world. They have been of high standard, but have made limited impact. Gordon Betts's forceful study seems fated to follow this pattern. This, indeed, raises the question or questions, why a great nation (or multi-nation) with several centuries of nationdom and empire to its credit can in the wake of a successful war of national survival throw its identity to the winds and submit to a so-called diversity which adds up to deracination. Both the author, and David Marsland in his masterly preface, touch on this question tangentially.

Sooner or later it must become our main focus of enquiry

and eventually action.

The book deals with race, ethnic identity, will-o'-the-wisps like global idealism and the UN, misappropriation of universal human rights, the limits of toleration, freedom of speech, and the new censorship. It brings EU Europeanism and the pretensions of the United Nations into its purview. The author demands strict definition and redefinition of terms, whose portmanteau usage – per Lewis Carroll – of late has been exploited to smuggle in partisan concepts and policies. 'Toleration is a complex and paradoxical concept. It should not be founded on the unquestioned notion that it is a virtue, because it is capable of being abused. It has different features and motives, not all of which are commendable. Toleration should be viewed instrumentally, namely, as facilitating negotiation aimed at the reconciliation of differing objectives. The limits of toleration towards multiculturalism should reflect the political, social, and overall economic well-being of the whole nation state.'

Underlying it all is the question: what has been happening to us, why, and what can be done? It still awaits answers.

Alfred Sherman

Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt: Toward a Secular Theocracy,
Paul Gottfried, University of Missouri Press
2002, \$34.95

For the 2000 American Presidential election, Green Party candidate Ralph Nader introduced the clunky neologism 'Republicrats'. According to the far-left Nader, Republicans and Democrats were entirely indistinguishable: the whole lot of them were in league with the evil corporate hegemony who were destroying the USA.

Paleo-conservative Paul Gottfried, although far from a supporter of Nader's conspiratorial economics, also perceives few differences between the American left and mainstream right. In *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt*, the companion volume to his earlier *After Liberalism* (1999), Gottfried argues that the Western world's 'managerial-therapeutic elite' has aimed at the 'behavior control' of its citizens. In the wake of the failure of Communism, argues Gottfried, this elite has (partly) cast aside its devotion to state-run economies, and instead set its sights on the radical transformation of social behavior. Since the 1960s, the power-brokers have ushered in a 'starkly totalitarian' nightmare of PC thought control. On a panoply of issues, this elite has militantly

enforced a party line: the West is uniquely and ineluctably racist; certain minority groups require state-sponsored preferential treatment; etc. This project has succeeded, Gottfried thinks, because of a watered-down pseudo-Calvinism that has acted as the driving force of what he terms the 'therapeutic state'. Unmoored from religious faith, a 'deformed Protestant culture' has chosen multiculturalism as its secularized way to salvation.

Although Gottfried's fiery polemic offers some compelling arguments, he too often allows his passions to get the better of him. To him, interventionism is an extension of multiculturalism. Gottfried's greatest fault is his inability to make distinctions: *pace* Ralph Nader, there's no such thing as a 'Republicrat'

Eric Adler

The European Constitution and what it means for Britain,

David Heathcoat-Amory MP, Centre for Policy Studies, 2003, £7.50

We seem to be reaching some kind of a watershed in the whole European debate. On the day the draft of Giscard d'Estaing's constitutional proposal was published, the BBC summoned me for a routine interview with their regional radio drive-time programmes. Instead of the usual condescending amusement, I faced a lot of rather worried questions about the document.

We are still waiting for a signal that this watershed has been reached. So far we have had little but the usual waffle with one shining exception. David Heathcoat-Amory MP, who sat on the Convention, resigned from the Conservative group on it, argued against almost all the provisions and put his name to an alternative proposal for a Europe of Democracies, has spoken and written tirelessly on the Convention and the resulting document, the proposed Constitution. As he explains in this excellent pamphlet, the Convention had not been entrusted with the task of writing a constitution but of coming up with some proposals to 'bring Europe closer to the people' or, in other words, it was a desperate attempt to make the whole project legitimate and popular. The result is a document longer

than all the previous treaties put together. It is not a constitution but a detailed set of rules with which the EU intends to tie every one of us into a tight pattern of behaviour.

Whether you are sceptical about the project or definitely against it, read this pamphlet and shudder, then pass it on to a friend. Then start thinking how we are to get out of it all.

Helen Szamuely

Eric Voegelin,

Michael P. Federici, ISI Books, 2002, £ 15.95 (Hardback), £ 8.95 (Paperback)

ISI Books is an imprint of The Inter-Collegiate Studies Institute, a long-established American conservative educational foundation who distribute the *Salisbury Review* in North America. Michael Federici's lucid study of the ideas of the exiled German philosopher Eric Voegelin appears as one in a series of books devoted to figures who have exerted a significant influence on the conservative intellectual movement in the United States. Federici focusses on those aspects and periods of Voegelin's work – predominantly those of the 1950s – which are relevant to the development of a coherent conservative response to the challenges of totalitarianism abroad and liberalism at home. He emphasises Voegelin's celebrated thesis, developed in *The New Science of Politics* (1952), that the innate disorders of modernity are best understood as modern manifestations of *gnosticism* – by which Voegelin essentially means a claim, characteristic of revolutionary thinkers, to possess a privileged knowledge of how the human condition can be delivered from its finite state and into a realm of more or less perfection.

Federici has certainly written a useful book on one important aspect of Voegelin's legacy and there is enough in his text to show that he is aware that there are others perhaps at least as important. Against this must be set a somewhat cavalier treatment of Voegelin's reasons for distancing himself from both doctrinaire conservatism and, in a more nuanced way, the endorsement of any dogmatically formulated system of religious belief.

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