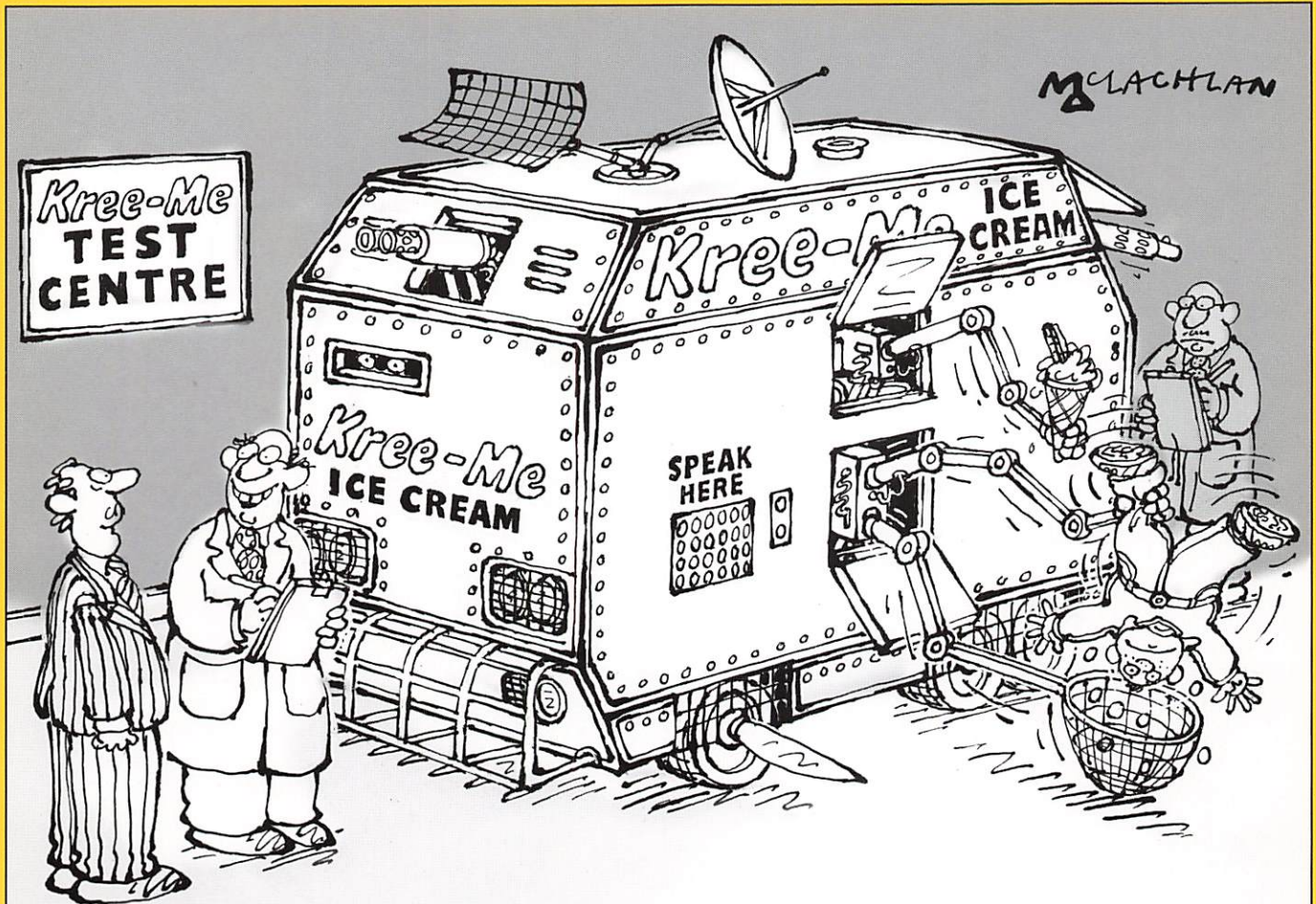


The
Salisbury Review
The quarterly magazine of conservative thought



"We've invented a new van for selling our ice cream in some of the more crime-ridden estates"

Crime On and Off the Streets

**Prisons as Home
from Home**
Theodore Dalrymple

**The McCain and
Obama Race**
Mark Coalter

**Whittaker
Chambers**
Helen Szamuely

**A Policewoman's
Lot**
P C Ellie Bloggs

**The Suicide of
Cricket**
Amol Rajan

**Why I am Not a
European**
Marc Sidwell

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In British society responsibility and respectability are now to be found only in the middle classes. At the extremes we find a wealthy élite who take reckless financial risks knowing that the taxpayer will bail them out if anything goes wrong and a feckless underclass quite unable to organize their everyday lives. Many of the latter prefer, as Theodore Dalrymple shows, to be in prison rather than at liberty because it is the only way that they can bring a degree of predictability and regularity into their chaotic existence. They find liberty and responsibility far too taxing. It is the thankless duty of the police officer to monitor their chaos and, like PC Ellie Bloggs, to decide on the basis of judgment and experience whether and when their 'normal' disordered and disorderly behaviour is likely to turn into serious violence. The police are forced to justify every decision in writing, in case something goes wrong and the politicians or the courts are looking for a scapegoat. It does not make their or our milieu safer but it enables officers to ward off unfair blame in an unpredictable world. This is the main cause of the wasteful paperwork that keeps the police away from their proper duty of protecting the public

Likewise, as Rodney Atkinson demonstrates in detail, there is chaos at the top, where bankers receive very high bonuses for their success in extending excessive credit to an already over-indebted population. When the loans cannot be repaid and the banking system is in crisis, there are for the bankers no 'negative bonuses', and no penalties for failure, merely silver handshakes for those who resign. Governments always come to the rescue of failing institutions for fear of an economic downturn, but postponing a small recession today is likely to lead to a major collapse tomorrow. When this is taken together with the present government's plans to abandon all fiscal restraint and to borrow and to borrow and to borrow in the manner of the 1970s, it will lead to accelerating inflation, the date rape of the British currency. Meanwhile, in the United States, as Mark Coalter reports, Wall Street, together with the tort lawyers, are bankrolling Obama,

not McCain. What conclusion should we draw from this? We know what is in it for the lawyers, for Obama's world will be a litigious one, but what pay-back are the bankers expecting?

As Christie Davies shows, the university leftists have matched this inflation with one of their own by awarding ever higher degree classes for ever inferior work. They are driven by their passion for equality, for equality of results, for parity of esteem between good, bad and truly dreadful institutions and worst of all for equality between the honest and those who cheat and plagiarise. Intellectual and moral standards alike are on the verge of collapse but, then, that is what equality means and what the pursuit of equality always entails.

We are already being robbed to pay for the Olympic Games in London in 2012, which as Alexander Deane points out, are already way over budget; in addition the Lottery Fund has ruined many small, worthy charities to subsidise this extravagant sporting conceit. Britain is about to follow Greece and Quebec into ruinous Olympic debt. Ironically these huge financial losses will coincide with the cheapening of the worthy and measured game of cricket, which is being rapidly replaced by a quick and nasty but more profitable version, flannelled fools feeding fast food to those without taste or patience, as Amol Rajan describes.

Still, life in Britain is infinitely better than Algeria, hit in turn by the two great disasters of the last century, socialism and radical Islam. Patricia Lança has described how after the collapse of French rule, the new left-wing nationalist Algerian élite reduced the Algerian population to poverty through their policies of nationalization and the collectivization of agriculture. In desperation the new oppressed turned to radical Islamic politics and the resulting civil war led to the loss of a hundred thousand lives. The Algerian experience tells us very clearly what we in the West must continue firmly to oppose. Our liberty, identity and way of life are at stake.

The Presidential Race

Mark Coalter

Thankfully, after six long months the field in the forthcoming US presidential election has narrowed to two candidates. Months of primaries, caucuses, debates, mudslinging and negative campaigning have now produced two individuals who, according to the commentators, are set to make 'history'. In the blue corner we have the first African-American presidential candidate to be selected by one of the two parties, a choice made more pertinent by the Democrats' historic association with Southern segregation. Representing the Republicans is John McCain who, if elected, would, at seventy-two, be the oldest person to assume the presidency in a first term. On paper this may be an 'historic' election, a contest between youth and experience, a fight for the soul of the nation and destiny of the free world, however, as with many such facile pronouncements the substance of reality far outweighs the superficiality of mere symbolism.

Are Obama and McCain trail-blazing candidates? Neither could be accused of emanating from the centre of their respective parties. Obama's politics are firmly on the left while McCain's

record has been decidedly maverick, or at least that is what his campaign would want everyone to believe. While McCain has been an international household name for many years, Obama's celebrity is much more recent. The tall, attractive, articulate spokesman of American liberalism, endowed with charisma and an unconventional background, is, for those who are left-leaning, the acceptable face of American politics. With his 'yes we can' mantra delivered in that distinctive drawl to adoring crowds, he has an appeal which extends beyond the fifty states of the USA to the far reaches of the English-speaking world, Western Europe and elsewhere. Opinion polls in the US suggest that his occupancy of the White House in January 2009 is almost certain. Indeed, one could be forgiven for assuming that the main hurdle for Obama was triumphing over Hillary Clinton in the bitter and prolonged Democratic selection process and that the contest in November against McCain is a mere distraction.

With the notable exception of Fox News, Obama

dominates the mainstream US media. The networks, NBC in particular, appear willing to give him a free pass — the *Saturday Night Live* skit with a debate moderator asking an actor playing Obama if he is sitting comfortably and then posing a hostile question to a Clinton double is perhaps not too far off the mark. After eight years of the Bush Administration it is understandable that the left and their fellow travellers in the BBC and other media outlets are desperate for change and banking on Obama to deliver. Withdrawal from Iraq, the ending of America's apparent pariah status on the world stage, the reversal of the Bush tax cuts, the reform of Washington — Yes We Can! — all appear on this most idealistic of wish lists. Why not throw in the end of global poverty, famine and disease for completeness?

That is the Obama problem. Whereas McCain has no shortage of experience in serving his country, either via the armed forces or on Capitol Hill, Obama

has relatively little. Elected to the US Senate in 2004, he had previously spent an unremarkable seven years in the Illinois legislature, sitting on the fence on every important issue and making

strategic alliances that would ultimately propel him to Washington. According to the respected and non-partisan *National Journal*, Obama's Senate voting record makes him one of its most liberal members. Promises and platitudes quite easily satisfy bleeding hearts; however, to quote Walter Mondale, 'where's the beef'? Is Barack simply just another politician? His recent pronouncements in favour of guns and criticism of the Supreme Court's ruling prohibiting the execution of child murderers is decidedly populist and does not necessarily sit well with his latte-sipping backers in San Francisco, New York and other such metropolitan locales. The politician in Obama, however, understands the need to move to the centre and the numerical limitations of just having this bourgeois contingent in one's column. In the spirit of *realpolitik* he is attempting to reach out to the millions in small town America whom he once dubbed 'bitter' at a California fundraiser, those who, due to economic deprivation, 'cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-

On paper this may be an 'historic' election, a contest between youth and experience, a fight for the soul of the nation ... with many such facile pronouncements the substance of reality far outweighs the superficiality of mere symbolism.

trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.' After the verbal drubbing he received from Clinton, McCain and Fox News for these naive and unscripted comments his campaign has begun reaching out to the folks in the sticks. The elitist tag, used by his opponents to great effect, may, however, have stuck.

At seventy-two McCain will be the oldest first-term president if he prevails in November. Age, McCain argues, is not a factor and he regularly parades his redoubtable ninety-six year old mother as proof of his durability. His experience in foreign affairs and military matters is not in question. However, despite these advantages and the self-proclaimed straight talking approach, John McCain is a less than ideal candidate. In comparison to the youthful Obama, McCain looks haggard and tired — reminiscent of Dole 96 perhaps. This is exacerbated slightly by Obama who goes out of his way to praise McCain's service record, but, reading between the lines, his opponent may well be commending McCain for his gallantry at Gettysburg rather than in Vietnam. McCain's strained relationship with his party has meant that the Republican base is less than excited about his candidacy. Right wing radio has been decidedly lukewarm and has focused more on Obama and Clinton than in selling a McCain presidency. Evangelicals are divided and while they may not vote for Obama they could stay at home *en masse*.

McCain's financial reserves are substantial by UK campaign standards. Obama's fund-raising prowess, however, is significantly larger and greatly outmatches Republican efforts. Ironically the bulk of this largesse is coming from Wall Street, traditionally perceived to be in the Republican pocket. Indeed, so successful have Obama's efforts been that he has declined public financing (the first candidate to do so since this was introduced after Watergate) and he will therefore be able to significantly outspend McCain in key battleground states. McCain's campaign also appears to be unfocused and reacting to events rather than taking the initiative. Again, that is partially due to the media and the fact that for three months the Clinton and Obama contest has dominated the headlines. One senses that Obama has the wind in his sails whereas McCain is still anchored in port.

That said, McCain is not wholly in dire straits. The length of the campaign will certainly help. If McCain enjoys a bounce after the Republican Convention in September then he should eat into the Obama lead. Gerald Ford made up substantial ground on Jimmy Carter in the fall of 1976 and lost by only two points. McCain is not as far behind as Ford was at that stage

of the race. As more Americans become familiar with Obama and the probability of his presidency sinks in then they may return to the GOP fold. Obama's inconsistency (opportunism?) on Israel has alienated many Jewish voters who remain sceptical and he has yet to make any significant inroads into the Hispanic community. While McCain has had his fair share of nutty pastors and unwelcome endorsements, his immediate disavowal of these individuals can be compared favourably with Senator Obama's prevarication over Rev Wright. Some of Obama's other unsavoury past associations may surface to embarrass him while his wife has a tendency towards the unpredictable. And, of course, there are unforeseen events, which will test the mettle of these prospective presidents. After all, McCain's measured and statesmanlike reaction to the assassination of Benazir Bhutto gave his fledgling candidacy much-needed *gravitas* during the Iowa caucuses when his campaign was just emerging from its coma.

The selection of running mate may also be important. Mitt Romney would bring economic expertise and nous to McCain's candidacy, although his Mormon faith may have electoral disadvantages. The Republican governors of Florida and Minnesota, both popular in their states, could deliver electoral votes, while Bobby Jindal, the thirty-six year old Governor of

Louisiana, would represent youth and diversity. For Obama, Bill Richardson, the Governor of New Mexico, another swing state, could help with the Hispanic community. The calls for Clinton to join his ticket are less pronounced now than they were at the time of her withdrawal and Obama appears to be quite sensibly moving away from that option. Kathleen Sebelius, Governor of Kansas, has been mentioned, presumably to appeal to women, while the names of other more experienced governors and legislators in Washington have surfaced and been thrown into the mix by the rolling twenty-four hour news media, salivating over the prospect of the next piece of political meat.

The 2008 presidential election is shaping up to be a fascinating, close run race. For Republicans this may be the only silver lining in what could potentially be a disastrous year, while Democrats look to consolidate their grip on Washington. McCain may need a small miracle to overcome such unpromising odds, but his victory is not impossible. The election may be Obama's to lose but with a good three plus months to go until polling day the final outcome is anyone's guess.

Mark Coalter is a lawyer in New York.

Throw Away the Key

Theodore Dalrymple

There is probably no more damning indictment of British society than the fact that thousands of prisoners each year refuse the offer to be released early from prison into what, often without the slightest irony, is called 'the community'. They prefer to stay inside. Some might see in this evidence that our prisons are too soft and that they have become little more than rest homes for criminals. It would, presumably, be possible to make our prisons so unpleasant that no one would want to stay in them a moment longer than he had to; and certainly it is true that since I started to work in the prison service the level of physical comfort in the prisons has improved considerably.

However, we must remember that in a civilised society not every punishment can be justified by the fact that it is effective. Public floggings would no doubt put an end to parking on double yellow lines, but no one (I presume) would therefore advocate such floggings. It is easy to exaggerate how comfortable our prisons are. Very few of the readers of these pages, for example, would happily settle for a spell in them. First time prisoners remain apprehensive, and in my view both understandably and justifiably so.

However, substantial numbers of British prisoners do prefer life inside to life outside. I first got an inkling of this when I noticed an apparent paradox. While many of my patients outside prison had had their houses burgled, the police had discovered the culprit in virtually none of the cases. Indeed, it was difficult for my working class patients even to get the police to record the burglary, let alone to catch the burglar. At the same time, however, the prisons were full of burglars. Either burglary was far more common than even our crime statistics reveal, or the imprisoned burglars were a self-selected group. The latter turned out to be the case. Many of the burglars had scores or even hundreds of convictions. When I took the prisoners aside and asked them, strictly *entre nous*, whether they preferred life in prison to life outside, a good proportion of them would reply affirmatively. They would never admit it in front of their mates, of course; the mythology of prison holds that it is a strictly them-against-us society, that we hate them and they hate us. That this is an oversimplification was obvious to me from the friendly way in which old lags, brought once more

to prison, often greeted the officers they knew from before. By the time I retired from working in a prison, I had concluded that about a third of prisoners found life in prison more congenial than life outside.

What did prisoners like about prison life? They liked its predictability, its regularity, its rule-boundedness. Most of the prisoners conceded that, if they 'got their head down and did their bird,' they were treated with reasonable fairness by the officers. Many of them said that they felt safe in prison: that is, safe not only from the kind of *contretemps* with others that a criminal life often leads to, but safe from themselves. The prisoners often had enough self-knowledge to accept that they were quite incapable of fixing boundaries for themselves; that their uncontrolled impulses made them like those fireworks that jump about unpredictably, exploding at random and scaring everyone. By no means deeply evil by nature, they were afraid of what they themselves would do next. Prison ended their fear by severely circumscribing their choices. They longed to breathe unfree.

Another great advantage of prison was that it was free of women. It is not that they were homosexual, far from it; but in the social milieu from which they emerged, the relations between the sexes were now so volatile and contested, and violent jealousy so much the rule, that a period free of the problems and tensions that the competition for women created in the absence of any institutional or customary boundaries to sexual relations came as a welcome relief. Moreover, as fathers of children, of sometimes numerous children, it was a relief to be free of the nagging sense of unfulfilled responsibility that they had when at liberty. In prison, there was nothing they could reasonably do to contribute to the upkeep of their children, and so they felt a burden lift from their shoulders. In short, many of them were glad to be in prison. 'There's nothing for me on the out,' or 'There's nothing out there for me,' were phrases I heard on innumerable occasions when I broached the subject. This was sad, bordering on the tragic.

The prisoners emerged, in the main, from a part of society in which there was no family structure, no love, no ambition, no culture, no religion, and no self-respect, nothing that could give meaning to life. It was a chaotic world of temporary stepfathers,

baby-mothers, half-siblings and a kaleidoscopically-shifting membership of households, where the only real question was that of power, or Lenin's well-known Who whom? — that is to say, who does what to whom. All forms of refinement and politeness were but weakness, to be taken advantage of; ruthlessness ruled. It was an exhausting way of life.

It was not the physical comfort of prison that was attractive to prisoners, therefore, but its comparatively orderly life. Unfortunately, the prisoners were quite unable to order their lives for themselves. Many prisoners who were transferred from an uncomfortable closed prison to a much more comfortable open prison would abscond in order to be sent back to the former prison. When I asked

them why they had absconded from the open prison, an apparently irrational thing to do, they would say, 'I wanted to get back to a real prison.' They meant by this a prison in which they had little or no freedom, and therefore no decisions to make.

Winston Churchill once claimed that the civilisation of a society could be gauged by the way in which it treated its prisoners. My criterion would be the number of people who preferred imprisonment to freedom. Judged by that criterion, Britain is an increasingly uncivilised society.

Theodore Dalrymple's book In Praise of Prejudice is reviewed on page 48

The Suicide of Cricket

Amol Rajan

It is a curious fact that, though the protracted and painful suicide of cricket is presently being widely reported, few people seem to have recognised its significance, and even fewer seem moved to lament.

This highly regrettable situation, which has arisen through an unprecedented spectacle of international self-flagellation, is, in the finest tradition of self-inflicted death, the product of a conscious act of cowardice. After centuries of noble existence and a richer, more intelligent dialogue with human history and advancement than any other sport has ever achieved, (or will ever achieve) cricket is overdosing on a hallucinogenic drug. Like a greying man who brazenly and through lack of self-discipline tries some new narcotic, and in so doing abandons all his learned principles and accumulated wisdom for a temporary fix, the overlords of the magnanimous marriage of leather and willow have decided that a transitory pleasure justifies premature death.

Over the past five years, a phenomenon (it does merit that overused term, unfortunately) known as Twenty20 has succeeded in persuading cricket's guardians to abandon not just a sport but a whole culture. Their motivation is money; their sin, avarice. In 2003, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) decided that county cricket, long synonymous with empty stadiums and low revenues, was in need of salvation. So, thinking 50-over, one day cricket a more propitious site for this venture than the longer four day game, they invented Twenty20.

Ostensibly just a shorter, condensed version of the 50-over game long popular around the world, Twenty20

would accentuate many of the other departures from county and Test cricket embodied in the one day game. Each side would have one innings, and only twenty overs in which to score their runs. Fielding restrictions would be adapted. Teams would wear improbably luminous attire, and acquire silly alliterative names. Bizarre noises and pop music would accompany each wicket, along with the spectacle of scantily-clad cheerleaders shaking pompoms vigorously. The route to victory would remain scoring higher runs than your opponent; but time, that unwavering friend of true cricketers, would be strictly censored. No more the three, four or five day game: this exuberance would last for three hours. In short, dignity would be supplanted by impudence; adult customs by childish fads. The symbol of this degeneration would be the emergence on cricket grounds of vulgar dugouts, common to football and baseball, where batsmen awaiting their call to the wicket could be seen giving each other pep talks and high fives. The cricket pavilion, an English invention and bastion of decency, would be rendered obsolete.

Barely five years on, the commercial success of Twenty20 has made it the most lucrative sporting invention in history. A legion of India's billionaires, many of whom legitimately claim membership to what the American writer David Rothkopf calls the new global 'Superclass', will pay extraordinary sums to entice players from overseas to play in India instead of at home. Many, following the footprints of the maverick New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond, decide that they would rather spend the remainder of their careers playing Twenty20, and therefore

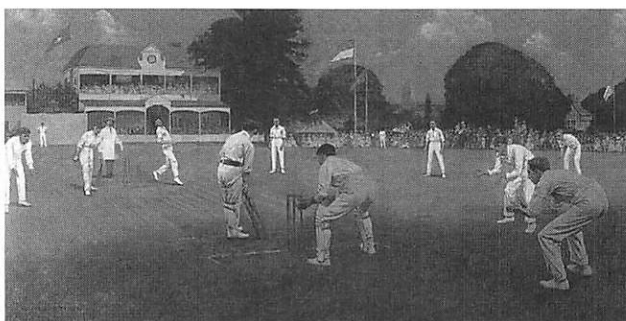
retire from other versions of the game to prevent the acquisition of injuries that might curtail their capacity to get very rich. A new tournament called the Indian Premier League can offer professionals up to \$1m for six weeks' work — more than many would get in a decade of county cricket. The monetary magnetism of this Indian exoticism is unquestionably pulling people away from their domestic games. It also injures Test cricket severely: at a Test match between the West Indies and Australia in Antigua in the first week of June, barely 200 people watched each day. Only competing billionaires can reverse the pull. On June 6th, a Texan billionaire named Sir Allen Stanford, who has had a home in the Caribbean island of Antigua for 26 years, announced a series of winner-takes-all Twenty20 matches between England and a West Indies All Star XI. Each player on the winning side will earn \$1m, as will the coaching staff and, between them, non-playing members of the squad. The losers get nothing. This is casino capitalism at its best.

Few consequences of all this are as depressing as this: even cricket's commentators have been infected. The longer form of cricket lends itself like no other sport to intelligent, contemplative commentary. In Michael Holding and Richie Benaud, a former West Indian fast bowler and Australian all-rounder respectively, cricket has given the world its two finest exponents of sporting commentary. So in thrall is Twenty20 to the money men, however, that it cannot accommodate these thinkers. Instead, a motley bunch of amateurs are forced by commercial need to greet each six or wicket with phrases like 'that's a DLF maximum!' or 'an AIG big wicket!'. This is mere verbosity.

It is true that Twenty20 is played by many of the same professionals; that it requires the use of much of the same equipment; that it is played in many of the same arenas; that it entices many of the same fans; that it is played according to many of the same rules. But Twenty20 is not cricket. It is Rounders at best — Rounders for kids. It is not cricket because it subtracts from cricket the physical skills and intellectual principles on which cricket is founded. Craftsmanship, for which batting and bowling are both really just euphemisms, has been abandoned. Patience no longer a virtue: it is punished, disincentivized, and made junior to instant gratification. Those who understand cricket recognise that the slower the game, the deeper the action. They seek reward not in the

value of power and speed, but in the virtue of subtlety and quiet accumulation. They recognise that in the history of cricket is a store of emotional knowledge and a precious fund of cultural integrity, now impaled on its own egoism. Twenty20, in short, is antithetical to the basic merit of the centuries-old game. And as a result of all the monstrous vanity and turmoil it has unleashed, cricket, like much of Western civilisation, is experiencing an existential crisis.

CLR James, the outstanding Marxist historian of his generation and author of *Beyond a Boundary*, widely recognised as the finest book ever written on the sport, evinced wonderful perspicacity when illuminating the correlation between cricket and civilised values. In a chapter called 'Decline of the West' — a reference to Oswald Spengler's book of the same name — he argued that 'There is no need to despair of cricket. Much, much more than cricket is at stake, in fact everything is at stake. If and when society regenerates itself, cricket will do the same.'



Kent vs Lancashire 1906

The values of cricket,

James argued,

like much that is now in eclipse, will go into the foundations of new moral and educational structures. But that they can be legislated to what they used to be is a vain hope which can only sour on the tongue and blear the eye. The owl of Minerva flies only at dusk. And it cannot get much darker without becoming night impenetrable.

I write with the prejudice of an immigrant who learned what England is on the cricket pitches of Surrey. Born in Calcutta, only a few miles from Eden Gardens, the world's largest cricket stadium, I devoted my childhood to a sport which taught me manners and showcased the best of the West. Few civilising missions can be more fun than club cricket. Yet the privilege is being denied to others, who are instead invited to engage with an inferior game. As I look ahead, therefore, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Marxist above, I seem to see cricket grounds foaming with much adrenaline, but the civilising force of longer games being slowly strangled. This is not, as some argue, flattery by imitation. It is suicide exhibited as evolution. Only resolute and urgent action will avert it even now. All I know is that to see, and not to speak, would be the great betrayal.

Amol Rajan is a reporter at The Independent

Algeria: a Story of Doomed Generations

Patrícia Lança

Only those who have now reached later middle age have a living memory of the Algerian War of Independence. And even most of these forget that Algeria was once a French colonial territory where secularism, even after independence, was influential among the native intellectual elites. So influential that no urban populations prostrated themselves in public for prayer and office workers kept ham sandwiches in their desks during Ramadan. However thirty years later Islamism had become powerful enough to precipitate a bloody civil war which caused 100,000 dead. This story, which serves as a paradigm for what would happen in other Moslem countries, shows that Algeria was in many ways the crucible for violent anti-colonialism, Third-Worldism and, finally, *jihad*.

Most significant perhaps is that these phenomena found their way into the heart of Europe carried by the huge number of Algerian immigrants who have now been arriving steadily for over half a century. This terrible story is the subject of a recent book by Martin Evans and John Phillips (*Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, Yale University Press, 2007). Over a million *pieds noirs*, as Algerians of non-native provenance were called, were always an obstacle to a peaceful decolonization, not least because of Algeria's proximity to Europe. They were France's motive for regarding that country as an integral part of France and any challenge to this status as invasion.

The *pieds noirs* resisted any discussion of decolonization with a ferocity soon to be matched by that of the nationalist FLN (*Front de Libération National*), while internecine conflict among the rebels themselves set a pattern for the future. Atrocities by both sides as well as notorious cases of torture by the French cemented a culture of violence which was to continue for decades both in North Africa and France itself. When independence did come in the early sixties it was resisted with bombs by the OAS (the secret terrorist army set up by French generals, opponents of De Gaulle). The latter's terrorism, however, paled in comparison with what was to come later among the Algerians themselves.

Casualties in the independence war are disputed. French sources estimate their own military losses at

27,000 killed and civilian losses at 5,000 to 6,000. These also say that casualties among Algerians reached between 300,000 and 500,000, while Algerian sources claim as many as 1,500,000. Added to human losses there was substantial material destruction: scores of villages were razed, forests damaged and some 2,000,000 inhabitants relocated in what France claimed to be a campaign of pacification.

A second important feature (as in other Arab countries such as Iraq and Egypt) was the widespread influence of Marxist and socialist ideas. Disaffected Algerian intellectuals followed the French example in adopting marxist ideas despite the policy of the French Communist Party, never wholeheartedly in favour of independence for France's colonies. But even where they did not embrace the French or Algerian Communist parties — the latter was largely a settler creation — many Algerians on both sides of the Mediterranean gravitated at first towards the leadership of Messali Hadj and his peculiar mixture of Islam and Leftish populism, liberally peppered with socialist ideas.

Ahmed Messali Hadj was, until the founding of the FLN in 1954, the Algerian leader most favoured by European leftists. However, these gradually turned to the FLN when the latter began to show it meant business by adopting armed struggle and the production of texts supporting socialism. Despite growing support for the FLN in international forums Messali's ideas persisted and long remained an influence for egalitarianism and socialism. It was only towards the end of the independence war, during which they had firmly opposed desertion from the armed forces by its militants, that the French communists began to support the FLN. Nevertheless this *volte face*, which was reinforced after independence, never reconciled many strata of Algerian society to communism. The ideological influences behind Algerian socialism, the role of communism and of what was to be virtually an alliance both with Castro's Cuba, the USSR and Eastern Europe are not widely understood. Nor how what had once been perceived as a model finally lost its appeal for Algerians and other Arabs. And yet it was this factor that left the vacuum that Islamism came to fill both in Algeria and the Middle East.

Evans and Phillips take due account of the role of the Berber minority, its territory of Kabylia, its nationalism (as much anti-Arab as anti-French) as well as the significance of French-speaking Algerian intellectuals whose importance continued long after independence. Each case was to provide an ample seed-bed for the consolidation of clans and provoke violent conflict between them. On more than one occasion after independence there was open fighting between francophone and arab-speaking students and staff at Algiers university. Determination to ignore Berber claims became clear when the department of Berber studies was closed down.

As in other Moslem countries Algerian politics and economics found themselves the prisoners of their oil and gas resources. Sixth in the ranking of world suppliers, Algeria enjoyed such rich pickings as eventually to make its rulers independent of taxation and hence of any need to placate their voters. These, despite growing rates of abstention, nevertheless went regularly to the polls in national and local elections and referenda. But the rulers they elected showed no qualms over abandoning promises and continued to engage in flagrant corruption as well as ferocious repression against all critics. Dependence on oil of course also meant vulnerability to the vicissitudes of its market, as became all too evident in the mid-1980s when falls in oil prices, followed by drought, intensified economic problems.

The military *coup* that overthrew Algeria's first president Ahmed Ben Bella in 1965 broke an uneasy peace between the clans. The causes of the *coup* lay in the different origins of Ben Bella and Boumediène. Ben Bella, a former sergeant-major in the French Army decorated for his service to France in World War II, was one of the founders of the FLN, an active organizer of its guerrilla warfare and a participant in spectacular robberies. After a first arrest by the French in 1950 and his escape two years later, Ben Bella was again arrested in 1956 and imprisoned until 1962. He was a francophone and frequently recalled that it was in French prisons that he had finally learned Arabic. This long incarceration not only gave him the opportunity for reading but also insulated him from implication in the fierce and often bloody struggles inside the FLN thus allowing him to emerge after the war with his reputation unscathed.

Houari Boumediène, on the other hand, was an Arabic speaker and a fervent Moslem who had studied in Cairo. He had not taken part in the *maquis* and by 1962 was a colonel in the ALN (National

Liberation Army) stationed on the Moroccan frontier. Independence did little to assuage the long-standing conflict between the armies of the frontiers on the one hand and the *maquis* of the interior on the other. These felt that the former had left them to bear the brunt of battle by failing to provide the arms and logistic support they needed. By independence it had become clear there were two distinct clans fighting for dominance: the leaders of the various *maquis* on one side and, on the other, the military with their *Securité Militaire* (SM). According to Evans and Phillips the SM, which eventually pervaded every area of society, was trained in dirty tricks by the *Stasi* in East Germany and the KGB in the Soviet Union. The ordinary police on the other hand were trained by Franco's Spain, a fact not mentioned by the authors.

Algerian politics and economics found themselves the prisoners of their oil and gas resources. Sixth in the ranking of world suppliers, Algeria enjoyed such rich pickings as eventually to make its rulers independent of taxation and hence from any need to placate their voters.

After Ben Bella's overthrow and imprisonment in 1965, the only substantial change in foreign policy made by Boumedièn was to rid himself of the numerous

foreign advisors who had flocked to Ben Bella's side in 1962/1963. These had arranged influential positions for themselves in government offices and included Trotskyists whose influence with some Algerians dated from the liberation war. A striking example of this was the Greek revolutionary Michel Raptis, a leading figure in the Trotskyist Fourth International. He irritated Algerian rivals by taking charge of two key positions: the distribution of the *biens vacants*, property abandoned by French colonists, and advising Ben Bella on the credentials of foreign anti-colonialist movements who hoped to make Algiers their headquarters. Like most of his Algerian colleagues and other foreigners, Raptis was concerned with creating a clientele for himself. In their account of the Ben Bella years Evans and Phillips say little of these foreign advisers. The matter was, however, one of the factors that provoked Boumedièn's *coup d'Etat* in 1965.

The cornerstone of Ben Bella's foreign policy was African revolution and loudly proclaimed solidarity with all who fought 'imperialism'. His hubris was so great that he once declared 'We shall even help the Papuans if they ask'. Press, radio, TV and public meetings constantly produced inflammatory declarations and helped to create an excitable anti-colonialism which diverted attention from growing social and economic problems at home. Ben Bella's domestic policies were those of a speedy transition to socialism through the nationalization of industry and collectivizing of rural properties accompanied by a number of spectacular operations such as that of rescuing the *petits circeurs*

(little bootblack boys) from the street and the appeal to the population to donate its gold jewellery to the nation. Administrative confusion was put down to infighting among the many clans that disputed power with both the military and the former *maquisards*, not to mention alleged French sabotage. The flight of many Algerian professionals added to that of their French colleagues also caused disruption in all the social services, while the arrival of Egyptian '*coopérants*' sent by Nasser was not wholly welcomed either by schoolchildren who, like most Arabs living west of Tripoli, could not understand the Egyptian version of Arabic, or by the civil servants they were supposed to help.

The Boumedièn *coup* in 1965 was intended to put some order into an increasingly chaotic administration and discipline among the feuding groups and also to placate Islamist criticism of westernizing social trends, which had continued and intensified after independence. At the time Boumedièn was denounced as right-wing by the international Left. This soon turned out to be a hilarious misapprehension: in the years between 1965 and 1978 there was no change in most of the policies that had been pursued by Ben Bella. On the contrary, farm collectivization was continued and extended as was the nationalization of industry. Economic and political relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were strengthened and arms imports mounted. Third-Worldist posturing in the United Nations and other international forums was more frequent than ever and Boumedièn was as keen to prove himself as good an anti-imperialist as his predecessor. The result was further ruin of Algeria's economy, a growing scarcity of consumer goods, and mounting international isolation.

Boumedièn intensified the dictatorship with arguments based on a sacralization of the role of the FLN and its leaders in the fight for independence. Arab supremacism was explicit. No attention was paid to Berber claims for official recognition of their language (Tamzight) or the importance of their region, Kabylia, and the role of its customs in the formation of Algerian identity. On the other hand there was no attempt to reduce the importance of French at university level, although this had been an important promise during the liberation struggle. Accordingly francophony continued to prevail among the elites, who sent their children to Europe for schooling. Inevitably the children of less well-off families faced a serious handicap on the labour market, especially in technological sectors like the oil industry.

The highest birth-rate in the world (fervently encouraged by Boumedièn who is said to have predicted Islam's victory over the West through 'the wombs of our women'), increased the population from 12m. in

1962 to double that number at the end of the millenium. In consequence there were times when unemployment reached 25 per cent. Hence it is unsurprising that the appearance of Moslem fundamentalism found a ready-made audience. This doctrine, which had played little part in the struggle against the French, began to spread and for many it provided hope in a hopeless world.

Evans and Phillips give a lively description of the street life of these unhappy young people, as it began to develop in the eighties, including some of their grisly jokes and the scoffing lyrics of their songs. They became known as *hittistes*, a word etymologically connected with the Arabic for wall, on account of their habit of lounging against the wall at street corners. Protest music, known as *rai*, resentful, febrile and bitter, became fashionable among wide swathes of youth and not only those from the shanty-towns. Particular hatred was directed at the *chi-chis*, children of the corrupt rich who lived far from the slums and flaunted their designer clothes, expensive cars and European-style girl friends whenever they descended on the centre of the capital. *Villa, Honda, Blonda*, the *hittistes* shouted at the *chi-chis* as these passed showing off the booty bought by their fathers' corruption. The time had not yet come for the throat-cutting, beheading, mutilations or gang-raping of the nineties. As the authors point out, there was a strong sexual undercurrent to the discontent of the young idlers. Poor and only half-literate, they had no prospect of finding a wife, for whom custom decreed the need to pay bride price, while the resurgence of Islamic puritanism ensured that girl-friends were out of bounds.

Evans and Phillips repeat the widespread contention that much of the appalling blood-letting of Black October 1989 and the Civil War of the 90s was provoked or even organized by the authorities themselves in order to dislocate opposition forces and further terrorize the population. These chapters dealing with Boumedièn and his successors transmit a political atmosphere of 'smoke and mirrors', familiar to us from accounts of politics in other Arab countries, not least in present-day Iraq.

The authors take us through the rule of Boumedièn, of the tentative reformist Chadli Bendjedid, of the *chef historique* Mohammed Boudiaf, who was assassinated in June 1992, and of his successors Ali Kafi and general Liamine Zeroual up to 2007 and today's relative calm. A new constitution, approved in February 1989, dropped all references to socialism, dismantled the one-party state and initiated political pluralism and a stuttering passage to a market economy, none of which put a stop to mounting Islamism.

They give due weight to two factors which favoured the rise of the Islamic fundamentalism represented by

the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) and the GIA (Armed Islamic Group) which fought against the army in the 90s Civil War. One of these was the influence of the Islamic revolution in Iran and the other Algerian participation in the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. Both provided examples of successful struggle against what came to be regarded as two forms of imperialism, American and Soviet. The latter put a final cap on the last vestiges of illusion about Marxism. The results of successive elections since the end of the eighties can leave us in little doubt that Algeria might well have become an Islamic Republic had the Algerian army and its leaders not been ruthless enough to quash them and intensify the dictatorial system which was already in place. The ideological vacuum was, of course, to be filled by Islamism. The ensuing bloodbath

was to involve the slaughter of at least 100,000.

Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has now consolidated his position both at home and abroad. Evans and Phillips offer an unfavourable analysis of his character and career and agree with the American view of him as 'one of our own bastards' in the fight against terrorism. Now that there is a self-confessed al Qaeda presence in Algeria, American policy towards North Africa has every reason to coincide with that of Britain and the EU, dependent as are the latter on Algerian gas and oil.

Patricia Lança, who was a deputy in the Portuguese Parliament from 1987 to 1991, lived and worked in Algeria for four years after that country's independence

The Honourable John Companies of Iraq

Stewart Birch

At the latest fairly conservative estimate there were over 20,000 armed, private security personnel operating in Iraq, about 20 per cent of the number of US troops. Something like 30 per cent of them are foreigners. And of these about 60 have been killed in the last 18 months. These bare statistics, which are only approximations, because there is no requirement for these figures to be recorded or published, suggest that this is other than normal commercial security.

These men and women are training the police, the army, and commercial security personnel; providing close protection teams for diplomats, engineers and assorted people at risk; managing and controlling armed escorts for supply convoys; guarding perimeters, premises and oil pipelines; carrying out surveillance operations; and advising on kidnap and ransom negotiations. In all but name they constitute an army or at least a couple of divisions of an army. They are performing many roles that the armed forces were previously performing and thus reducing the burden on the armies of the coalition. These divisions belong to what are known as private military companies (PMCs). PMCs carry out business in the grey world between

commercial security activities and the military proper. Their detractors refer to them as mercenaries. They are not a new feature. The East India Company (EIC), the Honourable John Company, as it was fondly called, had its own armed forces in the eighteenth century.

The Government published a Green Paper in February 2002 to further the understanding of the phenomenon of PMCs. It is ironic that just as the Green Paper was gathering momentum, with the publication of a select committee's report in July of 2002, it was knocked off course by the aftermath of the war in Iraq, the very situation that requires its presence.

The Green Paper, when looking into the origins of PMCs, states that 'The debate about regulating these companies is not only concerned with preventing the damage that an unregulated private military sector may cause. In some circumstances, private military companies may be able to provide security services more efficiently and effectively than states are able to. Such companies have the potential to make a legitimate and valuable contribution to international security. The challenge of regulation is therefore not only to prevent PMCs from inflicting damage, but also to establish how the Government should work with them to maximise

the benefits that a properly regulated private military sector can bring.'

The EIC did not have the benefit of a Green Paper to set it on its course to become one of the largest commercial operations the world has ever seen but it did have some robust and honest advisers. In 1669 Gerald Ungier, chief of the factory in Bombay, wrote to his directors in London saying, 'The time now requires you to manage your general commerce with the sword in your hands.' The Portuguese had done the same in Goa, the French were of a similar view and still earlier, in 1614, the Dutchman, Jan Pieterzoon Coen, had written to his company's directors, 'Trade must be conducted and maintained under the protection and favour of your weapons, and the weapons must be supplied from the profits enjoyed by the trade, so that trade cannot be maintained without war or war without trade.'

This transparent and frank interrelationship between war and commerce has far too strong a flavour for the present age but there is no doubt that of the \$70-80 billion estimate for the rebuild of Iraq a realistic twenty percent will come back home to the US and UK via the security companies. Although we may be squeamish about these sorts of connections and the forthright language of a former age, the EIC military operations have lessons for the latter day Honourable John Companies of Iraq, the PMCs.

Although they have the same *raison d'être*, to make a profit, there is a major difference and this is the main lesson. The EIC's military operations had government backing as opposed to a tacit acceptance. From this official approval flowed authority. The company could then develop a structure and lay down standards. The vast number of documents in the British Library's India Office Military Department's records section is proof of the extent of the system.

Standards are of significance to Iraq because of problems that have arisen or because of the potential for damage that may occur from the use of PMCs. We have to remember that apart from the benefits that may be gained from PMCs, the Green Paper is also, 'concerned with preventing the damage that an unregulated private military sector may cause'. The problems, potential and actual, are of three main types:

- Damage to government policy caused by the unaccountable actions of corporate soldiers: a recent example being the killing on 16th September 2007 in Baghdad of 17 people by Blackwater security operatives. The strategic aims of the coalition should not be put at risk by such uncoordinated, uncontrolled activities.
- Poor service given to clients due to lack of clear

standards.

- Loss of life of the security personnel caused by lack of manpower, inadequate weapons or poor procedures.

These problems arise because of the lure of quick profits of an unregulated security industry. Unregulated companies may attract unsavoury elements both at director level and at employee level. At a corporate level there may be inadequate insurance cover for dependants, inappropriate weaponry, and poorly trained personnel with weak procedures. And at the employee level there may be rogue individuals with undesirable backgrounds who have enjoyed working for regimes with a poor human rights record such as Milosevic's Serbia, Chile under Pinochet, or apartheid South Africa.

The damage caused by this lack of regulation may not become evident in the short term but PMCs are not a fleeting phenomenon. They will be in Iraq for at least the medium term. Seven years is a realistic estimate when you compare the situation with other, less grave, situations such as Algeria or Columbia. And they will survive and prosper in the long term as the world becomes more and more volatile, and more and more privatised. Although it can be argued that the use of lethal force should be the monopoly of the state, in this privatised world it no longer is. The fact that such a traditional function of the state is now partly in the hands of private enterprise makes the case even stronger for regulating the private purveyors of force.

Regulation would give the following benefits:

- Less potential for adverse publicity stemming from rogue corporate condottiere through greater accountability of the operators.
- A better level of service to the clients through common standards of equipment and procedures.
- Greater protection of the rights of the employees of the PMCs by way of adequate insurance and appropriate weaponry. Migration of an established, accepted and approved concept to other troubled areas where instability and anarchy are hampering developments.

But before these benefits can accrue there has to be an official acceptance by the British government that PMCs are a part of the overall security effort. At the moment one of the most dangerous business sectors is devoid of legislation and standards, and in the case of American private security employees in Iraq they even have immunity from prosecution under the terms of an agreement made in 2003.

To address this situation the Government could take notice of three lessons from the EIC. Firstly, they need

to engage a robust honesty and from this would lead an official acceptance that PMCs are part of the security strategy. This would enable them to learn the second lesson: that regulation is necessary to enforce standards and the UK could take the lead to secure international standards.

And finally this would lead to a third lesson from the EIC's experience: close cooperation between the PMCs and the Army. This could assist in mutual support on operations and if managed adroitly turn a one way stream of soldiers leaving the Army into a two way flow of personnel between public and private sectors, thus

assisting the military's manpower retention problems. The Army already accept the need for this by offering one year sabbaticals to soldiers wanting to work with PMCs in Iraq.

If we officially sanction and recognise PMCs we will be able to regulate them and then we can cooperate with them, and thereby in the words of the Green Paper, 'maximise the benefits that a properly regulated private military sector can bring.'

Stewart Birch is an ex SAS freelance security consultant

Does Anybody Think that the Olympics will be a success?

Alexander Deane

Since London won the bid to host the next Olympic Games, the budget has more than trebled from the original £2.375 billion to (currently) over £9.4 billion. Excuses offered include the fact that the need to factor in VAT was overlooked — imagine how such an explanation would go down in the private sector! The relevant Public Accounts Committee Report disclosed that the bid also neglected to consider the (enormous) amount of civil service man-hours the Games would take up.

The 2012 Aquatic Centre is a good example of the chaos; it is not only hugely over budget; it's also one of the main Paralympics venues, but has only two disabled lifts. Tessa Jowell said 'we pledged that it will cost £75 million, and that is precisely what it will do.' The current budget? £242 million — and rising. The £2.7 billion 'contingency fund' for the Games is sure to come into play — or rather, the £2.2 billion that's left, £500 million having already been blown, a full four years prior to the Games' commencement (again, no doubt many businessmen in the private sector would be delighted by that sort of inbuilt incompetence cushion).

Of course, the spiralling budget doesn't just blacken the economic credentials of our Government and drain the resources of the state (or rather, take from the taxpayer). It is also the biggest bull in the public finance china shop; we all know of examples of charitable organisations which had reasonable budgets dependent on Lottery funding which has now dried up because of the continual raids on the Lottery funds by the swelling

Olympics purse. Charitable organisations, theatres and performance companies can swiftly be destroyed in one economic cycle. The harm of losing the accrued expertise and knowledge held within them often can't be undone and even when it can, rebuilding them can take decades. On current projections (and the pot will no doubt be raided once again before we're through), the Lottery is putting in £2.175 billion. That's a lot of money, which would otherwise be going towards (what one hopes are) worthy causes up and down the land. The benefits to the Lottery and its normal recipients of this enormous capital injection are, to use the polite terms of the Public Accounts Committee, 'uncertain'.

The dishonesty behind the budget process is breathtaking. The Government announced in February 2007 — funnily enough, just before a visit from the IOC — that the budget would rise to £5 billion. Given the transparently absurd state of the project's finance process, the Conservatives accused the Government of 'low balling' the budget, which they predicted would rise to £9 billion soon after the departure of the IOC. The Government didn't even bother to refute the allegations which, lo and behold, swiftly became true. These are the financial wheezes more associated with regimes run off the back of envelopes by third world despots than with Great Britain. I suggest that Britain should stop attempting grand projects until we have worked out why we are so bad at them, because we invariably see overspending and chronic delays in the construction of buildings that don't come up to scratch.

Here are some examples: the British Library,

the Dome, Heathrow Terminal 5, the Jubilee Line extension, the Scottish Parliament, and Wembley. Of course we don't have a monopoly on such catastrophes in grand projects: the National Library in Paris, Boston's Big Dig, the EU's Berlaymont outrage. But we seem *always* to have it here nowadays.

We *used* to be good at such things. As David Hughes has pointed out, 'Brunel built the Great Western Railway from Paddington to Bristol — still in use today, a century and a half later — in five years. That's only a little longer than it took the public inquiry to be completed for Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5.' Indeed, it's still possible to find examples of success *now*; the refurbishment of Twickenham was finished on time and under budget (it was done privately and with a single purpose in mind).

The government sought to sell us this pup by promising that a host of programmes for London would flow from it — like the regeneration of the East and Crossrail. However, as the cost of the Olympics has burgeoned, the money set aside for 'infrastructure and regeneration' has remained static (at £1.6 billion). Moreover, if that regeneration is the desired end, then why not simply have regeneration of the East and Crossrail? The expenses, per project, could properly be defined, and their execution would not involve the great risks innate in constructing buildings for a one-off event which may become very expensive white elephants.

Consider the fate of past hosts. The unfortunate hosts of the last Olympics suffered enormously as a result of the Games. Not only did Greece end up with a national budget deficit of 6.1 per cent (twice the maximum permitted under the EU's rules) but of the 22 venues specially constructed for their games, 21 are now entirely derelict. They lie disused, concrete already crumbling, a sprawling, graffiti-scrawled mess on now-unproductive land. Strangely enough, there wasn't a massive demand for fencing and handball on the outskirts of Athens. Or consider Montreal, just recently clear of the debt accumulated from hosting the games in 1976 — their stadium was known as 'the big O' for the duration of the games, and 'the big owe' for 25 years thereafter.

Any attention to precedents, foreign and/or domestic, might have been instructive. But this is a Government that hates history; in which ministers refuse flatly to be photographed near a steam locomotive or a square-rigged ship. Retrospection is a dirty word. This was not the decision of the occasional peculiar individual; rather, it was laid down by fiat: 'ministers

were ordered not to not to be photographed next to buildings of any antiquity.' That's the background. An appalling budget and a chaotic process, presided over by a Government that ignored all precedent and fabricated the finances. But we can be sure that all will be forgotten if the Games are a whiz-bang success. As *The Daily Telegraph* said in an editorial about the desolation of the Athens arenas, these things aren't about money, they're a luxury item that's all about prestige and pride. If they're a success, all is forgiven. Will they be?

Now that we are lumbered with them, it would be churlish to do anything other than hope so. But it is certainly hope rather than expectation. Consider the catastrophic baggage handling farrago at Terminal 5, and now envisage it in spades. At least the Greeks

built their venues on time (with the help of a large dose of illegal labour), although corners were cut to the extent that 13 workers died during the building process. Will the holes in the ground around East London actually become the grand, light-filled arenas of the architect's drawing board, given the unwillingness in this country to embrace the inventive building practices prevalent in the Athens 2004 construction? Probably

not. Then imagine the humiliation of being the hosts who couldn't provide the proper arenas. *The Telegraph* pointed out gleefully that one of the considerations in favour of the London bid win was that it was 'putting one over the French'. Considering the current state of affairs, are we really sure that they didn't put one over on us?

Indeed, faced with this constant round of panic building and IOC bribing, there is a case to be made for a permanent host city to be designated; it would do away with the corruption of the bidding process and the junkets for the IOC. It would serve to develop a permanent centre of expertise in a place accustomed to performing the enormous logistical feats required to pull off a Games successfully. (Given the great job the Australians made of it in 2000, my nomination would be for Sydney. Admittedly, such a step would lose the great excitement felt by host cities and would deprive areas of the tourist boost and attention that hosting entails — but, as shown by the arguments above, those things come with a very hefty price tag.

The sky-high state of our budget isn't set in stone. It's at £9.4 billion with four years still to go — who genuinely believes that it won't rise again?

Alexander Deane is a barrister



Death by Degrees

Christie Davies

Professor Geoffrey Alderman, formerly Chairman of the Academic Council of the University of London, has warned that degree standards at many British universities are in danger of collapsing. Universities UK, the Vice-Chancellors' front organization, has denied this. As a former external examiner, I know which of them to believe. Remember the old adage: 'If the Archbishop of Canterbury says he believes in God, well that's his business. If he says he does not believe in God, you can take it he means it.' Professor Alderman means it.

There has indeed been 'an explosion in the number of firsts' at respectable and grubby universities alike, thirds have died out, failure is impossible and lower seconds are called upper seconds. Everyone wins and all get worthless prizes. Alderman blames the inflation on the struggle of each institution to stand high in the university league tables and to earn enough fees from overseas students to stay solvent. Professor Alderman is right to blame these factors for the current rise in the rate of the inflation of degree results to Zimbabwean heights, but what are its historical origins?

Several years after I graduated I met one of my old supervisors, a distinguished academic, who was extremely angry. He had consumed enough alcohol at lunch to enable me, as a life-long teetotaler, cynically to encourage him to be voluble about a planning meeting of the university's examiners that morning. It had been decided to raise the proportion of finalists awarded firsts in his subject several fold. 'It was that idiot Professor X,' he complained. 'He can not resist flattery and the young radicals on the faculty persuaded him he was the great man who could sponsor the change. They thought it would be more egalitarian. Given that X had also been largely responsible for debasing Britain's currency, he was at least consistent.'

By this time I was teaching at a northern British red-brick university of neurotic respectability and I had no fears that the inflation would spread. Our department awarded on average one first each year, at most two, often none at all. One reason was that most of the staff had not attained first class honours degrees themselves and were unwilling to give students degrees better than

their own, particularly the younger staff who saw the new graduates as competitors. The Oxbridge graduates on the staff were more relaxed, since they saw the degrees they were awarding as inferior anyway, but many of the staff were products of the university and begrudged every first awarded. Standards were sternly upheld by the human emotions of envy and malice.

When I was senior enough to become an external examiner in the 1980s the inflation really got going and it began in the polytechnics, not in the universities. One year I arrived at a respectable university where I was an external examiner to be told that the department, indeed all their departments, were under pressure from the Vice-Chancellor to award more firsts. They asked me to defend them against this pressure, it being the job of the external examiner at that time to maintain proper standards. I refused to do so, and said that I strongly agreed with the Vice-Chancellor. Everyone was horrified.

The Vice-Chancellor was nagging them because his university was no longer getting its fair share of

There has indeed been 'an explosion in the number of firsts' at respectable and grubby universities alike, thirds have died out, failure is impossible and lower seconds are called upper seconds.

post-graduate scholarships from the central agencies that awarded them. They were instead being given to graduates of inferior institutions, polytechnics

and worse, whose low standards and peculiar modes of assessment allowed them to award numerous firsts to students of little merit. The award-giving body had been told by Mrs Thatcher's absurd ministers of education that the degrees awarded by these institutions must enjoy 'parity of esteem' with those granted by pukka universities. I knew how meaningless their degrees were and I now told my respectable red-brickers that they had only two choices. They could either assemble outside the gates of one of their inferior rivals and chant, like Millwall supporters, 'You're ***** and you know you are', or they could hand out more firsts. Anything else would be a betrayal of their own students.

Later I heard that the matter had gone to their Faculty Board. The Professor of Law, a nonentity heading a mediocre department, had refused even to consider the Vice-Chancellor's case. He proclaimed that everybody in Britain knew that his department had rigorous standards and that their degrees were highly respected

because of this. In fact no one had any idea that this was the case or respect for his department and his students suffered accordingly. The Dean, a woolly-sock brain literary man, was, even by the standards of professors of English, grossly innumerate. He wrung his hands and said, 'What can we do? Their average marks keep coming out at less than 70 per cent.' This dimwit really thought that you could use arithmetic averages as an absolute measure and that an essay marked at 80 was exactly twice as good as one marked at 40, in the same sense that there are two pints in every quart. When the inflationary pressures first hit, they impinged on men and women who, though good at the craft of examining, had no analytical understanding of the system they were using.

Obviously the Vice-Chancellor won. He would have won even if he had been in the wrong because he had more power and in universities that is all that matters. However no one wanted to lose face and openly give higher marks for the same work; what I call honest inflation, since everyone knows exactly what is happening. Instead they sneakily altered the way in which the marks were added up to calculate the degree classes. Those departments which used sophisticated modes of aggregation based mainly on overall profile were forced to use arithmetic averages. An absurdly complicated new method emerged that was imposed uniformly on all departments, even though very disparate things were being measured. They were quite unable to see that using the same formal system for calculating degree classes, far from making degree results more comparable between one subject and another, had in fact made them more different. A system suitable for Spanish may well not work for economics or history. Indeed three external examiners resigned rather than implement it. The new scheme was not only irrational but quite impossible to fathom. You could no longer look at a batch of marks and see roughly what they meant. Classes were calculated according to a complicated formula based on an absurd compromise.

Because it was so opaque the new system was easy to fudge so as to produce further increments of inflation. All you had to do was to tweak the formula and more and more firsts poured out of the tap. It became even easier when marks for courses were replaced with far more numerous marks for tiny modules taken in two or more different years and given different weights in the final process of addition. As with our fraudulent retail price indices, universities could now have more inflation and yet still claim it wasn't happening. The

present inflation may well have accelerated because of league tables and dependence on overseas fees, but it began as a result of egalitarianism and bureaucratic forces: the two great enemies of academic integrity.

Professor Alderman has also denounced the increasingly widespread plagiarism in British Universities, but this too has earlier roots. When I began as an external examiner, cheating in a formal examination was very rare. British students knew that they must not cheat and invigilators had very little to do. Nearly all the cheating was done by foreigners, but no one was willing to say so openly because of political correctness. The cheaters were rarely expelled or even severely penalised. It had nothing to do with overseas fees, since many of the worst cheats were Greek and came from a country within the European Union, paying the same fees as the British students, and there was no particular benefit in recruiting them. They would begin by cheating in Greece to get some fake qualifications to enter a British university and to avoid military service. When they arrived, their inadequate

I can remember a university porter being suspended because he had gone in an hour before the examination began and confiscated all the notes. He was told that it was not part of his duties to assist the invigilators in this way.

English and general lack of ability meant that they were bound to fail a qualifying examination. However they were as willing to cheat in Britain as they had been

back home. At first their technique was crude. They would hide notes in the cisterns of the lavatories next to the examination hall the day before the exam and ten minutes after the exam had started they would head off to consult them under the pretext of a more material activity. The universities tried desperately not to catch them. I can remember a university porter being suspended because he had gone in an hour before the examination began and confiscated all the notes. He was told that it was not part of his duties to assist the invigilators in this way. When I suggested they check the list of candidates and assign extra invigilators if there were a lot of Greek names, this was considered to be in very poor taste; some called it racist. I called it common sense, a rational deployment of limited invigilation resources to achieve maximum detection and deterrence.

If a foreign student was caught, the staff would be told not to penalise them because 'cheating was quite normal in their society'. It was instead referred to a committee with the wonderful acronym SCAM (The Standard Committee on Academic Misconduct) that at its most severe would order a dishonest Hellenic to re-sit. Later the Greeks became more skilful and would get someone else of similar appearance but of greater ability to sit the examination for them. They also mastered the skills of sending examination questions

and answers in and out of the hall as text messages on their silent mobile phones.

The worst problems came with continuous assessment, a dishonest method of diluting standards, justified by spurious pedagogic arguments. Instead of using genuine examinations, students were given degrees based on their essay marks. At this point even the British students could not resist the temptation to cheat. The clumsy ones downloaded entire pages from the Internet and got caught. The cunning ones borrowed essays from brighter students who had done the course the year before, which is more difficult to detect unless you have had the sense to store all the essays electronically in a common file. No one ever did. Wealthier students did something which is quite routine in the United States; they bought from dishonest middlemen unique custom-written essays composed by hard-up graduate students. I have even known cases of seriously wealthy Greeks and Nigerians paying someone to write their PhD thesis in this way. American computer experts have developed techniques for detecting differences in authorship, such that you can tell with reasonable certainty by comparing the work written by the candidate under rigorously supervised conditions with a particular essay done in their own time whether he or she or someone else was the author of the latter. However, you are not allowed to use these programmes in British universities because too many students would get caught. In America those developing the new computer techniques had their grant funding abruptly ended when they started proving that many senior academics were not the authors of articles appearing under their names.

The basis of the utter rottenness exposed by Professor Alderman is, ironically, revealed by the phrasing of Universities UK's attempt to refute him. Their spokesman stressed that the 'processes and mechanisms are subject to additional external scrutiny by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education'. What use is that? Given that in many of our more crooked universities the external examiner may not change the marks or the classes but is told that he or she must only consider whether the correct procedures have been followed. It means that no one checks up on the vital substantive question of whether the degree classes given are appropriate for the work the student has done and whether they are consistent with past years or more rigorous universities. It is Robert Maxwell style accounting. The accounts get passed because the procedures have been followed

even though fraud, incompetence and impending bankruptcy lurk beneath. Justice is not procedure, it is the correct allocation of rewards and penalties.

Here we can see exactly what is wrong not just with examining but with the entire education system. No one ever looks at outcomes or provides 'external scrutiny' of what graduates know or what they are capable of doing. They merely look at 'processes and mechanisms'. This is what bureaucrats always do when they wish to avoid uncovering unpleasant facts and are trying to reassure the public that all is well. It is a subtle form of fraud.

The reckless expansion of degree-awarding higher education has sucked in enormous numbers of students who are incapable of degree-level work but have to be given degrees. The better universities can now only maintain the differentials between their own degrees and those of the inferior universities by inflating their results. As it gets larger, both the system and the

Wealthier students did something which is quite routine in the United States; they bought from dishonest middlemen unique custom-written essays composed by hard-up graduate students. I have even known cases of seriously wealthy Greeks and Nigerians paying someone to write their PhD thesis in this way.

institutions become more bureaucratic; bureaucrats can only handle procedures and they do not like or understand the kind of substantive and value-based thinking used by professional people, like academics, who no longer

have any power in the universities. Power now lies with what are laughably called managers. When academics are raised to bureaucratic positions with a salary three or four times higher than before, they immediately forget the concerns that had guided them as scholars and teachers.

Since the mad expansion of higher education has not been and cannot be properly funded, the financial pressures described by Professor Alderman now come into play. The only answer is to close down the inferior universities, perhaps a third of the total, and redistribute their funding among the rest. Let us deliberately reverse the trend and savagely reduce higher education. Then standards can be restored.

Christie Davies taught and examined at many universities for over forty years. He is the author of The Strange Death of Moral Britain (Transaction)



Music and Christianity

Alexander Boot

If we wish to understand the metaphysical forces that drive a civilisation, we could do worse than look at its most emblematic art. For the Greeks, one such art was sculpture, the marble body of their soul. As the soul wasn't much given to introspection, it had to seek transcendence in the perfection of form: all those idealised discus throwers with their sightless eyes. Other civilisations, such as Egyptian or Indian, produced superb sculptures too, but it's hard to argue that these were the ultimate expressions of their metaphysical essence. Nor has the Christian soul ever been consistently contained within sculpted stone or bronze, a couple of *Pietas* by Michelangelo notwithstanding. For the Romans, what stood out was poetry, the plastic perfection in words. Western culture has created magnificent poetry too, but it owes to Horace, Virgil and Ovid so much as to owe them almost everything. That by itself disqualifies it as the dominant Western art. Characteristically, Schumann once described poetry as 'music in disguise', thus hinting at the true spiritual hierarchy.

Indeed, applying our criteria to Christian culture, we can identify music as the art without which it wouldn't be what it is. Again, other civilisations have had their own music, but nowhere else has it been so seminal. Musicologists will insist that the form of Western music has gone through an evolution whose roots can be traced back to thousands of years before Christ. Our diatonic scale, they'll point out, was a development fitting into a progression of 'begats': chant, possibly going back to the Temple, begat modes; modes begat polyphony; polyphony begat tonality; tonality begat tempering, and so forth. And of course they'll be right, on their own formalistic terms. Yet nowhere outside Christendom has music ever assumed such a cosmic importance. Nowhere else has it scaled such a glorious peak. Nowhere else has it been such an exhaustive reflection of the very core of a civilisation.

Preceding civilisations did not fail to acknowledge the importance of music. 'Music,' wrote Plato, 'is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and to everything.' 'In order to take the spiritual temperature of an individual or society,' he continued, 'one must mark the music.'

Aristotle shared that view, but he warned against musical liberalism: 'Any musical innovation is full of danger to the whole state, and ought to be prohibited...

when modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state always change with them.' Aristotle's wrath was caused by the addition of the Phrygian mode to the Dorian, which to him had made music much too sensual. Both he and Plato believed that one had to be alert to the possibility of music appealing to the baser passions of man, not to the higher faculty that they regarded reason to be. To become a high art, music therefore needed the ennobling effect of words just as *Eros* needed the mitigating effect of philosophy.

From what little we know about it, Hellenic music was primitive, which is hardly surprising. Just as a cathedral achieves its spiritual purpose by an aesthetic arrangement of space, music is an aesthetic ordering of time. Until Aristotle, the Greeks had not come to grips with time. They hadn't even had the concept of an hour and told the time of day by the length of shadows, so they lacked the confidence to try to conquer what they had learned so recently. It was as if God realised that people weren't yet ready for the mastery of time, his most mysterious creation outside man himself.

That changed when God, as Christ, established an ontological link between himself and man. Though still in possession of the freehold on time, he was now able to issue a long-term lease to great composers. Thus it was Christianity that brought music to the fore. And in its turn it was music that became the clearest expression of Christianity. Why did music succeed in this task where, say, post-Scripture literature didn't?

St John tells us that '*In the beginning was the Word*'. However, that word was uttered not in ink on paper, but in the person of Christ. The shock of this revelation was so overpowering that the original Word rendered all subsequent words woefully inadequate: in a brightly lit room, the light cast by a match is unnoticeable. As Christ's followers received the New Testament, new understanding dawned. And it's in human nature to articulate understanding, so as to share it with others, to hold it up to scrutiny. Yet the Scripture had exhausted the divine capacity of language in the same way in which Bach later exhausted the divine capacity of contrapuntal music.

It was precisely because of the omnipotent Word that was at the beginning that music rather than literature became the ultimate artistic expression of Christianity. There were men after Jesus who found beautiful words to express God, as there were men after Bach who wrote beautiful counterpoint. But in spite of the success

— more accurately, because of the ultimate failure — of such men, the need for new forms became pressing.

Music, first as accompaniment to words of devotion and ultimately on its own, became such a form partly because of the essence of Christianity. It's not only the teaching of Christ but also the teaching about Christ. The person of Christ is dual: he was fully man and fully God. He didn't just teach the link between God and man — he established it within and by himself. Thus he brought together the temporal life of man and the timeless life of God.

Music guides not by telling but by suggesting. Like faith, it's not without but within us, waiting to be released. A musical performance can unshackle the inner resources of a listener's imagination and lead him towards an intuitive, non-verbal understanding that's his own and not necessarily the artist's. Music lives in the same compartment of the soul as faith, while literature by-passes this area either wholly, as does prose, or at least to a large extent, as does even great poetry. Music doesn't just appeal to man's inner self. It's actually a part of it. If we believe that God created man, then he also created music.

As music is within us, composers not so much create as uncover it. The listener thus becomes their passive co-creator. If music is indeed metabolised in the same part of the soul as religious longing, then this symbiosis acquires an almost divine aspect. It doesn't matter that most great composers after Haydn eventually distanced themselves from Christianity in their private lives. Whatever their explicit intent was, even their secular music is always implicitly metaphysical, while literature is implicitly rationalistic — even when dealing with metaphysical subjects.

Christian music began as an accompaniment to words of devotion. But as music is capable of conveying the Christian drama all by itself, it eventually pulled away from words. Though it is still used for sacramental purposes, it also began to stand on its own instrumental feet. Music picks up where words leave off. One can observe how, after Bach had shown the autonomous potential of instruments, vocal music became increasingly trivialised. Powerful vocal pieces by Schubert, Brahms, Mahler and a few others were offset by a massive outpouring of operatic banality so popular with humanistic modernity. Opera in general, and Italian opera in particular, is more like music's

PR department than music itself, even though some may wish to exempt bits and pieces of Mozart's and Wagner's operas from this observation. It's hard to argue either with Glenn Gould, who believed that Mozart's affection for opera was a millstone around his musical neck, or with the wit who described Wagner as 'the Puccini of music'.

Music already possesses enough drama of its own not to have to rely on the verbal drama of a libretto. The



dramatic potential of the spirit is better revealed in the slow movement of Mozart's K488 than in all his operas combined. If we accept this, then words — when they are more than just sounds — subtract from music rather than add anything to it. Schubert's *Der Winterreise*, perhaps the greatest vocal cycle this side of Bach's *Passions*, remains music of genius even to one who doesn't understand the German words. But any attempt to read Müller's cheesy verses without the music is likely to disappoint. The inherently Christian drama of Western music doesn't need

to lean on the crutch of semantics — its own language is sufficient.

Proof of this comes from the work of the world's greatest composer, Bach. He clearly saw his music as a means of breaking through the barriers blocking man's path to God, even such symbolic barriers as instrumentation or words. Bach created the greatest vocal music ever written by treating the voice as another instrument, by using words as building blocks of musical phrasing more than as carriers of semantic meaning.

Albert Schweitzer shows how Bach's musical devices always corresponded to the same emotions and were amply sufficient for expressing them. So a Bach cantata will always sound better in German than in English even to those who have no German at all. After all, if Bach used words primarily for musical phrasing, then surely they depend on the cadences of the original language more than they do on the inconsequential semantics.

Philipp Spitta, another important Bach scholar, confirms this. He shows how even in Bach's recitatives words are '...only the medium of utterance: the instrument best fitted to the purpose here aimed at.' Bach's urge was to go forward to musical self-sufficiency, not back to music as accompaniment to words. He strove to elevate instrumental music so

that it would soar even beyond specific instruments. String, hammer or vocal chords were to Bach mere incidentals, things he happened to have handy when music came to him and he had to put it into a form that others could understand. As if to prove that instruments didn't matter, Bach would transcribe the same pieces for keyboard today, violin tomorrow, flute the day after. And his crowning achievement, *The Art of Fugue*, the only work in which he encoded his own name B-A-C-H, mysteriously was written for no instrument in particular, being playable by a string ensemble, orchestra, organ, harpsichord or piano.

Bach revolutionised the writing for every instrument that existed at the time, and some that didn't, such as the modern piano. But what he was after transcended mechanical devices. He himself put it succinctly: 'The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God.' That aim can only be fully achieved in a society that shares it. If music appeals to intuitive perception, then its success depends on many people sharing the same intuition. Thus a shift to egalitarian humanism not only delivered a blow to Christianity, but it also pushed the delayed-action destruct button in music. Not only did it compromise the intuitive bent of most people, but it also destroyed the social conditions in which Christian culture — and certainly music — could thrive.

'In the deepest devotion,' writes Bach, 'I lay before your Kingly Majesty the accompanying trifling work, proof of the science I have attained in music, with the very humble petition that you will graciously regard it not according to the poorness of the composition, but according to your world-renowned clemency...' The 'trifling work' was the *B Minor Mass*. We today find it hard not to cringe at the social conditions that made such obsequiousness necessary. However, we

ought to remind ourselves that our own, supposedly more advanced, social conditions have so far failed to produce anything approaching such an achievement. Egalitarian liberalism is more likely to produce something like *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Audiences, weaned on the belief that any taste is as good as any other, don't mind: they simply don't know any better.

Such ignorance says something about all of us. The Greeks knew that music isn't just sounds. It's what the sounds convey, and that always reflects the core of society. What reflects our primitive, hedonistic society isn't real music but drugged, tattooed plankton belching into microphones the world over. To quote Plato again, 'the old "sovereignty of the best"... has given way to an evil "sovereignty of the audience."' Real music has been relegated to the status of entertainment. Ignorance is bound to follow.

In spite of the humanisation of culture, music held out longer than other arts. Great works were written until the middle of the 20th century, surviving the most horrible upheavals of that age. And interestingly, there never has been a great composer who died a violent death. This isn't coincidental. The divine message of instrumental music is suggested rather than articulated. That's why music can hide behind the camouflage of secular entertainment at a time when any overt link with God could assign it to the same bin into which all other uncool things are discarded. But we know that music can be either secular or great, never both.

When we listen to a great work, we hear more than just the sound of music. We hear the sound of eternity.

Alexander Boot is the author of How the West was Lost, I B Tauris

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When the Music has to Stop

Rodney Atkinson

In David Rothkopf's book *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making*, the author (whose own experience is very much as part of the group he describes) identifies those who are assumed to 'control' markets and billions of dollars of credit, investments and business assets. They are, as it happens, the ones who completely lost control of international finance and now claim to be able to solve the crisis they created. They are the guilty men. Rothkopf lists them:

..... the heads of the biggest financial institutions, the top 50 control almost \$50 trillion in assets. The heads of the world's biggest corporations are also members; the top 2,000 support perhaps 500 million people, generate almost \$30 trillion in sales and have well over \$100 trillion in assets. The list also includes top government officials with real cross-border influence: heads of state, of course, leading diplomats and military chiefs, but also central bankers like Geithner and Bernanke, and their counterparts like Chinese Central Bank Gov. Zhou Xiaochuan, reappointed this week, and the other top economic officials responsible for the world's fastest-growing economy and its nearly \$1.5 trillion in reserves. They are joined by media barons like Rupert Murdoch, whose global network of newspapers, movie studios and TV stations reaches hundreds of millions of people every day...

But if we look more closely at the activities of each of the above mentioned 'elite' who are brought together to seek to solve the crisis in global markets we see the very people and institutions who were intimately, unequivocally and irresponsibly the cause of the crisis in the first place. The above will certainly include banks like Citibank (sub prime losses of \$40 billion), UBS (sub prime losses of at least \$37 billion) and Merrill Lynch (sub prime losses of at least \$27 billion). Their first instinct of course is to ensure that the 'solution' starts with relief of their own corporate or, in the case of Government, political and fiscal losses.

The Central Banks allowed themselves to be cajoled by money-printing Governments and thus undermined the whole financial system, baling out the grossly irresponsible and rescuing over-lending banks and over-indebted Governments — by allowing inflation to raid the savings of those who were responsible.

Government Finance Ministers pulled the levers of the printing press while pretending to 'fight inflation' and inventing false definitions of inflation to fool the electorate. Large multinational corporations whose Government-'promoted' mal-investments fail go cap in hand to the State for a subsidy — 'otherwise there will be high unemployment and you will lose your majority Minister'.

Large City Investment Funds and Banks have wastefully churned 'other people's money' taking the appropriate fee at every juncture. Likewise pension fund managers' returns are barely more than the value of the Government subsidy to the individual pension saver, while City firms hand over billions of pensioners' money to the irresponsible highly-borrowed hedge fund managers. By highly risky 'gearing' of investments some of these hedge funds have achieved ludicrous 80 per cent annual returns, then wonder why the next year they are bankrupt. Central Banks claim to be fighting inflation but in fact respond to economic activity, perpetually postponing healthy recessions until the distortions, failed investments, property bubbles and inane forms of production collapse into a slump of historic proportions.

The Central Bank of China hitched its currency to the US Dollar in order to subsidise its exports and then found that a collapsing Dollar was causing them serious inflation (the British Central Bank once did the same by linking the Pound to the Deutschmark and with predictably similar results).

The press habitually claim a pivotal role in the education of the voter and yet in the one vital area where they could have warned the consumer — in the matter of his savings, capital spending and borrowing — they failed abysmally. For years the press talked of 'high interest rates' when inflation made real interest rates very low and 'low interest rates' when real interest rates were high. Furthermore the press decried both homelessness *and* lower house prices and promoted the use of the word 'credit' for 'debt' thus promoting that most toxic destroyer of homes and families. As a result they were effectively urging their readers to take on ever bigger risks and with the US and British consumers the biggest debtors in the world their irresponsibility has certainly born its rotten fruit.

These are the geniuses of the 'Superclass' who are

going to rescue us from the crisis they themselves created. A member of the German Bundesbank once said to a friend of mine (a Professor of Economics) after the latter had warned that the *one size fits all* Euro could cause a serious economic crisis, 'Good, that means we can use the crisis to acquire the kind of power which otherwise might not be given to us'.

The idea of the great and the good, a large international collective of 'important' institutions gathering to bring political weight, money and 'solutions' to a crisis sounds comforting. But we must be aware of the political nature of such collectives where not one of the participants will be investing their own personal resources in the solution and they will have been collectively responsible for the crisis in the first place because they were able to play fast and loose with 'other people's money', whether that money belonged to pensioners, taxpayers or employees.

The larger the organisation the less responsibility the executives will have. The less responsibility they have for their decisions the less they learn from their mistakes and the more their 'solution' will mean a repetition of those mistakes. Such is the weakness and irresponsibility of collectivism, either in its corporatist or its socialist forms. Ironically it is the once entrepreneurial capitalist market place (with none of those characteristics) which is now accused of failure. There is no capitalist crisis, only a corporatist, statist failure by collective funds and failed Central Banks

where the idea of investing one's own money and accepting personal loss is anathema.

There is an old adage in business. 'If I owe the bank £1,000 and can't pay I am in trouble. If I owe £10 million the bank is in trouble.' The wisdom and responsibility of the whole is always dependent on the wisdom and responsibility of the individuals who act wisely because they know they must accept the consequences of their actions. As soon as they collectivise, become part of a gigantic system of aggregate finance or a business lending to the monopolistic or to the State or dependent on the State for subsidy, allowances or patronage then the greater the loss the more comfort they enjoy. The Establishments must survive and therefore feel 'justified' in financing incompetence and failure on a gigantic scale.

The solution to a great crisis is the same as for a small — let the crisis be revealed, let those responsible be exposed, break up the Establishments, break down the monopolies, separate the State from business and banking, remove Government from monetary control, eliminate subsidies which reward failure, take decision making from the collective whole and return it to the atomistic many where failure can be identified and punished and where no one need say 'He is big and has been grossly irresponsible so everyone else must pay to rescue him.'

Rodney Atkinson has written three books on political economy and three on the European Union

A Policewoman's Lot

PC Ellie Bloggs

Saturday night in 'Blandmore', the mid-sized English town in which I work as a front-line policewoman. It is a mid-terraced Council house, and I've been there half an hour with no sign of leaving: 'Ryan said he's gonna kill me. Innit.' Fifteen-year-old Kelly Morgan thrusts her mobile phone towards me. I glance down at the text message displayed: 'ul gt shnkd u bith.' [*sic*] Not being twelve, I will confess that I don't immediately understand the nature of the threat. Kelly explains to me that 'shnkd' or 'shanked' has something to do with a long blade, and that 'bith' is a female dog. 'I want him arrested,' Kelly announces next. As she talks, she types a message back to her sixteen-year-old ex-boyfriend informing him that if he shnks her he'll b fukd ova bi her m8s.

I have two choices. I can explain to Kelly that the text message does not constitute a 'Threat to Kill' as defined in law, that if I do arrest Ryan the chances are he will deny everything and claim that Kelly has threatened to kill *him*. The odds are therefore minimal that their teenaged lover's spat would result in an actual prosecution. Even if it did, the likely outcome would be for the court to warn him, with an indulgent smile, to mind his language. Or, I can go and arrest Ryan, put his denials before the Crown Prosecution Service, and report back to Kelly when he is either not prosecuted or smiled at indulgently in court. I choose Option 1, and advise Kelly to change her mobile number, stop replying to Ryan, and to pay a little more attention in English class. Kelly's mother informs me that it is

disgusting and she doesn't know what she pays me for.

From Kelly's house, I drive across Blandmore to see Ritchie, whose ex-wife has been glaring at him. And on to Michelle, who is sick of children playing in the play area outside her house.

Tomorrow, Kelly might be shanked outside school. Ritchie might be run over on his way to work. Michelle might be beaten to death in the play area. Frankly, I doubt it. However, just in case, I complete a vast tract of paperwork explaining my rationale for not throwing all three of their tormenters straight into the darkest prison.

We live in a world where every murder is splashed across the headlines with an account of how the police 'did nothing' to protect the victim despite numerous calls for help. The public seem ready to believe that police officers spend time plotting ways to ignore upcoming murders. That they couldn't think of anything worse than arresting a violent criminal. That they genuinely couldn't give a damn if the battered woman they visited yesterday turns up dead on the evening news today. We all know that most murders are committed by someone known to the victim. A rival gangster, or a lover. If you are having problems with either, the chances are that the police have been involved in one or more of your altercations. I would hazard a guess that in 90 per cent of murders, the police have had previous dealings with the participants.

And yet, in the thousands of incidents I have attended, not one has so far turned into a murder (believe me, I'd have been told). I very much doubt that my impressive policing skills have prevented a slew of murders (although you can rest assured that I will take the credit in my end-of-year review). More likely, just a tiny percentage of couples, gangs or acquaintances actually end up 'shanking' each other. Murder, thankfully, is still a headline-grabbing event.

Another Saturday night, and I'm taking a report of stalking from a member of staff at the Co-op. She had a brief fling with an ex-colleague, Keith, and since breaking up he's been sending her gifts and turning up outside her work-place. Last week someone put a brick through the Co-op window, and today the word 'DIE' was written on her car windscreen in lipstick. The staff member, Edie Wicks, doesn't want to make a big deal about it, because she's friends with Keith's wife, and she won't support court proceedings.

As a police officer, you make judgment calls, and this time the 'Harvey Nichols' bells are ringing. In 2005, a case like Edie's led to the public shooting of a

perfume counter assistant in Knightsbridge's Harvey Nichols store. I therefore tell Edie that I plan to arrest Keith regardless, and I go straight round to his house and do so. He denies everything, there are no other witnesses, and he is released without charge. The next day, Edie's brake-pipes are cut. A police camera is installed outside her house, we focus hourly patrols on the area, and Edie takes out a restraining order on Keith through the civil court. In 2005, the police were accused of failing to properly 'risk assess' the threat the Harvey Nichols offender posed. However the internal review also concluded that even a risk assessment would have scored 'low' due to the lack of any violent history. Moreover, the killer had actually been imprisoned briefly over the harassment. The police, said the internal review panel, could not have prevented the murder. And yet, in 2008, we are once again being squeezed through the mangler of a high profile 'stalker' case: the murder of fifteen-year-old Arsema Dawit by a man who had been reported to the police for harassing her.

The police know well that if any situation they touch results in a murder, they may be held accountable. We therefore go to extreme lengths to provide an audit trail of our actions and inactions in every case.

In fear of cases like these, my police force has introduced a new and improved 'risk assessment'. A series of yes/no questions decide the likelihood that the victim will

come to serious harm. 'High risk' cases are dealt with by installing panic alarms and cameras, prosecuting more vigorously and even summoning victims to court against their will. The police know well that if any situation they touch results in a murder, they may be held accountable. We therefore go to extreme lengths to provide an audit trail of our actions and inactions in every case.

I find it all rather patronising. When I attend a job, it is usually apparent whether I am dealing with a Kelly Morgan or an Edie Wicks. If it is the latter, common human decency requires that I do my utmost to intervene before the worst happens. If the former, the same human decency suggests that a sixteen-year-old boy doesn't deserve a criminal record over it. Police officers make decisions like this daily, and more often than not we get it right. However, we now make these decisions in a culture of blame, in which it is better to err on the side of caution and give sixteen-year-old Ryan his criminal record, than to risk being the subject of a Harvey Nichols headline. I am in favour of scrutiny, to expose systemic flaws or avoidable errors, but if the fear of reprisals becomes too great, it actually inhibits our ability to make commonsense judgments.

I could complain about the criminal justice system, about how many violent stalkers are put before the

court by the police only to be released on bail or given non-custodial sentences. Some of these go on to commit murders — such as police Inspector Gary Weddell, who gunned down his mother-in-law whilst on bail for the murder of his wife, or Adam Swellings, on bail for multiple offences when he stamped on and murdered father-of-three Garry Newlove. Yet I am sure the judges involved in these decisions would be as vehement in their defence as I am in the police's.

The government is now announcing more measures to tackle knife crime. Custodial sentences will be recommended instead of cautions and, no doubt, the police will have new powers to do what we have already been doing, but in a new way. Not to sound cynical, but it won't do the trick. The sad truth is that there are people in this world hell-bent on murder. They are people who have been through the criminal justice system many times. There will be a trail of opportunities by the police and courts to lock them up well before they commit their final crime. There are

The police are an easy target. We aren't always right, but we are always there in the mix, grappling with the dark and ugly side of life. It is easier to point at us than to pinpoint the moral turpitude that drives a human to kill.

also thousands of minor criminals who will never go on to murder anyone, and who should not be punished as if they will.

The police are an easy target. We aren't always right, but we are always there in the mix, grappling with the dark and ugly side of life. It is easier to point at us than to pinpoint the moral turpitude that drives a human to kill. Murder is hard to predict, and harder to prevent.

Sometimes it's someone's fault. It is always a tragedy but it would be ever greater if, in pursuit of perfection, we take away discretion and liberty, and annihilate commonsense.

If we continue down this path, we will breed a police force of automatons, incapable of dealing with human issues in a human way. As a society, we must not be intolerant of mistakes.

Diary of an On Call Girl by WPC E E Bloggs is available in all bookshops or from www.mondaybooks.co.uk priced £7.99

Shakespeare the Conservative?

Ralph Berry

Michael Portillo, then Chief Secretary to the Treasury, once made a speech extolling the values of Conservatism. In it, he took as his text Ulysses' speech on 'degree' from *Troilus and Cressida*:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
Observe degree, priority, and place

That is the ideal standard, against which is set the threat:

O, when degree is shaken
Which is the ladder of all high designs,
The enterprise is sick...
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark what discord follows.

(I.iii.84)

These lines are a classic statement of hierarchic values. Can Shakespeare be claimed then as an authentic Conservative?

Shakespeare in the conduct of his life clearly *voted* conservative, as it were. His record is a consistent endorsement of Establishment values. He made a great deal of money, which he invested wisely in a fine house and over 100 acres of good farmland in and

near Stratford-upon-Avon. And he bought, late in life, a *pied-à-terre* in Blackfriars. He appears to have made no enemies at all after his early days, being well spoken of in many testimonies. When a political problem arose (the Enclosure troubles of 1607), Shakespeare took care to insure himself, by proper legal means, against all outcomes. Shakespeare was a Court playwright, a pillar of the Establishment. There is nothing of the maverick that Marlowe was. Unlike Marlowe again, he was not buried anonymously in the plague pit.

Shakespeare's public attitude to rank and authority can be inferred from two episodes. In 1596 the Office of Heralds granted the title of 'gentleman,' which Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare, had applied for years earlier. Shakespeare himself must have revived the application and paid the necessary fees. In due course Shakespeare inherited his father's title and became a gentleman ('Non sanz droict' his motto). In his will he refers to himself not as a playwright or actor, but 'I, William Shakespeare, gentleman...'

But after Shakespeare bought his father a coat of arms, thus establishing his own claim to be 'a gentleman born,' this grant of arms was specifically

criticized as wrongfully awarded. Sir William Dethick, Garter King, had indeed been free with his grants — graziers and ironmongers with cash to spare got lucky — and Ralph Brooke published a list of twenty-three ‘mean persons’ who had benefited from Dethick’s laxity. Shakespeare was one. It must have been deeply humiliating for him to be included in this public outcry, after all he had spent on getting it right. We can take for granted the intense delight of his dearest friends and closest colleagues. Jonson, of course, took his chance: the clown Sogliardo takes a coat of arms with the motto ‘Not without mustard.’

Consider *Venus and Adonis*, that elegant piece of eroticism that Shakespeare dedicated to the Earl of Southampton. Dedications were a conventional form in which the poet was scarcely regarded as speaking in his own voice. Even so, this strikes me as laying it on rather thick: ‘Right Honourable, I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your Lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden; only, if your Honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour.’ Shakespeare’s patron must have liked the result, for the ‘graver labour’ followed (*The Rape of Lucrece*, pornography in an altogether darker vein), and there is little doubt that Shakespeare was well rewarded for his pains. Shakespeare played the system.

When one turns to the plays, a different picture emerges. The Ulysses speech can be dismissed at once. It is subject to the iron law that governs all speeches in Shakespeare’s plays: the words are spoken by an individual in a personal situation. Ulysses is a military politician. He has a disciplinary problem with Achilles, a superb warrior but one with total contempt for the Greek General Staff (not surprising, since they have got nowhere in the seven years of the siege of Troy). The ‘degree’ speech is a set of rhetorical commonplaces, designed to bring the Greek Council to support the proposition: something must be done about Achilles. In the upshot Ulysses rigs a ballot to ensure that Achilles is not chosen by the Greeks in single combat against the Trojan hero, Hector. Ulysses subverts the ‘degree’ he affects to revere. The play does not support the quotation.

The canon may nod towards hierarchy, but it also offers evidence of a Left-of-centre approach. Take *King Lear*. There is an extraordinary poignancy in Lear’s discovery, on the heath, of what homelessness means:

You houseless poverty...
 Poor naked wretches, whereso’er you are
 That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
 How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
 Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you

From seasons such as these?

(III.iv.26)

That sympathy with the underdog goes with a distrust of authority. There is nothing in the canon to beat the mad Lear’s question:

Thou hast seen a farmer’s dog bark at a beggar?...
 And the creature run from the cur. There thou mightst
 behold the great image of authority—a dog’s obeyed
 in office.

(IV.vi.150)

There is also a haunting speech from the blind Gloucester, when he hands over his purse to the beggar who guides him. Gloucester speaks of the need for ‘superfluous’ (ie. well-off) men to give something to the poor:

So distribution should undo excess,
 And each man have enough.

(IV.i.73)

‘Distribution should undo excess’ sounds like a pre-echo of the redistribution of wealth, an idea at the heart of Socialism.

The key case for enquiry is *Coriolanus*. It is the most nakedly political play in the canon, the story of an aristocrat whose hatred of the Roman people verges on the hysterical. He is the patricians’ nominee for the Consulship, but this requires endorsement by the Plebeians, the people at large. Hence Coriolanus has to do a little canvassing, a task all but beyond him. A senior Party manager is called in to give image-projection advice. Menenius urges him: ‘Pray you, speak to ’em, I pray you,/In wholesome manner.’ To which Coriolanus responds briskly ‘Bid ’em wash their faces/And keep their teeth clean.’ For Coriolanus, ‘the great unwashed’ is no mere trope. That is the way he sees the people, and indeed smells them.

In Shakespeare’s analysis, everything stems from the relationship between Coriolanus and his mother, Volumnia. She is a monster whose most memorable line occurs at the news that her son has been wounded in battle: ‘O, he is wounded: I thank the Gods for’t.’ Coriolanus’s political opinions come from her. He tells us so, in a confessional passage (III.ii.7) that invokes Mother’s schooling. There is no more devastating political revelation in Shakespeare. This is an aristocrat’s contempt for the people, the view that they are mere units in a society rightly controlled by its natural leaders, the patricians.

Coriolanus, for most of its history, was regarded as a right-wing play. Today it is usually mounted in a context of ideological neutrality, with everything focused on its title role. Even so, neutrality begs all the questions. The play is an account, etched in acid, of the attitudes of the extreme Right and the inevitable

opposition which is aroused in the people. It cannot conceivably be taken as an endorsement of mainstream Conservative politics.

We can reach Shakespeare's politics from another angle. His genial lampoon of Old Labour comes in *Henry VI, Part Two*, and it is contained in the Collected Speeches of Jack Cade. Act IV presents Old Labour's election manifesto, in which Cade appears as a representative, Scargillian figure of the outer Left. His election programme has disconcerting pre-echoes of today. The appeal is class-based. Cade, originally a clothier, has no time for the Establishment. He sees that the structures and personnel of the Law will have to be changed, and one of his followers hints that the judiciary will have to be enlarged. '...it is said, "Labour in thy vocation"; which is as much as to say, "Let the magistrates be labouring men"; and therefore should we be magistrates.' (IV.ii.16) Five centuries and more later this admirable policy was still being called for.

The radical programme that Cade advances resembles later essays in the genre, starting with food subsidies. 'There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny.' (IV.ii.59) 'I will make it felony to drink small beer' (IV.ii.61) might seem of antique interest. In fact, Cade is alert to that grave class offence, Watering the Workers' Beer. (Small beer was the weakest and cheapest beer.) And who or what is to pay for this bounty? Cade gives no answer.

Education is always prominent in manifestoes of the Left. Cade takes a line that startlingly sets forth the doctrines of the 20th/21st centuries. The Left's aversion from grammar schools has its *locus classicus* in Cade's charge against Lord Say: 'Thou hast traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school' (IV.vii.29). When Cade says 'It will be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun and a verb and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear' (IV.vii.33) he is speaking the language of advanced educationists today ('There is no such thing as English grammar'). Cade's pure doctrine has been a little diluted of recent years, but then he is Old Labour.

We must not think that Cade is fixed in class rigidities. He is a friend to upward mobility. Cade proposes as his first act of Government, 'sitting upon London Stone,' to 'charge and command that, of the city's cost, the pissing-conduit run nothing but claret wine this

first year of our reign.' (IV.v.1) Honest citizens are to drink claret at municipal expense: social democracy in action. He is ahead of his time.

His greatest slogan, 'The first thing that we do, let's kill all the lawyers' (IV.ii.70) rings down the ages. It is still quoted, often by lawyers. Cade is putting together the elements of a genuinely popular programme.

There is even a foreign policy, based on a rough nationalism of the anti-French order. 'He can speak French; and therefore he is a traitor...the Frenchmen are our enemies.' (IV.ii.159) The charge on which Lord Say is arraigned is selling out to French interests: 'what canst thou answer to my majesty for giving up of Normandy unto Mounsieur Basimecu, the Dauphin of France?' (IV.vii.23) This translates easily into today's discourse. For 'France,' read 'European Union'. The same passions are at work. Lord Say would today be a prominent Europhile. In Cade's version, the radical programme is nationalist and opposed to Continental (EU) influence.

Unhappily for Cade, the Establishment takes over that part of the programme with most enduring popular



Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!

appeal, hatred of the French. Shakespeare stages a virtual hustings in IV.viii, when the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Clifford, speaking in the Conservative interest, appear before the mob in Southwark and debate with Cade. The aristos shrewdly offer a free pardon to the rebels, and invoke the ever-glorious name of Henry V. At this, the mob cries 'God save the King!' Cade derides them as 'base peasants,' willing to

be enslaved by the nobility, and the crowd responds 'We'll follow Cade!' Clifford now plays the winning card. What if the French, taking advantage of civil unrest in England, were to invade and occupy? 'I see them lording it in London streets,/Crying "Villiago!" unto all they meet.' (IV.viii.45)

The past continues to stare us down, for the DNA that connects us with our ancestors shows up at election time. I doubt that the current Labour leadership spends much time analysing the political lessons of *Henry VI, Part 2*, but a Shakespearean might well counsel them: do not allow yourselves to be outflanked on Europe.

Shakespeare cannot be claimed for a party. As a practical man of the world, he went along with what we would call mainstream or lower-case conservatism. He has however been absorbed into many of today's agendas, emerging as a man of advanced liberal views. On the stage, certain lines and passages are repeatedly censored, in line with

the politically correct standards of today. Race is in, class is out. The plays' centre of gravity has shifted.

Shakespeare now presents a new face to the world. But that face is surgically enhanced. The opening line of *Romeo and Juliet*, 'Two households, both alike in dignity' is contradicted by actors who embody ethnic divisions. The text should recall us to the author's plain intentions. I prefer to see Shakespeare as an independent thinker, whose views on power, sex, war, social interaction, and

politics are untrammelled by today's agendas.

The case for Shakespeare the conservative must stake out new ground. It will not do to settle in territory familiar to the Victorians. And there should be no capitulation before certain liberal pieties. The oldest truths of all are lodged in the words of his plays. To rediscover Shakespeare's conservatism, one has to return to his texts.

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Why I Am Not a European

Marc Sidwell

From 4 to 7 July this summer, I was in Madrid, attending the first conference of the Center for European Renewal [www.europeanrenewal.org]. The subject under discussion was 'Spirit of '68: is Europe in Crisis?' but the real question for the delegates was whether European conservatives could form a pan-continental cultural alliance to defend their common Western heritage. Of course, for an Englishman and a political conservative, the idea of joining hands across the channel, even with ideological fellow-travellers, naturally causes my scepticism to rise.

Yet what substance is left to all the talk in recent years of defending the Western inheritance, if Europeans cannot find ways to come together? I felt the need to investigate, and thought the presence of Roger Scruton in our little group (he is on the CER's International Advisory Board) a sign that Englishness might not be a barrier to membership.

What could bind Europe's conservatives together? Before attending, I had reminded myself of the answer T S Eliot gave at the end of the Second World War. Together with Vita Sackville-West and a group of like minds, he launched the Virgil Society, as they wrote in an open letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, 'to bring together those men and women everywhere who are united in cherishing the central educational tradition of Western Europe. Among such persons the love of the poetry of Virgil is most likely to be found; and for such persons he is the fitting symbol of that tradition ... he is the witness to the continuity of our civilisation'. Eliot's answer was a beautiful one. It is some comfort to observe that the Virgil Society still meets — at Senate House in Malet Street, just £10 a year for membership [www.virgilsociety.org.uk] — and charming to find it still blends a welcoming attitude with a refusal to dumb down. The website declares 'Everyone is welcome. It is generally useful

to bring a text of Virgil to meetings.'

Yet today, despite the Virgil Society's quiet persistence and two exceptionally fine recent translations of the Aeneid, by the late Robert Fagles and most recently by Sarah Ruden, the European educational tradition can hardly be said to be thriving. Once education without Virgil might have been unthinkable; I was well out of university before I even established first contact with his work.

In Madrid, the conference session on education seemed to give ground for hope: it was enlivened by the presentation of a Dutch professor recounting his efforts to instil the rhetorical teachings of Isocrates into his twenty-first century students in Utrecht by way of such pop-culture tools as the film *300*. Yet it was striking that, as he revealed in the discussion that followed, he was passing on a tradition of education that he had learnt by teaching in an American college. The group had to acknowledge, while the tradition of liberal education received some fine theoretical defences in the twentieth century from Europe (notably from the UK, from C S Lewis, Dorothy L Sayers, Sir Richard Livingstone and Gilbert Highet among others), in America, the Western tradition is a living force.

The American example ought to give Europe hope. For America's living tradition was not achieved by maintaining an unbroken way of learning across the ocean, but through the hard process of recovery — a recovery that began in the European wasteland left after World War I, where the temporary university for American troops at Beaune became the proving ground for the Great Books movement that later had so much influence across the Atlantic. Americans had the humility to look back, and pick up the books that had inspired their greatest leaders, to rebuild the education of Thomas Jefferson, or to recognise the grounding offered by the medieval trivium. Europe too can grow

by looking backwards — as we always have, as the Romans learned from Greece, or as the Renaissance drew from both great ancestral civilizations. Against progressivism, the great rebellion is always a good memory.

This is the truth that Eliot appreciated: the hope that he saw in the *Aeneid*. Not that Europe must protect ways that are immemorial, which leads to hopelessness or intolerance when they are placed at risk, but that, in the manner of Aeneas, it has always been possible to escape with nothing but the memory of one's ancestral gods, to strike out from a city, like Troy, reduced to a wasteland of rubble and ash and yet to build anew something greater, inspired by the past.

The Western tradition offers Europe's best hope because it contains the seeds of renewal, and the promise of unconquerable values. In the shifting sands of postmodernity and the ruins of cultural tradition that the post-1968 continent now presents, the memory of something finer is light enough to carry, and bright enough to illumine a more hopeful future.

The classicist Helen Waddell provides an example of such continuity and renewal. Waddell found herself sustained against the horrors of the twentieth century by translating the medieval lyrics of Alcuin of York. During the darkest days of the war, she dedicated her translations to the victims of Nazism. She wrote, '*By these, by these same chains* was strong consolation, when the banners of the swastika move through Prague'. She was speaking of a poem that celebrates the Western destiny of survival despite destruction, both as a religious promise and a historical fact. It was first read by Arator to a Roman crowd when the Goths were at the gates of their city in the sixth century. Alcuin took it up and revised it two centuries later, as the Vikings brought their depredations to the coast of Britain. Helen Waddell gave her translation the dedication 'for Vilpuri, Cracow, Prague'. Today we might add, 'for Atocha, 7/7, 9/11'.

That heart unconquered and these solemn walls
Shall stand, shaken it may be, not destroyed
By any trampling of the hosts of hate.

And yet again my thoughts turn to America. For it was the late, great William F Buckley who had the cultural confidence at the height of the Cold War to offer defiance in the tradition of Arator to the Soviet Empire.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we deem it the central revelation of Western experience that man cannot ineradicably stain himself, for the wells of regeneration are infinitely deep. No temple has ever been so profaned that it cannot be purified; no man is

ever truly lost; no nation is irrevocably dishonored. Khrushchev cannot take permanent advantage of our temporary disadvantage, for it is the West he is fighting. And in the West there lie, however encysted, the ultimate resources, which are moral in nature. Khrushchev is *not* aware that the gates of hell shall not prevail against us. Even out of the depths of despair, we take heart in the knowledge that it cannot matter how deep we fall, for there is always hope. In the end, we will bury him.

In the end, the confidence that Europe needs, now as much as ever in the past, is the confidence that comes from looking backwards. Only through knowledge of our past can we understand that our civilisation has been through many crises, some worse than today, and it survives even defeat, may even, mysteriously, be strengthened by the experience of catastrophe. That confidence enables the West to stand upright even when matters seem hopeless, and that hope can bind Westerners together despite their differences. When

we lack confidence we are most likely to reach for the illiberal measures that betray our heritage, or attempt to patch countries together with

profoundly different national narratives and varying political and legal heritage into some forced consensus that satisfies no one.

It is not in Madrid but in America that I see that confidence and its achievements on display. It was appropriate that the conference should have begun on American Independence Day, and that the Center for European Renewal should have chosen an American English spelling for its name. But the lessons seemed lost on many of my fellow delegates. America at its best offers a vision of the future dignified by the endless rebellion of memory. As we sat in a faded European gentlemen's club, trying to ignore the blaring sound of Madrid's street carnival, I sensed that in old Europe conservatism still means preservation at all costs, not renewal, even in the face of the facts. That is immediately absurd, and ultimately dangerous, because for those who see no way forward, compulsion is the only way to force back the rest of the world.

Europe needs happier dreams of its past. It needs the confidence to infuse the future with its great inheritance. But if it wants to achieve either, it must now learn from America. I saw precious little sign of that commitment in Madrid. And for that reason, I must declare, I am not a European, not even a conservative one.

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Conservative Classic — 31

Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*

Tom Nolan

Thomas Mann's ostensible political positions underwent a good deal of change during his career. During the First World War he wrote a long polemic, *Opinions of a Non-political Man*, in which he declared himself a traditionalist, a monarchist and a patriot. The nineteen-twenties, by contrast, saw him make ever more 'liberal' public pronouncements. Unlike the vast majority of German patriots he felt that Weimar democracy was not necessarily at odds with the national spirit, and he was keen to see it succeed. But, not satisfied with professing the virtues of parliamentary democracy as a system, he also acknowledged his support for the political party prepared most staunchly to defend that system — the Social Democrats. This apparently leftwards drift outraged many of Mann's former comrades on the right, and led them to accuse him of shallow opportunism. Mann himself, though, claimed that his fundamental tenets were the same as they had always been — changes in the social and political context might reveal his philosophy in a new light but had not altered its nature.

The truth is that Mann made his public pronouncements with a view to some long- or short-term political end, and in order to achieve that end effectively he was bound to exclude from them doubts and caveats which were none the less never far from his mind. The changing political context, that is, made him manifest *in turn* a conservatism and a progressivism, a patriotism and an internationalism, a credulity and a scepticism, which were always simultaneously present within him. With the result that in contrast to his apparently dissonant public pronouncements his literary works are remarkable for their consistency: the same debates and conundrums occur in all of them. When, therefore, we talk of Thomas Mann as a conservative writer we are really referring to *one element* of his authorial personality, for each novel exhibits a conservative, faith-driven aspect in tension with a progressive, sceptical one.

Doctor Faustus was written during the concluding phases of the Second World War. By that time Mann — deprived of his German citizenship and living in the United States — had been deeply alienated from his home country and thoroughly persuaded of the dangers of conservative and reactionary intransigence. But the novel none the less emphasises strongly a conservative point of view and emphasises the role played by Enlightenment and modernist thinking in

bringing about the rise of Nazism.

On one level *Doctor Faustus* deals with the problem of artistic creativity in a world without religion or metaphysics. Its protagonist, the composer Adrian Leverkühn, is a man of sovereign intellectual powers who has been persuaded by his musical teacher, Wendel Kretzschmar, that he will one day be the saviour of German music. But his analytical powers are so acute that he is doomed to *see through* music: it appears to him to be nothing more than an expert manipulation of an audience's feelings and conditioned reactions. In a letter to his friend and biographer Serenus Zeitblom he describes a well-respected romantic symphony in these terms: 'Can beauty be cultivated more judiciously? And I, wretch that I am, must laugh, particularly when I hear the supporting notes of the rumbling tuba — Wum, wum, wum — Pang! I may have tears in my eyes at the same time, but the urge to laugh is overmastering.'

Leverkühn is, however, as ambitious as he is disillusioned. He could very well make a reputation for himself by playing on the instincts and expectations of his audience, but he feels that to do so would be a betrayal of his calling. On the other hand, if the emotions of his audience are an unworthy criteria for musical creation, then what could provide such criteria? In earlier epochs, less infected by materialism and rationalism, the composer would have had a ready answer to this question. The criteria his works were to be created and judged by existed — but not as part of the phenomenal universe. A personal God, for example, or a rarefied metaphysical essence: the Good and the Beautiful. Adrian, brought up in the anti-religious, anti-metaphysical tradition of the nineteenth century, cannot take such notions seriously. His uncompromising rationality insists that what the unsophisticated *believe* to be an apprehension of the supernatural is entirely explicable in terms of human psychology — and human psychology is, taking a naturalistic view of the matter, just a fact among facts and cannot be a criterion of value.

Leverkühn, so long as he is on the one hand unwilling to compromise with the world of conditioned reactions and emotions and on the other hand incapable of taking the supernatural seriously, must content himself at first with the musical mockery of the works of other composers. It is no surprise that his friend Zeitblom, commenting on his earliest work for public consumption, the impressionist parody *Meerleuchten*, senses in it the 'sterility with which scepticism and spiritual reticence, the apprehension of the

deadly extension of the realm of the banal, threatened a great artistic gift'. But purely negative parody can no more satisfy his ambitions than the manipulation of an audience's feelings would. And he comes to see that the only way he can break out of his creative *impasse* is to overcome that rationality which refuses to take the supernatural seriously. How he does this is a controversial matter.

The naturalistic — the rational, material, phenomenal — view of the matter is that by pursuing and bedding a young prostitute, whom he names Esmeralda, he contrives to infect himself with syphilis which, left untreated, will alter his consciousness in such a way as to enable belief in the supernatural and thus a belief in valid musical creation. The supernatural — the metaphysical and superstitious — view of the matter (which the novel goes some way to support) is that, hand in glove with his altered psychological state, a force from 'beyond' does indeed manifest itself to him and that his new-found belief in real artistic criteria might be justified.

Whether we regard Leverkühn's visitant as a syphilis-induced hallucination or as an intrusion from beyond the material world, is less relevant than that visitant's character. He is the devil, or an aspect of the devil, going by the name of 'Sammiel' and he offers Leverkühn, in exchange for his sanity and his soul, twenty-four years of musical creativity. And this comes to pass: the composer produces a series of rather disturbing masterpieces and is regarded by many as a slightly rebarbative musical messiah. He ends his career with two outstanding works: the *Apocalipsis cum figuris* and the *Doctor Fausti Weheklag* which are the realization in musical terms of his satanic inspiration and of his imminent damnation, and thereafter suffers a complete psychological collapse. He ends his days as a lunatic in the care of his devoted mother.

Viewing the matter from a conservative point of view, there are several aspects of Leverkühn's story worthy of particular emphasis. Firstly, there is the notion that his pact with the devil is a desperate but necessary remedy for that artistic sterility which is the inevitable consequence of a strictly naturalistic world-view. For it is the advance of an irreligious, anti-metaphysical conception of the universe which has denied the composer real (as opposed to illusory, psychological) criteria to compose by and which necessitates that he sacrifice his sanity in order to gain exceptional access to a transcendent realm which his forebears could take for granted.

Secondly, this descent into insanity and the satanic is associated with what many conservatives would regard as the aberrations of modernism. Mann has his protagonist, not Schoenberg, invent the twelve-tone scale and serial composition, and much of his music is a challenge to traditional musical values. *Apocalipsis cum Figuris*, in particular, is a pitiless exposure of

the barbaric roots from which much that we regard as exalted and sublime in western music draws its nourishment. As Zeitblom says: 'How often has this menacing work, with its urge to unveil all that is most hidden in music — the beast in man as well as his most sublime gestures — been accused of bloody barbarism, not to mention bloodless intellectualism!'

Thirdly there are the obvious analogies between Leverkühn's creative *impasse* in the aesthetic realm and society's — particularly German society's — moral *impasse* in the political realm. The political ideals and values which inspired so many politicians in the nineteenth century — justice and the dignity of mankind — are as incompatible as any artistic criteria of worth with the rationalist, materialist world-view. And without a natural and unforced belief in such ideals those who aspire to be political agents are obliged to reject that rationality which threatens to stalemate them: to do their own deals with the devil. *Doctor Faustus* is full of characters who insist on the supremacy of *ad hoc* values which, considered from the traditional perspective, are no values at all. Hermann Institoris idolizes the Renaissance as an era that reeked of 'blood and beauty' and considers manly decisiveness to be the supreme value. The poet Daniel zur Höhe enthuses over the aggression and ruthlessness of the marauding military as though these were self-evident virtues. Chaim Breisacher makes of the primitive and original his only criteria: he prefers, for example, the terrifying God of the first Jews — with His unpredictable whims, His insistence on human sacrifice and His exclusively tribal allegiance — to the insipid conceptions of later religions. When asked to judge between polyphony and harmony, between monody and polyphony etc. it is enough that he know which came first: for that is bound to be the best.

The main story of *Doctor Faustus* ends before the Nazi take-over of German society, but there is a framing narrative. Zeitblom interpolates between episodes from Leverkühn's past contemporary political and military developments. Given that he is supposed to be writing his account at exactly the same time that Mann was in fact writing the novel — during 1943 and 1944 — it is impossible to overlook the implication that Leverkühn's catastrophe and that of German society are analogous, that the composer's predicament and his reaction to it are at bottom the same as that of German society's at large. If we take the view that Mann considered the reign of the Nazis to be an unmitigated catastrophe, then it is hard to resist certain conclusions which the conservative reader would be happy to accept. On the one hand, that musical modernism and twentieth century totalitarianism spring in the first instance from the decay of traditional values, and on the other hand, that the attempt to summon up values *in contempt of the reason* is an unconscionable Faustian pact.

Reputations — 21

Whittaker Chambers

Helen Szamuely

There is a famous picture of Whittaker Chambers where he is leaning back in his chair and holding a newspaper whose headline is 'Hiss found guilty of perjury'. Far from looking triumphant, Chambers is more than sad – his face has set into the lines of a Greek tragedy mask. That is how he saw himself: as the man who had 'supped full of horrors', escaped and returned to the world in order to warn it of reality but who could never escape those horrors and who did not really think the world would ever listen to him or understand him. To a great extent this attitude was seen in other well-known former Communists who had become involved in the dirty work: Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Manés Sperber, even Margarete Buber-Neumann, the most optimistic of them all, despite having suffered more. In a way Chambers was a natural recruit to the more pessimistic kind of conservatism, and like others of that ilk he could never quite explain what it was that had been lost never to be recovered. What he did understand for obvious reasons, far better than most conservatives, was the battle-lines of the twentieth century and the cost the war had claimed and would claim in human and financial terms.

The name of Whittaker Chambers has never really disappeared to the dust-heap of history and will not do so until we have to fight the battle that he fought, that is for a long time to come. As long as Hollywood produces lying films about the 'victims of McCarthyism', as long as Communist emblems remain chic among Western youngsters and the intelligentsia, as long as even people of the right (or of the anti-Communist left) speak of Chambers with embarrassment, the battle has to be fought.

Sam Tanenhaus's extremely long and detailed biography was published in the US more than ten years ago to some acclaim but did not appear in this country until last year. (*An Un-American Life: The Case of Whittaker Chambers*, Old Street Publishing, 2007). Perhaps the importance of the Hiss-Chambers case has not yet been fully recognized here. After all, it all unfolded merely sixty years ago. It takes a little longer than that for people to wake up and pay attention. Neither is it entirely clear why Tanenhaus saw fit to add an introduction in which he used the personality

and ideas of Whittaker Chambers to lambaste President Bush and the fight against terror.

At the risk of guiding readers towards an obsession I recommend that they dip into *An Un-American Life* in conjunction with a number of other books: Alistair Cooke's *Generation on Trial*, Allen Weinstein's *Perjury* but above all Chambers's own *Witness* and *Cold Friday* as well as *Odyssey of a Friend*, his letters to William F. Buckley, one of the founders of modern American conservatism. Indeed, I should like to see a new edition of those letters with all the asterisks filled in, as the people in question are unlikely to be alive, and a few notes that explain precisely what or whom Chambers is writing about.

Tanenhaus does correct and amplify Chambers's own account of his life, how he joined the Communist Party and became a secret agent, how he broke with it, why he decided to make his knowledge of what had been happening public and, of course, those HUAC hearings and trials, which sealed Alger Hiss's fate but also drew the battle-lines in American politics for many decades to come. They are still with us. For all the detail and accuracy, little can better Chambers's own explanation of why he and others tore themselves apart and broke with the great faith of their lives:

Yet there is one experience which most sincere ex-Communists share, whether or not they go only part way to the end of the question it poses. The daughter of a former German diplomat in Moscow was trying to explain to me why her father, who, as an enlightened modern man, had been extremely pro-Communist, had become an implacable anti-Communist. It was hard for her because as an enlightened modern girl, she shared the Communist vision without being a Communist. But she loved her father and the irrationality of his defection embarrassed her. 'He was immensely pro-Soviet,' she said, 'and then — you will laugh at me — but you must not laugh at my father — and then — one night — in Moscow — he heard screams. That's all. Simply one night he heard screams.'

What Communist has not heard those screams? They come from husbands torn forever from their wives in midnight arrests. They come, muffled, from the execution cellars of the secret police, from the torture chambers of the Lubyanka, from all the citadels of

terror now stretching from Berlin to Canton. They come from those freight cars loaded with men, women and children, the enemies of the Communist State, locked in, packed in, left on remote sidings to freeze to death at night in the Russian winter. They come from minds driven mad by the horrors of mass starvation ordered and enforced as a policy of the Communist State. They come from the starved skeletons, worked to death, or flogged to death (as an example to others) in the freezing filth of sub-arctic labour camps. They come from children whose parents are suddenly, inexplicably, taken away from them — parents they will never see again.

Too many people have been deaf to those screams. If Tanenhaus really wanted to draw parallels he might have done better to think of people who are deaf to the screams of tortured people in many prisons run by our enemies whom they support. But it seems that a fashionable sneer at President Bush is more important to the biographer than an understanding of the fight that is being waged now. His detailed description and analysis of Whittaker Chambers's thoughts and actions cannot live up to those passages. Chambers, as he wrote to Buckley in one of his many self-analysing letters, was a poetic writer. His natural inclination was reinforced by his extensive and undisciplined reading of European, particularly German, literature.



Whittaker Chambers

He rightly saw his struggle, which acquired epic proportions with Alger Hiss and all that the latter represented, as his greatest gift to his country and his cause — the West and its survival. He also thought that he had lost. This view was based partly on his bitter and accurate understanding that a large part of the country had never accepted Hiss's guilt or, to be precise, never really thought that his activity as agent both of information and influence was of any importance. Even now, there are more humming and ha-ing exonerations of the man, his brother and many others around him, than one would think possible when one looks at what it is Hiss did and what kind of a system he worked for. As for the leftish media and political establishment, they have, quite illogically, hated everyone who has dared to suggest that Alger Hiss and his cohorts were anything but martyrs to the unfeeling, unthinking, uncaring rabid right-wingers. Richard Nixon, Chambers's supporter in HUAC, suffered from that hatred to the end of his political career and beyond. George Clooney's dishonest 'Good Night, and Good Luck' was received with adulation by most film critics and many of the film-watching public (though it did not do quite as well as had been predicted), with only a few bothering to look at the lies

it was propagating. Somewhere Whittaker Chambers is smiling sadly but knowingly.

A more difficult issue was that in Chambers's view the West, and that included people who might have been his allies if only he would let them be, never quite understood what the battle was about and what it was fought for. To be quite fair, his letters to Buckley, in which he discusses these matters and disclaims that he could ever be a conservative, do not make one feel that he knew the answers himself. He merely felt that, having gone through the darkest circles of the twentieth century hell, at least in his mind, he was better able to grasp the apocalyptic nature of the struggle. Much of what he says about the West having already lost the battle is out of date but much is frighteningly real even now.

In one letter Chambers explains why he cannot be called a conservative. He is, he says, in favour of capitalism, a most unconservative economic system but the only one that will defeat the enemy. The real problem is that neither he, nor Buckley at this stage, had managed to work out what conservatism might be. It is not easy but Chambers's view that it is largely a milk-and-water nostalgia for a mythical past is only true about some members of that extremely unselective movement. He rightly points out that the past which some of Buckley's colleagues are sighing for never existed in the United States, which is a child of the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, Chambers's call for a muscular fight-back on behalf of Western values and ideas (even if they are rarely specified except in the examples he gives) is what has made the conservative movement in the United States as strong as it is, despite the apparent swerve to the Democrats by the electorate. Contrariwise, it is a refusal to look seriously at Whittaker Chambers's (and Bill Buckley's) ideas that keeps conservatism in Britain mostly in the milk-and-water state.

The lyricism and frightening accuracy of *Witness* obscure Chambers's attractive and difficult personality. Unlike Alger Hiss, he maintained a loving marriage until his death, had an excellent relationship with his children and his friends and family gathered round him as he stood up to the most appalling personal attacks. However, Buckley must have been something close to a saint to put up with Chambers. What could be more frustrating for an editor than to receive yet another long, self-pitying and self-analysing letter, with many hints towards the great cultures of the world, explaining at great length how yet another article has been destroyed or will have to remain unfinished. One

wonders how often Buckley read through the letter and shouted to the paper: 'Just write the wretched thing'. Then again, he may have understood that Chambers's great contributions to the cause, apart from the Hiss

case and apart from *Witness*, were those letters, in which he could, at his own pace, explain what he thought needed to be done and assure the recipient that it would never be done properly by anyone.



Roy Kenridge

No group of immigrants, in my lifetime, has ever been so welcome here as have the Poles. Rumours that one day they may all return to Poland have led panic-stricken booksellers and librarians to provide books and comics in Polish; grocers, butchers, bakers and supermarkets eagerly display Polish food in appetising heaps. Please stay here Poles, and do the work that English people used to do!

Nowadays the title 'English working class' seems to be a misnomer. 'The Entertained Class' might be a more accurate phrase, since the whole 'entertainment industry' seems to be aimed at the former workers, a Workers' Playtime that has engulfed the nation.

The Labour Party approach to the English working class is to promise them riches and security through grants, gifts, subsidies and waiting lists. The Conservative Party approach is to urge them to get richer and richer by their own efforts. I seem to be the only person in England who wishes to make the working class poor, for the good of their souls — and so that I can have someone to talk to.

Fortunately for England and myself the Poles are here, the new working class poor. With them have come long forgotten delights. Tripe, the food of the gods, is in our shops once more. With it have come hearts, livers and lights, and we only need bread and dripping for the complete return of the Earthly Paradise that is the world of the poor.

An authorised biography has brought VS Naipaul back into fashion. His early books were reviewed favourably by writers who probably imagined him to be a Negro. When an Englishman thinks of a Trinidadian, he imagines a calypso singer or steel band performer. 'Indian Trinidadians' have not yet penetrated the English consciousness. This is ironic, for one theme that runs through the work of V S Naipaul and of his infinitely more talented brother Shiva is a contempt for Negroes. I can quite understand this, for Trinidad and its brother country Guyana are in an awkward position.

Land, business and private wealth are in the hands of Negroes. South Africa and the American state of Mississippi are in a similar position, if you read 'white people' for 'Indians'. In such a situation, resentments are inevitable, and the Naipaul brothers' books are full of them. V S and the late Shiva seem incredulous at the folly of high-born English girls who fall in love with black men. Both Naipauls have written about Michael X, the Trinidadian Black Power criminal, and his associate Hakim Jamal who had a wealthy white English girlfriend, Gale Benson. What did she see in him? It almost served her right to be murdered.

A travel book, *A Turn in the South*, by V S Naipaul appeared at the same time as my own *In the Deep South*. This did me a lot of good, as I was paired with Naipaul in review columns, though I never met him. It was amusing to see the fascination that 'rednecks' or 'poor whites' held for Naipaul, judging by his book. These wonderful people openly hated Negroes. Too shy to meet them, he spied on their antics from afar. Shiva Naipaul made a celebrated speech attacking the idea of 'The Third World'. I agreed with some of it, yet it was noticeable that one of his strongest objections was that the term 'Third World' encompassed both Africa and India, despite the ancient civilisation of the latter.

This Indian-Negro rivalry also works the other way round. Black spokesmen turned statesmen, Trevor Phillips and Herman Ouseley came from the same part of the world as the Naipauls. When Phillips and Ouseley attack 'multiculturalism' and berate Indians for 'not integrating'; it should not be seen as a miraculous enlightenment of previous Leftists, but as the same old Indian-Negro antagonism, a purely Caribbean quarrel.

Foolish people say 'Even the blacks are turning against multiculturalism' without realising that many Negroes have *always* resented Indians, and wish they could have pulled up the immigration ladder before 'Asians' arrived. What is more, no two people can agree on the meaning of the word 'multiculturalism'. In my opinion, it's a code word for 'multicolourism'.

ETERNAL LIFE



Michael Nazir Ali, Bishop of Rochester, has criticised the church for its reluctance to preach the Gospel to people of other faiths. The issue is to be debated next month at the General Synod. As you would expect, the so-called ‘liberals’ among the modern bishops and in the Synod have expressed their strongest disapproval of a bishop for suggesting that we should follow Our Lord’s command to preach the Gospel to all nations. What, take the word of the Lord seriously? Not likely: this is the new and enlightened Church of England and the Bible is out of date, Our Lord was only a man of his time.

The former Bishop of Hulme — now Bishop of Urban Life — says that Bishop Michael’s approach

...shows no sensitivity to the need for good interfaith relations. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs are learning to respect one another’s paths to God and to live in harmony. The demand for the evangelisation of people of other faiths contributes nothing to our communities.

So much for baptising all nations in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Notice what this Bishop of Urban Life — and so many like him on the bench of bishops — really is: he is not a Christian evangelist carrying out the command of Christ; but a secularist who thinks contemporary sociological definitions of *communities* far more important. But it is the idea of communities – multiculturalism – which has produced so much of the unease and tension in Britain today.

The communities-mongers, multiculturalists, really recommended cultural and religious segregation in Britain. These were the same people who, when they saw this practised in South Africa, condemned it as Apartheid. Now even Sir Trevor Phillips, former head of The Commission for Racial Equality, says that multiculturalism was a mistake. To have large minorities in a nation who refuse to integrate into the life and culture of the nation produces racial ghettos and the breakdown of social order.

This Bishop speaks of *paths to God* as if the different faiths all believe in the same God. This is not even theological ignorance but ignorance of the plain meaning of English words. The various religions have different paths because they lead to different gods. Perhaps mainstream Islam is an authentic Abrahamic faith. But what about that strain of Islam which is once again resurgent on four continents? Militant Islamism, Jihadism, preaches conversion to the Muslim

faith or death. This is a long way from the Bishop of Rochester’s suggestion that we should gently invite and persuade people to become Christians. The Bishop of Urban Life also mentions Hinduism as one of the different paths to God. But if you take a different path, you must not be surprised when you arrive in a different place. Hinduism is polytheistic — of which we were reminded recently in the public exhibition of images of the god Rama going forth with his army of monkeys to do battle with the demon king.

There is a real difference between truth and error. What precisely you believe has consequences for the whole of your life, even for your science, your politics and the sort of music you compose. Judaism is a special case because Jews and Christians share so much of the same book, and the Founder of Christianity was a Jew who declared he had not come to abolish the Law but to fulfil it.

What is called into question by the controversy about converting people of different faiths is the issue of truth and authority. The last forty years have seen the gradual and then the headlong abandonment of the church’s truth and authority by the very men who at their ordination promised to uphold these things. Instead of resisting the aggressive secularisation that masquerades as the doctrine of universal human rights, the church has conspired with this secularisation, with the result that the church almost no longer exists.

As T E Hulme said, An institution is beaten only when it has lost faith in itself, when it has been penetrated by the ideas that are working against it. The Church of England has accepted the whole secular agenda: the new sexual ethics by which what was once a mortal sin is now only a lifestyle choice; mass abortion; embryo research; the abolition of Sunday, and with it all public acknowledgement of the sacred. The church hierarchy has also adopted the Marxist agenda which declares that crime is produced by economic forces. So the General Synod’s report *Faith in the City* preached that the excluded underclass can be improved by massive inflows of cash. As Chesterton said, If the poor can be made better by becoming richer, why aren’t the rich better already? But the modern church has abolished the doctrine of sin and the notion of personal responsibility. The claim that poverty causes crime is an insult to the great majority of the poor who remain honest and upright.

What is worse than the Church’s failure of nerve is the surrender of theological and spiritual truth. Like

the sexual and social revolution, which began in the 1960s when Bishop John Robinson said *Our image of God must go* and when senior clergymen lined up to quote Professor Rudolf Bultmann: *You can't believe the miracle stories in the Gospel and the resurrection in an age of electric light and the wireless*. One of the bestsellers in church bookshops at the time was called *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*. The Church of England has effectively resigned and we have been penetrated by the ideas that are working against us. Marcello Pera, former President of the Italian Senate, says: *Christianity is so consubstantial with Europe that if Christianity goes, everything good in European civilisation goes with it*. There is deliberately no reference to God in the European Constitution. Professor Pera says:

A foul wind is blowing through Europe. This same wind blew through Munich in 1938. While the wind might sound like a sigh of relief, it is really a shortness of breath. It could turn out to be the death rattle of a continent that no longer understands what principles to believe and consequently mixes

everything together in a rhetorical hodgepodge. Will the Church, the clergy and the faithful be able to and want to be purified of the relativism that has almost erased their identity and weakened their message and witness?

Not if The Bishop of Urban Life and his colleagues in the church hierarchy have anything to do with it. They have surrendered to the new regime of democracy, universal rights, diversity, and the moral relativism which can no longer distinguish between right and wrong. Libertarianism will not do. We are not at liberty to do as we please. We have Commandments from God which are few in number but very specific. The new regime we now live under advertises itself as tolerant and liberal. It is not. It is a secular juggernaut. It is not too much to say that the church which should preach Christ has become Antichrist. But God has promised he will always leave himself a faithful remnant. Michael Nazir Ali is a leader of this remnant.

Peter Mullen is Rector of St Michael's, Cornhill

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NewPolitics

President Mugabe advises on Lisbon Treaty

Myles Harris

It was announced last week that the Irish Government had been ordered to hold a fresh election on the Lisbon Treaty on November the 1st 2008. Irish voters had delivered the wrong result in the June election. This time the EU expected the result to be a resounding yes. 'Only God,' announced Senor Jose Manuel Barroso from his presidential suite in Brussels, 'will remove us from office'. Soon after President Mugabe telegraphed Mr Barroso's office with a message of sympathy. He had recently had found himself in a similar predicament. It was a matter of principle that elections must never be inconvenienced by the opinions of voters. Only firm action against malcontents had carried the day.

Following President Mugabe's advice reports soon began coming in of gangs of Brussels bureaucrats roaming the streets of the Irish capital looking for people who had voted 'No' in the previous referendum. Those who confessed to being against the Treaty were forced to listen to entire chapters being read in a monotonous chant. Those who still resisted were water-boarded.

But when it became clear that the Union was planning institutional violence, including large rises in taxes, curtailment of voting rights, even eviction from their traditional tribal areas in the European Parliament, the Plain People of Ireland took refuge in the Taiwanese embassy in Dublin. (The Taiwanese being small allowed plenty of room for the Irish). The latter emerged briefly to advise voters that even if they disagreed with the treaty they could consider themselves free to vote for it. Nobody knew how dangerous an unchecked tyrant such as the European Union might prove if it were challenged for a second time.

Voters were reminded of the fate of other tribes who had challenged the might of Brussels. Although the French and the Dutch had voted against the treaty their gullible leaders had been secretly bribed with worthless trade goods to surrender their lands to Brussels. Britain proved more intractable. There was bad blood between the British and the Germans. Just as Mr Mugabe had had to use force to try and make the people of Matabeleland surrender their lands, so Adolf Hitler had tried to persuade the British of the necessity of joining an early version of the European Union. He failed and, as with the Matabeleland massacres, many lives were lost. Their chance came when a tribal

leader called Brown seized power in Britain. Brown, it turned out, was prepared to sign the treaty when nobody was looking and did so a few weeks after he had taken office.

A mysterious figure from a minority tribe in the north of the island, Brown had, without submitting to the inconvenience of a popular vote, replaced Blair, also a Scot, who had been suspected of wanting to mount his own coup to seize the European Presidency. The latter was last seen in the Sinai desert talking to Arabs bristling with weapons. He is not expected to return.

Although turnout for the Irish re-election was reported as poor, almost immediately after the polling stations closed the President of the Union declared the Treaty had been voted in by a huge majority. There followed immediate and widespread condemnation of this result by the US and other countries of the non-EU block, but countries within the Union said it was an 'internal matter' and only those within it could fully understand the subtleties of European tribal life. As for an international peace-keeping force and the re-running of the elections under the supervision of independent observers, this was out of the question. The memories of colonial times were too bitter.

Just as Zimbabwe had been developed by colonial settlers into a wealthy modern state against its will, so Europe had suffered from the effects of American colonialism. No European could forgive the vast sums of money America had spent in Europe after the war under the Marshall Plan to re-build its roads, railways and factories devastated by war. The European Union would do anything, even declare martial law, rather than allow our previous colonial masters to return with their absurd notions of government of the people by the people for the people. Europe had always been ruled by people who knew more than their electorates. Examples were Mr A Hitler, M N Bonaparte, Snr B Mussolini and above all the modern legislative innovator, Snr Silvio Berlusconi. The latter has recently made his name by making it impossible to prosecute Italian politicians for fraud. His methods are being eagerly studied in Brussels.

Under the Lisbon Mandate the people of Europe can look forward to a totally stable government untroubled by elections or the annoyance of a free press — as long as they do exactly what they are told.

LETTERS

Sir

Tom Burkard writes ('Tackling Leviathan'): 'And without John Hoskyns, Howe's economic blunders would probably have sunk the [Thatcher] project before Galtieri so generously came to the rescue'; flattering to me — but quite wrong.

I am not sure what blunders Burkard had in mind, but I assume that the excessive monetary squeeze of 1979-80 would be among them. If that was Howe's 'economic blunder', most of the UK economic establishment had, like the Treasury, failed to spot it. At times of discontinuity, fresh thinking often comes from 'unofficial' sources. The first and only public warning that monetary policy was too tight came in August 1979 from Gordon Pepper in the city, whom we immediately consulted. An uncannily accurate prediction of the unfolding fiscal-monetary crisis reached me five months later, in February 1980, from Terry Price — not an economist at all, but an ex-senior government scientist with a nuclear physics and defence background.

The authoritative monetary analysis was made during the winter of 1980-1, by Alan Walters in No 10 and Jurg Niehans of Berne University (retained at Alfred Sherman's prompting). The outcome was presented to Howe and Thatcher just four weeks before the 1981 budget. The only real cure — severe fiscal tightening in the middle of a deep recession — looked politically suicidal. After much internal debate, Howe and Thatcher gritted their teeth and took the high and stony road. General uproar followed but they were proved right within months, as Britain's economy began eight years of growth at an average of 3.2 per cent per annum.

The failure to spot the early signals of an excessive monetary squeeze may be laid at the Treasury's door, but hardly at the Chancellor's. No minister can be his own expert on everything. He must listen to advice, test contrary views, and then put his judgement and reputation on the line. If it all goes wrong, he is damaged, perhaps destroyed. If it goes right, he deserves the credit.

There are other examples of Howe's ability to get the big decisions right. He abolished Labour's price controls, dividend controls and pay policies following the 1979 election. Perhaps his most 'unthinkable' and far-reaching reform, only five months after the 1979 election, was the complete abolition of foreign exchange controls which had been in place since 1939, and which no post-war chancellor had dared to touch.

I watched him make two other crucial but controversial decisions during 1980. The first involved abolishing the inflation-perpetuating pay comparability system for the civil service, despite the near certainty of an unprecedented civil service strike the following year. The second was the scrapping of the 'Plowden convention' (which dated from 1961 and perversely sheltered public spending from the inflation borne by the private sector). He did this against the advice of his own senior officials.

The Thatcher-Howe team was central to the beginning of Britain's economic miracle. Their relationship was one of mutual exasperation, but each needed the other. Subtract Howe from the equation, and I doubt whether the Thatcher project would have survived to the end of 1981. Geoffrey Howe's quiet style was deceptive, especially when contrasted with that of the clever and rumbustious Denis Healey. But the plain fact of the matter, it seems to me, is that Healey was a bad chancellor in a disastrous government, while Howe was our most effective chancellor since the war.

John Hoskyns
Suffolk

Sir

One of the great merits of Christie Davies' article on Pinochet and Castro is to indicate the parallel between Salvador Allende and Adolf Hitler. Each came to power as a result of backstairs intrigue on a minority popular vote — 33 per cent for Hitler, 36 per cent for Allende. Each intended to destroy democracy and substitute totalitarianism.

In Hitler's case this is not controversial. Christie Davies provides evidence that it was just as true of Allende. There is more; it was Allende, then a Chilean senator, who flew Che Guevara's fellow-cut-throats out from Bolivia after their leader's death.

Davies is right; if in 1933 a German general such as Schleicher or Blomberg had disposed of Hitler in the same way as Pinochet destroyed Allende forty years later he would be applauded, however rough his methods had been. In contrast Pinochet was meanly harassed in his old age and is still ignorantly execrated. Look at the map. If Chile had gone Communist in the seventies the world balance of power could have been dangerously tilted against us. The Berlin wall might never have come down.

Jonathan Guinness
Cirencester

ARTS AND BOOKS

A Soviet Trap

Martin Dewhurst

Stalin's Children: Three Generations of Love and War, Owen Matthews, Bloomsbury, 2008, £17.99.

Even though I knew the eventual outcome, I found this family memoir more gripping than most of the recent fiction I have read over the last few years. The book tells the story of the author's Welsh father and Russian mother and of their parents and other relatives, notably his maternal grandfather, an ardent Communist, born in the Crimea, who was purged during the Great Terror. Both of Owen's parents were brought up in very difficult — in Mila's case tragic — circumstances, suffered from ill health as children and developed exceptionally strong characters and principles. (Owen's father, Mervyn, described his childhood in *Mervyn's Lot*, Seren, 2002). In these respects they are very like one another and might therefore have seemed to some outsiders to be a perfect match when they eventually met. But perhaps they were (and are) too similar for an ideal marriage?

Just before reading *Stalin's Children* I came across the review in the Spring issue of this journal of Andrew Tarnowski's *The Last Mazurka*. Caroline Hamilton-Fleming writes: 'Whilst full of admiration for his courage in writing such a searingly honest account of his family and at the same time, making sense of his origins, one can only wonder how these revelations have been received by his family.' Exactly the same could be said here, because it reminds us yet again of the not infrequent clash between one's respect for other people's privacy and the desire to convey the whole truth and nothing but the truth. How to balance the conflicting requirements of honesty and tact, candour and self-restraint, especially when writing about those who are still alive? It may well be that younger writers, brought up in an exceptionally open and permissive society, find it much easier to go public about themselves and their parents than do older fogies. Moreover, to write only respectful and respectable things about one's family members is bound to invite disbelief. By and large, Matthews copes well with this problem, in part because he indulges in quite a lot of what in Soviet times was known as *samokritika*, self-criticism. Indeed, some of his best pages are about

his own misbehaviour in the 'Russia where anything goes' in the 1990s.

Furthermore, he writes well, not least about the *smells* of Russia, a theme broached on the first two pages of chapter one and recurring regularly throughout the entire volume. For instance, at the age of six: 'I thought I understood exactly what Pushkin meant about the smell of Russia. It was a distinct odour, partly cheap disinfectant, partly (though inexplicably) the smell of a certain Soviet brand of Vitamin C tablet, tangy and artificial. Russian people smelled, too, in a way that English people never did, an overwhelmingly powerful body odour which was not unpleasant, though I felt its carnality was somehow not very decent or respectable'. The author also makes many apposite comments about Russia after the largely unexpected end of the Soviet regime: 'In other countries a trauma of this magnitude has ripped society apart and plunged it into decades of soul-searching. But in Russia the twin forces of fatalism and apathy meant that the country reacted with little more than a collective, resigned shrug and slogged on with the painful business of staying alive'. To the author in the 1990s, 'Moscow felt as surreal as a colonial outpost on which some distant master had tried to transplant grimly imperial architecture and European fashions. Underneath all the affectations the city's heart was wild and Asiatic'. 'Even life in Moscow, where the sophisticated elite is cocooned from the isolation and medieval darkness of the village, seems defined in a powerful but intangible way by the greatness of the land that surrounds it, just as life on board ship is pervaded by a knowledge of the deep, cold sea all around'. For Matthews, alluding to Solzhenitsyn, 'in truth all of Russia is an archipelago, a string of isolated islands of warmth and light strung out in a hostile sea of emptiness... When I read of Peter the Great's famous *ukaz* (decree) angrily ordering his citizens to obey all previous *ukazy*, I pictured him as a mad radio operator sending indignant messages into space, and receiving only faint cosmic echoes in reply.'

Returning to the problem of whether any biographer who goes public early on in life should or should not be economical with the truth, I should add that I found this account of a far from ideally happy family extremely moving precisely because it is completely unsentimental, even when the author describes in great detail his parents' five-and-a-half-year struggle to be reunited and get married after they were vindictively separated from one another by the Soviet authorities in 1964. (This episode has also been more expansively

recounted by his father in *Mila and Mervusya: A Russian Wedding*, Seren, 1999). In addition, like several famous works of Russian literature, the book has a 'positive heroine' rather than a 'positive hero'. The fantastic story of how Owen's future mother was reunited with her only sister during the war (both parents had been arrested) is an example from real life of the incredible apparent coincidences which make many Western readers of novels like *Doctor Zhivago* doubt their verisimilitude. But in Russia the impossible is possible more often than in the West, and this in consequence should make it *impossible* to give up all hope for the future of that extraordinary country.

This excellent monograph deserves a corrected reprint, as the first edition contains a rather too generous sprinkling of minor mistakes, the most extraordinary of which is the misspelling throughout the text of the name of the Oxford College of which the author's father hoped (in vain) to become a long-term Fellow. And all but one of the mentions of this reviewer are completely incorrect.

The 20th Century Tragedy

David Holohan

Comrades: A World History of Communism, Robert Service, Macmillan, 2007, £25.

Robert Service observes that a third of the world's land mass was occupied by communist states and regimes, and on these grounds alone this subject is one that anyone interested in history and politics ought to read and know more about. As the author of *Lenin: A Biography* (2000), *Russia: Experiment With A People* (2002), and *Stalin: A Biography* (2004), to mention but a few of Robert Service's excellent analyses of communism's cradle and its founding fathers, no one is better suited to write a survey of world communism.

The subtitle — *A World History of Communism* — is ambitious, and the book might appear daunting to some on account of its scale and length, yet it is immensely readable. This is because of Service's clear exposition and the book's excellent organization: frequently the author gives an overview of events with a broad brush, comparing and contrasting trends in communist regimes, their circumstances, problems and developments, subsequently to retrace a country's or enclave's historical events in greater detail.

A good example of this approach to what is a complex story, is to be found in the chapter on 'Roads from Communism', in which the author clearly describes US President Reagan's 'nuclear brinkmanship' and his

B-movie dream of a strategic defence initiative, later known as 'Star Wars'. Service shows how Reagan's intransigence over pursuing this vision heightened tensions between the US and the USSR and formed a barrier — not to each other's missiles — but to furthering talks on disarmament and *détente*. The author then tracks the rapid transition of Soviet leaders after Brezhnev to Gorbach v, succinctly describing not only the serious problems Russia was facing at the time, but also events unfolding (and not unconnected) in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and China. Then, in a later chapter, he revisits Gorbach v's rise to power and the eventual putsch which brought him down.

Service expertly handles the complicated relationships not only of communist countries with the rest of capitalist Europe, but also the relations and tensions between the various communist regimes, from their inception to their demise. He shows how 'friendly' assistance offered with largesse from Russia — the 'mother country', sponsor and model of so many communist regimes — to other emerging administrations fostered the growth of communism and undermined the status quo before its ultimate triumph, and then how Russia had to cut the purse strings, mainly under Gorbach v, because of her precarious domestic situation. He reminds us of the perennial problems of supply and demand that many of us witnessed at first hand in Russia and which made communism so unappealing on a purely day-to-day level, politics and human rights aside: all but the starry-eyed visitors who were taken in by the Pot mkin village effect of Moscow and other favoured cities could see the apathy towards work, cronyism, corruption, and the sheer drabness of Soviet life, a common phenomenon in communist countries.

Service graphically describes how 'communist states isolated their peoples from alien influences' by 'walls, landmines, barbed wire, censorship and propaganda,' keeping them 'in quarantine from capitalism, representative democracy and civic freedom'. 'Rulers in the USSR and the People's Republic of China initially assumed that seclusion was only temporary,' — but, of course, we know now that it was not a passing phase: the Chinese, even now, are broadcasting the progress of the Olympic Torch a full twenty-four hours after the events, so that they can doctor the media footage showing world outrage over China's treatment of Tibet and its record on human rights. The USSR collapsed as a hermetically sealed regime before the genuine threat to total media control posed by the Internet could give the censors a real headache over the seepage of truth: we wonder how Russia and the KGB would have coped with such a phenomenon and we watch with interest to see how China is going to

fare. It might be possible to cope with a leaky bucket, but when a vast hulk is riddled with holes, the task of containment seems Herculean.

Service's book chillingly reminds us of the build-up of hostilities between the former USSR and the West, when two incidents within a single generation brought the world to the brink of a nuclear disaster — the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the shooting down in 1983 of a South Korean civilian plane which had strayed into Soviet airspace in the Far East, causing military personnel in the USSR to fear that a nuclear strike was being undertaken by subterfuge. However humiliated the Russians feel over the collapse of their empire, and however many still pine for a return to the 'good old days', by which some mean Stalinist times, the world is a better place for the demise of Russian communism.

Robert Service shows the similarities of all communist regimes; that none ever fully eradicated the pre-revolutionary culture; that dissenters never went away, necessitating 'gulags' and *laogai* — the Chinese equivalents, which hold 'between four and six million inmates in shocking conditions'; that all communist regimes crushed civil society with brutality; that 'Marx and Engels had predicted a "withering away of the state", yet 'communist history moved in the opposite direction'; that religion was, and still is, persecuted; and that their leaders have enjoyed almost God-like status. The destruction of the old order, the cultural vandalism *à la Taliban* and the pathological desire to start from a fresh canvas, was a passion to which almost all seers of communism seem to have yielded. One country after another insisted on collectivizing agriculture and squeezing the peasantry for produce beyond their means of production in spite of the evidence of failure. On the eve of Soviet collectivization in 1930, Gorky wrote to Stalin, who remained isolated, immune from reality, telling him that the general populous 'feel instinctively, down to their bones, that the destruction of the deepest foundation of their centuries-old life is beginning. You can rebuild a destroyed church and set any god you like in it, but when the earth slips out from under your feet, that is irrevocable and forever. And so here people who have mechanically mastered the revolutionary phrase, the revolutionary lexicon, curse wildly, very often concealing beneath this phrase the vengeful feeling of the ancient man whose "end has come".'

Many regimes set up systems of free education and health care where there had been little before, but these came at a price and were often woefully inadequate. In China there are still millions of people who cannot afford health treatment. One child in three does not survive its first year in Tibet, which is appalling given

China's booming economy and its control over that so-called 'autonomous region'.

The great experiment of communism as developed and conceived by the USSR and Mao is over for most of the world and Service notes that its restoration and conception 'has been thoroughly discredited among intelligentsias and general publics.' However, it was more successful and innovative than fascism, and it lasted longer. It has proved inspirational to all leaders 'from Mussolini and Hitler down to bin Laden', who, though they hated communism, have been influenced by its metastasized forms, and Service ominously predicts that 'it will have a long afterlife even when the last communist state has disappeared.'

Acing the Shakespeare Test

Edward Short

Shakespeare the Thinker, A D Nuttall, Yale University Press, 2007, \$30.

No literary compositions take a critic's measure like the plays of Shakespeare. They may inspire the very best critics to outdo themselves: Samuel Johnson, Coleridge, Eliot, and Auden all wrote brilliantly about the playwright whom Ben Jonson called 'the wonder of our stage'. But the plays can be unmerciful to lesser lights. Look at the critical shipwreck to which they led Harold Bloom and how they exposed the superficiality of Frank Kermode. The young can write ineptly about Shakespeare and move on to other more suitable things; but when older critics write about him and fail, the failure is gross and final.

A D Nuttall's *Shakespeare the Thinker* passes the exacting test of the plays with flying colors. The book not only crowns his earlier efforts but shows how his own thinking about Shakespeare has deepened over the years. Unfortunately, this generous, witty critic died unexpectedly in January 2007 before his book went to press. Nuttall never repudiated the classical humanism he imbibed as a classics student at Merton College in the mid 1950s. In one of his earlier books he wrote: 'I remember a conversation with a friend in which he suggested that we should have our names inscribed... high on some ancient building, together with the legend "We never believed in Theory".' *Shakespeare the Thinker* engages the claims of many theorists but only to show that the key to good Shakespeare criticism is not theory, but insight.

Nuttall mines chronology to chart the development of Shakespeare's thinking. Thus, Shakespeare's study of stoicism, first essayed in *Julius Caesar*, makes way

for what Nuttall calls the 'subjective nightmare' of *Hamlet*. When Brutus says: 'Between the acting of a dreadful thing/And the first motion, all the interim is/Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream,' he is thinking of Caesar but prefiguring the paralysis of the cerebral Prince. Hamlet looks at Horatio and sees someone 'more an antique Roman than a Dane,' who 'is not passion's slave'. But when Hamlet tries to emulate his friend's stoicism, a rather more complicated subjectivism results, in which 'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.' Most commentators gloss over this as a stoic platitude, but Nuttall rightly recognizes it as the arrival of a demoralizing relativism.

On the vexed issue of Shakespeare's religious faith, Nuttall is admirably balanced. While unconvinced that Shakespeare's Catholicism was central to his thinking, Nuttall does recognize it as an abiding factor. Certainly, he rejects the view that Shakespeare was a nihilist. He shows the tragic world of *King Lear* underscoring, not obliterating the differences between good and evil. The world that blinds Gloucester and kills Cordelia may be unjust but it is not meaningless.

One of his unifying themes is how Shakespeare's 'brilliant articulateness' coloured his plays. Nuttall nicely describes what would be a most enviable predicament for most other writers when he says: Shakespeare 'is oppressed by his own verbal facility. Effortlessly he hits every nail on the head, finds the stirring image, lights upon the undermining parody, and, amid all this, hears in the distance a voice that says, "Slow down".' Much of the innovation in Shakespeare's plays came from his having to find ways to challenge his prodigious technical mastery — a search which only ended with Prospero abjuring his author's 'rough magic' in *The Tempest*.

It was precisely this facility that led him to take up the theme of rhetoric in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*. As Nuttall observes, Auden might have been right that 'Poetry makes nothing happen,' but rhetoric does make things happen and usually 'on a frightening scale'. Shakespeare is fascinated by the power of rhetoric not only to persuade people but to loosen their very hold on reality. Nuttall puts Shakespeare's interest in rhetoric in context when he says: 'It remains a curious fact that in later ethical philosophy we shall see reason displaced as the proper director of moral action and feeling substituted — and this switch is first made in the handbooks of rhetoric.' We are still contending with the consequences of that particular trend.

Verbal facility as something of a curse also appears in the comedies. Regarding the unrelenting banter of *Love's Labours Lost*, Nuttall observes: 'If one is trapped in the convention of restless badinage so that

one is never able to look steadily at anything, the appropriate reality will be perhaps the great negative fact of death; this alone can stop the witticisms.' Hence, the Elizabethan use of 'die' for 'orgasm.' John Donne, in his strenuously witty lyrics, also suffered from this 'restless badinage,' which made C S Lewis doubt whether Donne ever really understood human love as anything other than a kind of verbal athletics.

Then there are Beatrice and Benedick of *Much Ado About Nothing*, whose jousts of wit, Nuttall observes, 'look at first like displays of festive freedom but at last compose a glittering cage in which it is impossible for either party to say, simply, "I love you".' This is rather different from what Craig Raine in his recent study of Eliot called 'the perverse platitude that language is always an obstacle to expression,' which continues to enthrall the postmodernist academy. The very articulateness of Shakespeare's would-be lovers may frustrate their desires but the plays do not support the notion that language *per se* necessitates their separation. On the contrary, as Nuttall affirms, the plays show how 'words when they become transparent... can engage reality'. There is nothing determinist in Nuttall's Shakespeare.

Nuttall shows how feeling humanizes Shakespeare's thought. Although engaging enough about the various philosophical systems in which Shakespeare dabbled — Nominalism, Realism, Gnosticism — Nuttall is most shrewd when his analysis calls for psychological insight. Speaking of Othello, he says: 'He does not really know Desdemona and marvels that she, so beautiful, could love one like him. So he turns, as Iago knew he would, to the familiar: to the genial male friend, the experienced soldier, 'honest Iago'. There is something frightening about the strength of the love of a woman when it comes to one till then cocooned in comforting male solidarity. It is as if we had a Romeo who instinctively felt he could not be loved by Juliet, turned back to his old friend Mercutio — and found that Mercutio hated him. This is good old character analysis after the manner of A C Bradley, and Nuttall, who is not afraid of singing Bradley's unfashionable praises, is superb at it.

Nuttall's close reading of *Richard II* is perhaps the best in the book. 'Richard has grown up', he says about the man who goes to his death with newfound bravery. He has 'matured to the point of full *anagnorisis*, in the sense in which that term applies to Sophocles' Oedipus, self-understanding. Perhaps the trauma of usurpation is itself enough to account for the change. But we do not see enough of the transition. The movement at the end is so profound that it engages the audience entirely. We have no mental leisure to wonder any more how such a thing could happen. Suddenly we love Richard.

But I am not sure that we should.' In revisiting this study of regal introspection, Nuttall sounds more an inspired stage director than a critic poring over the play in his library.

What sets Nuttall apart from many other critics is his readiness to question his own assumptions. This intellectual humility is a trait he shares with Shakespeare, who, for all his protean thinking, never lost sight of the larger scheme of things in which thought is merely a part. Apropos the great speech in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which Bottom, scrambling St Paul, exclaims: 'The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was,' Nuttall proves his critical mettle. For Frank Kermode, this 'fantasticated' allusion was tossed out merely to divert an audience fond of Scripture. For Nuttall it is very much more: 'At one level Bottom's hilarious confusion of ear and heart makes nonsense of the Pauline thesis; at another level it deepens it. Paul is striving to lead our minds to a place where the ordinary categories no longer apply. Bottom's wild synaesthesia enforces the idea of a reality beyond categories.'

Shakespeare the Thinker is a gloriously good book which deserves to be read and re-read by all who love the poet who remains 'the wonder of our stage'.

The Dhofar Wars

Ian Gordon

A Monk in the SAS, Paul Sibley, Trafford Publishing, 2006, £12.99. **Oman's Insurgencies**, J E Peterson, Saqi, 2007, £55 (hb). **In the Service of the Sultan**, Ian Gardiner, Pen & Sword, 2006, £19.99. **Dangerous Frontiers**, Bryan Ray, Pen & Sword, 2008, £15.99.

Oman's small internal wars may be widely unknown; people may even confuse Darfur with Dhofar. These seemingly unimportant affairs that happened in a relative backwater have not had much written about them. This makes it all the more unusual to have a history and three first-hand accounts published recently.

These personal accounts are constrained by the geographical and chronological limits of their author's deployments in Oman. They try to cover the whole duration of the Dhofar war from 1965 to 1976 by drawing on other accounts to provide a background for their experience. Gardiner puts the Dhofar war into its geopolitical context, contrasting it neatly with the contemporaneous war in Vietnam. He points out

that Vietnam was not essential to America's survival, as defeat there proved. In contrast, defeat in Dhofar would have had a serious impact on the security of the West, in particular its oil supplies. While it suited those involved at the time not to court publicity, these books honestly reveal that the absence of journalistic 'watchdogs' did not result in a proliferation of military excesses and war crimes. Had there been more lapses of discipline and decency, the outcome would, surely, have been different: My own abiding lesson from my involvement there from 1972 to the end of the war, was that the side which most flouts the laws of war and standards of decent behaviour, eventually loses.

The tone is set from the top. The commander-in-chief was the Sultan. His exchequer, not foreign governments or aid agencies, paid for the war and for development. He was clearly the Boss, so, although Gardiner's working title for his book was, attractively, 'War in the Frankincense Mountains', its eventual title is most fitting; for all of us there were clear whom we were serving. The same clarity is not apparent in Iraq or Afghanistan today. In contrast to Sultan Qaboos's forces, the communist guerillas terrorised cruelly those of their kith and kin who refused to forsake the path of Allah for the ways of Lenin. Lording it over the people they lived off, they managed to drive their own people into the arms of a polyglot 'foreign' army of northern Omanis (more alien to a Dhofari than a Sassenach is to a Scot), Baluchis, Britons, Pakistanis, Indians, Jordanians, Iranians and a smattering of others.

It wasn't always like that. As these books explain, under the regime of Sultan Said bin Taimur very little was offered to the people of Dhofar, while the Dhofar Liberation Front, and its later communist manifestations, promised much. All that changed with the accession of his son Qaboos in 1970. That was the political, economic and social turning point of the war. The three personal accounts focus on the subsequent success story. The military and psychological turning point came two years later, almost to the day, when a large enemy force was prevented, by a small force of defenders anchored by an SAS team, from capturing the key coastal town of Mirbat. They were driven off with very heavy losses; over half of the more-than-250 attackers were casualties. The Communists never really recovered from this blow to their morale and prestige, although that wasn't obvious at the time. Indeed, just over a year later, one of the few journalists allowed into Oman, the writer and expert on terrorism Penelope Tremayne, and I, talked to two former top Communist leaders who had recently declared for the Sultan. They told us that the enemy were still very formidable and felt that, even with the continuing sound development policies of the government, victory was, at best, 8 or

10 years away. Just over two years later the war was over. These books go some way towards explaining how that came to happen.

The three personal accounts give interestingly different but complimentary perspectives. Gardiner, a Captain on loan from the Royal Marines who retired as a Brigadier, was a Company second-in-command in the Northern Frontier Regiment (NFR). Ray, on loan from the Queen's Regiment, was a Lieutenant Colonel commanding NFR and, for a while, Gardiner's boss. Their accounts mainly involve operations to the west of Salalah. Sibley did 20 months over four 'trips' with the SAS, mainly in the central and eastern areas and then just over a year on 'contract' with the Firqa up to the end of the war, followed by working for the Civil Aid Department.

Sibley's book started as memoirs for his family but is surprisingly good for all that. His raconteur style captures the acerbic humour and iconoclasm of the special forces soldier and provides fascinating insights into that culture. Ray's has good photographs and, drawing on his diaries, it gives an accurate and reliable picture of how a battalion operated. Sadly, only Peterson provides reasonable maps.

Gardiner's easy, readable style weaves an excellent story, with literary skill, around his personal experience as a young man in his early 20s leading Omani soldiers fighting in some very tough terrain against a very hardy, highly motivated, wily and dangerous enemy. He captures the sensations of exuberant confidence with which a few youthful British officers integrated (embedded is the current slang) with their Omani troops.

While they recount times of frustration with lack of materiel, with decision making and with cultural issues, a climate of rapport, affection and humour, despite very disparate cultures, comes through in all the accounts. And they also reveal that this climate was created by wise and humane leadership at all levels. All do justice to the extremely effective cooperation between the three services, which was so vital to success. Ray gives well deserved credit to the late Brigadier Jack Fletcher (whose widow he married) for starting that cooperation, not least through insisting that the meagre available funds were used to build a small, joint, Brigade HQ in RAF Salalah. There, ground and air worked in unison in the same building with far reaching benefits that were built upon most successfully by his successor John Akehurst.

The main action described by Gardiner and Ray takes place on the 'Hornbeam Line'. This area could be supplied by road from Salalah, and its relative lack of vegetation and resultant sparse population made it possible to bring the enemy to conventional

battle with minimal danger to civilians and livestock. They tell the hard fought story of how the crucial aim was achieved of disrupting enemy supplies coming from Yemen in the west and being used against the populous areas around Salalah and further east. In these conventional military engagements around the Hornbeam line the 'Firqa' were useful but not vital. However, the Hornbeam line enabled the vital civil aid operations in the centre and east to succeed, relatively unmolested. There, the 'Firqa' and civilians could contrast the wise, humane and decent policies of the Oman government with the increasingly crude cruelty of communist dogma. Sibley gives some insights into these operations.

In Dhofar the term Firqa applied to former enemy who, comparing the rhetorical promises of the communists with the genuine results of the government, turned against their erstwhile communist colleagues and fought in tribal groups (called 'Firqats') as irregulars alongside the Sultan's regular army. The effect of this 'brain drain' on enemy morale was considerable while the benefits it brought to the government were immeasurable. Some regulars found the Firqa frustrating, fickle and seemingly unreliable allies, often seeming to care more for their livestock than the military mission. But, for the Firqa, it was very much a civil war and they were both the spearhead and the key to victory, without whom the mission 'To secure Dhofar for Civil Development' could not have been achieved. Their story has yet to be fully told. The West is wrestling in current conflicts with problems similar to those faced in the Dhofar campaign. Many of its lessons could, therefore, help to inform Western policy, particularly in Afghanistan. So, the full story is worth telling, particularly including the enemy and Firqa perspectives.

Peterson, a historian, not a soldier, covers all Oman's conflicts. His access to source documents during his ten-year appointment as historian to the Oman military in the 1990s gives it authority. However, the narrative thread of many military actions is lost in irrelevant incidental data or repetition. He claims to have interviewed hundreds of 'non-attributable' primary sources but he admits he made no attempt to obtain the 'enemy' view and even the Firqa contribution is not well covered. The few instances where I have personal knowledge contain basic errors and the overall significance of key operations such as 'Himmar' are not given their rightful place. His analyses and conclusions are topically valuable and there is a useful bibliography, but his coverage of the Dhofar war is disappointing.

The more attractive personal accounts capture the charm of a magnificent country and a captivating people, and give an insight into an intriguing little war

which was more hard fought than many realise. They are worth the read as good stories, well told, and if they tantalise someone into writing the definitive history that the Dhofar war deserves, they will have served an additional purpose. Sadly, the protagonists are aging and the whole story will soon be lost forever.

Herald of the Market State

Jonathan Guinness

Sex, Science and Profits, Terence Kealey, Heinemann, 2008, £20.

The author of this book is Vice Chancellor of Buckingham University, an institution which flourishes without state funding; and his message is that state funding of just about everything has always been at best inefficient, at worst harmful. In a masterpiece of multi-disciplinary writing, Kealey overturns most accepted ideas in history and economics. Defying the *idées reçues* of the global intelligentsia, his book provides an in-depth justification for the free market policies of Margaret Thatcher. Implicitly, it also celebrates the advent of the 'market state' which Philip Bobbitt expects to replace the nation state (*The Shield of Achilles*, Penguin, 2002).

For Kealey, human achievement results from the free exchange of goods and ideas. He sees trade as operating in the same way as natural selection. An animal species evolves to fill a particular ecological niche. In the free market, as in nature, what succeeds survives; what does not make the grade, dies out. Science progresses in the same way: '...the scientific method emerged when a trader ... first extended his market method into an abstract problem of the type we call scientific.' The concrete precedes the abstract. Further, the number of relevant facts that one person can know is limited, so knowledge can only advance by consensus among people who know what they are talking about.

This principle can be applied to democratic politics, the prize here being not knowledge but power. Once universal suffrage has distributed sovereignty among the whole population, those who feel the need to run things will then competitively gather up the votes of the electorate for the purpose. If science is the consensus of the curious, democratic politics is the consensus of the bossy.

These insights can be extended back beyond humanity. As the primatologist Frans de Waal puts it 'the roots of politics are older than humanity.' In his book *Primates and Philosophers*, de Waal notes that the human move from interpersonal relations to a focus

on the general good is anticipated in apes. 'Females may bring males together after a fight between them, thus brokering a reconciliation, and high-ranking males often stop fights among others in an even-handed manner, thus promoting peace in the group. But market trading, scientific advance and democratic politics arise only from one side of human nature, the cooperative side. There is another side, the predatory, equally manifest in the chimpanzee. For human groups, and for historians, war has too often paid better than trading and discussion. Kealey celebrates the ordinary people, until recent times largely unsung: the traders, the innovators, the technical and political debaters.

Kealey endorses the late Stone Age because during that time agriculture began. This was important 'not because it provided food as such ... but because it provided a food source that could be owned. A resource that is owned will be husbanded, not extinguished,' but he deplores the latter part of the Bronze Age. After an initial period when writing was invented, the first cities were built in the Fertile Crescent and technology surged, the predators moved in, establishing militaristic empires. He approves of the early Iron Age with the invention of the alphabet, the discovery of iron and the pre-Classical age in Greece but sees the Greeks going wrong in Classical times, coming to despise their merchant ancestors and adopt the military values which made the fortunes of such as Xenophon but led to ultimate decline. Rome he deplores, seeing it as entirely predatory and poor in technological progress, only able to keep going by imposing crushing taxation for which reason its eventual fall was, he says, a liberation for ordinary people. Kealey mentions the breakdown of law and order, but rather skates over it, referring to the first centuries after Rome's fall as 'the so-called Dark Ages'. He says it is to that time that we owe the crank which converts rotary motion to reciprocal, as well as all the important techniques for harnessing and riding horses including stirrups, horse-collars and the tandem harness.

After the 'Dark' ages came the feudal Middle Ages. Kealey rightly points out that feudalism was a protection racket in which farmers sought the protection of warriors to keep their goods from being plundered. Over most of Europe communications and social order had still not recovered from the fall of Rome and communities had to become self-sufficient in defence as in everything else, so that trading was only possible where 'Charlemagne and other magnates ... enforced contracts, ... secured property rights ... maintained roads ... and ... executed footpads'.

Even Kealey has to notice that there is a function for governance. Markets, the product of mankind's cooperative side, need stable political conditions

which depend on effective authority. Which is where the human predators come in; for top-down authority is predation, if at one or two removes. When predatory authority is secure, the predators and their descendants gradually come to see that *noblesse oblige*. The relationship between man as negotiator and man as successful predator then resembles the symbiosis between fungus and algae in a lichen on a rock; the algae produce nourishment but require the protecting fungus in order to survive in the harsh environment. The entrepreneurs and scientists who drive the market need their tame predators to protect them from wild ones.

Such a relationship powered development in Western Europe under the leadership of Britain from the time of the Restoration onwards. For Kealey the important date was the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, but that simply re-established a social pact concluded after the Civil War. Charles II, the restored King, founded in 1662 the Royal Society whose members were half Royalist and half Cromwellian. Natural phenomena amused the King; he used to close one eye, look through the other at a courtier, and 'behead' the man by directing his blind spot at him. It was Robert Boyle who provided much of the Society's basic thinking, helping to 'launch the scientific revolution as a collective activity, where one person's tacit knowledge could be legitimized on its being tested by others'. He and the others started the tradition of civilized debate, starting with the exclusion of the curmudgeonly Thomas Hobbes.

It may have been fortunate for England, and for English science, that Charles II was always short of money; had he been as rich as his French opposite number, Louis XIV, he might have used the state to subsidize research, which would have done less than no good. For Louis did pour state money into scientific research and education, yet to little effect because research by individuals, the only kind that for Kealey is beneficial, was stifled by heavy taxation. In England the two revolutions, first agricultural then industrial, transformed the economy of the country, then of the world.

Here are some of the skittles which Kealey blithely overturns: *William Cobbett*, mourner of a pastoral England which in practice was a place of grinding poverty. People were not herded into the new industrial towns, they went of their own accord because wages were higher. *Patents*, which neither incentivise research nor promote disclosure. 'Not only do the vast majority have no commercial value... but the valuable ones inhibit competitors.' *Economists*, whose theories make sense intellectually but have no relationship with real life where the rules are those of Darwinian selection. *Germany*, whose apparent economic progress in the

late 19th and early 20th Centuries frightened many observers but which only became truly prosperous when Ludwig Erhard scrapped controls in 1948 and let markets rip.

Today's world approaches Kealey's ideal. International trading is more or less free and scientific advance continues. The question is, can it go on? Philip Bobbitt sees the 'market-state' maturing in the United States as the future world norm. 'Whereas the [20th Century] nation-state justified itself as an instrument to serve the welfare of the people (the nation), the market-state exists to maximize the opportunities enjoyed by all members of society,' It is 'classless and indifferent to race, ethnicity and gender; its yardstick for evaluation is the quantifiable'.

It is a pity that this splendid book is abysmally edited. For example Petrarch is mentioned, then a few pages on his name is transmuted to Plutarch. And that is only the worst of the editorial blunders. I hope these errors are corrected in the paperback edition.

Right On

Stephen J Sniegowski

Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right, Paul Gottfried, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, \$39.95,

Paul Gottfried has a negative view of the contemporary political and intellectual world, and it must be said that he has much to be negative about. Gottfried's study of the post-World War II American Right serves as a refutation of the many pollyannish works that have lauded what they regard as the triumph of conservatism in the United States. Gottfried acknowledges that the self-styled conservative movement has been successful in moving from a marginal status to the limelight, with numerous media celebrities, radio hosts, and even a President who blathers to be, and is widely perceived as, a conservative. However, Gottfried points out that in achieving this success, the conservative movement has evolved, or more precisely devolved, in a leftward direction, by adopting all the popular nostrums of what is fashionable in modern American liberalism and even adding some destructive policies of its own — support for the managerial state, multiculturalism, a militantly Wilsonian interventionist foreign policy, and an institutionally-enforced political correctness that effectively screens out authentic Rightist views.

This picture is hardly novel to many long-time toilers on the American Right, especially those who were purged or marginalized in this process of leftward

movement. And the culprit in the eyes of these folks is the neo-conservatives. Instead of presenting a golden age of conservatism that was subverted by the neoconservatives, however, Gottfried describes a much longer history of salient short-comings in the movement.

Gottfried certainly regards the neoconservative conquest of the conservative movement as bringing it to its absolute nadir. He was one of the earliest Rightist critics of neo-conservatism, sounding the alarm even in the 1970s, when movement conservatives were welcoming neocons aboard as allies against the danger of Soviet Communism and the depredations of fashionable American liberalism, which had veered sharply to the left. Of course, once gaining a foothold in the conservative movement, neoconservatives would quickly take control, expelling those who would not go along, and altering the movement in a left-wing direction to fit their particular needs and interests.

Gottfried asks the deeper question as to why the neocon takeover was so easy. While there was some resistance, he points out that most of the leaders of the conservative movement — those in the media, such as the magazine *National Review*, and think tanks, such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation — simply acquiesced in, or even embraced, neocon rule. Gottfried traces this failure to resist the neocon invasion to certain inherent weaknesses in the post-World War II conservative movement, as initially coalescing under the auspices of William F Buckley's *National Review*. According to Gottfried the American Right's movement leftward began to take place almost at its very inception in the mid-1950s.

He emphasizes that the post-war conservative movement was highly defective in its very formation. He maintains that the conservatism that the proponents of the movement purported to represent could not really exist in the United States because the social basis for it — the hierarchical society that existed in Europe — was lacking. 'American conservatism,' Gottfried writes, 'could not be anchored in anything as concrete as the social world in which European conservatives had lived and defended their orders and degrees.' Gottfried sees the efforts by Russell Kirk and other intellectual luminaries of the postwar American Right to find an English or Continental European pedigree for what they conceived as American conservatism to be an exercise in fantasy.

He maintains that the type of conservatism developed by William Buckley's *National Review* group, which cobbled together three rather disparate elements — European-like traditionalist conservatism, free-market limited government, and anti-Communism — lacked the unified idea structure, along with a social base, to

resist constant alteration by the spirit of the times or by any powerful group that could gain the levers of power. Conservatives in the 1980s began to claim an anchor in 'values conservatism', which was so amorphous as to mean almost anything, thus providing the basis for today's 'conservatives' to use the 'value' of universal democracy as the justification for spreading democracy by perpetual war to every corner of the world. The meaning of conservatism has become so transmuted that in international policy it resembles Trotskyism; today's American conservatism is not only led by former Trotskyite neocons but embraces current admirers of Trotsky, such as Stephen Schwartz.

Gottfried also sees a serious flaw in the priority the Buckley conservatives gave to Communism during the Cold War. The focus on combating Communism led to the sacrifice of other aspects of the 'conservative' *mélange* — especially the idea of limited, constitutionalist government. The war against Communism, Gottfried maintains, had conditioned conservatives 'to follow orders from the top.' Libertarians, non-interventionists in foreign policy, and other disobedient people were purged from movement ranks. This habit of obedience to conservative movement authorities explains why there was little resistance to the neocon takeover — movement members obeyed their new masters just as Communists would automatically follow changes in the Party line.

Was the movement of the American Right to the left inevitable, the result of deeper, structural changes in American society? Gottfried does not deny that such changes would lead to some movement leftward, but he holds that the current situation was not inevitable and that the pre-Buckley 'Old Right' would have provided better resistance to the onslaught of the Left. The 'Old Right' did not pretend to be conservative in the European sense; rather, it identified with what is known as liberalism in most of the world. It was for limited, constitutional government, categorically rejecting mass democracy and the managerial bureaucratic state, and in foreign policy pursued non-interventionism. The 'Old Right', in essence, was grounded in concrete ideas, which were far more difficult to alter than the nebulous basis of movement 'conservatism'.

Instead of serving to counter the leftward trend of American politics, Gottfried goes so far as to claim that the emergence of the Buckley 'conservative' movement facilitated that leftward movement. This view is the polar opposite of the conventional interpretation of the post-World War II American conservative movement by individuals on both the Left and Right, which holds that the modern conservative movement stemming from Buckley has made authentic conservative views

popular, if not dominant, in American politics and society. Such was the predominant theme of a host of eulogies that followed Buckley's death earlier this year.

Gottfried has developed a masterly revisionist account of the American post-war Right. I would like to see how the downfall of Soviet Communism and socialist economic thinking fit into this interpretation. It would seem that the conservative movement would deserve at least a little credit here. Gottfried presents a view that deserves to be debated, and refined — as would any general theory. But the very left-wing and neoconservative Political Correctness that Gottfried describes prevents it from getting any attention. In the old pre-World War II America, a thesis such as Gottfried's would be discussed by mainstream, academic historians. Major publishers would beg Gottfried to author or edit books. University students would study his views in history classes and he would be feted in the highest academic circles. As it is, he is left to disseminate his ideas largely on the Internet, a few intellectual journals, and small book publishers, and though not without admirers, he is ignored by PC mainstream academic historians. The very fact that his views are suppressed and ignored helps to provide substantiation for his thesis.

Before a Fall

John Jolliffe

In Praise of Prejudice, Theodore Dalrymple, Encounter Books, 2007, £10.99.

The author of this book worked for many years as a doctor in a heavily disadvantaged district of Birmingham, and also in a nearby prison. He has thus come to see what most of us would regard as exceptional criminal horrors every day. In trying to analyse the reasons why these gruesome situations arise, he has come up with the theory that preconceived ideas are necessary if realistic attitudes and policies are to be formed.

He has concluded that to be without any prejudice is to be without any general basic principles on which to base judgements, and therefore to be unequipped to deal with the realities of life. Of course, prejudice *may*, but does not *necessarily* include lazy stereotyping on the basis of colour, age, sex, or even old-fashioned class. To have prejudices does not preclude abandoning them if confronted with evidence which falsifies them.

This book is really a series of twenty-nine related

essays, between three and seven pages long, rather on the lines of Pascal's *Pensees*, but a bit longer. Topics include 'Why we prefer the History of Disaster to that of Achievement' (see the BBC, and the daily press, *passim*). 'The Supposed Equality of all Opinions, provided they are one's own'. 'Racial Discrimination being bad, all Discrimination is Bad'; and finally 'No Virtue without Prejudice'. He quotes the example of Macaulay, who began his History with the claim that the previous 160 years (the time since the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688) was 'eminently' the history of physical, moral and intellectual improvement. Note the weasel word 'eminently'. It was of course the history of a great many other things as well, which Macaulay preferred to pass over, unlike his contemporary Engels in his rather different portrait of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, which was compiled, interestingly, in the intervals between going out with the Cheshire Hunt

Later, he identifies the very widespread failure of contemporary parents to inculcate (prejudicially) self-control in their children: hence both obesity and the blackboard jungle. If a child is 'constantly consulted over his likes and dislikes, he soon feels that life is, and ought to be, ruled by them', and comes to cause immense trouble when, inevitably, it turns out otherwise. The old prejudice in favour of constituted authority has been replaced by a new one, namely that *any* authority, other than one's own, is illegitimate. He blames J S Mill (*On Liberty*) strongly for the notion of 'the unique beauty and utility of each person's opinions', and the idea that they should all be heeded with equal attention. Without some kind of rule-making authority there would be chaos. Exactly how that authority is to be constituted, and obeyed, is a problem that neither Mill nor anyone else has categorically solved. Probably the answer is 'in different ways, in different circumstances', but if so it is not exactly helpful, and usually leads to Lenin's great question 'Who whom?' Mill also seems to have ignored the possibility of radical evil, in which the following century, like the two preceding ones, abounded. Dalrymple goes on to explain, elegantly, that 'rights' expand to satisfy the egos of those who want their freedom to be unconstrained, and whose motto is 'I want, therefore I have a right'. This is also exemplified by children who say, uncorrected, 'I need', when what they mean is 'I want'.

The great drawback of the new exclusive emphasis on 'rights' seems to have led to any balancing concept of duties being ignored. Certainly anyone proposing a Human Duties Act would be laughed to scorn. You have a moral duty, do you not, to avoid causing unbearable annoyance to your neighbour? But as a prison doctor the author has seen innumerable examples of inmates

who have been so exasperated by very loud noise, or 'music', late at night that, since the authorities have abdicated their powers of enforcement, nothing is left but the argument of the club and the knife, with the unfortunate doctor often literally picking up the pieces.

Short though it is, this book contains a great deal more pure common sense than can be mentioned in a review. It covers most of the more pressing problems of society today, and deserves to sell far more copies than a piece of stale, lopsided propaganda like *The God Delusion*. Unfortunately, it won't, but buy a copy today.

Between Two Rivers

Penelope Tremayne

Farewell Babylon, Naim Kattan, Souvenir Press, 2007, £12.90.

Naim Kattan, now in his eighties, has written an engaging memoir of his childhood and adolescence in Iraq. Of a Jewish family native to Baghdad, he went to France as a student in 1927, and ten years later emigrated to Canada. He wrote and published the book, *Adieu Babylone*, in French, during the 1970s; and it has only now appeared here in an English translation. It gives a straightforward account of daily life in a not very prosperous middle-class family (his father was a minor Post Office official), for a bright child who by hard work, determination, and a real appetite for literature acquired first an education and then a career. To-day it is likely to interest readers not so much for its portraiture, good though that is, as for the light it throws on Moslem-Jewish relations during the adolescence not only of the author but of Iraq itself.

'In our group,' Kattan writes (the group, all about 16 years old, were mostly Arabs, with a sprinkling of Jews, Kurds and Armenians) 'we were neither Jew nor Muslim. We were Iraqis. Except,' he goes on 'that the Muslims felt more Iraqi than the others. It was no use for us to say to them 'This is our land and we have been here for 25 centuries ... Our identity was tainted.'

Neither Jew nor Muslim? All his childhood reminiscences show how totally unassimilated the Jewish minority was and how complete was their separation, living in their Jewish quarter, fearing all Arabs automatically. When he was nine Kattan dislocated his elbow. His father, knowing that a doctor highly skilled in such injuries lived not far off, nerved himself to take the child there. His mother attempted to disguise him; all three were terrified, he no less than

his parents. His description of the visit might almost be of a young horse being shod for the first time, and the doctor seems to have handled him much as a good blacksmith does a colt. The visit was a total success, but seems not to have extinguished their fears, which show just as much in other incidents. 'Living on the fringe of the Muslim world' he writes later, 'we could sense its strangeness. For us it was a world of hostility and compromise ... it was imperative that we avoid their blows, appeal to their goodwill.' Or elsewhere: 'My father, my uncle, and later my brother were civil servants and all their fellow workers were Muslims or Christians, but when their offices closed ... they became strangers again.'

Kattan and his friends tried to believe — for a short time did, passionately, believe — in part through regarding the British as their mutual enemy — that integration of Arab and Jew was possible. Then at seventeen or so their hopes were turned in a new direction. 'The Russians were in the game now. A few years of patience and the world would be transformed and our enemies laid low by the new defenders of our freedom. We would no longer need to leave Baghdad.' Sure enough, he finds that secret societies are being formed and communist cells organised in his school (the French-run Alliance Israelite). His closest friends are sucked in. He is distressed, but refrains from joining them. The state of Israel is set up; many Iraqi Jews are suspected of Zionism, in Kattan's case wrongly. Meantime they are being taught ancient history by their English teacher. 'Only the Jews can feel the upheaval of a living past under these piles of stones' he tells them. 'Nothing ties the Arabs to Babylon. When they conquered it, we were already there. We are the true natives ...' 'Are we worthy of our ancestors?' he exclaimed. 'We should be ashamed of our laziness.'

His passion for literature reclaimed Kattan from this swirling propaganda. None the less, by the time he was nineteen he had made up his mind that there was no future for him in Baghdad. He left it, never to return.

I must not give the impression that this book is about politics: it is blessedly almost free of them. What it gives us is an impression of the author as a modest, moderate and generous-minded man, readier to make mild fun of himself than of others, highly intelligent, and wholly devoted to French and English literature. But the sense of exile glimmers through the whole.

Unfortunately, he has not been well served by his translator. Many sentences read as stilted, flowery or ludicrous, a few are incomprehensible, and here and there words seem misinterpreted. Kattan is a distinguished writer, and deserves better than this. By contrast, the book production is excellent, and it is a pleasure to read anything so free of errors.

Spare My Blushes

James Docherty

Shyness: How Normal Behavior Became a Sickness, Christopher Lane, Yale University Press, 2007, £18.99.

Advertisements for Horlicks Malted Milk used to take the form of a comic strip. The first square would show, say, a poor clerk who has not had the advancement he deserves. Tired, listless and run-down, he is seen in square two consulting a doctor who diagnoses something called 'Night Starvation'. The remedy is 'Horlicks' which will lead to 'deep satisfying sleep' and a better life. In the final picture, we see our hero now promoted to office manager, reflecting 'Thanks to Horlicks'. Inventing an illness and selling the remedy for it has always been good business, but the public now looks for some sort of scientific provenance. 'Night starvation' has gone the way of the Spleen, the Vapours and the Brain Fever that afflicted our ancestors. Christopher Lane's very readable book describes the process by which aspects of human character and behaviour have been labelled as mental disorders, as illnesses which should and can be treated.

In 1952, for the first time, a drug was developed which could treat psychosis. Chlorpromazine, useful in schizophrenia, was found to be effective in depression. Similar drugs were produced in the following decades and manufacturers realised that there was a huge potential market for products which could be used, not just on the grossly psychotic, but on millions of other people. At the same time, psychiatry was changing too, especially in the United States. These changes were seen in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the 'bible' of the profession. The very weight of this volume gives it authority, not only with psychiatrists but with social workers, lawyers and insurance companies. Successive editions of the DSM became thicker and thicker and contained hundreds of new disorders. Lane describes in detail the wrangling and lobbying behind closed doors about whether some traits should be regarded as abnormalities and how they should be named. Of course this was of great interest to the manufacturers: more and more diagnoses affecting ever more people offered an almost limitless market.

It has always been recognised that some of us are shy by nature and many are so in certain situations — speaking in public for example. In *Shyness* we learn how the group of doctors who compiled the DSM came to decide that shyness was an illness they called 'social anxiety' or 'social phobia'. This hitherto unrecognized

disease apparently affected millions. Studies and surveys (of very dubious quality) showed that as many as 18.7 per cent of Americans suffered from it. Clinics to treat them sprang up and the media gave wide publicity to the epidemic. The drug companies moved into action. 'Every marketeer's dream' said the product director of Smith, Kline and French 'is to find an unidentified or unknown market and develop it. That's what we were able to do with social anxiety disorder.' The American Psychiatric Association helped to make that dream come true. It sent out a signal to researchers, health-care professionals and drug-firms that they should seek fresh remedies and lots of new ones duly appeared. Massive advertising, direct and indirect, has greatly expanded the market for these drugs and just one of Smith Kline's products now enjoys sales of 2.7 billion dollars a year.

Whether necessary or not, these drugs can have side effects. The author's energetic delving into the archives of the APA and of the pharmaceutical industry gives a disturbing picture of the efforts to conceal these dangers. He is scathing about the extent to which scientists and doctors are increasingly beholden to their corporate sponsors. Lane deals with one facet of life and its commercial exploitation but also gives evidence of a recent back-lash, especially in the US. However, if 'social phobia' should lose its appeal, there are other exciting possibilities for the manufacturers. A new edition of DSM is due to appear in 2011 and the wise men are already discussing whether 'apathy' should be included as a disease. Other conditions strongly fancied include 'internet addiction', 'binge eating' and 'compulsive buying disorder'. Professor John Duffy of the University of Connecticut backs apathy. 'It's not just a state of mind,' he says, 'but a common illness'. There is certainly a lot of it going about: might there be something in Night Starvation after all?

"Out of Ireland have we come"

Sean O'Callaghan

Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006, Paul Bew, OUP, 2007, £35.

Paul Bew is Professor of Irish Politics at Queen's University, Belfast and a recent addition to the House of Lords where he sits as a cross-bencher. He is regarded by many of his contemporaries as the leading light in the study of Irish politics. This magisterial book firmly establishes his pre-eminent position in that area. Bew has written extensively on Irish politics over many years but one could see much of his previous work as

a dress rehearsal for this wonderfully objective and erudite example of scholarship at its finest.

From the impact of the French revolution on Irish politics to the working out of the Belfast Agreement Bew handles that historical narrative with great authority and a refreshing lightness of touch. He writes and communicates clearly as only one who comprehensively understands his subject matter can. Bew uses the phrase 'ethnic rage' to describe the often troubled and sometimes violent relationship between the two islands, or at least important elements therein, without ever losing sight of the economic and social realities. He correctly identifies the awesome and catastrophic impact of the French revolution on Irish society and the body politic in general. That revolution and the legacy inherited played a major role in all that followed. It inspired the creation of the United Irishmen and Orangeism in the 1790s and from then on the story is clearly one of conflict between Irish Catholics and Protestants living on the island of Ireland and on the British 'mainland'. This book also describes the attempts by leading politicians of the day such as Castlereagh and Pitt and intellectuals such as Edmund Burke to find a way to stabilise Ireland inside the Union. Catholic Emancipation and the Act of Union of 1800 in essence summarised the overarching strategy which would pacify Ireland and best serve Britain's interests.

Unfortunately for this strategy, the Irish potato famine of the mid to late 1840's in which roughly one million died created a well of bitterness and hatred which, partially at least, gave rise to the Fenian movement of the 1860's. The mass flight to America during and after the famine years created that sentimental monster known as 'Irish America', often ready, particularly when 'ethnic rage' was boiling, to send guns, money and political support to those opposed to British control of Ireland.

The birth of Fenianism owed much to James Stephens [1824-1901]. In 1848 Stephens, then a young civil engineer, got involved in the comic opera attempt at revolution led by William Smith O'Brien during which Stephens was wounded. Following a tradition of sorts he escaped and made his way to Paris and 'a new life as a revolutionary exile in Paris.... and generally inserting himself into the revolutionary culture of the Latin Quarter.'

He returned to Ireland in late 1855 with a number of very clear convictions on how to proceed to revolution. Most importantly Stephens clearly recognised that a greater Ireland now existed beyond the sea, both in America and Britain. Irish emigrants often carried with them a tradition of banding together in secret societies in hatred of the 'Saxon' and a passionate desire for

revenge. From the famine right to this very day militant Irish Republicans have always looked to Irish America, in particular, for practical and moral support. It in return has rarely been found wanting. The Fenian Movement failed in its primary object but Gladstone was later to tell his Irish Lord Lieutenant: 'I admit... that the Fenian outrages and their overflow into England have had a very important influence on the question of the time for moving upon great questions of policy for Ireland.' The Fenians were the first republican militants to carry out attacks in England and indeed to attempt an invasion of Canada. Nationalist Ireland now had a cohesive diaspora with a visceral hatred of all things English, a fondness for conspiracy and a near narcotic attachment to the notion of a free and independent Ireland irrespective of the economic consequences for those that actually continued to live there.

If one Irish politician, in the person of Daniel O'Connell, is synonymous with the Catholic emancipation struggles of the 1820s, then Charles Stewart Parnell dominated the Home Rule debate of the 1880's. John Devoy, a very serious Irish American militant, sent a public telegram to Parnell on 25 October 1878 proposing what became known as the 'New Departure', offering Parnell the support of American militants on certain conditions.

Some people may well have seen the Irish pan-nationalist alliance of the early 1990s as an attempt to re-create the 'New Departure' with the addition of an independent sovereign government in the Irish Republic. So it goes on, the search to make the relationship between both islands easy and devoid of drama or indeed 'ethnic rage', and the determined efforts by some to keep the relationship in a state of tension. Always hopeful, their view, their will, their enmity comes to dominate.

Paul Bew's book is an immense contribution to understanding and untangling our shared history. It should be read and studied by anyone who wishes to understand what happened and hopes to be able to make a reasoned prediction about what the future might hold.



FILM

On the Beach

Directed by Stanley Kramer

Myles Harris

On the Beach was released in December 1959. It stars Gregory Peck as Dwight Towers, the commander of the US Submarine *Sawfish*, which at the start of the film we see surfacing in the entrance to Melbourne harbour. The sub is in search of survivors of a nuclear war which has killed every human being on earth. Towers and his crew survived because the *Sawfish* was submerged off Midway when the war began. On surfacing and finding the atmosphere filled with radioactive dust Towers sails south to Manila to find it destroyed. He makes his way down the east coast of Australia to Melbourne where radio broadcasts indicate there is human life. But even there the population waits for certain death as winds blow the radioactive cloud south. It is expected to reach the city in five months.

How did this war come about? As the British scientist Julian Osborne in the film — played by Fred Astaire with a surprisingly authentic English accent — explains, the war probably began as an accident, ‘Our so-called civilisation was destroyed by a handful of vacuum tubes and transistors, probably faulty. Somewhere some poor fool looking down a cathode ray tube thought he saw something and pressed the button.’ At the time those in the realist school of anti-Soviet politics, including myself, accused film director Stanley Kramer of trying to shirk the task of suggesting the Russians might start a nuclear war — Kramer and Peck’s liberal views were a matter of record — but looking back on the film forty years later, one can see that involving politics would have trivialised the subject. This is not a film about nuclear war but about why we go on living knowing we are sure to die. Why do we not despair when as children we learn we are eventually going to die? The film gives this conundrum an extra twist by examining how the whole human race copes with learning it is about to die, and very soon.

Concentrating on how we would react to this gives the film a haunting realism. In five months the authorities plan to issue lethal pills to every man woman and child so they do not have to suffer the agonies of death by radiation. It will be a thousand years before the earth is habitable again. But there will be no humans to inhabit

it. Just after the submarine arrives the authorities in Melbourne pick up a unreadable morse code signal near San Diego. A morse signal suggests not only survivors but a power station. Perhaps not everybody is dead. Maybe, scientists advise, the radioactive dust is being washed out of the air by rain or snow and life is beginning to return in the northern hemisphere. The *Sawfish* is dispatched to take samples of the air over the Bering Strait and on its way back to investigate the source of the morse signal.

While the sub is being fitted out with special radio direction finding apparatus, Commander Towers is given shore leave. This gives the director an opportunity to portray life in the doomed colony. Most of it takes place around a beach south of Melbourne, at a country club and the house of a junior naval officer and his wife, played by Anthony Perkins and Donna Anderson. The parents know they will soon have to poison themselves and their child. Towers also lost his two children and his wife in the war; they were at home in Connecticut when the bombs fell. Although appearing to be perfectly normal, at times he harbours the delusion that they are alive and he will be seeing them again soon, but then reality asserts itself and he remembers the terrible truth. He begins an affair with a beautiful but alcoholic Melbourne hostess Moira Davidson (Ava Gardner). At the club the members worry that they will not have time to drink the vintage port in the cellars. Outside Melbourne town hall a Salvation Army band exhorts people to repent. The writer of the original novel, Neville Shute, hated religion and in the film it is portrayed as singularly useless.

The film poses and answers the question: why do human beings go on living in the face of death? The answer is that life, however short, is good, and the setting of the film, the sunlit beaches, the deadly but thrilling road race that Fred Astaire undertakes in his vintage Jaguar, the love affair that takes place between Towers and the beautiful Ava Gardner, are all hugely enjoyable. Because everyone has only five months left does not mean that life cannot be enjoyed. Nor is there is any hope. The *Sawfish* sets out for the Bering Strait only to find radiation levels are still lethal and the morse signal from San Diego is caused by the loop on a window blind becoming entwined with a morse key. Each time a gust of wind flaps the blind the morse key taps. The power station supplying it was running on automatic. Towers brings his submarine back to Melbourne, where people are starting to die. He and

Gardner spend a last night together before he sails the next morning to die with his crew in America. The final shot is of the *Sawfish* leaving Melbourne with Ava Gardner standing on a promontory watching its departure. Then there is silence.

Watching *On the Beach* you are seized with the frailty of human existence and how we, a few billion creatures clinging to a fragile planet, cannot afford to have delusions about our vulnerability. But there are 20,000 nuclear warheads stored in the world's missile

silos, and every day you hear 'experts' prepared to take a chance similar to tossing a coin on global warming. We seem to determined to either blow ourselves to bits or choke ourselves to death. Yet we may be the only talking, intelligent species in our galaxy, possibly in the universe. We simply do not know. But once we are wiped out a great silence will descend, a silence that may last a billion years, even for ever.

On the Beach is available from Amazon.com and others on DVD.

The Rest is Noise

Robert Hugill



After writing her First World War book, *August 1914*, historian Barbara Tuchman decided to explore the pre-war world and to find out whether the pre-war golden age had ever existed. Her solution was to write a book where each chapter covered an aspect of Western Europe in the 1900 to 1914 period, the disparate elements adding up to a complete picture. Tuchman started the whole thing with a bang, the crowned heads of Europe attending the funeral of Queen Victoria.

In his new book, *The Rest is Noise*, American music critic Alex Ross investigates why Western classical composers are where they are today, why did our war of modernism happen? In his words, the book is about 'the cultural predicament of the composer in the 20th century'. Ross intends to cover all Western Music including Jazz and popular music, but to adequately cover the entire history of Western music in the 20th century would require a book longer than the mammoth 500 pages of Ross's tome. Its title as well as being the name of Ross's influential blog is intended to indicate that all music is covered in the book.

His solution is like Tuchman's, a series of themed chapters, moving the spotlight around the globe examining particular times and places with cultural relevance. Like Tuchman he opens with a bang — the performance of Richard Strauss's *Salome* in Graz. This event attracted not only Richard Strauss, but Mahler, Schoenberg, Zemlinsky, Berg, Puccini and even Johann Strauss II's widow. From here he examines Mahler and Strauss's relationship.

This problematic relationship is the first of a series of dichotomies or dualities which Ross threads through

the book. The second chapter deals with the Franco-German divide, personified by the different attitudes to modernism of Schoenberg and Debussy. Then we move to Paris, covering the years before and after the First World War, so that we sense the developing dichotomy between Schoenberg and Stravinsky, another re-incarnation of the Franco-German divide. Ross admits that this method does not work perfectly: his stand alone chapter on Sibelius is intended to stand-in for composers from 'small nations', composers who might not have been in the vanguard (like Stravinsky and Schoenberg) but who were 'acutely relevant for a broad public'. This means that composers like Vaughan Williams and Holst are offered brief mentions and that Grainger's forward looking (but relatively unknown) experiments in musical production and notation are completely omitted. But Ross does deal, in relative detail, with the rise of American music, both the black and white varieties, displaying another one of Ross's dichotomies as racism caused classically trained blacks to work in popular music and create their own form of American music. Similarly he gives ample space to the problems of Prokofiev and Shostakovich in Stalin's Russia. For Ross, the Prokofiev/Shostakovich relationship replays the Mahler/Strauss one.

Chapters often open with a striking event; the Paris one with the premiere of *The Rite of Spring* and the Prokofiev/Shostakovich one with Stalin's negative reaction to *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Ross writes with concision and zest, sterling qualities in a book with so many historical facts. But he does allow himself to pause, giving us salient details of composers' lives and describing their seminal works. His descriptions

embodies the brilliant sweep of 20th century Western musical history, written in lively and engrossing prose. When you finish it you feel you understand the cultural events of our century better. As to explaining Modernism and the cultural predicament of the composer, I am not sure. It is easy to demonise both Schoenberg and Modernism, and Ross does sometimes succumb to the temptation, but then again neither Schoenberg nor the dogmatic 1950's modernists were all that attractive. Nadia Boulanger is only mentioned briefly, but her pupils crop up all over the book. She influenced a whole generation of American composers, idolised Stravinsky and famously did not get on with Boulez. By the time I came to the end I felt that her views and influence were palpable — perhaps a not unexpected consequence of Ross's position at the centre of American music making?

Inevitably Ross's cultural position as an American

seems to imbue the selection of the material which is too American-biased, that the sheer size of the USA means that we get far more detail than we do for Europe. Obviously, a European music critic would have written the same book differently and shown you a different series of selections and explanations. This is only as it should be; we all want to feel that history can be explained and somehow contained. But the sheer act of containment means that the result is never impartial. That's half the fun of reading history books particularly when they are as well written and as thrilling as this one.

The Rest is Noise — Listening to the 20th Century, Alex Ross, Fourth Estate, 2008, £20.

Robert Hugill is a composer

War Paint

Andrew Lambirth



This book has a striking photographic frontispiece depicting the fireman artist Bernard Hailstone in uniform with his easel set up on a bomb-damaged street in 1940, posed as if painting. It looks like a mock-up, window dressing for the propaganda boys. A few pages on, a woman artist this time gets the treatment: chic Ethel Gabain is photographed with brush poised amid the ruins. Neither of these photos is properly analysed for what it might reveal about the nature and intentions of war art, and this is indicative of the text in general — it does not look to visual sources for its propulsion. This book (*Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*, Brian Foss, Yale University Press) has been built from extensive research and wide reading, but not from looking at art, so it is groaning with facts, and will provide a mine of information for further studies of war art, but it isn't really about art. It's about social and cultural history from a Canadian academic's point of view.

It's ostensibly a study of the WAAC, the War Artists' Advisory Committee, the body responsible for commissioning artists to record the war, chaired by Kenneth Clark. The WAAC played a crucial role in the sustenance and promotion of British art (commissioning some 6000 items from 400 artists),

and Kenneth Clark is a crucial figure within it. Clark's aim was to keep artists in work and prevent them from getting killed. Powerful and largely benign — though there are those who will never forgive him for not signing up Rex Whistler as a war artist and thus perhaps preventing his life being cut short by active service — Clark did a lot of good, and it's refreshing to see him being given his due for a change.

A trio of artists died pursuing their duties, their artistic careers as well as their lives tragically curtailed. Their joint loss appears in retrospect to be a savage blow to English cultural life and to the visual arts of the postwar period. But at the time, they were only mourned in private. All three of them were exceptionally talented, and Eric Ravilious was one of the finest watercolourists of the century. He was lost in a reconnaissance plane over Iceland in 1942. Albert Richards, the least-known of the group, was blown up in 1945. Meanwhile, Thomas Hennell vanished in the uprising in Java when the Dutch East India Colonies declared independence, also in 1945. Curiously, Albert Richards is one of the very few artists whose work Foss feels able, albeit briefly, to discuss in artistic terms.

Perhaps he doesn't much like art, or understand it. Foss writes next to nothing about Evelyn Dunbar or

her art, preferring to examine related issues such as the fact that ‘men still accounted for 78 per cent of all regular British farm workers’. This is supposed to be a book about war art: I would have welcomed some informed comment on Dunbar’s painting and the context in which it was created. The only paintings Foss examines in terms of their artistic construction are Stanley Spencer’s shipbuilding on the Clyde series, which are easy to write about because they’re compositionally so radical and unusual.

The chief issue this book raises (by default, rather than intention) is whether reporting can ever be art. The answer is sometimes — when the artist is capable of transmuting his raw material into something else, something greater and more emotionally nuanced than reportage. Much war art remains dull, a plodding plotting of the visual that might indeed have been done as well (if not better) by photography. Cyril Connolly had a point when he said that painters should ignore the war. All too often, there was not the time nor the necessary distance from the subject (actual or intellectual) to allow for artistic transformation.



Ethel Gabain painting air raid damage in London, November 1940
(Reg Speller, photographer)
Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Certainly to many top-brass soldiers, photography seemed a more suitable medium to record war. But, as the critic Eric Newton pointed out: ‘The camera cannot interpret, and a war so epic in its scope by land, sea and air, and so detailed and complex in its mechanism, requires interpreting as well as recording.’ And when the top brass couldn’t have photos, what they really wanted were fashionable portraits of themselves. Successful society portraitists such as Reginald Eves were much in demand, and a more interesting artist like William Dring completed more than 150 pastel portraits for the Admiralty before moving on to the Air Ministry.

For the general public, staff portraits were of limited appeal. As Stephen Spender observed, in WWI war pictures meant the Western Front, but in WWII they meant the Blitz. By the end of March 1945, 62,000 civilians had been killed in air attacks. However, air raids themselves were difficult to paint. Bomb damage

was much easier and correspondingly more popular. It was not nearly so distressing to paint devastated buildings as shattered bodies. Rows of little terraced dwellings that were wiped out all over the East End did not attract the war artists. Historic buildings or factories made much more dramatic subjects.

Wrecked churches were considered good propaganda to help persuade the Americans to enter the war, as were images of the devastation inflicted upon such great cities as Bath. And who was the laureate of bombed Bath? John Piper: ‘More than any other war artist Piper conveyed those qualities of pre-modernist buildings — their evocation of history, their status as sources of inspiration and meaning, the contrast they suggested

between civilization and barbarism, their usefulness as propaganda, and their value as physical and psychological orientation points in devastated urban landscapes — that resulted in these structures constituting the bulk of architectural references in the WAAC’s bomb damage records.’ The devastation was cruel. The savage intensity of the attack on Coventry destroyed the Cathedral, while

a third of the city’s houses, 600 shops and 28 hotels were severely damaged. In London, the night of 29-30 December 1940 achieved the worst destruction since the Great Fire of 1666.

Although he reels off lists of obscure artists and obscure paintings, very little is followed up. A subject such as Joan Connew’s *Blackout in Bromley High Street* (1942) was a rarity as well as an oddity. Joan Connew was not a full-time war artist, for she rates no potted biography at the back of the book. One of my reference books says ‘*floruit* from 1940s’, and that she studied at Brighton, Beckenham and Central Schools of Art, and lived for many years at Shortlands in Kent. Foss is not forthcoming, describing her as ‘a hitherto virtually unknown painter’. One of the many who slipped through his net?

There are few references to Norma Bull, an Australian artist who lived in Britain during the war and painted it rather effectively. I remember seeing some good

pictures by her in the Queen Mother's collection. None is reproduced or mentioned here. Bull is just one of those names Foss allows to float past the reader without the ballast of fact or even opinion attached to it.

This book abounds in theories, and various spectres loom behind the text, not least Gramsci and Homi K Bhabha. Foss likes theories and jargon, though for much of its length his text is mercifully free of cant. Chapter Three is a major disappointment, especially when Foss starts gibbering about feminist scholars and the management of gender. The analysis of a famous painting such as the munitions factory portrait of Ruby Loftus by Laura Knight in such terms is wrong-headed, and irritating. Foss's careful research is suddenly marred by crass simplifications and easy attitudinising: 'Colonial discourse has long conflated the foreign landscape with the female body...' This kind of trendy affectation damages the whole book.

I began to wonder what Foss believes in. He is not impressed by such wartime stereotypes as the resilient Cockney, seeming to suggest that such paragons never existed, while missing the point that *the idea* that they might exist was a great comfort to people. Thus he is rather sneering about Edward Ardizzone's unquenchable ability to summon up the camaraderie of the war, the plucky bonhomie of the citizenry under attack. Was it really like this? I suspect that on occasion at least it was. Ardizzone's friendly drawings were rather better at raising morale than Henry Moore's shelter studies, which, however great as art, are rather depressing.

An artist I knew well and whose opinion I trust, Robert Medley, who painted ARP pictures before going into the army to work on camouflage in the desert, said that Ardizzone and Anthony Gross were the best of the official war artists at rendering what life was actually like in the operational army. 'Something about our war made the grand statement impossible; the prevailing mood was honestly anti-heroic, humorously stoic: Ardizzone and Gross caught with perfect authenticity and sympathy this mood of brave irony.' It is perhaps the irony that Foss misses.

I admire Edward Bawden, who spent much time in North Africa and the Middle East working in areas where troops were forbidden to go. Foss comments: 'In the process he produced many dozen highly attractive views but few that showed belligerence of any sort.' A book by Nigel Weaver devoted to this period of Bawden's increasingly popular oeuvre has just been

published by the Antique Collectors' Club, (£25). It brings together 45 watercolours, mostly from the Imperial War Museum, reproduced in a feast of colour after the largely monochrome reproductions of Foss' book. Bawden is a versatile artist and a superb designer, but I'm not sure this is his finest or most interesting work. The war didn't bring out the best in many.

Kenneth Clark attempted to elevate taste in contemporary art. He was rash enough to have standards of excellence and wrote: 'Popular taste is bad taste, as any honest man with experience will agree.' But he did think that public taste could be educated, and he continued with popular work of remarkable breadth like his brilliant but much-maligned TV series *Civilization*. He organised a programme of exhibitions of War Art, good for bolstering morale and stressing unity, as well as improving taste. There was a genuine hunger for art amongst new middle class buyers and the exhibitions were crowded.

At the end of the war, the Imperial War Museum received just over half the WAAC collection, the remainder being divided between 60 other institutions. The estimated cost to the Treasury of the entire WAAC project was £96,000, not bad for a scheme which had given full-time employment to 36 men and one woman and short-term contracts to 100 other artists. The only one of the full-time artists still alive (apart from the Admiralty artist James Morris, who has a question mark over his dates) is Leonard Rosoman (born 1913). A remarkably sensitive and interesting painter and draughtsman, a fine muralist (Lambeth Palace and the Royal Academy restaurant) and book illustrator, there should be a major museum show to honour his long and distinguished career. He is a modest man and doesn't scream for attention as so many 'successful' artists do. Many of the painters who managed to transform their war experiences into art were modest. Their achievement still needs a major survey and appreciation as art rather than cultural history.

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IN SHORT

After the Reich, Giles MacDonogh, John Murray, 2008, £10.99.

Not everyone will welcome this well-informed and well-written account of the 'Allies *über Deutschland*'. For the author records many hardships experienced, between the capitulation of Vienna and the airlift for Berlin, by defeated conscripts and humbled civilians alike, at the hands of the victorious powers. Some historians think these ex-enemies deserved all they got, any temporary miseries being trivial compared to what a triumphant Hitler might still have inflicted on other nations. After all, the number of 'our boys' shot down during the Anglo-American bomber offensive nearly matched that of the children killed in their 'area' devastation, while recently recalculated *Wehrmacht* death totals scarcely approach the figure regularly repeated for Jewish victims. No neo-nazi or revisionist tract, this relatively isolated work will hardly 'detract from the uniqueness of the Holocaust'. The mass-expulsions, mass-rape, mass-starvation and even post-war mass-murder of Germans, however, form part of history — if only in their case a 'mere detail' (to coin a phrase).

Marianna Robinson

Alien Powers: The Pure Theory of Ideology, Kenneth Minogue, ISI, 2008, \$18.

The 'revolting student' heyday four decades ago threw up several outstanding books suggesting that western culture masked a system of oppression; for example, *Beliefs in Society* by Nigel Harris, then an 'international socialist' editor and now an RSA immigration campaigner, who reads today like a brilliantly clever undergraduate, but has nevertheless been outclassed by an exacting tutor with superior wisdom like Kenneth Minogue. Whether or not Marx himself used the expression 'false consciousness', he certainly held that economics ultimately determined intellectual life in general; and this superstructure fallacy has been a starting-point for the employment of 'ideology' as a power tool by would-be revolutionaries. With profound erudition and dry wit, the Emeritus Professor of Political Philosophy at the SE relentlessly 'demystifies' the Marxian 'ideology' intended as a preparation for the 'great unanimity to come'. Dogmatic in theory and ruthless in practice, it conceals 'a backstage

absolute which relativizes every detail of modern life and diminishes whatever it touches,' he writes, but it is precisely this apparatus used to convert fallible material into demonstrated 'truths' that makes ideology intrinsically vulnerable at the 'highest intellectual level'. This second edition of a uniquely valuable *tour de force* adds comment from Paul Gottfried and Stephen Erickson.

David Ashton

Politics & Apocalypse, Robert Hamerton-Kelly (ed), Michigan State UP, 2008, \$19.95.

Recently introduced by Roger Scruton to *Prospect* readers, Professor René Girard argues that social conflicts are rooted in 'mimetic rivalry', ie competitive imitation by persons, countries and cultures. Despite over-extensive application, his theory offers fresh insights into the nature of violence, including Islamic terrorism. He also offers an original re-interpretation of the ritual of redemption central to the divine scapegoat myth in Christianity. Religious believers should find these challenging chapters, from this pioneering historian, and seven writers influenced by him, especially pertinent at a time when Catholic thinkers are joining Protestants in discerning scriptural signs in the collapse of civilization. The main value of this particular book, however, is its specific critique of Eric Voegelin, Leo Strauss and Carl Schmitt, the terrible trio of 'undemocratic' politics, from a Girardian standpoint.

David Ashton

Twelve Galton Lectures, A Centenary Selection with Commentaries, Steve Jones and Milo Keynes (ed), The Galton Institute, £5.

Fashion affects and afflicts even the most scientific and objective human endeavours and this fascinating collection is a good illustration of this truth. As the contents demonstrate, less than a century ago most progressive opinion enthusiastically supported eugenics, broadly defined as improving the human stock by some form of selective breeding, but birth control methods which went beyond 'refraining from marriage' could hardly be mentioned. Now the opposite is true. Both negative attitudes are, of course,

mistaken. In a world with finite resources birth control is important but so is the nature of the human stock; put simply it is better for society if more rather than fewer people are healthy and bright. It is only sensible to reflect on what will be the consequence of fertility trends on, for example, calls for medical resources and whether there is or ought to be any implication for public policies.

The main reason eugenics can now scarcely be mentioned in politically correct society lies in the reaction to the — scientifically dubious — eugenic zeal displayed early in the twentieth century in countries such as the USA and Sweden and, above all, to the legalised murders of the unfit perpetrated by the Nazi regime. Indeed, hostility to the word ‘eugenics’ has become so widespread that in 1989 the learned society which has produced this volume removed the word from its title.

Despite the widespread suspicion of the subject some scientists continue to reflect on eugenic questions. It is of such obvious importance that we can predict with confidence that, eventually, it will again become mainstream, even fashionable. Meanwhile the historical curiosities included in this volume, some of them highly learned, will provide a useful source for reflection for the many who think the latest mode is always the best — and at a bargain price too.

Richard Packer

The Great Books, From the Iliad to Goethe’s Faust: A Journey through 2,500 years of the West’s classic literature, Anthony O’Hear, Icon books, £20.00.

Anthony O’Hear has written a wonderfully old-fashioned book; old-fashioned, because the West’s classic literature is still a source of inspiration to him (rather than merely ‘texts’ to be mined for evidence of the patriarchal, sexist and racist attitudes of DWESMs — Dead, White, European Males).

O’Hear approaches his subjects — Homer, Aeschylus, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton and the rest — in the spirit, as he says of ‘a warm enthusiast’ who wishes to communicate something of this enthusiasm, so that we will come away from his book with an enhanced appreciation of Western culture in all its inexhaustible richness.

By patiently teasing out the meanings of key passages in the works he has selected, while also illuminating the grand themes that run through European literature, O’Hear reminds us how deeply these classics have entered into our minds and feelings, even without our fully knowing it. How far they will continue to do so after the barbarism of deconstruction has laid waste our literary heritage may depend crucially on books such as this one: more than a beautifully illustrated work of reference and interpretation, it is an eloquent testimony to the author’s love of literature and his belief in its healing powers.

Ian Crowther

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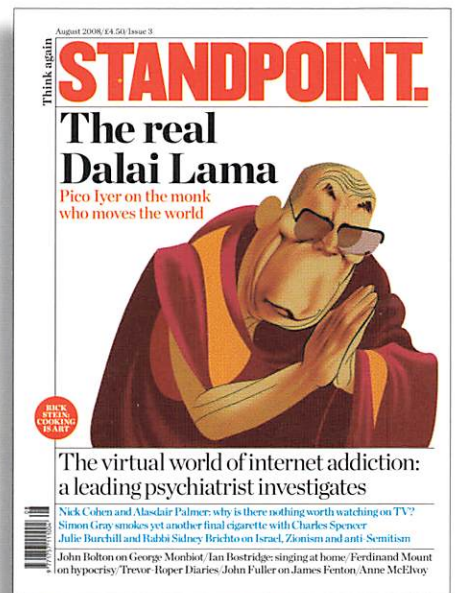
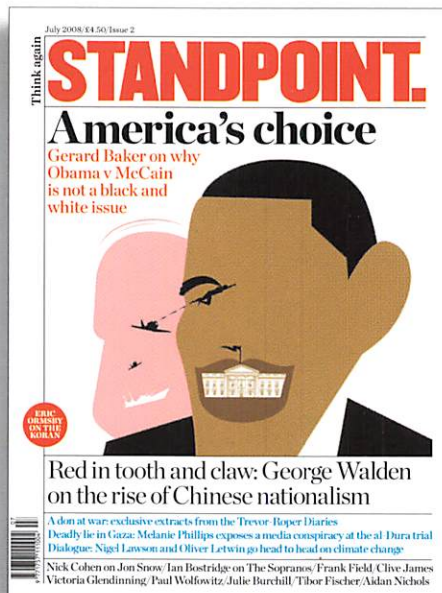
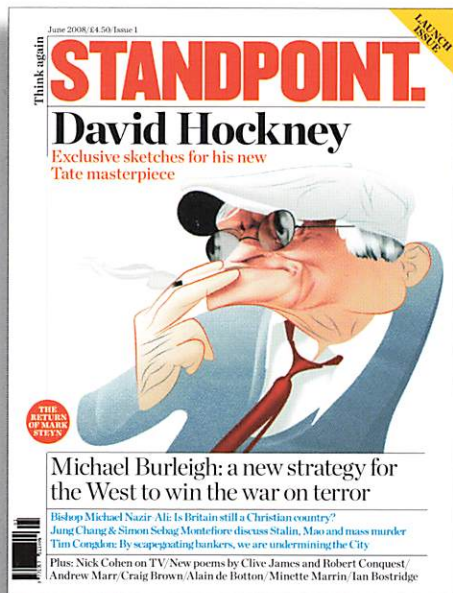
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