The Salisbury Review

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought

"You might at least look grim about it."

The Pope Strikes Back
Theodore Dalrymple

Teatime in America
Anthony O'Hear

The Principle of Unreason
Brian Ridley

NHS Freeloaders
Jane Kelly

Counter Jumpers
Christie Davies

Soviet Spectre
Pavel Stroilov

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In October David Cameron had a golden opportunity to call the EU's bluff over its demand for more money. With the British public so hostile to the EU Berlaymont would have risked losing Britain's £6.4 billion a year (£260 per household per annum) contribution towards its towers and palaces. Why then did he return to London mouthing public relations phrases like 'Britain has made a real difference in Brussels' when it has done nothing of the kind.

He did so because he thinks he can work both sides of the street; keep in with Brussels while selling himself to the British as a Eurosceptic. Cameron is a PR man, 'someone who may be called upon to put "a warm'n fuzzy" spin on the company's latest oil-spill.' Despite the talk of cuts the Coalition is going to increase expenditure by 9 per cent from £697 billion this year to £757 billion in 2016. They have no option. We now have a population of 63 million, one fifth that of the United States, and a growing army of untrained and uneducated people dependent on state benefits. Unemployables are kept off the streets by a sophisticated version of the bread throwing carts of the late Roman Empire, with the middle classes paying to feed, house and entertain them. Cameron has a choice; stay with Brussels in case this tax base founders or revolts as the Tea Party movement in America suggests it might, or be the statesman. It is doubtful if Cameron, PR mouthpiece of a corporatist state, is the man.

He would need to impose zero immigration, a universal 18 per cent flat income tax rate, a 5 per cent corporation tax, and abolish the minimum wage. Only those who had previously contributed enough to the tax pot would be entitled to state help. Migrants only here for the free ride would find it best to leave. The rest would be offered apprenticeships, or immediate unskilled work. There would be food stamps and travel vouchers, but no dole. Grammar schools must be restored and university places awarded only to the top 5 per cent of school leavers.

We examine some of the reasons for the present mess. Christie Davies in 'Descending to be Upwardly Mobile' shows how by fostering the myth of social mobility liberals have trapped the poor at the bottom of the social ladder. Jane Kelly in 'NHS Freeloaders' questions why we allow tens of thousands of foreign free loaders to abuse the NHS, while Anthony O'Hear explains why The Tea Party Movement is a reaction to America's political class abandoning the principles of the Founding Fathers.

Theodore Dalrymple examines the furore over child abuse during the Pope's visit and asks why abuse by stepfathers, on a far greater scale in Britain than that which occurred in the Catholic Church, attracts so little attention. In a criticism of aggressive secularism, physicist Brian Ridley in 'The Principle of Unreason' shows why Stephen Hawking fails to explain the origin of the universe. Amsterdam City Councillor Diederick Boomsma describes how the Dutch government pays squatters and hooligans Danegeld. We have articles on e-books, how the press has substituted celebrity gossip for investigative journalism, a description of history teaching in our schools and two excellent recollections of Russia: one, by Pavel Stroilov, lifts a corner of the curtain concealing the murky world of post Soviet international finance.

A Britain and Europe in which talent and thrift are penalised and state theft appeased reminds us of Rebecca West's account of how, on a train in Croatia in 1937, she met an elderly German businessman and his wife fleeing the Nazis. 'The latter,' she wrote, 'seemed to have abolished every possible future for them. I reflected that if a train were filled with the citizens of the Western Roman Empire in the fourth century they would have made much the same complaints. The reforms of Diocletian and Constantine created a condition of exorbitant and unforeseeable taxes, of privileged officials, of a complicated civil administration that made endless demands on its subjects and gave them very little security in return.' By 2050 will our grandchildren find themselves on such a train?

The Pope Strikes Back

Theodore Dalrymple

It is a nice question as to whether a true or a false accusation provokes more outrage in the accused. So when, a few days before the Pope's late visit to this island, Cardinal Kasper said that arriving at Heathrow was like arriving in a Third World country, he was much excoriated by those who hate Cardinals as a matter of principle, and was immediately accused of racism, the accusation against which no defence is known.

Quite apart from the fact that the term Third World corresponds to no racial category, the all too swift resort to the accusation always puts me in mind of Lear's remark in Act IV:

> Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back.
> Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
> For which thou whip'st her.

In other words, the accusation of racism is often but a smokescreen for the accuser's own doubts.

It is obvious to all who know Heathrow that the Cardinal's remarks about our largest airport could have been interpreted in another way than racist: that its disorganisation, its atmosphere of always being on the verge of chaos or collapse to be brought about by one more passenger, its over-crowdedness, its sheer physical messiness, brings to mind the urbanisation of the Third World. Has anyone ever heard of people choosing to fly through Heathrow when an alternative presented itself, just because they liked the experience of Terminal Three? The very idea is absurd; the question answers itself; and while the tendency or ability to muddle through might be an admirable one in some circumstances, it certainly is not in the design of airports.

In other words, Cardinal Kasper's terrible crime was to be right, to draw attention to an unpleasant aspect of our reality from which we would rather avert our attention because we cannot face the effort, and no doubt the expense, that would be required to change it.

A great deal of the hostility to the Pope's visit was likewise caused by his having been right, at least in some things, such as the insufficiency of consumerist materialism as a basis for a satisfactory existence. There are few human types less attractive, surely, than failed materialists, which is what the British, or at least so many of them, now are. They consume without discrimination what they have not earned: which is why many of them are so grotesquely fat as well as so deeply indebted. Indeed, there is scarcely any kind of debt or deficit to which we as a nation have not resorted in order to continue (at least for a time) on our vulgar and degraded way. A nation that behaves thus is quite without honour or self-respect, collective or individual. All this Benedict XVI has seen with a perfectly clear eye; and if what George Orwell once wrote, that we have now sunk to a depth at which the restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men, we might even call the Pope the George Orwell of our time.

Gratitude is seldom the reward of those who see an unwelcome truth more clearly than others; quite the reverse. But Benedict's 'crime,' apart from being German, goes much further than his failure (or worse his refusal) to screen out the unpleasant consequences of consumerist materialism from his vision, which it is the duty of all right-thinking people. He lays down a ethical challenge to our utilitarian ways of thinking; in other words, he is a heretic to be excommunicated from the Church of Righteous Liberalism.

In pointing out some of the fallacies, oversimplifications, dangers and empirically unfortunate results of contemporary rationalist utopianism, the Pope is potentially provocative of the kind of spiritual crisis that John Stuart Mill recounts in his *Autobiography*. When he was twenty, Mill, who had hitherto been trained as a kind of calculating machine for the felicific calculus, asked himself a question, with (for him) devastating results:

> Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be erected this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?' And an irrepressible self-consciousness answered 'No!' At this my heart sank within me; the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been founded in the continued pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for.

In other words, Benedict XVI presents not a challenge to this or that piece of social policy, but to a whole *Weltanschauung*. And hell hath no fury like a questionable *Weltanschauung* questioned.

Here it is necessary for me to declare an interest, or rather lack of one. Just as one cannot write of the question of tobacco-control without declaring that one

owns no shares in a tobacco company, so I must declare that I am not a Catholic, that I am not religious, that I am not therefore an apologist for the *curia* or anyone else. I am, in fact, not a systematic thinker at all, lacking the capacity or patience for it. And I disagree with the Pope on many things, but I do not therefore *hate* him.

The quite extravagant expressions of antagonism towards him — such, for example, as that consideration be given to arresting him for crimes against humanity — seem to me to bespeak a very odd, almost paranoid, state of mind. And while I hesitate always to use Freudian concepts, surely the idea of projection, the attribution to others of discreditable inclinations, thoughts or behaviour that one has oneself had or indulged in, is appropriate here.

As everyone knows, the Catholic Church has been embroiled in a scandal about the sexual abuse of children by priests and the religious. It is the Pope's supposed complaisance towards and responsibility for child abuse that has led people like Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins to call for his arrest for crimes against humanity, under the doctrine of universal jurisdiction for such crimes. No one would say that the church has acted always with appropriate expedition in dealing with the problem.

A great deal of the hostility to the Pope's visit was ... caused by his having been in the right, at least in some things, such as the insufficiency of consumerist materialism as a basis for a satisfactory existence. There are few human types less attractive, surely, than failed materialists, which is what the British, or at least so many of them, now are.

But the problem is not only, or even mainly, that of the church, quite the contrary. It is universally accepted that step-fathers, for example, are many times more likely to commit both physical and sexual abuse against children than biological fathers; and since step-fatherhood has now become a very much more common relationship than it once was, thanks to the social reforms of the last fifty years or so, it is likely that the great majority of child abuse that occurs in this country is committed by them. Moreover, it is a matter of common knowledge that many mothers connive at such abuse because they wish to retain the favours of the step-fathers.

It follows from this that, if the Pope should be arrested for crimes against humanity, so should the following categories:

Divorcees with children

Step-fathers

Single mothers

Feminists and all other proponents of lax marriage and easy divorce, including journalists

All legislators who have eased divorce laws and all government ministers who have either failed to support marriage by fiscal means or have actually weakened it by those means

All judges and other lawyers who have administered easy divorce laws instead of having refused to do so

All social workers and social security officials who have sought advantages for or administered payments to non-widowed single parents and no doubt many others.

I hope I need not say that I am not in favour of the arrest and trial of perhaps forty per cent of the population between the ages of twenty-five and sixty, or that I expect secular social 'liberals' either to arrest themselves or each other, but that they should does seem to follow from the argument of at least a few of their representatives.

Indeed, the very resort of some liberals to the language of arrest shows how, not very far beneath a veneer of libertarianism, lies an authoritarianism that makes Benedict XVI look very liberal indeed. They want arguments to be settled by arrest: in other words, who can arrest whom, assuming that they will always be the ones to wield the handcuffs.

As is well known, Professor Dawkins has suggested that a religious upbringing should in itself be considered a form of child abuse, because in his view it *is* a form of child abuse; but he then drew back from the obvious inference that such an upbringing should be illegal. Of course, there are degrees of child abuse as of every other crime; but if a religious upbringing is not so abusive as to merit legal sanction, is it properly to be called child abuse at all, given the current connotations of that expression?

Given that so intelligent a man as Professor Dawkins, and others like him, were so clearly illogical on the matter of the Pope's visit, are we not entitled to suspect a deep emotional confusion within them: for example, one caused by a robust and unaccustomed challenge to a brittle *Weltanschauung*?

Theodore Dalrymple's new book is The Examined Life *Monday Books £7.99.*

Descending to be Upwardly Mobile

Christie Davies

One of the most bizarre aberrations of the Conlib coalition is the emphasis it places on the need for more social mobility, even bringing in that old Labour party hack Alan Milburn as a 'social mobility czar'. The association of 'czar' with equality and fair-deal serfs is itself a farce. Baron Prescott of Hull has denounced Milburn as a 'collaborator' but he is an infiltrator. Milburn is on his 'long march through the institutions' and such men are far more dangerous than confrontational buffoons like Prescott.

The British educational system was wrecked by the 'moderate', 'modernising' Gaitskillite Tony Crosland. Why should conservatives engage in the pursuit of social justice, which is merely radical equalising by a blander name? Social justice is no more justice than social democracy is democracy or the social market economy a market economy. Put the word social in front of anything and its meaning is immediately negated, indeed reversed.

In a modern, open society social mobility is inevitable and desirable but let us be clear why. Social mobility is not the Yankee myth of the space shuttle rise of those from the lower depths to the glittering prizes. The most important upward mobility is in stages. The children of lower middle class families, the sons and daughters of teachers, police officers, supervisors and skilled workers such as tool-makers, electricians or printers come to occupy higher professional and management positions or to build up a substantial business of their own. Those children of poor and unskilled parents who rise in the world learn a skilled trade or take positions of responsibility in the lower middle class. In turn their own children may well rise into the upper middle class.

Upward mobility tends to exceed downward mobility because the number of tasks requiring skill or brains has expanded regularly since the time of the industrial revolution, whereas positions for the unskilled diminish with mechanisation and the export of such work to countries where labour is cheaper. There is still a great need for unskilled workers in the service industries and a great pool of people suited to them. To suggest, as Baroness Percy has done, that there should be extended education for all is a delusion and a waste of resources. Why are the unskilled staff in restaurants, supermarkets, hotels or those working as office or railway carriage cleaners largely immigrants and often illegal immigrants? Why are our own people not doing this work? Are they on benefit or are they locked into the lower reaches of the educational system and learning nothing? It is ideological nonsense to pretend that they will ever rise in the world. They have neither the brains nor the willingness to strive today for greater rewards tomorrow. It would be better and fairer to reform the benefit system to force them into jobs now done by immigrants rather than to waste money on their education. At a time of cuts in expenditure this is imperative.

One of the biggest lies spoken by those who control education is that individuals are equal in ability. Worse still, many of them believe it. They cannot, or will not, see that a minority are very gifted and need an education appropriate to their talents. Most of us are close to average and some, perhaps a fifth of the population, less so. Ability is mostly genetically inherited rather than being a product of a person's social environment. A large part of the failure of our educational system stems from an unwillingness to recognise these important facts.

Far from freezing society into castes, inherited ability is the great driving engine of social mobility. The genetic tendency of children to be, in general, closer to the average than their parents means that some children of the able will lack ability and will tumble out of the class into which they were born, while some of the children of those below will have the gifts that will enable them to rise. Whilst downward mobility may be a tragedy for individuals it is vital for society.

The alternative is that decision-making lies in the hands of privileged but incompetent persons. People of humbler origin who could do the job better are put in the frustrating position of taking orders from a fool who is destroying the very institution or profession on which they both (and indeed all of us) depend. The dumbing down of the educational system has made this more likely and it is here that the advantages afforded by private education have become a problem. Those in charge of education have deliberately made A-level and University examinations easier, so that all could

pass. Yet the main consequence has been to prevent downward social mobility. The exams no longer test analytical or creative ability; subjects are broken down into petty modules and a large portion of the marks is from coursework. This assists those who can pay the high fees charged by private schools because it has made the exams more crammable and the public schools have been able to become great engines for getting the mediocre through exams and protecting them from downward mobility. This protection has been achieved not at the expense of the poor, but of those lower middle-class pupils in state schools who are far more able but can no longer shine in exams by their intellect and who do not have access to this kind of intensive coaching. A fistful of A grades no longer means anything because everyone has one and the university place goes either to the candidate who talks posh or to the beneficiary of affirmative action by post code. The lower middle-class and the children of skilled workers are squeezed out from either side. The crisis in social mobility lies here. It can only be reversed by restoring grammar schools that select by ability and by making examinations more difficult.

Social mobility is not the Yankee myth of the space shuttle rise of those from the lower depths to the glittering prizes. The most important upward mobility is in stages.

The other social mobility problem lies in the dwindling capacity of the children of the unskilled to complete apprenticeships (there is a 50 per cent drop out rate for those who begin one) and to enter the ranks of the skilled at a time when there is a shortage of skilled workers. Those who are skilled earn considerably more and are more likely to be in work. The offspring of the lower orders are unable to do so because they lack the moral qualities necessary to become a skilled worker, the qualities of steady application, perseverance and taking responsibility. They drop out of apprenticeships for the same reason they fail in secondary school. Professors of education will scream at you that you cannot rank cultures in this way. Why not? Unless and until this fact is recognised and deliberate measures taken to smash this lower class culture, whose subscribers live only for the day and have no respect for achievement, then we will continue to experience a dire shortage of skilled workers.

The upper working class shares with the lower middle class a sense that achievement through effort should be rewarded but those below do not. The women of the lower class sometimes do rise, for they know it is a way to gain independence from useless men. The men by contrast wilfully choose to be anti-social. There are no failed schools, only failed pupils. It is choosing all play and no work that makes Jack-the-lad fail, not the school.

It is not only class cultures that differ in these respects but also ethnic and religious ones. Tony Blair had a set speech in which he would tell us how immigrants had contributed disproportionately to our economy and society but he only ever mentioned the Huguenots and Jews. These had the acumen, determination and respect for education and commerce to succeed; other immigrants did not but the lying W M D Blair never mentioned this. Today we notice the same contrast between Britain's Hindus and Muslims who are identical in appearance and hence in reception by others but who differ utterly in culture and religion. By the beginning of the twenty-first century Hindus had achieved remarkable upward mobility, while those whose ancestors came from Pakistan and Bangladesh are still stuck at the bottom of the pile. Only two Hindus in every 10,000 pupils get excluded from school but for the white British the figure is fourteen. Later in life Hindus are much more likely to obtain a degree than the indigenous whites. The children and grandchildren of first-generation Hindus who once did menial tasks or kept a corner shop have risen fast. 35 per cent are now in managerial or professional occupations which greatly exceeds the 26 per cent of the white population and the 22 per cent of Muslims. The Hindu involvement in corner shops is now less than for the population in general, for the same reason you now rarely see marginal Jewish traders. The opportunities for social mobility in Britain are there and the Hindus have grasped them. Like the Jews before them, they are bringing benefits to our country because they are more productive and culturally superior to the indigenous population. Muslims are the opposite, for they do not value secular education, choose to live in self-imposed seclusion and deny autonomy to their British-educated women. Unless the new czars and boyars of social mobility are willing to mount a fierce assault on these cultural weaknesses, Muslims will remain at the bottom. They have chosen to be there.

What we must repudiate is the endless liberal whingeing about the 'working class' being held back and the sneering at middle-class aspirations to succeed. Neither class is homogeneous and the stratification within each of them is stronger than the contrast between them. Above all we must deny the idea that fairness is about equality. It is not. It is about just deserts.

Christie Davies is the author of The Strange Death of Moral Britain.

Teatime in America

Anthony O'Hear

I spent the summer in the USA, in the small town of Bowling Green, Ohio, and I came to appreciate some of the virtues and bars of Main Street and small town America, combined with visits to art museums in Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, Minneapolis and, above all, our local one of Toledo, all mostly privately collected and funded, and all boasting collections of European art which would grace any European capital.

I have since been keeping an eye on politics both in the USA and in Britain. The British scramble for power now over, the similarities between the big governments in Washington DC and London are closer than the differences: For example the introduction of what is now known as Obamacare and the Cameron pledge to keep spending on the NHS up to pre-credit crunch levels. According to its critics Obamacare is going to put up taxes and introduce an element of compulsion, to say nothing of a huge bureaucracy to administer it ,without producing a health better service overall. But what it will do and may be intended to do is to pave the way for an eventual state take-over of health-care. If the NHS in Britain is a guide, the critics may well be right. They are certainly right that Obamacare is a striking example of big government over-riding local influence and personal choice. But here there is a huge difference between Britain and the USA, for in the USA (unlike in Britain), as even the British media have now acknowledged, albeit with disbelief and distaste, there is a popular movement against Big Government. This movement is known quaintly, but appropriately, as the Tea Party, after the Boston Tea Party of 1773, whose *leitmotif* was 'no taxation without representation'. The complaint of the current Tea Party is that in 2010, while there is representation of a sort in government, the representatives — of both parties — pay no attention to the wishes and needs and liberties of the ordinary voter.

In the current political climate in the USA, the Tea Party is influential. President Obama's approval ratings have slumped dramatically since his election (far faster than Tony Blair's post-1997). We have seen the results of the mid-term elections, with the Democrats losing the House of Representatives, and Tea Party candidates having had a considerable influence. But all is not good news for the Republicans either. McCain fought, rather like Cameron, on a centrist platform against Obama in 2008, and lost dramatically. (Did Cameron *win* in 2010? Maybe someone will remind me.) The administration of George W Bush was very much one of big government, one of whose last acts was the so-called 'Troubled Assets Relief Program'. TARP allowed the US Government to bale out banks and financial institutions hit by the sub-prime mortgage crisis with up to $350 billion; as late in his presidency as December 19th 2008 it was extended by George W Bush to apply to any industry he personally deemed necessary to avert the financial crisis — in this case, the US motor industry to the tune of $17.4 billion. None of this left the Republicans with a leg to stand on when Obama went down the same track to a hitherto unimaginable degree. And, after the mid-term elections there is clearly a big question as to the future direction of the Republicans — to continue their recent centrist trajectory, or to reclaim their historic role as the party of small government, balanced budgets and low taxes, of individual liberty and personal responsibility.

The Tea Party is a loose coalition of individuals and groups opposed to big government. It is to a large extent based on cable television and radio talk shows, both arenas which give far more space than is available in Britain to hard-talking conservatives and free marketeers. On the Consumer News and Business Channel 'Squawk Box' slot, in February 2009, a week after Congress had passed Obama's $800 billion stimulus package and the day after the President had announced his 'Homeowner Affordability and Stability Plan', CNBC's editor Rick Santelli said this: 'Why don't you put up a website to have people vote on a referendum to see if we really want to subsidize the losers' mortgages, or would we like to buy houses in foreclosure and give them to people who might have a chance to actually prosper down the road... who carry the water instead of drink the water?' Inelegantly expressed, no doubt, and quite inexpressible in the British media (which by contrast would be full of stories about the heartache of losing one's home), but one can see Santelli's point. Even more thought-provoking is his further argument that 'you cannot buy your way into prosperity' (with *our* money) — again a sentiment well off limits in Britain, where nearly everyone in politics and the media seems to favour one sort or another of a 'recovery package'. Liberty means responsibility and at times loss, and the state attempting to mask this fact, to spend what is in effect

our children's money to get us out of it, makes neither moral nor intellectual sense.

Glenn Beck is a talk show host with a daily audience of 8,000,000 and a further 2,000,000 on his Fox News slot. He uses his programmes to promote such works as Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, which topped the best seller charts as a result, and Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen's *A Patriot's History of the United States*. (Hayek on *Richard and Judy*, A Patriot's History of Britain anywhere?) In *Glenn Beck's Common Sense* (one of many Beck productions currently on sale in the USA, in bookshops everywhere, even in Perrysburg, Ohio), we read that 'with a few notable exceptions, our political leaders have become nothing more than parasites who feed off our sweat and blood'. Distasteful, no doubt, to the mandarin class, but just point to any *major* policy difference between the three major British political parties in the 2010 election, which might realistically have been expected to trim the scales of the Leviathan we feed with our taxes particularly MP's expenses.

Taking Santelli and Beck as figureheads of the current Tea Party, it is easy to see the spiritual link between this one and the original. The Tenth Amendment to the US Constitution, formulated 18 years after the Boston party and in its wake, says this: 'The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, or prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.' Some of the original drafters of the amendment wanted the word 'explicitly' inserted between 'not' and 'delegated', and perhaps they were wise. What has happened since 1791 has been, a generous interpretation of powers *implicitly* delegated by the constitution to the federal government (and, therefore, also in effect to the President), with little resistance from the Supreme Court. The current Tea Party wants to change all this, and to return to a far more exact and literal interpretation of the Constitution.

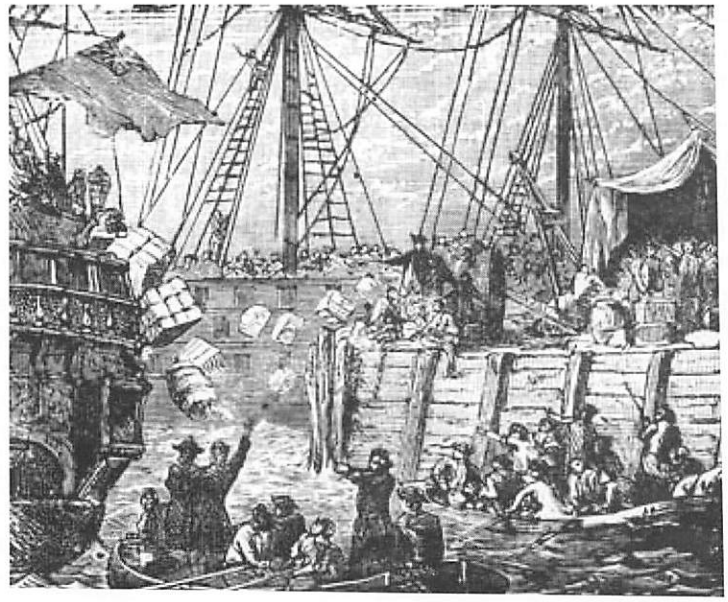
The populist rhetoric touches on a deep and important philosophical divide. The framers of the US Constitution were convinced that the principles which they made explicit in it and which underlay it were timeless truths about human nature, derived in their case from the writings of John Locke, and drawing on the older natural law tradition rooted in Christianity and the ancient Greeks. Central to these truths was a set of natural rights and liberties on which neither other individuals nor, more particularly, governments should trespass. Although the actual manner in which these rights and liberties were to be exemplified will be historically conditioned — and they could be exemplified in different ways — they, together with the consent of the governed, will form the basis of any legitimately constituted state. One thing which Jefferson in particular was conscious of was that a mere majority of voters was not enough to guarantee liberty: '173 despots would surely be as oppressive as one'. It wasn't 'elective despotism', even if arrived at by impeccably democratic processes, which the revolution had been fought for, but for the rights of man, safeguarded as far as possible through prudent constitutional and institutional structures. For the Founders, indeed, individual liberty was paramount, and democracy at best a means. Individual people had a right to themselves and their fates, and government was to be limited to allow for its full expression.

The Tea Party agrees with the Founders. The rights of man are timeless; the Constitution which safeguards and embodies them is not to be tampered with. The role of government is to protect liberty, even in the face of elective despotism. However, for most of the twentieth century and for all so far of the twenty-first, the Founders' view has not been shared by most politicians or, in the main, by the Supreme Court. The mass of the American body politic and judiciary has decided that the Founders' principles are not timeless at all, but simply yesterday's solutions to yesterday's problems. All human affairs are in flux and evolution; there are no timeless truths of morality, of politics or of anything else. Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and FDR all believed in a strong regulatory role for the state, that, for all kinds of reasons the state has a right to interfere in the free actions and transactions of individuals. As the twentieth century went on, the state's remit was extended to encompass the redistribution of wealth according to the notions of 'fairness' of particular politicians, and to develop the community according to other preferred policy nostrums, including changing and mutable ideas on welfare and education (and now health and sexual morality).

All this has been done in the name of democracy and equality, and often in blatant conflict with the founding documents. The legislators and the courts were encouraged and supported by such iconic intellectual figures as John Dewey, Walter Lippmann and Herbert Croly, as well as most of the current academic establishment. In contrast to the Founders' view of the state as the upholder of a framework in which free individuals and autonomous institutions could pursue their own goals and develop their own enterprises, the state itself has become what Michael Oakeshott has termed an 'enterprise association', with its own specific goals and aims, which it uses its coercive power to impose on everyone else — unfairly, of course, because the goals and aims imposed are always those of particular factions and interests, right or left, and no one is powerful enough to withstand the might of the state. One side-effect is that big players, whether

capitalists or trade unions, now have an interest in capturing the bureaucracies and mechanisms of the state, which they spend huge amounts of money and effort in doing, while those bureaucracies themselves seek ever to aggrandize and expand their influence and domains.

What has come to be called progressivism is the idea that the state and its institutions, Constitution and all, are or should be undergoing constant evolution – and this progressivism is common to both left and right in to-day's mainstream politics. Glenn Beck sums it up: 'Progressivism has less to do with the parties and more to do with individuals who seek to redefine, reshape, and rebuild America into a country where individual liberties and personal property mean nothing if they conflict with the plans and goals of the State'. We could add to what Beck says by pointing out that the goals of 'the State' are the goals of those individuals and interest groups who have captured the state apparatus, including the largely self-serving bureaucracies spawned by all this legislation and planning. Against progressivism, Beck and his fellow tea-partiers want to remind the American public of the older, more venerable notion of the Constitution and of the timeless principles on which it rests.



Beck is touching on a deep philosophical point, as to whether there are or are not timeless truths about human nature, human progress and timeless moral principles. If there are, then, the scope for state activity becomes constrained, and particularly if they take the form we find in Locke, which stresses individual rights and liberties (in which we surely all believe, at least deep down, and which is why most of us prefer democracy to tyranny, and don't like being pushed around by officials and bureaucrats). In the USA, the Tea Party may well make headway, given the robust sense of personal liberty which still obtains there (often for religious reasons), and particularly now, in the present state of political disillusion there, of which the rapid fall from popularity of the President is a striking symptom. The Tea Party in the future may well become a force which begins to wield influence within the Republican Party, and to which the Democrats will at least have to listen at local level.

In Britain state activity and taxation are much higher than they are in the USA (including barrow-loads of regulators and 'authorities' and barrow-loads of otiose regulation and 'advice', often ostensibly for 'consumer protection' and our own 'health and safety'). The European Union dictates a large part of our law as well as around 120,000 directives and regulations currently in force. If we stopped paying what it costs us to belong to the EU, the deficit from the credit crunch would be wiped out in a few years, while polls regularly show that half the population wants to leave. Yet this topic was not discussed by the three main political parties during the last election, and all have shiftily contrived to refuse the British public a vote on the new European Constitution (now re-packaged as the Lisbon Treaty). There is a widespread disillusion with the personal behaviour of hundreds of MPs in the expenses scandal. So why is there no sign of a British Tea Party?

Unfortunately in Britain there is nothing like the US Constitution around which campaigners against progressivism and the over-mighty state can gather. But this in itself would not mean that liberty and timeless moral principles are not held in high esteem in Britain. Indeed, as recently as World War Two a robust sense of the individual and of the importance of his or her self-reliance was very much part of the British psyche. Unfortunately, so was a degree of deference and servility. Do we have reluctantly to conclude that in 2010, for all our personal chippiness, when it comes to what really matters, deference and servility are now uppermost (or is it just laziness)? Maybe we have to remind ourselves that it was against precisely that side of the British character (servility masquerading as laziness, or vice versa), that the Tea Party of 1773 was reacting, while staking its future on the other side, Magna Carta, the Glorious Revolution and the Rights of Man… Tea, anyone?

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NHS Freeloaders

Jane Kelly

After he returned to the safety of Rome, the Pope commented that the UK 'closely follows Catholic social teaching'. Despite our much vaunted secularism, I too am struck by how resolutely Britain clings to Christian charity; we give without expecting anything in return, and our neighbour is anyone who arrives from anywhere, even if he or she is an outrageous crook.

I first glimpsed this in the 1980s when I had an American boyfriend who suffered from psoriasis. I took him to my GP where he duly received large pots of lotion for free. He was astonished and I felt proud to be British. I remembered this in the Hammersmith Hospital Chemotherapy clinic recently, waiting for my dose of highly expensive drugs. I am frequently the only English person in there, surrounded by Europeans and Asians. I don't feel proud any more as I can see how the NHS is being stripped of its resources.

I can't help thinking just how much there would be to go round if the NHS hadn't become the hub of an international health racket. No one even knows how much money is spent on treating foreigners. But even our politicians, who don't use the NHS any more than they use buses, have become uneasy about it. The Department of Health admits to £5 million per year lost on unpaid charges, but in October 2006 Andrew Lansley, then shadow Health Secretary, terrified by the rise of the BNP, used the Freedom of Information Act to provide the first national picture of health tourism.

It seems you can see the whole world and his pregnant wife in any urban hospital or pharmacy. NHS staff regularly report overseas nationals arriving with their medical notes to show to clinicians.

His survey of 106 hospitals, of all sizes, revealed that ineligible visitors received treatment valued at £27 million. But the size of the fraud is likely to be much larger. Last year it emerged that St Mary's, Paddington alone had treated 120 overseas maternity patients, leaving it with unpaid bills of £126,000.

Recent figures show that at least £14million is owed to the NHS by private patients who have not paid for their treatment, many of them from overseas. If this is repeated across more than 200 NHS hospital trusts the cost will exceed £50 million and the value of the unpaid bills will be more than £20 million. Some estimates suggest that 'health tourism' costs the taxpayer as much as £200 million a year, but no one can tell.

Between February and June this year, the Department of Health, again worried by the rise of the Right, carried out a *Review of Access to the NHS by Foreign Nationals*. Since then there has been no word about this report. When I contacted the DofH in September, they said they would send me information about the outcome of the report, but didn't.

'It's still being evaluated,' explained a spokesman later. 'It's cross-departmental and involves the Home Office so it will take longer then usual. We don't know how long.'

The Home Office were equally vague. 'We have inputted,' said a spokesman. 'But don't know when the report will be discussed again.'

Don't hold your breath; the Department of Health admit that the NHS does not even collect detailed data on overseas visitors; that would be too politically sensitive. In the interests of political correctness they might have to ask everyone they treated for similar details, it would turn into a massive means test. According to law passed in 1948 and 1977, free NHS entitlement is based on current lawful residence, past residence or current payment of taxes or national insurance, not nationality, which would again be contentious, perhaps racist. Those exempt from charges include people working in this country for a UK employer and anyone who has come to live permanently in the UK, providing their application for permanent residence has been approved. Also exempt are anyone carrying TB, HIV or pandemic flu, refugees and asylum seekers while their applications are being considered, the 350,000 students on courses lasting six months and anyone with a life threatening illness or in advanced pregnancy. When heavily pregnant women arrive, even though there may be grounds to refuse entry (where the purpose of the visit is to seek health treatment) treatment is not denied while payment is secured. Many mothers return home without paying. Professor Lesley Regan, from St Mary's, is one of the few doctors ever to speak openly about this. Earlier this year she complained in the press about heavily pregnant women coming to

the UK on 'shopping trips' then giving birth here. She called health tourism a 'massive problem'.

It seems you can see the whole world and his pregnant wife in any urban hospital or pharmacy. NHS staff regularly report overseas nationals arriving with their medical notes to show to clinicians. The UK Border Agency, part of the Home Office, says there are regular cases where visitors arrive at ports and airports with evidence of hospital appointments and medical records in their luggage. No one wants to talk about it on the record, certainly not browbeaten NHS Staff.

'A lot of people come to the UK and use the NHS when they aren't entitled to its services and it's hard to get the money back from them,' said a director of one of London's biggest hospital trusts. 'There are people who just turn up at A & E who could easily have been diagnosed in their own country, but probably wouldn't get the same quality of care at home.'

A senior executive at a Midlands hospital trust told me: 'Foreign patients use fake addresses and fake identities. They often come with a UK relative and look affluent and able to afford treatment. But when it comes to payment, the addresses are bogus, there's no response to phone calls and the relative shrugs, saying that the patient has left the country.' One of the most obvious areas for fraud is the hospital pharmacy, where it is easy to see long queues of foreign nationals waiting in line. ID is not required for a prescription, unless they are claiming exemption from payment — when the appropriate British exemption is required — but I am told by a hospital pharmacist of twenty years standing that this does not always happen in a busy clinic. He told me about a few of the tricks he had witnessed, which are taken as the norm, part of a climate of grabbing whatever the NHS has on offer.

No one even knows how much money is spent on treating foreigners. But even our politicians, who don't use the NHS anymore than they use buses, have become uneasy about it.

'I used to get very annoyed with overseas friends living temporarily in UK', he said. 'They registered with a GP who would request large quantities of medication, six months' worth, much of which would be sent to relations back home.'

'I don't understand why doctors are so generous. I expect it's quicker to comply than argue with the patient! I also get angry about patients asking for extra medication — which we know will be sent to the family back home, where medicine is much more expensive.'

'Another issue is family visits. The visiting relative will suddenly develop a medical condition. I think GPs often think that the patient is a resident — with the same name and address, so they manage to get free treatment.' Within the EU there was supposed to be some reciprocity, but who would go to Bucharest for chemotherapy? As Prof Regan put it, in other countries you won't get a cup of coffee without paying. In the US proof of Health Insurance would be demanded at the door, even in an emergency. A nurse at Hammersmith told me, 'In the UK everyone is terrified of litigation and payment is not considered as it is not the norm here.' A senior official at St Mary's Paddington added: 'We bill you — but after the event. We don't throw you out on the street.' The problem isn't going away. Immigration will add nearly seven million to our population in the next twenty years, mainly in England. The number of new arrivals from overseas registering with GPs has increased by 50 per cent in the past seven years.

Unlike the Benefits system, where people feel brave enough to talk about 'scroungers', perhaps because many of them are perceived as white low life, there is still a squeamishness about restricting access to the NHS. The sensibilities of the British, our culture of caring and sharing, or some would call it 'post-colonial guilt', means that very few people will ever be turned away at the point of care and those that receive free treatment will be billed later, not before, so the NHS will always run at a loss. The only 'inputting' done by the Home Office in the new report is to suggest that people who fail to pay their bills should be banned from returning. But why would they want to, when they've got what they came for, and more?

Since the party conferences we have been hearing the clarion call for 'fairness', in the face of economic cuts. A cultural shift is surely needed towards fairness for the people David Cameron referred to as 'the great ignored': those who have paid into the NHS all their lives, just as their parents and grandparents did before them.

Jane Kelly contributes to the Health Pages in the Daily Telegraph.

The Principle of Unreason

Brian Ridley

Scientists, like almost everybody else, believe there is a real world out there that reveals itself through our senses. Even sceptical philosophers who deny that the existence of a real world can ever be proved, must, in practice, live their lives according to the commonsense belief that a real world exists. Science goes further with its belief that Nature behaves consistently and not capriciously, with effect following cause. It believes in the Principle of Sufficient Reason, that any natural phenomenon can be understood rationally. Science aims to explain, not merely to predict, natural phenomena. As its investigations probe ever more deeply, scientists are forced to offer explanations that not only offend commonsense but are more and more mathematical. Nevertheless, in spite of the non-intuitiveness of much mathematical theory, those explanations have led to the transistor, the laser, the world of information technology and, equally striking, to the understanding of stars and their evolution. If there is any unease about all of this, it is likely to be focused on the use that is made of technology, but not on the science.

However, a palpable unease begins to show elsewhere, and for good reasons. Cosmology, the study of the universe, is an obvious example. Ninety percent of the universe may never be available to our senses, in the same way as an ant will never be able to read Shakespeare. Another problem is cosmology's insistence on applying the Principle of Sufficient Reason to the universe to answer the question of why the universe has the properties it has. One of its striking features is how well-tuned it is to support carbon-based life — as if it had been designed. By a designer? The idea is anathema to many scientists. Another disturbing thought is that the universe is unique, it is that it is. Now, science cannot cope with anything unique. It is why the Principle of Sufficient Reason, coupled with the possibility of beautiful mathematics, becomes irresistible.

Using the Principle of Sufficient Reason there is nothing for it but to invent an ensemble of universes, of which the one we know is a member. John Gribbin, astrophysicist and brilliant science writer, gets out of the Designer-with-a-capital-D horror by suggesting that a higher civilization, may be in another universe, had found a way to manufacture baby universes, one of which, suitably tweaked, is the one we find ourselves in. (Somebody wrote an amusing book in which a scientist accidentally created one the size of a football in her laboratory.) But, avers Stephen Hawking, a designer of whatever ilk is unnecessary. Given many universes, ours arose just by chance. Using the power of mathematics, there is no need for any sort of designer. Here we enter the world of string theory. What I describe here is only a parable as string theory can only be understood by very difficult mathematics. Let us say that Reality is made up, not of tiny particles, but of vibrations like those produced by the strings of violin. But it is very strange violin that produces not only music in our world, but music which can only be heard in worlds lacking our familiar three dimensions of up, down, sideways, backwards and forwards. All others are forever beyond our description, except as mathematical projections. Some tunes may only play in worlds with eleven dimensions, wrapped up too small to be observable.

Prosaically, this is referred to as M-Theory. Professor Hawking explains that M-theory allows for a whole host of universes, each with its own set of physical laws — 10^{500} at the last count. Moreover, a universe can come into being spontaneously, creating itself out of nothing. A Creator is unnecessary.

Actually, M-Theory does not exist. All the theories that cluster under that nomenclature are thought to be approximations to a super fundamental theory of everything, and it is this theory, the holy grail of physics, that is yet to be fully elucidated. M-Theory, in other words, is an abstract dream, evoked by prodigies of mathematical formulism, each of which claims to grasp something of that transcendent realism which is the vision of mathematical physicists. If it is a science, how can it be verified or falsified? What experiments can be done? What are its testable predictions? On this Stephen Hawking is silent. If it is not a science, what is it? Myth? But where are the physics equivalent of Odysseus or Parsifal? Theology? In the beginning there was M-Theory — calls for experimental verification defined as heretical? Better, Art — the painting of mathematics on the vast canvas of the multiverse, the exhibition of genius in manipulating the abstract considerations of logic.

We can all appreciate the enthusiasm for his subject that Stephen Hawking has, and he may be talking about a novel art form that has yet to be seen as such. But

it is hard to take him seriously when he claims that philosophy is dead and that science has taken over. I find it impossible to imagine that philosophy could ever be dead and, in any case, philosophy and science do not inhabit the same cultural space, so claim that science has taken over is vacuous. Perhaps he might consider a touch of Humean doubt, and ask himself on what impression M-Theory is based. Whatever that impression might be, it is certainly not derived from the fallible senses. Rather, its foundations are to be found in that glorious vision of mathematical physics, the Theory of Everything, that future product of man's logical ingenuity that will explain why our universe has the physical laws it has, how it came about, and how we are here. Commonsense, grievously weakened by the discovery of the quantum world and of dynamical space-time, reels under the assertion of a reality that is purely mathematical. Einstein's vision of a unified theory was much less grandiose than is the putative M-theory, but it was still mathematical. As he cautiously put it: 'Insofar as mathematics is about reality, it is not certain, and insofar as it is certain, it is not about reality.' Commonsense can live with that.

It comes down to this: if Hawking's vision is to count as scientific explanation, there have to be testable predictions. Unfortunately, in the thirty or more years that string theory has been around, it has made no testable predictions of new physics. Indeed, it has become evident to many mathematical physicists that its usefulness lies in the advancement of the mathematics of multidimensional space, but that it has no credible claim to be a theory of physics. If this is so, M-Theory will have nothing to do with reality, and the mystery of design remains.

Brian Ridley is a Fellow of the Royal Society.

The Covenant of the Hatch

Diederik Boomsma

Early on a September morning in 2008, pedestrians found a 34-year-old man known locally as 'Yogurt' lying unconscious on the pavement in front of a pub in the centre of Amsterdam. As became clear later, he had been beaten with metal pipes over a row about his dog, 'Custard'. Brain fluid leaked from his skull and blood from his ears, leaving a grisly trail to the front door of the pub. When the police arrived however, they were refused entry by the staff, who warned them: 'You have no right to come in.' Only after waiting outside for an hour was one officer grudgingly allowed in. By then, most customers had scurried away, and the manager refused to name names. The officer later noted in his police report that the place seemed thoroughly cleaned, and it yielded no usable traces that might lead to an arrest of the aggressors.

Why, one may ask, did the police agree to wait outside? If there are any situations in which law enforcement officers have the right, and indeed the duty, to enter private property surely this was one?

The reason they didn't enter is that the nineteenth century building that houses the pub has been squatted, and in the Netherlands, squatters (*krakers*, in Dutch) have long been more equal than other citizens. Living gratis in someone else's building in the historic centre is only a start. The *krakers* in question had run an illegal pub and nightclub on the squatted premises for eighteen years, when in 2002 the mayor of Amsterdam (Dutch Labour Party social-democrat Job Cohen, whom *Time Magazine* later voted second best mayor in the world) wanted to legalize the establishment and grant the necessary permits and license. This would require periodic inspections concerning health and safety regulations, closing hours and so on. But since the building, named '*Vrankrijk*' (the correspondingly misspelt English translation of which would be 'Vrance', instead of 'France'), formed the headquarters of an 'anarcho-feminist' political organization fighting for a 'repression-free' society, police inspections were refused.

In repression-free circles policemen are regarded as fascists, and the Vrench squatters argued that the mere sight of a police uniform would cause abiding anguish or even uncontrollable rage to many of their people. The mayor then suggested a policeman in civilian clothes to do the job, but that was also unacceptable. To solve the conundrum and to 'de-escalate the situation', a lawyer and former social-democrat council-member (who became the new mayor of Amsterdam a few months ago), was hired by the city, and came up with a creative, practical solution. Mr Cohen signed an agreement with the squatters (who signed with their first names only) that — except in case of a major catastrophe — no police would enter their domain. Instead, a little hatch was constructed in the wall, which the authorities could open from the outside to

sneak a peek without physically entering — almost an inverse peephole.

The hatch quickly fell into disuse, although a Basque ETA terrorist wanted for murder was arrested a few months after the 'treaty' was signed. Exiled from Zpain, he had been granted asylum in the Republic of Vrance. To be fair to the police, they did raid the building after this arrest, to avoid international embarrassment. But the treaty ostensibly remained valid. Thus, when, six years later, the *krakers* told the police they 'had no right' to enter, those were not merely angry protests intended to intimidate; they were in fact referencing an officially sanctioned local privilege, and defended it with all the authority which an English Lord might accord the *Magna Carta*. In spite of their attempts to hamper police investigations, two squatters (one of whom was Danish) were eventually convicted of the attack and sentenced to 16 months in prison. Anarcho-feminist bulwark *la douce* Vrance agreed to pay 21,000 Euros to Mr Yoghurt, who is left partially deaf and paralyzed, and permanently brain-damaged.

The covenant of the hatch was generally hailed in its time as a pragmatic solution, taking into consideration both the demands of the police and the sensitivities of the squatters — or rather, their short fuses. These events serve to illustrate a way of thinking that has become deeply ingrained in the Dutch legal and political culture. When faced with aggressive or unreasonable demands — or those questions difficult to navigate such as prostitution and drugs — the tendency of the authorities has been to give in, initiate respectful negotiations, seek to accommodate the demands, and find a consensus. This tendency appears to be particularly strong if the aggressive or unreasonable demands are made by subcultures laying claim to a form of counter-cultural or multi-cultural authenticity — a claim that in its turn seems mysteriously strengthened by the intimation of looming violence. As a self-styled 'city of sin' desperate at times to preserve its anti-bourgeois credentials, these policies are still particularly pronounced in Amsterdam, where the fear of becoming dull seems to be one of the important driving forces in politics.

Of course, the occupation of buildings against the wishes of their owners has been legal in the Netherlands for decades and is in itself an example of this tendency. After all, *pace* Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, squatting is theft. Organized squatting grew from the social activism of the *Soixante-huitards*, when it ostensibly presented hope, change and anti-capitalism, flourishing in the largesse of the liberal eighties and nineties. After a long uphill struggle against left-wing reactionaries, the previous centre-right government achieved a historic victory: as of 1 October 2010, squatting will become a criminal offence, punishable by one year in prison. But in Amsterdam, the game is not entirely over.

The city government has condemned the squatting ban, and has so far refused to confirm that they would uphold the new law, arguing that it would tax the police too heavily to vacate squats forcibly — the implication always being that the occupants are likely to resist eviction, which has often proved true. During previous confrontations, for example, squatters even booby-trapped buildings. One such booby-trap photographed by the police last year used motion-sensors to start a small electric engine to weaken a support beam. This could have caused the roof to cave in on top of the police, if it had worked properly. Because enforcing the law would probably require a massive mobilization of police should not be a reason to avoid doing so, but precisely the opposite: all the more reason to put a stop to the whole thing.

Legal squatting has been stubbornly defended in the city not only as a pragmatic means to counter excessive vacancy caused by 'greedy property speculators', but also as a creative breeding ground for social and cultural innovation.

That argument, however, seems to remain alien to the good burghers governing Amsterdam — perhaps because some of them have squatted themselves in their younger years. One of the aldermen even put a 'squat me' sign on a vacant building a few months ago, during the municipal elections. Legal squatting has been stubbornly defended in the city not only as a pragmatic means to counter excessive vacancy caused by 'greedy property speculators', but also as a creative breeding ground for social and cultural innovation. Squatters are regarded as privy to a uniquely creative bohemian spirit without which the city would quickly become a suburban wasteland.

Under the official motto 'No culture without subculture', the council has even set up a €42 million fund for turning unused offices into cheap *ateliers* for artists, often ex-squatters. Some 1250 of these ateliers, called 'breeding places', have been created in the city, and are defended as having major cultural and economic spin-offs. There may be something to be said for stimulating affordable ateliers. On the other hand, it's uncertain how many new Rembrandts and Van Goghs are being hatched in these subsidized fringes, or whether we will even get a Pollock or Hirst for our trouble. By rolling around in their sub-cultural muck, the burghers hope some of the creative contrariness will stick to them, and preserve the counter-cultural identity the city acquired in the sixties — which brings back

such warm memories of freedom and youth to many of them — freedom from mortgages, for example.

Disguised as tolerance and enlightened pragmatism, these policies are really a form of appeasement — not towards Danes or Huns from afar, but towards a motley horde of home-grown barbarians comfortably accommodated within the city walls.

Now, contrary to unpopular opinion, appeasement may in fact work, and often does, in the short term. The problem is that it often comes at the price of unforeseen

(if not entirely unforeseeable) effects in the long term — for example, six years later. The immediate conflict seems avoided, but is in reality merely displaced, only to resurface in a different form. Appeasement also seems to breed the need for further appeasement. As Rudyard Kipling pointed out and Mr Yoghurt found out the hard way: 'He who pays the Danegeld never gets rid of the Dane.' It should perhaps come as no surprise that, according to Charlemagne's court historian Einhard, the first Danegeld ever was collected in the northern parts of the Netherlands in 810 — the Anglo-Saxons only started paying up in 991. A more recent example in line with this Dutch tradition occurred last year, when the 'Stubnitz', an Eastern European former fishing vessel turned party boat, docked in Amsterdam, after staying in Copenhagen, of all places. The crew organised dance parties, supposedly to fund 'cultural events' on board. When police observed that during one of these, a sizeable majority of customers and staff were either using or dealing hard drugs, the city forbade these parties. Outraged, the boatpeople then complained that the city had taken away their chief source of income. They then refused to leave the city harbour, claiming they could no longer afford to buy fuel for their engines. A Labour politician, lamenting that the Stubnitz could no longer afford to organise cultural events, even went on board to cook soup for the now supposedly destitute sailors. After a few weeks, the city paid them fifty thousand Euros from its budgets for the above-mentioned cheap ateliers to go away, ostensibly as an interest-free loan. This too was defended by some as a pragmatic solution, supposedly saving the city the greater costs of perhaps having to dismantle *Das Boot.* It's not clear which port they are currently calling at, but needless to say, it's not unlikely the proud Stubnitz will soon sail in from the East again to grace the city with its presence.

The problems of this sort of pragmatism are manifold. First, pragmatism, which can be a virtue in politics, becomes indistinguishable from cowardice. Second, by favouring the feckless, you end up discriminating against the lawful, undermining the rule of law in general. Third, a whole sub-section of the government economy has become involved in what are effectively pay-offs. Fourth, a whole sub-section of the population has become involved in receiving pay-offs, and creating circumstances in which these are likely to be received. Fifth, this facilitates certain psychological and moral habits that are in fact detrimental to the public peace. This means that pragmatism ends up being distinctly un-pragmatic.

Diederik Boomsma is a writer and Amsterdam City Councillor.

Soviet Spectre

Pavel Stroilov

Recently there has been a very uneventful conclusion to the criminal case once regarded as the greatest international corruption investigation in US history. In one stroke, the prosecutors dropped about 60 charges of overseas bribery, money laundering, tax evasion, and mail and wire fraud. The individuals under scrutiny are, on the one hand, multinational oil giants, and on the other, the President of Kazakhstan. The allegations involve a labyrinth of numbered accounts in Swiss banks and multi-million bribes being paid to win lucrative contracts. In short, the trial of the century has been annulled.

The defendant, James Giffen, owns a fairly small investment bank in the US, employing just a handful of people. Yet it was Giffen who personally controlled the flow of oil from one of the largest producers in the world — Kazakhstan — for many years. Until being handcuffed in JFK airport in 2003, he was known as the 'oil consigliere' to Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Of the captains of the oil industry, Giffen was known as 'Mr Kazakhstan'. It was Giffen who arranged oil deals worth billions of dollars that were concluded by multinational companies in Kazakhstan throughout the 1990s.

Needless to say, big business in Central Asia is not always conducted in spotlessly white gloves. The case was settled, however, with a plea bargain. The consigliore pleaded guilty to giving inaccurate information about his foreign bank accounts on his 1996 tax return. He will be sentenced in November — to six months in prison at most.

The plea bargain relieves Giffen of the obligation to tell his side of the story which, he claimed, is rooted in the dark recesses of the Cold War. His defence lawyers portrayed him as an American super-spy, whose unscrupulous financial operations over two decades were actually intelligence operations authorized officially or unofficially by the CIA, the State Department and/or the White House. The case lasted for seven years because his lawyer applied for disclosure of secret documents from agencies of the state.

All this suddenly became of no interest to the prosecutor and judge. The defendant simply forgot to tick a box on his tax form. As for that odd $84 million in frozen Swiss bank accounts, a deal was made with Kazakhstan and Switzerland whereby the money will be spent on programmes to support impoverished children and to improve transparency in the Kazakh oil industry. This is certainly one of those cases which might be justifiably called a legalized cover-up, but there is more to it than just protecting some high-ranking officials. It is true that Giffen's story is deeply rooted in the Cold War — and it was supposedly in nobody's interests to have those secrets revealed in open court. That is why the government fought tooth and nail to keep their secret documents under seal, and eventually chose to let Giffen off the hook rather than open a Pandora's box. However, Giffen's activities have left a document trail in the Soviet secret archives as well as in the American ones. Despite all the efforts of the secretive Russian regime, some of these documents have leaked out. They have now been made public.

How could a small investment banker become one of the most powerful figures in the global oil trade? During the Cold War, East-West trade was closely interlinked with Soviet 'active measures' espionage. Legendary secret agent businessmen, such as Armand Hammer and Robert Maxwell, were only the tip of the iceberg. Another phenomenon was the network of the 'firms of friends', secretly or openly controlled by Western Communist Parties, which traded with Moscow on mutually beneficial conditions, and which was used by the Soviets to channel money for the subversion of the free world. Meanwhile, about 300 large US businesses worked together with the Soviets in the secretive umbrella organization known as US-USSR Trade and Economic Council (TEC). Eminent Hoover Institution historian Anthony Sutton, who investigated the TEC in the 1980s, described it as 'a formal joint Soviet-American apparatus to conduit advanced technology with pure military applications to the Soviet Union' and directly accused its American members of 'treason'. The TEC, whose membership list remained secret, was known to be backed by then Vice President George W Bush and Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldridge. The president of that organization was one James Giffen. On the Soviet side, the TEC co-chairman was Vladimir Sushkov, a USSR Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade.

The 1972-1991 diary of the high-ranking Soviet official Anatoly Chernyaev, now available to researchers

in several Western archives, reveals how he was briefed by Sushkov about the TEC's activities in the 1970s: Sushkov told him that the American members of the TEC included 'the biggest monopolistic giants, such as General Motors'. Some of them were willing to provide the Soviets with 'badly needed products, including those of military significance,' Chernyaev wrote on 21 January 1978.

The existing legislation barred US banks from lending money to the USSR because of Soviet human rights abuses. However, the American members of the TEC allegedly told Sushkov:

> We can give you any loans. You just name a dozen products you would supply to us in exchange. It doesn't matter if they're not good enough for the US or West European markets – we operate all over the world. We [...] can sell anything you supply.

The diarist notes the cynicism of multi-national corporations and members of the US-USSR Council, who allegedly organized 'positive results' for opinion polls in the US in favour of the development of Soviet-American economic links. They supposedly paid good money to 'all those Gallups' for polls that produced the required result. As the TEC President, Giffen was at the very heart of that murky world. A top secret report by another high-ranking Soviet official, Vadim Zagladin, now deposited in the Gorbachev Foundation Archive, records his meeting with Giffen in May 1985: the meeting took place on the initiative of Giffen, who shared his thoughts about the US Commerce Secretary Baldridge's upcoming visit to the USSR.

> 1. Giffen described Baldridge as one of the most reasonable, though not highest-ranking, members of the Administration. Especially of late, he has been strongly advocating the development of relations with the Soviet Union and, in particular, the development of US-Soviet trade.[...] You can regard Baldridge, Giffen said, as the man who is the friendliest towards the USSR in the present US Administration.
>
> 2. [...] The mood in the Administration increasingly favours some kind of 'improvement' in relations with the USSR. The people who take such a view include [State Secretary George] Schulz, [National Security Advisor Robert] McFarlane and Baldridge. There is, of course, the opposite wing ([Defence Secretary Caspar] Weinberger, [Assistant Defence Secretary Richard] Perle, and others), who advocate confrontation. However, although the latter wing dominated Washington's policies until recently, now they are gradually losing ground to the soft-liners. Giffen is convinced that, in the nearest future, we will see great twists and U-turns in the administration's policy due to the rivalry between the different factions. [...]
>
> 3. In these circumstances, Baldridge hopes to achieve some positive results in Moscow. Obviously, he cannot return from the Soviet Union with just unilateral results, ie, having only made concessions to the Soviet Union. He has to get something in exchange, although, basically, he cannot and should not expect anything serious.

The document then goes into some detail as to what concessions the Soviets could expect from Baldridge, and how they could get away with offering some purely symbolic quid pro quo.

The document does not confirm any later claims that Giffen used his influence to urge the Soviets to improve their human rights record and allow more Soviet Jews to emigrate. The then US legislation linked US-Soviet trade with freedom of emigration from the Soviet Union and, according to Zagladin's report, Giffen warned him that Baldridge might raise the issue 'unofficially' during the visit:

> Giving his personal view, Giffen said that he, personally, was not concerned with this problem. Probably an increase in emigration might help to remove some obstacles to trade with the US. However, Giffen stressed, even if we chose to do something in this field, we should not move too quickly. We should take small steps and carefully observe the reaction of the opposite side. We should not let the 'hawks' present an increase in emigration from the USSR as a result of their pressure — that would only lead to greater pressure in the future.
>
> Significant changes are also under way in US Jewish circles. Giffen believes this is very important, bearing in mind their influence in politics, business and the mass media.
>
> The President of the World Jewish Congress, E[dgar] Bronfman, is becoming an active advocate of developing relations with the USSR. On his own initiative, Bronfman was elected as one of the directors of the US-USSR Trade and Economic Council, and is now preparing to visit the Soviet Union. Giffen handed over Bronfman's programme of activities in the near future in this connection (enclosed).

So Giffen's career in East-West trade was closely interlinked with the Cold War, but it is far from certain that he was playing on the American side. In these documents we see him supplying the Soviets with highly sensitive information about the US leadership. Even if he was backed by a certain political faction within the US administration and liaised with Moscow on their behalf, his mission was very different from what his lawyers hinted at. In conclusion, Giffen told Zagladin that he could see some good opportunities emerging for improvements in various areas of Soviet-

American relations. Giffen 'would do everything in his power, and in particular work more actively with representatives of Jewish business, since so much depends on them'.

The most difficult area would be disarmament, mainly because that is where the 'hawks' had the greatest influence. 'In Giffen's opinion, R[ichard] Perle occupies the leading position among them. He is clever, but evil and very dangerous. Even within the Administration, many people increasingly believe that he is acting not so much in US interests as in the interests of Israel's right-wing Likud Party. 'Bring Perle to the Soviet Union, keep him in some remote place, and everything in our relations will improve immediately,' Giffen joked at the conclusion of the meeting.

Over the next six years, Washington's 'doves' increasingly got the upper hand, relations improved, trade flourished, and even disarmament treaties were signed. The Soviets, of course, went on cheating and periodically killed pro-democracy protesters (eg, in Lithuania in January 1991). At the same time, facing the imminent collapse of the regime, the Communists quietly began to privatize their vast empire in order to secure their own future. Needless to say, the key roles in the newly emerging market were given to old and trusted comrades — from the East and from the West. The Party apparatchiks and KGB operatives were encouraged to set up 'joint ventures' with Western businesses; especially the 'firms of friends' and other old partners.

Giffen promptly organized a consortium to establish such joint ventures on behalf of seven US companies, including Chevron, Johnson & Johnson, Decatur, Archer Daniels Midland Co, and New Brunswick. In that capacity Giffen befriended Nursultan Nazarbayev, then the Soviet dictator of oil-rich Kazakhstan and even today still its 'democratic' president. Brokering the huge drilling contract for Chevron at a lucrative Kazakh oilfield laid the foundations of Giffen's career as 'Mr Kazakhstan' and the 'oil consigliere'.

'On 14 February I had a traditional meeting with Jim Giffen, the President of the American Consortium', reads a 1991 top secret report by Zagladin deposited in the Gorbachev Foundation. Once again, the seven-page document is filled with high-grade political gossip about the alignment of pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet forces in Washington:

> President George W Bush (whom Giffen saw before going to Moscow, as well as Scowcroft, Baker, Brady and Cheney) is clearly in favour of the further development of good relations with the USSR. Treasury Secretary Brady is the most consistent advocate of improving relations with the USSR and developing economic links. Giffen was present at the President's meeting with the leaders of the Congress. A number of participants claimed that the events in Lithuania and Latvia merited a 'full review' of relations with the USSR, but then Brady vigorously opposed that idea.

In the end Bush, cautiously but firmly, supported Brady's standpoint.

The document also records Giffen's advice on how to play on the personal sympathies and antipathies of the US leaders. George W Bush would be best influenced by personal contacts with Gorbachev. Brent Scowcroft trusted Gorbachev's military advisor Marshal Akhromeev. Baker was very upset by the recent resignation of his friend, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze. Brady disliked his Soviet opposite number, but otherwise could be a good channel for Soviet influence if he was invited to Moscow for talks.

'The President's [ie Gorbachev's] meeting with Brady, his explanation of our problems, could strongly influence US policies and the views of President Bush, who treats Brady 'almost like a brother'. At the end of the meeting Giffen pointedly remarked that the information he gave me, as well as his personal views, were strictly confidential. He begged me to ensure that they don't become known to the public.'

In the same document we find the following curious passage:

> To demonstrate his closeness to the White House, Giffen informed me, in strict confidence, that he has just finished one of his regular trips to Iran. He goes there on the instructions of Bush and Scowcroft, trying to improve US-Iranian relations. Although progress is slow and painful, these efforts are close to success, Giffen said.

This may or may not be relevant, but some six years later Giffen's name was often mentioned in connection with a controversial 'oil swap' between Kazakhstan and Iran, whereby Iran got around Western trade sanctions. Furthermore, the two countries negotiated, albeit unsuccessfully, a plan to conduct such swaps on a regular basis, under a 10-year multibillion dollar contract. One international businessman involved in those talks then sued Giffen, three other businessmen and Kazakhstan's oil minister for cheating him out of his lucrative commissions. The lawsuit, which threatened to reveal many secrets of the international oil trade, was, of course, promptly settled out of court.

Alas, the recent decision of US prosecutors to agree to a plea bargain with Giffen seems to be influenced by similar considerations.

As the Soviet 'joint ventures' mushroomed on the ruins of the empire in the early 1990s, Vladimir Bukovsky warned that we were witnessing a monstrous

global crime syndicate. 'Starting with the laundering of party funds and transferring the resources within their grasp (gold, oil, rare metals),' Bukovsky wrote, 'these malevolent, Mafia-like structures have grown like a cancer, absorbing practically all 'private' enterprise in the countries of the former USSR. Now, with the emergence of these countries into the world market, it behoves us to deal with yet another international mafia, a much more frightening and powerful one than any Colombian drug cartel or the Cosa Nostra. It is very likely that in some ten years time we shall be up against a criminal super-syndicate like the fabled Spectre in James Bond movies.'

Now, it seems, Bukovsky's prophesy has come true. The kleptocracies in such countries as Russia and Kazakhstan are an indisputable fact of life. However, few seem to appreciate the global nature of the problem. We used to live in a world largely run by communists and their fellow-travellers. Now they have sold out their bankrupt ideology and turned into ordinary criminals, but they still appear to be running the world. Like the communists, they are above the law; and like the communists, they are largely immune from prosecution. The spectre is there — but there is no James Bond. The worst that can happen to them is a comfortable plea bargain.

Pavel Stroilov is a historian who smuggled a vast secret archive of the Gorbachev era out of Russia. This article was first published on the web: http://frontpagemag.com

The Electric Book

Mark Griffith

Some are called Kindles, some are called Tablets, but all of them are electronic hand-held devices supposedly transforming the venerable object known as the book. Books already underwent one major technical shift in antiquity, from scroll to codex. In the 2nd century AD, people started chopping scrolls up into rectangles of text and gluing or stitching the sections to a spine between two boards. The codex is now such a success that few of us even know the word. We don't see codices on library shelves, we see books. To find a pre-codex scroll-format book in daily use, you have to visit that ultra-traditional venue, a synagogue. Aristotle or Ovid would recognise a modern rabbinical scroll being handled by its two long wooden pins, both being rotated to move the text forward.

If we believe the giggly Jeff Bezos, founder of online bookseller-turned-everything-seller Amazon, books are now undergoing their second big technical shift. We are told we will start to abandon the codex, and embrace a family of handheld electronic devices. I'm not so sure.

A large group of people, especially in the United States, want to read books this way: futurists anxious to be part of any new trend. This way of packaging text has some solid benefits. If you have to travel light and carry a lot of text with you, paper-based books are heavy objects, some so impractical that reading them on a Tablet or Kindle is surely easier. I'm currently plodding through one huge tome, ridiculously published in paperback. Uncomfortable to read in any position, it could actually tear apart under its own weight if held wrongly. This particular codex needs one of those desk-mounted book-holders which medieval woodcuts show monastic scholars using.

On the other hand, if the publisher had issued the same text as five or six smaller volumes sold together, no electronics would be needed. I'm also sceptical of people who stack their Kindle with 50 novels for the beach instead of two. Who reads that fast? Another question is why you would stick e-texts into one of these devices instead of just reading them on the laptop you have already. The Kindle is easy on the eye, designed to resemble opaque paper pages — but screens like this will come to all computers and phones soon enough.

Bezos wants to convert his powerful lock on bookselling into a piece of the electronic-appliance pie. Yet computers and mobile phones will keep improving — Japanese rail commuters have been reading novels on their mobile phones for at least five years. Isn't the computer a good idea precisely because it is mankind's first general-purpose machine? So a new kind of not-computer-not-phone showing only books seems a step backward. That's not all. Amazon have withdrawn titles after selling them, reaching into your device to zap texts you thought you owned. Some Kindle owners had the creepy experience of buying something and then having Mummy confiscate it. You cannot print one

of these texts onto paper: you're not allowed to. Yet isn't the new digital age all about reducing restrictions on reading? Still, excited fans of e-text-reading devices firmly believe that technical progress cannot be resisted and never gets it wrong.

Except sometimes it does. Remember the Sinclair C5 electric buggy, which didn't fill the streets of the world? A century further back was an even more intriguing case. In the late 19th century an enormous craze succeeded in selling huge numbers of desk-mounted devices across the rich world. For a couple of decades it seemed indispensible to any civilised home. It looked like a pair of binoculars mounted on a sturdy stand, pointed down at the table. If you inserted a pair of photographs taken with a matching camera, you saw one image in depth, in 3D. Yet people got so sick and tired of stereoscopes, and stereotypes, the special photographs they displayed, that 'stereotype' is to this day a word of contempt.

Will inquisitive grandchildren in fifty years time rummaging in Papa's old boxes recognise these curious handheld electronic book things? To think oldies thought every household needed a special device to read books!

They didn't totally disappear. While the mass-production versions now hide in museums, specialised versions lived on in aerial photography. Stereoscopes show ground features jumping out of the artificially flattened images you get from high altitude.

Will inquisitive grandchildren in fifty years time rummaging in Papa's old boxes recognise these curious handheld electronic book things? To think oldies thought every household needed a special device to read books! Those children will sometimes read long electronic texts on whatever all-purpose computers there will be, but — to an extent which would surprise us — they'll often read them in paper format too.

Nothing ages faster than futurism. One group of internet enthusiasts runs a list of articles, the Dead Media Archive, cataloguing near-obsolete ways of carrying information. Among lovely relics like the message-canister steam-tube network that still serves Prague, or the French Army's working messenger-pigeon unit, the serious core of the Archive is abandoned computer formats. There are major computer systems worldwide with code written in a now almost-defunct computer language from as recently as the 70s or 80s. Formats for accessing digital text age fast. Fixing programming bugs in a once-ubiquitous computer language like COBOL is now an almost antiquarian skill. Imagine a chunk of your book collection, retrieved after a decade, being locked inside a damaged handheld reader, with no normal firm able to unlock it for you.

Nicholson Baker in the 1990s raged against the blithe destruction of typed and handwritten card indexes in favour of digital indexing. Some libraries burned the old cards, some threw them out, one attached them to balloons for visiting children to release to the winds. Baker pointed out that many of those cards encoded other information — handwritten notes, worn edges indicating how often they had been withdrawn — and that in the process of being digitised a certain percentage would go missing, never to be transcribed, stranding invisible books deep in the stacks that we now don't even know are there.

A similar disappearance of book titles might be happening now, though the deviceists promise more books. Yet e-readers threaten to bring readers' bookshelves within the control of electronic-appliance firms, and reduce the size of the market for printed books. Just as vinyl records are vanishing, breaking the hold record companies once had on the range of music we can hear, Bezos and his rivals are trying to create a whole new record-player market — a market for dedicated devices that have your books inside them, and can do little else than play those books.

Purely digital texts, free of loyalty to this or that device, would more likely succeed than record players for books, since they can work on general computers. All computers will evolve to make it less stressful on the eye to read on-screen. Why should publishers like me release a book into the wild, to be read digitally on someone's laptop, but also to be copied for nothing? Why would I let a book roam around in digital form for others to make thousands of copies without paying me or my authors?

This is the uncomfortable secret of Tablets and Kindles. They make it easy for you to download and yet also make it hard for to you break copyright by recopying it. Will the trick work? On the principle that anything digital can be hacked and cracked, I don't see how it can work. Kindles will release titles into digital form. They will then be cracked and copied into simpler formats, and then royalties to writers will become as rare as royalties now are to musicians. Meanwhile, people will still print out digital files, and still enjoy reading 'privileged print-outs', namely smart-looking paper codices.

To me, paying to have a Kindle, and putting digital books on it, and reading them only on that device, does not sound like the experience of owning a book. It sounds like the experience of paying to borrow a book. In the 1930s, before the 1940s welfare state decided to make all libraries free, Britain had thriving paying libraries. Boots the Chemists ran a popular paying library as a loss leader to pull people into its shops,

and you could borrow from one branch, and return a book to another branch in another town. Today this concept outrages people used to free libraries, although those same people are oddly quite happy to pay a video rental library to let them borrow a film on DVD for a couple of nights.

If handheld digital-book-reading devices (or possibly very well-encrypted digital books which open on laptops but are hard to copy) are to survive in some form, I believe they will survive by recreating the paying library. I am not willing to pay ten pounds for a digital version of a novel that I cannot print, cannot copy, and that someone somewhere knows I'm reading. However, I might pay fifty pence to borrow the device and read the book on it within a fortnight. I suspect the digital book industry has it wrong. Digital book buyers want lower prices, sellers want prices high. If prices come down, but with a time limit, publishers become paying libraries. Meanwhile, people who want to own a book, look at it, leave it lying around as a physical object to lend to their friends, will want something tangible and traditional, perhaps even in hardback.

Codices overtook scrolls by having fewer moving parts, by being lower-tech. 'Upgrading' the codex book, one of the simplest innovations ever, into a clever electronic box might well be a widget too far.

Mark Griffith is editor of the forthcoming book Collateral Damage: Global Crash Phase Two, *a collection of articles about the financial crisis*

State of the Fourth Estate

Will Robinson

Twenty-five years ago a distinguished Fellow of All Souls, the late Stephen Koss, published the concluding volume of his monumental study, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain.* This was a confident rebuttal of the idea that we would ever return to a world in which politics and journalism were inexorably linked. But, *pace* Dr Koss, here we are again. Rarely has the press been so intensely political or politics so shamelessly journalistic since the end of the nineteenth century, when one in ten MPs came from Fleet Street and nearly every paper was the blatant organ of one party or another. In Andy Coulson we have both the symptom and the potential cure of this most pernicious of political ills, which reappears every so often like the pathogen of some accursed medieval plague.

The basic problem for the 'free press' in the period scrutinised by Koss was that it simply didn't pay. This meant that their proprietors, who were mostly resigned to the fact, saw their publications as luxury items, useful only in as much as they gave them status or seats in Parliament (preferably in the Lords) for unspecified 'services to the party'. The scribblers they employed were scarcely more exalted, often succumbing to the same temptation to cash in their chips with a ruling elite, who, like their successors today, had little idea about how to present themselves to the millions of people upon whom they depended for power.

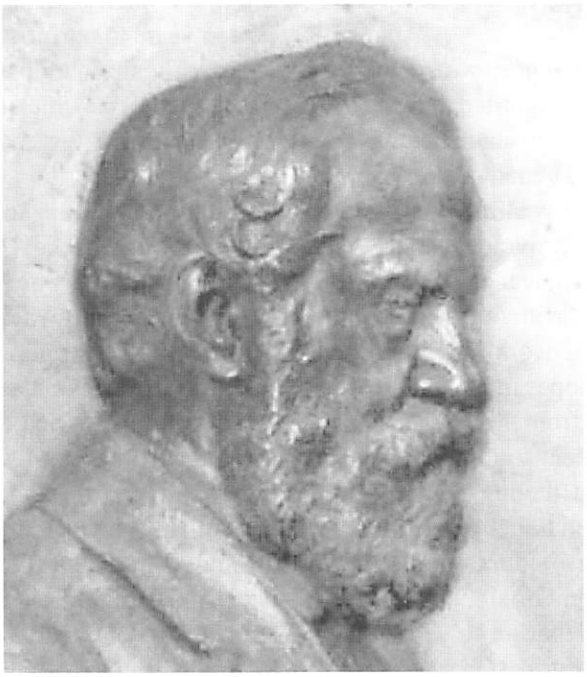
This unholy alliance was only broken when two remarkable journalists, Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) of the *Daily Mail* and W T Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, realised that the *status quo* was not the only option. While the former was driven by a desire to become fantastically rich, Stead believed it to be an editor's duty to stand in permanent opposition to every government, holding a mirror up to the hypocritical morality of the age.

Yet today it is only Harmsworth who is remembered. This is partly because the kind of journalism he invented was essentially the forerunner of the cheap, brainless entertainment that seems to be the driving force of our popular culture today. Stead's vision, by contrast, was far more ambitious, leading him to pioneer the sort of investigative journalism that has never been fully embraced by the mainstream in this country. This is well demonstrated by the mixed views most people have about *The News of the World*, a newspaper that combines noble causes with gross levity far more successfully than any of its rivals.

Stead's greatest coup was to prove that it was possible to buy a 13-year-old girl on the streets of London with the express intention of transporting her to a Continental brothel, where she would be unlikely ever to be seen or heard of again. When he published his findings (the report of our Special and Secret Committee of Inquiry) under the title of 'The

Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' in the summer of 1885 it caused the greatest sensation ever to have been recorded in the history of British journalism. The little street in which he had his offices off the Strand was besieged by thousands of hawkers who wanted to cash in on the massive upsurge in demand by buying the paper cheap to sell on dear. For a short time his circulation rose from a respectable 5,000 to an unprecedented 100,000; a figure that Harmsworth would easily match with his easy-going *Daily Mail*.

But in the coming months two facts emerged that have blighted Stead's reputation forever. First, the old laws against child trafficking were proved to have been more robust than he imagined, since he was convicted of abduction and sent to prison (albeit for only three months) after a rather shameful trial at the Old Bailey. Second, it emerged during the course of this hearing that the procuress he had bullied into buying the child had claimed to have only wanted her for domestic service – presumably because attempts to buy a little girl in any other way had failed and she was too frightened to return to the editor without the young virgin that would make his story 'thrill the world'.



Bust of W T Stead

It is likely that Coulson would respect such tactics, which — whatever may be said against them — did succeed in having the age of consent raised from thirteen to sixteen by way of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885). But he would do well to take note of the scorn that the same crusading editor heaped on his fellow journalists who abandoned journalism for politics; notably John (later Viscount) Morley, Alfred (later Viscount) Milner and Edward (later Sir Edward) Cook. This was because he viewed it as impossible to serve Fleet Street and Downing Street with any purpose (not to say integrity), either simultaneously or consecutively. Instead, he contended, the journalist needed to act in the manner of an independent investigator, not unlike a *bona fide* government inspector, yet somehow more powerful for the reason that he was freer to push the boundaries of the law to their very limit.

Like Alastair Campbell and Damien McBride before him, Coulson has effectively ignored this sage piece of Fleet Street wisdom. He obviously thinks that newspapers are all but finished, so finds the best market for his skills working at Number Ten, but what he brings to his new position is much less valuable than what he takes away from his old profession. Though we may deplore phone-tapping and other dark arts, most people would rather that they were practised by an independent reporter than the Prime Minister's highly-paid Director of Communications. Moreover, most people would prefer to read a newspaper controlled by a Stead or a Coulson than a Harmsworth, especially now that cheap entertainment is available in so many places other than the newsstand.

Such editors also offer the press its only real chance of survival in this fiercely competitive world of virtual monopolies and ostensibly free news on the internet. As has long been clear, print media cannot survive on celebrity gossip, mindless opinion columns and puzzles and crosswords alone. Such devices may have worked wonders in Harmsworth's era, but the world has changed considerably since those times. Only the kind of investigative journalism pioneered by Stead seems capable of recapturing a mass audience, as was clear during the *Daily Telegraph's* exposure of the expenses scandal and, indeed, *The News of the Worlds* recent discovery of corruption in the world of cricket.

If the irksome life that goes with this kind of journalist seems more precarious than that of the beneficed spin-doctor, it is worth considering the fate that currently hangs over Mr Cameron's special adviser. The fact is that both careers tend to end in martyrdom; the only difference is that the public is much more likely to be sympathetic to a law-breaking investigative journalist than a deviant director of communications. For this reason, people working in the media should stick to what they're good at: shining the 'disinfectant of sunlight' into the dark recesses of power. If that leads them into the dock, so much the better. The alternative will only bring *both* their professions into great disrepute.

Will Robinson was shortlisted for the Tony Lothian biographers' club prize for his forthcoming biography of W T Stead.

Moscow Nights

Mattiya Kambona

In 1961 Tanganyika was granted Independence by the British Government. Despite the poverty in much of the country, there was general rejoicing; many of us thought that independence would bring immediate economic improvement. It was easy to conclude that our underdevelopment was because we had been governed by a bunch of foreigners from a faraway country who did not have our best interests at heart.

As we struggled for independence, we seemed to have plenty of well-wishers. We regarded them as true friends who would help our emerging nation embark on economic projects, which would benefit all our people. Tanzania had abundant natural wealth — minerals, rivers, good arable land in all provinces, and a vast labour force. Most of us arrived in Dar es Salaam fresh from Colleges and Universities with our heads full of high hopes, but the absence of working capital and technical expertise turned our hopes into mere dreams. No help appeared to be coming from the West, so many of us thought it would be prudent to look elsewhere. There was therefore a general feeling that the East should be approached and asked to help as during our Independence celebrations these countries had been very friendly and free with offers of aid.

It was decided to send a delegation to Moscow to request money for developing our national resources. One day our Permanent Secretary summoned me to his office and told me to prepare to travel to Moscow. I was very excited that I would be involved in the development of my country but aware that ordinary people would be praying that we would be returning with the means through which a better life would come at last. It was the biggest mission ever sent overseas and was supposed to set the economy on an industrial revolution.

After a long flight we arrived in Moscow. From the friendly welcome we received we had no doubt that our mission had chosen the right place. We settled into the comfortable rooms in our hotel as our hosts seemed to be going out of their way to make us feel welcome. I was appointed Assistant Secretary to the Mission, so the following morning I made sure that everything needed for the meeting was available. In the meeting Hall our hosts had performed wonders. The setting was more than perfect; every face beamed. Copious speeches were delivered in which 'solidarity' was the main theme while our throats were constantly lubricated with tots of vodka and glasses of water. We looked at the timetable, and eagerly awaited the time when we could begin the discussions.

Tanzania was well known for its reserves of iron and coal which the Mission regarded as the backbone of any future development. To our dismay our hosts considered these industries as leeches. They pointed out that in their own countries it had taken more than fifteen years to nurture their own reserves to maturity. Meanwhile these industries had absorbed a great deal of the resources which should have been set aside for other sectors of the economy. To benefit the country as a whole they said such industries must be run at optimum level. Tanzania's economy was small with few overseas markets; the iron and coal industries could prove to be a burden.

We were keen to develop the railway line, which connected the copper belt in Zambia directly with the port of Dar-es Salaam, to avoid exporting copper through South Africa, the world's pariah state. Our hosts turned down this suggestion because the main beneficiary of the development would be Zambia rather than Tanzania. If our mission had included some prominent Zambians, further consideration would have been appropriate. Reluctantly we switched to our third plan: the use of our abundant water supplies to develop hydroelectricity. At this point our hosts adjourned the meeting to the following day when we would discuss Zanzibar's projects. It was very confusing and our heads were beginning to spin. We began to feel nervous and there seemed to be no easy way ahead but the beaming smiles continued, so we thought that in the next two weeks we would manage to change our hosts' minds. It certainly was a puzzle.

Next day we assembled again. This time we were more wary, having tasted some bitter medicine the previous day. The spokesman for Zanzibar was invited to put forward his projects. (Tanzania and Zanzibar had only recently been unified and the political sympathies of the Zanzibaris had been much more in line with those of our hosts). The first was to increase the power of Radio Zanzibar by some megawatts. Our hosts readily accepted the proposal and offered to increase the range of the radio station much more strongly than anticipated. They also readily agreed to supply hospital beds and in two hours the Zanzibaris had what they wanted and more. We thought we would be able to use the rest of the day to discuss more of the mainland

projects but the Russians soon reminded us that the day had been set aside to deal with Zanzibar's requests only and we were told to go sightseeing instead. Our security personnel (minders) were ready to take us anywhere. I was keen to visit a church but my minder told me that such a visit would not be appropriate.

Next day we came to the meeting well armed with feasibility studies for hydroelectric dams, irrigation systems and manufacturing projects. As we submitted one plan after another everything was rejected. Then Kassim Hanga, the Minister of Industry and Power suggested that we should walk out of the hall, pack our bags and leave the country. It took some time for our advisor, Denis Pompeya, to persuade Hanga and the others to stay: 'You must remember that you are here, begging because our country is poor. We are doing this for our people who are relying on us to help them. Please return to your seats and continue to negotiate.'

At that point our hosts suggested that we take a break and discuss the rest of our ideas later so we returned to our rooms. One of my colleagues and I wished to go out on our own to do some shopping and sightseeing. We told them that as we had no engagements we would meet them on the following day and after lunch we prepared to go out. We decided not to take the lift as we thought that the 'guides' might be around so we slowly went down the staircase to the first floor. To our surprise, there they were. The delegation was accommodated on the second and third floors and the guides were occupying the whole of the first floor to see that none of us went out alone. We told them that we did not want to trouble them but it was to no avail, we could not get rid of them and they even kept a driver handy in case we should want to use a car. I wanted a camera so we went to a camera shop where I found one to buy. I asked the shopkeeper for the price but before he could answer the guide spoke to him and it was handed to me indicating that I could have it free of charge. I refused and said that I wanted to pay but he waved his hands and moved away. I left the package on the counter and began to leave. The guide tried to persuade me to take it but I told him I no longer wanted it. My colleague had a similar experience so we decided to abandon the idea of shopping and return to the hotel. The following day we again tried to sneak out on our own but soon realised that it was hopeless. The guards were very vigilant. And I never saw the church.

Further meetings were organized a few days before our departure. This time we never got a strong 'no' or 'yes' to our proposals; each time our hosts would have to think about it. This was very unsatisfactory, but we had no choice. We left Moscow after two weeks completely empty-handed. On the plane I unwrapped the two presents which I had been given on my departure by Mr Lomako, a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet. The first contained a good wristwatch, which I got rid of as soon as I could because we were told that such watches could only be serviced or repaired by returning them to Moscow via the Soviet Embassy. The second contained a good camera!

At Dar es Salaam Airport I was shocked when friends congratulated us for 'a good job done'. I thought they were being sarcastic but I heard on my car radio that we had brought more than £135 million to finance various projects. I wondered where this money could have come from. Next morning I went to see my boss who told me not to worry. The leaders were well aware that we had returned with nothing, but the mission was the most expensive ever sent overseas, so the Government had to find a way to justify the expense. I was dumbfounded.

Mattiya Kambona who was exiled in Britain in 1968 returned to Tanzania last year (v SR *Vol 29 No 1).*

Ragpickers

Parveen Chhibber

There's a man who lies most days, out in the open, his rear exposed to the sky, if not found outside the kitchen door of a local eatery (Established: 2009). He's not a rag picker. There are three of them, rag pickers. They can be often seen going from one road crossing to another and probing and picking through the many inner lanes of the Central Business District of Belapur in Mumbai. Of late they have a professional look. With bags full to overflowing, and prospects of an assured sale, their step is almost jaunty. And, what's the reason for the light step? It's not rags they carry anymore, but plastic: up to the very brim. Water bottles, tubes, packets, casings and all that makes life worthwhile in this century are the subject of their search. A corporate honcho has recently tied up with street scavengers, to buy bottles for recycling at a profit, to make each and everyone happy.

Just as fast as the trio can pick up the trash, new rubbish

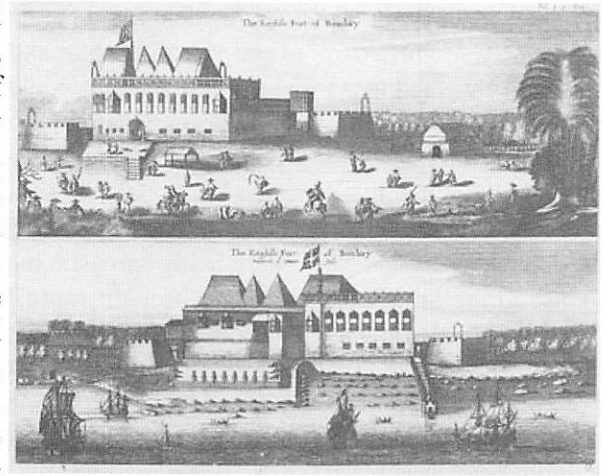
is being created. It's all plastic now. An idea is born, and takes physical form in plastic. In a year it's dead. More work for the pickers and a host of re-touching experts who can sell it down the line, whole or in parts.

'Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust, Plastic to Plastic'

Everything finds its place.

Wealth is now ephemeral, more than any time in the history of man. And, we're all rag pickers as we plump for the latest gadget, and pass it on at the end of its cycle of usefulness for us. Or, select a thing off the retail shelf, in its flexible packing. Brighter colours and interesting designs made possible by the synthetic casing. The value chain is long, each rag picker taking it from the one higher up, till the street scavenger gets it.

Many years ago, I saw a Dangi tribesman lying in the middle of the road, passing through the forests, near a rivulet, and its low bridge for crossing. I was travelling from Ahwa (Dangs), his district capital, ensconced in the western slopes of the Sahyadri scarps, in the state of Gujarat, to the commercial town of Surat, a hundred and forty kilometres to the North West. The lorry driver, of the small truck carrying my material possessions, halted his vehicle. The place belonged to the tribesman, and it was a sacred moment. The stream was his, the trees, the sky and the earth. The forest was his. He was the forest. The tribes of the district had fought the Empire over a century and a half ago to preserve their independence, signing a treaty in 1842. There were minutes of complete silence in the dense jungle of teak and black-wood trees, the driver didn't blow the horn, and the journey resumed in due course. No one thought of mentioning it later. The man was in his own element, at one with nature.



Now, in an age of super hygiene and super bugs, it's the thin inorganic layer of polyethylene, which protects us from the earth; encloses and circumscribes all our activities. Lightweight and everywhere, the material shapes us and shapes our minds. Wiley-E-Coyote can fall from a height of a thousand feet and walk away from the crater, created by his fall, bruised but unhurt, and a source of merriment for all. Our muscles grow weaker and desires stronger, just the child's need for curiosity and excitement.

Prime time is god. The rabid men at each end of fanaticism serve only this god, whatever they may profess. And, the god pays well, as long as his servants get enough eyeballs watching him and minds enslaved to his purpose; an entropy of ideas that will end white, static-safe, sanitised and uniform — the bright colours and myriad shapes masking the sameness and banality of the thought being packaged and sold.

And, the cruelty of homes destroyed by bombs and the misery of families as long as the god is served; inured, this will prepare us for larger horrors as long as the other fellow gets it. We'll demand the horror, for we know that like Coyote the victim will just walk away from the crater.

It's also true we cannot live outside our artificial world. Kindle and i-Pad will save swathes of forest, otherwise destroyed by logging. The total carbon cost will also be eliminated or substantially reduced as transportation and shipping go down. Plastic carrier bags, and packaging, which have replaced paper and cardboard, and are used to excess today are needed for that very reason.

The mess being created by e-waste-discarded mobiles, computers and electronic gadgets is on the other side of the scale. A man who has made a thriving business out of this garbage says that over a half a million tons of it is produced every year in India alone, and ninety seven per cent of it is improperly disposed of, thrown into rivers, the sea and mines. In the face of Government apathy it is up to people like him to get things done, says this saviour of the environment. With the latest machines from Europe the eco-business man is now able to separate the dross from the goodies, copper, nickel, iron and even gold, which he sells on the commodities exchange and has founded a gainful venture, with on occasion a nominal charge and resale. Rag picking has never been so profitable.

Buy nothing for a year, except for the bare essentials; food, floss and perhaps soap — you can have your own list. I would hazard a guess that not much would change in our lives. One would be becoming older, but having adequate models of electronic items and wearing the same clothes. Most of us could live with that, and start making better use of what we have — listen to that Mozart symphony on CD, which we never got around to hearing as we browsed the music stores for the latest new collection of the same old tunes.

And, what of the man with the rear view? The restaurant of 2009 vintage, and which also displays a coat of arms, isn't half bad. There could well be a smoked something in the leftovers today.

Parveen Chhibber is the author of The Companion: A Tale of 1857, *available from Amazon.*

All True except the Facts

Hugh Nicklin

> The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction
>
> William Blake

This year is the 20th anniversary of the History National Curriculum. I don't hear of any planned celebrations of this great landmark in our educational progress, so I offer these reflections.

School History courses are divided up into amounts thought to be suitable to provide lessons for a year's teaching. In Britain, as you recall from 'Our Island Story' and '1066 and all that', it went like this...

Year 1 (11 year olds) History up to 1066
Year 2 1066-1485
Year 3 1485-1714
Year 4 1714-1815
Year 5 1815-1914

This scheme did not come into being by spontaneous generation. It was the course originally devised by the Tigers of Wrath for the Horses of Instruction, and appeared in some 'Orders' in 1899. This article traces the stages by which this 'Tiger Curriculum' came to be replaced by the present National History Curriculum.

Consider Year 1: eleven-year-olds could not cope with the subjects which make man's early history important, so they learned to write their names in hieroglyphics, made pyramids out of cardboard and learned about Greek battles.

The importance of the Greeks is what they thought and said but, as eleven-year-olds are not very good on deep thinking, it tended to centre on the fighting, which they could understand. Leonidas, Pheidippides *et al.* therefore got most attention. Roman History tended to be the Romans in Britain, and more battles, with Julius Caesar. The Saxons were there to be converted to Christianity, after which you could draw a Saxon house and end on an upbeat note with authority and culture presenting a sunny face with King Alfred learning to read, burning the cakes and finally trouncing the Danes. I say 'end on' because the reality of school courses is that *you never finish what you were supposed to do.* Going on after Alfred was fraught with difficulty, with fractions of Canute and even a whole Canute. The whole Canute was very confusing, because hadn't Alfred beaten the Danes, and why would we bother with a person who thought he could stop the tide coming in?

Wherever you had got to in Year 1 the second year began with 1066. The barbarous Viking ancestry of the Normans and the fig leaf of legitimacy behind which they concealed their act of aggression could therefore be hastily passed over in the great action adventure of 1066. Thus the fundamental illegitimacy of the British aristocratic establishment (the original 'Tigers of Wrath') was obscured.

Failing to finish the second year course, few classes would be presented with England's resounding defeat in the Hundred Years' War. Everyone therefore knows of the valour and competence of the Tiger Edward III at Crecy, and no-one knows of the embarrassing Tiger defeat at Castillon in 1453 or much about the equally embarrassing spectacle of the Tigers biting each other in the subsequent Wars of the Roses.

Year 3 could therefore cut to 1485 with that other action adventure in which the unconstitutional piratical adventurer Henry VII beats the worthy and constitutional (though demonised) Richard III. The fundamental illegitimacy of the British Royal establishment (Henry was 29th in line to the throne) was thus obscured. One rarely finished the huge amount of content in the 1485-1714 period, so one passed over the embarrassing radicalism of the Cromwellian period, cut hastily to the Great Fire and the Great Plague and that was that.

Failing to finish Year 3 the learners were thus spared the embarrassing spectacle of a (relatively) legitimate king (James II) being removed through the treachery of the Tigers, and of the abandonment (in the settlement of 1714) of the principle of hereditary monarchy. I am not defending 'legitimacy' but pointing out that the Tigers, whose whole position (since 1066) had rested on the principle of hereditary succession, did not want to draw attention to their deviation from it.

Many state school pupils dropped history in favour of other subjects at this point. In doing so they were left with a corpus of knowledge which, though big on the enduring wisdom and legitimacy of the Tigers, failed to touch on matters relevant to 90 per cent of modern life. Although by now expected to vote at 21, those dropping history were thus deprived of the knowledge of the recent past necessary for an informed democratic choice. This would not be unwelcome to the Tigers.

The Forster Education Act of 1870 had been intended by the Tigers to create a soldiery which could read its orders, not a proletariat which could reflect on its own position. The unexpected dynamism of the Board Schools, and their burgeoning 'secondary' initiatives such as History teaching, were most unwelcome to the Tigers, and this is part of the explanation for the Orders of 1899 regulating history (and other 'secondary subjects') and the destruction of the School Boards in the 1902 Education Act.

Those pupils continuing with History into Year 4 (now 'Year 10') encountered a strange twist. Instead of battles and acts, they were directed to study turnips. The main event in the eighteenth century, a development of the greatest significance in the history of the world, is the Enlightenment, a movement best illustrated by the Europe-wide rejection of witch burning. This rejection was the result of general revulsion at the claims and policies of the Christian theocrats of all stripes. The Tigers did not want to draw attention to this. As the controllers of appointments to posts within the Anglican Church the Tigers of Wrath possessed a fully funded employment scheme for their less enterprising sons, and this was not the moment to stress the fact that the entire intelligentsia of Europe had rejected organized religion. No Bishop, No King; No Parson, No Tiger.

The fourth year ended with the French Revolution. By this age the children would be quite old enough to consider the implications of the doctrine of natural, universal and equal rights, but as unnatural, partial and unequal rulers the tigers did not want this at all. Children were presented with an account of the French revolution beginning with beastly guillotining and quickly passing on to the glorious victories of Nelson and Wellington. No need at all to debate whether, the French having been defeated, their egalitarian ideas had been as well.

Year 5 celebrated nineteenth century imperial glory and industrial and political 'progress' presided over wisely by the tigers. Their beneficent sway was threatened at the end by the Beastly Hun, whom they selflessly opposed for the sake of fair play, cricket teas, the sanctity of contracts and gallant little Belgium. Most schools would then revert to the Tudors for A Level, rubbing in the merits of Protestantism. The Tigers did not care a groat for salvation by faith or the Real Presence, but they still had the monastic lands which Protestantism had granted them.

Such was the status quo from around 1900 when codification of History courses started, until well after the Second World War. School History courses having generally not touched on events since 1914, there was a historical void after that. To fill the void the tigers relied on government propaganda. The Germans roasted babies on bayonets, and were duly punished for it after the war. Post war disillusionment saw a rival school of propaganda emerging: 'we were all to blame' for the First World War, and a Wilsonian world of justice and peace was the way forward. The Tigers were between a rock and a hard place. They had been left in charge of defending the Versailles Settlement by the withdrawal of the US, but with huge war debts, obsolescent industries and a pacifist electorate they were in no position to oppose Hitler. Spotted with racism themselves (how many Jews were members of British golf clubs in the 1930s?) they did not particularly want to. Much more urgent and dangerous was Stalinist Communism, the bastard child of the French Revolution. The result was a desperate and secret rearmament policy and the undignified public posture of appeasement in the desperate hope that Hitler would fight Stalin for us. Things went wrong, a Polish fig-leaf replaced the Belgian fig-leaf, and a phoney war ensued. The tigers did not care a groat for Poland either, but they still took offence when directly attacked, so real war began in May 1940.

This war was just another in the series of European Civil Wars going back a millennium and more, but it needed to be cleverly sold if a second round of conscription was to be accepted by a population which had been largely anti-war in the very recent past. In a remarkable volte-face the Tigers, who had consistently and resolutely opposed the League of Nations and Wilsonian liberalism, suddenly began to claim that the war to defend themselves against German rule was actually a war against fascism! As the Tiger Churchill observed:

> The truth is so important that it must be defended by a battalion of lies!

This was successful. Willing armies were recruited, and the truth was defended, but a price had to be paid. When British people bracketed this universalist propaganda with a second experience in thirty years of Tiger bumbling in the armed forces, they voted Labour in 1945. That is to say, they voted for a party which really believed in the propaganda put out with complete insincerity by the Tigers during the war. When the evidence of the holocaust came to light, natural-rights millenarianism became unstoppable. By the 1960s the British empire was gone and we had pop festivals, liberal reform of divorce, abortion and homosexuality, and a drug culture from which even the Tigers themselves were not immune. The state of affairs could hardly have been worse from the Tigers' point of view. When I 'trained' (*sic*) as a History teacher in 1965 nothing was said about History at all. It was the 'Education' Department of Tiger Oxford, horrified

and speechless. In the slack water and slack liberalism of the 60s all sorts of History courses now made their appearance. There were whole courses on the History of Medicine, or the North American Indians. The generation of emerging History teachers had been born in the war (I was born in 1942) and was thoroughly imbued with the traditional historical knowledge plus a veneer of natural rights thinking coming from the war propaganda. Full of missionary zeal, I entered a bog-standard comprehensive school.

The Tigers decided that to undo the damage done by the World War II propaganda it was necessary to de-historicise the electorate altogether. Margaret Thatcher, a Tiger reared among ringing tills rather than imposing castles, was up for a street-fight with the chattering classes and their flopsy rainbow liberalism. Her 'National History Curriculum' applied to state schools from 1990. It replaced the Old Tiger curriculum, with its subtle diversionary tactics, by an astonishing *tour de force* to the same end. It presented unconnected chunks of traditional British history in random chronological order, making it completely impossible for non-Tiger children to form any coherent view of the past at all They receive no instruction on the history of China (or any third world country), the rise and fall of European Imperialism, the Arab-Israeli issue, the collapse of Communism, the history of religions other than Christianity, and world over-population and shortage of minerals, notably water. Elections are decided without reference to these elephants on our doorstep. *Vox Populi, Pox Dei...*

Among the Horses of Instruction, Historians are most likely to bolt, and must be kept under control. The famous dictum that '*Historians upset everything*' has been excised from public knowledge. A Google search on it draws a blank.

Hugh Nicklin's teaching odyssey has taken him in and out of the state and private sector and further afield in Bombay and Serbia.

Eat Your Heart Out

Margaret Brown

With good reason the obesity epidemic is rarely out of the news. In January 2009 the front page story in the *Western Mail* featured two-year-olds needing treatment for excess poundage. In the same month 'Half Ton Son' was a TV portrayal of the dangerous adiposity now spreading among the young. We have no idea of the consequences of mass obesity. The problem is unprecedented and thus all the more difficult to solve. Humans have had only too much experience of malnutrition and starvation and of trying to survive them. Historically, a lack of food has been the norm. The relatively recent advent of more than enough food after millennia of near-starvation and fluctuations in consumption caused by the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions are having unexpected consequences and will have more. But if we realise what has been and what is happening, we could influence future events.

The past has some lessons. We know the political and social consequences of obesity when it afflicted powerful individuals in hierarchical societies. Hunter-gatherer tribes could barely keep body and soul together but as tribes settled into agricultural communities, social differences appeared. Those at the top could afford to over-eat, though even most of those were too active to become fat. Assyrian and Egyptian stone reliefs and records occasionally depict fat people. In the second century AD the Roman writer Juvenal expressed contempt for the owner of 'the belly still swollen with undigested peacock meat' struck with a heart attack. He understood the link between fat, inactivity and illness. The robes of Chinese emperors show that they too yielded to the temptations of the table. Unfortunately the traditions of their culture forbade them from compromising their dignity by exercising.

Obesity is bad for monarchs. Monarchies of the past illustrate this dramatically. It has limited their capacity to function properly and killed them prematurely, endangering the stability and leadership that monarchy embodies. In his later years William the Conqueror grew so fat that the French King joked that he looked pregnant. In the tense diplomatic situation of 1087 this sparked off a war. At the consequent siege of Mantes, William's horse stumbled on burning timbers and flung him against the pommel. In his bloated state the injury proved fatal. In 1135 Henry I died eating too much of his favourite fish. His nephew, Stephen's seizure of the crown led to civil war lasting 20 years. Two years later the French had a similar problem. Louis VI had grown so fat that he was unable to ride and died imprisoned in a mass of flesh, warning his son to learn from his fate. The son was 15 and too young to rule effectively. The next English and French monarchs were too active

to grow fat but in 1216 King John gorged himself on peaches and died. As his son was only nine, strife ensued. No wonder that a century later Dante's Inferno had a special section for gluttons. Greed was clearly viewed as a dangerous sin.

Henry VIII is an exemplar of the consequences of obesity. At 30 though already stout, he continued jousting. Aged 45, he fell from his horse and suffered concussion and a broken leg. He never fully recovered and his fertility rapidly declined. His last wife, Catherine Parr, remarried a few weeks after his death and immediately became pregnant by her new husband. Henry VIII did not have the self-control to reduce his food intake. By contrast Elizabeth I was modest in her consumption of food and drink. She walked and rode every day and spent an hour or two a day improving her mind by reading. She lived to be nearly 70 — a longer life span than any previous sovereign and 12 years longer than her father. Her longevity provided stability and peace.

Throughout the 17th Century her successors were physically active and able to conduct government but after 1701 Queen Anne's obesity brought with it a host of political problems. None of her 17 pregnancies produced a healthy heir or heiress. Queen Anne was so fat she could barely cope with the coronation ceremonies and was often unable to walk. Her lack of direct heirs brought decades of unrest. George III had periods of insanity but he had the sense to watch his weight. He fathered 15 children and lived to be 82. His efforts to inculcate frugality and restraint in his offspring had the expected results. His eldest son, the Prince Regent (later George IV) ate and drank on the same scale as he spent and built. His portly form was a gift to the burgeoning cartoon industry. His lifespan was 15 years less than his father's and no legitimate children survived him. His brother and successor, William IV, enjoyed a more active life and lived to be 72. Ten illegitimate children survived him. Queen Victoria was plump but not excessively so. She died aged 82. Her son, Edward VII, approached the hemispherical. Trips to spas did little to slow his expansion, though they slowed the process of government. He died before turning 70. Since then monarchs have been thinner. Some of the present royal family are examplary. At 90 next year the Duke of Edinburgh still wears trousers he acquired thirty years ago. Two years ago Princess Anne wore the same dress she had worn 25 years earlier. The Queen too, watches her intake.

Soldiers have had to be efficient and this was sometimes codified in law. In 1200 Genghis Khan decreed the death penalty for gluttony. His most trusted Chinese minister advised him, 'You cannot rule from the saddle, Sire.' Genghis Khan understood the implication; he had the Mongol language given a written form and set up a Chinese-style bureaucracy to run his new empire and organise his army's supplies. But he remained able to leap back into the saddle if necessary and did not let his warriors to rot with soft living. His descendants in India and China forgot their ancestor's lessons and wallowed in the luxuries of the conquered lands. Like similarly tempted dynasties they disintegrated.

Five centuries later Cossacks entering the Tsar's service were given a belt with standard holes. If the waistline expanded past the last hole, he was dismissed. In our own time the German Army has laid down weight limits on the grounds that a hugely overweight soldier would, if wounded, be difficult to carry from the battlefield. The Germans' caution was vindicated during the Iraq War when a British corporal, unconscious and weighing 15 stone could not be pulled quickly enough from a blazing vehicle. Fat handicaps top military commanders too. Drawings of Napoleon in 1815 show a large paunch. The night before his last battle he was incapacitated by digestive problems. In contrast his opponent, the Duke of Wellington, was in perfect condition. Napoleon died aged 52 and the Duke at 83.

In the Korean War of 1951 to 1953 some American soldiers in their twenties were found to have arterial furring. During this conflict, American POW's died like flies while their Turkish fellow-prisoners nearly all survived. The British death rate fell between the two. There were religious and cultural reasons for the difference in death rates, but one cause was the sudden change in the quantity and quality of food. Turks had always lived frugally, so for them having only bowl of rice was no hardship.

In all fields and in all epochs being overweight is likely to be a drawback to the leading cadres. Now the problem has been shifting down the social pyramid and down the age scale. Whole nations and whole classes within nations are becoming weightier. We Brits have just waddled past the Germans and the Dutch in the weight stakes. Type 2 Diabetes is rising among those in their 20s. The aggressive marketing of diets and gyms, media pressure and health risks appear to be having no impact as yet. Several medical authorities have forecast a situation in which children predecease their parents.

The trend appears to be worldwide. China has boot camps for its young Bunters. Saudi princes show how quickly body profiles adapt to changing environments. The image of Arabs of exalted birth racing over the desert on thoroughbred steeds is a stark contrast to the modern image of plump princelings being chauffeured around in Cadillacs

The lurch to obesity appears to be speeded up by the credit crunch as it drives people to cheap filling food. Organic meat and vegetables rot while fast-food restaurants boom. Beds in maternity wards have been strengthened to hold heavy mothers and, after several unfortunate incidents, crematoria are being modified to take bigger bodies. More clothes in large sizes, school uniforms up to size 18 and dating agencies with titles like 'Plump Partners' are omens.

If continued unchecked, the rise in obesity could be disastrous. Fertility could be affected on a large scale. Sexual activity might diminish. In terms of sickness, productivity and replacement the race might suffer a downturn difficult to reverse. William Leith, the author of *The Hungry Years* believes that only a catastrophe could shake us into a revolutionary life-style change.

Drastic short and long term measures could be taken. The credit crunch might be used as a pretext to introduce rationing of some kind, which would need an acceptable label. Perhaps nutrition allocation? Working days could begin with physical jerks, as in *1984* or old style Japanese firms? For non-workers, collective callisthenics before receiving the day's allowance in cash or food? Bigger versions of hamster wheels at the workplace, their use a contractual obligation? Similar wheels on every street corner for non-workers? Medical staff will, in the event of a fat epidemic be even more overworked than now and might refuse treatment to the wilfully obese.

If unrestricted deterioration in the health of the population is not arrested, the effects of natural or man-made disasters will be exacerbated. Climate change, or rather disruption, complicated by political and economic upheavals, will almost certainly produce situations in which communities are isolated from modern comforts for unpredictable lengths of time. The shock of deprivation and the atrophying of the adaptability which has enabled man to survive and dominate would result in millions of deaths. Since World War II we have been almost deliberately subordinating the populations' adaptability skills to those of the industrial society. The fate of the American POWs could be replicated on a global scale, at least in the developed nations. In the event of civil breakdown it would be the intellectually and physically limited who would perish en masse. A ruthless utilitarian would say that our species might profitably lose a whole tranche of its most burdensome members.

How could the pressure to avoid such a cataclysm be brought to bear? Our society is not authoritarian and has so far limited itself to social pressure in the form of helpful advice. This policy might eventually express itself in coercive legislation. The campaign against smoking could provide a template. A gradual decrease of permissible weight, regular checks and vigorous reminders that incapacitating fat is anti-social could be co-ordinated. Objections along the lines of 'the Nanny State' would have to be ignored. Harsh though this forcible weight control would be initially, the consequences of inaction would be worse. A solution, or set of solutions, is required.

The lessons of the past should propel us to take firm action before it is too late. Human beings are meant to be mobile and alert. Keeping people inactive and materially cared for without any effort on their part is to defy evolution. We are not intended to be just overloaded digestive systems. Using human energy to shift the burden of effort to slaves, subject communities or machines, then becoming unfit to main this brittle dominance and finally being superseded has so far been the lot of societies. The past, on both the individual and the general level with which it is interlocked, is a microcosm of this progression. Can we afford the macrocosm? Henry VIII sized bodies by the billion? The future of our flesh might depend on there not being too much of it. Let the past be our pointer.

Margaret Brown is a freelance writer.

Conservative Classic — 41

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Roy Kerridge

American Conservatives may regard *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the last word in foolish sentimentality. If so, they should have another look at it. Filled with passionate emotion, it is an adventure story, a Christian allegory and a book of ideas in which the pros and cons of slavery are debated, often by slave owners themselves.

Uncle Tom's Cabin began as a cliff-hanging serial in a magazine, *New Era*, and moves along at a great pace. It was published as a book in 1852. If Conservatives stand for God, Queen and Country, with emphasis on the first in that trinity, then it is a conservative book. It is not so much a tract as an evangelical adventure story. Reading it, I am sometimes reminded of Surtees by a touch of humorous worldliness, sometimes of Gogol whose *Dead Souls*, a satire on Russian serfdom, came out at about the same time.

A greater anti-slavery novel, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* appeared too late, long after the American Civil War, a war that may have been precipitated by the success of *Uncle Tom*. Twain's sense of movement and descriptions of scenery equal those of Gogol. They are superior to their counterparts in *Uncle Tom*. For Beecher Stowe learned about the Deep South at second hand, from her brother. Twain saw and heard everything he describes and is a master of local dialects. *Huckleberry Finn* is narrated in dialect, and so lacks the universal appeal of that deserved best seller, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

On re-reading that book, I was surprised to note that it was not Simon Legree who whipped Uncle Tom to death, but two slaves instructed by plantation owner Legree. Nor was Legree a Southerner but a retired Northern pirate.

Black power people use the name Uncle Tom as an insult and depict the poor cabin dweller as a 'traitor to his race'. True, the book's hero has the chance of chopping up his evil master with an axe, but does not take it. Had he done so, it would have made a different sort of book, revolutionary rather than Christian. Murderer Tom would have been hunted down and killed for such a deed. As it was, Tom died because he would not betray the hiding place of two runaway slaves on the Legree plantation. Nor was Tom a quavering white-haired old preacher-slave, but a strong man in the prime of life until his last fatal whipping.

In *Goodbye to Uncle Tom*, author J C Furnas points out that the American idea of Uncle Tom comes not from the book, but from the stage shows that grew out of it, as pantomimes have grown out of our English fairy tales. These shows toured the American North in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and were immensely popular. Uncle Tom developed into a pathetic old man, slave hunter Marks became a clown and Simon Legree an ogre who dominated the whole drama. In the book, Legree appears only in the High Gothic finale. Furnas criticises Stowe for describing an American South which she scarcely knew. Daughter of an evangelical Abolitionist family, Stowe knew slaves only as fugitives seeking help to reach Canada and freedom. But knew them she did, for almost every human type is represented in *Uncle Tom*.

Uncle Tom at the height of his distress is comforted by a vision of Jesus. Tom's counterparts can sometimes be met in London's West Indian churches. I have heard an aged Jamaican pastor describe a radiant Archangel Gabriel who appeared to him, filling a squalid railway hut with light. Although a white foreman was beating the future pastor savagely, the man felt no pain, for he was covered by the angel's wings. When rescued, he begged London Transport officials not to prosecute his torturer. The poor can be sentimental, and the English poor once wept over Uncle Tom.

Reputations – 30

Ayn Rand, 1905-1982

David Ashton

> How do you know I'm mad?' said Alice.
>
> 'You must be,' said the Cat, 'or you wouldn't have come here.'

The 'Tea Party' campaigners in the 'Land of the Free' against the 'Two Party' establishment and excessive taxation have been accused of insanity by hostile hacks. Their 'right wing' medley has even been compared to the Mad Tea Party in the 'Land of Wonder' visited by Alice, the fictional English rose.

By coincidence, this American grassroots gathering has been visited by the ghost of another Alice — the writer Alisa Rosenbaum, better known as Ayn Rand. Their joint forename in European languages implies 'reason' and 'nobility', while the adopted 'Ayn' can convey 'uniqueness'; curiously, a trinity of abstract concepts that animated her literature and lectures.

Along with tea-party cheer-leaders of other faiths, the unlikely Latter-day Saint figure of Glenn Beck has brandished the atheist author's magnum opus *Atlas Shrugged*, suggesting that nationwide disasters predicted therein were coming true, while populist placards display a catchphrase about its 'hidden hero' John Galt. It has taken five decades for this best-seller to be filmed, though unlike its famous predecessor *The Fountainhead* is without the famous stars, like Farrah Fawcett, that the writer wanted from Hollywood, where she had honed her own screenplay skills. Nevertheless, as *The New Republic*'s Jonathan Chait complained, 'Rand is everywhere in this right-wing mood'.

Rolling Stone's Matt Taibbi has wildly attacked the Tea Party movement as 'one example of an entire demographic that has been inspired to mass protest' by Miss Rand:

> When the globe was engulfed in the flood of defaults and derivative losses that emerged from the US housing bubble two years ago, few understood that the crash had its roots in the lunatic greed-centred objectivist religion, fostered in the '50s and '60s by the ponderous émigré novelist.... Outside America, Russian-born Rand is probably best known for being the unfunniest person Western civilisation has seen since maybe Goebbels or Jack the Ripper, but inside America she is upheld as an intellectual giant.

Angry ink-squirts across the political and international spectrum have reacted to renewed interest in this extraordinary lady with similar sneers of misunderstanding and smears of misrepresentation.

Who was the real Ayn Rand? This question has particular relevance in the aftermath of financial turmoil, not least because of the conspicuous, if ambiguous, Federal Reserve role of Alan Greenspan, her best-known former disciple.

Fortunately, the two latest biographical studies of Alisa/Ayn by Jennifer Burns and Anne C Heller illuminate the political and personal background to her lifelong quest for the 'ideal man' and development of an ideology of 'rational self-interest', including family experiences under Bolshevism, her controversial engagement with previous thinkers (most notably Aristotle, Kant and Nietzsche), enthusiastic anti-communist activities, and the cult-like dogmatism that beset her circle and still survives in denials of dogmatism by her faithful followers.

In essence Ayn Rand's philosophy is that reason alone enables human beings to analyse reality, ensure survival and attain a proper enjoyment of life.

The unprejudiced will judge Ayn Rand directly for themselves, disregarding both hagiography and vituperation from detractors past and present. The Objectivist Reference Center (www.noblesoul.com) provides independent information about her ideas, their opponents and defenders among a growing number of academics. YouTube shows Tom Snyder and other interviewers eliciting typically incisive answers — accompanied by an engaging smile beneath 'dark and darting eyes'.

Her most relevant fiction, the pre-war *Anthem* and cold-war *Atlas Shrugged*, were different. The first, reminiscent of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, describes a solitary non-conformist, labelled Equality 7-2521, who eventually escapes from a collectivist hell to find a home where he and his female companion, their children and chosen friends, can originate a society that enables each individual to live for 'his own sake'.

In *Atlas Shrugged*, a very much longer dramatic, mystery novel, the 'men of the mind' go on strike. Industry is already groaning under state control, bailouts and welfare parasitism, but its collapse is

accelerated by the deliberate disappearance of scientists and entrepreneurs, who in rebellion withdraw their creative capacity from society. Numerous dependants upon this elite suffer grim consequences, fortunately only in lurid fantasy. Nearly an entire chapter presents John Galt's radio broadcast, a lucid case for self-reliant egoism within a 'ventriloquacious' account of the author's philosophy.

Conservative fellow-atheist and critical admirer Jillian Becker recently said Ayn Rand's vision had a 'comic-book hyperbole about it', a neat comment on the style of the massive narrative of *Atlas*. Other readers felt uneasy with incidents of destruction and unable to empathise with quasi-allegorical characters apparently deficient in empathy themselves. *National Review*'s William F Buckley Jr became a perpetual foe, whereas Ludwig von Mises, who admired the plot, told 'Mrs' Rand that, unlike politicians, she had the courage to tell the 'masses' they were 'inferior' to those actually responsible for improving their conditions.

Though this book has inspired many young adults, the initial response from reviewers, intellectuals and even businessmen proved disappointing. This precipitated her first serious setback, so she switched to an interesting non-fictional exposition of ideas and comments always expressed with undiminished vehemence.

In essence Ayn Rand's philosophy is that reason alone enables human beings to analyse reality, ensure survival and attain a proper enjoyment of life. Biologists, of course, challenge aspects of her psychology, particularly over the *tabula rasa,* the evolution of co-operation, sexual attraction and the raising of children. Her ideas may prove necessary for maximum prosperity, but insufficient to embrace the full range of human experience, let alone form judgements about the superiority of Rachmaninoff's *Second Piano Concerto* to Mozart's *Requiem* or of Mickey Spillane to William Shakespeare.

She repudiated as evil the 'moral' code of altruism whereby people are expected to sacrifice themselves to others, while clarifying her acceptance of voluntary charity to 'deserving' persons. Obviously teaching or nursing brings satisfaction from improving the lives of other individuals, not just from dedication to professional expertise or for the money. In private she was more childish and temperamental than the hard-hearted and single-minded supermen of her imagination. There is sadness in the spectacle of her second major crisis after the failed affair with her hitherto chief disciple (publicised on screen by Helen Mirren), followed by the responsibility of coping with the incurable dementia of her husband. This is not to accuse Ayn Rand pf hypocrisy, because even heroines can have tragic flaws, but to suggest that there are more things on earth than dreamt of in her 'romantic realism'.

She would hardly have disagreed with Marx that 'the doctrine that man is the highest being for man' puts an end to religious mysticism, or with Hitler that 'it is not the mass that invents and not majority that organises and thinks, but in all things only and always the individual'. However, she consistently advocated free speech, property rights, minimal government and laissez-faire economics — against totalitarianism.

The Washington Times' Brian Doherty was not alone in thinking she still had the power to instruct on 'the scary implications of government growth in the age of Barack Obama'. Indeed, her devotees have discreetly offered policy resources to the Tea Party, whose adherents are broadly united over lower taxation, less bureaucracy and more free enterprise, but also embrace a miscellany of different aims, ranging from Constitutionalism and the gold standard to Christianity and gun ownership. The Randian remnant resolutely supports atheism, abortion and unregulated capitalism, and rejects 'tribal' tradition, social conservatism and all community funding. Whereas an immigration crackdown could free up jobs for Americans without additional debt from 'stimulus' programmes, these 'Latter-day Objectivists' demand amnesty for illegal immigrants and an open door to unlimited millions from alien cultures, while simultaneously urging military massacre of civilians in Muslim lands. Close alliance between these True Belief sectarians and Tea Party patriots could prove as futile as the infuriating dialogue between Alice and the Hatter in *Wonderland*.

The so-called 'goddess of the market' Rand herself wrote in *The Virtue of Selfishness*, 'A pure system of

capitalism has never yet existed, not even in America'. Certainly the rise of American living standards, driven by the profit motive and mechanical innovation, required an industrious people occupying a bountiful subcontinent, its railroad network started by army engineers at presidential direction. Pure capitalism remains an *unknown* ideal, almost as theoretically utopian as the previously 'logical' arguments for class struggle and public ownership, and more than ever a practical problem in a specie-superseding, speculation-susceptible and privacy-destroying cyberspace.

Investment in the cheapest labour zones overseas is now combined with importation, for similar purposes, of foreign 'nomads' from inexhaustibly overpopulated areas; a cost 'spiral' quite unlike the provision of competitively *high* wages by the exemplary metal manufacturer in *Atlas Shrugged*. The excuse that cut-price imports of every type merely make money available for alternative domestic expenditure is becoming indefensible. That big banks and big business can be dangerous in their myopic avarice was amply illustrated by the supply of capital and technology to big government in Russia. Today the entire western infrastructure is being undermined at the same time as resource imperialism emerges from bigger government in China.

Ayn Rand was primarily a principled thinker, never a mercenary materialist:

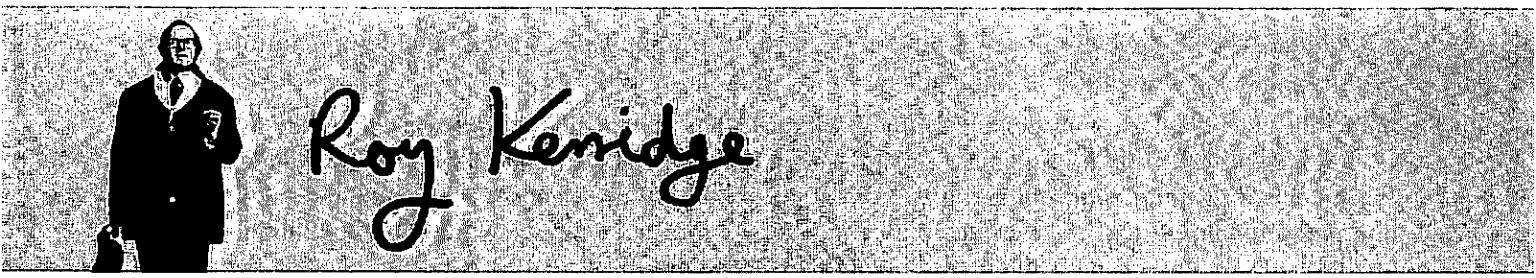
> My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute.

Observe her essay contrasting the supreme competence of astronauts, engaged in a soaring state-supported enterprise, with the contemporary worshipping degeneracy of dope-and-rock addicts, who represented hedonistic consumption at its nadir. Fools could then 'go to hell in their own way', but the rational part of the population may no longer be able to protect itself from stupidity and escalating crime just by patient persuasion.

Today we are facing terrorism and unprecedented geopolitical changes, dare we speculate that Ayn Rand, who once demanded continuous national defence improvements and sanctions against slave-states, and held that scientific cultures took precedence over primitive peoples in territorial conflict, might today readjust her value hierarchy to propose new policies to overcome the existential 'emergency' confronting our entire civilization?

On this side of the Atlantic, where many demonstrate against austerity cuts and further unemployment, how much wisdom can we still draw from her defiant celebration of liberty, self-esteem and creativity? That must be left for objective readers to decide.

David Ashton is a researcher and writer.



A long neglected book, Richard Wright's book *Black Power* should have been subtitled A Yankee in the Court of Nkrumah. An American Negro visitor to Ghana at the eve of Independence, Wright's astonishment, insight and naivety are all reminiscent of Mark Twain's Yankee hero transplanted from workaday New England to magical Camelot. Wright was brought up in Mississippi, where he felt different from everyone else. He was neither a blues person nor a church person, not musical, not spiritual, but very intellectual. Finally, by way of residence in Chicago and acquaintanceships with Jewish communists in their short-lived 'Negro period', he became a great writer. I cannot read his fiction, but his autobiography, *Black Boy*, is a work of genius.

Entirely self-educated, Wright finally becomes an American Liberal of the sort who likes Paris and 'civilisation' (Mark Twain, the greatest American writer of all, uses 'civilisation' as a cuss-word in *Huckleberry Finn*). Afraid at first of English white people in Ghana, Wright eventually allies with them, appalled at the superstitions of the Africans. He is particularly ironical about Chiefs, still people of importance in Ghana today. However Wright sees them as aristocratic absurdities. He ends his book by begging Nkrumah to impose a military dictatorship so harsh as to cause everyone in Ghana to lose all traditions. Only then can they start again as rational Americans.

(A Chief who believed in magic dwarves particularly annoyed Wright).

It is a pity that the 'Yankee' is so scornful of Camelot, as Accra might well be named. Some say that King Arthur is based on memories of a pagan god. Wright bewilderedly depicts Nkrumah setting himself up as a god-king. The Chiefs in their togas resemble Roman senators, but could also be regarded as Knights or Barons. Ashanti tradition is surprisingly Arthurian. Their Merlin-figure, Okonfo, conjured the Sacred Stool down from Heaven just as our Merlin conjured the sacred stones of Stonehenge from over the sea to Wiltshire. A Sword in a Stone still stands in Ghana, waiting to be plucked. ('Lizards are playing upon it', an informant writes.) Wright sees all this enchantment through a sceptical Yankee's eyes, and very irritable it makes him too.

'That damn old Chief!' he raves.

His title, *Black Power*, is, I think, the first known use of that unfortunate phrase. It has since been taken up by a very different sort of writer.

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Another literary American visitor to Africa, land of his ancestors, is President Obama. In his autobiographical *Dreams of my Father* he describes a visit to Kenya. There he learns of an ancestor who welcomed the first Englishmen to his district with warm curiosity, eager to learn the best of their ways.

The future President of America is shocked. Phrases such as 'Uncle Tom' and 'House Negro' spring to his lips. I don't have the book with me, but I rather think he was riding on a bus at the time, along with his university-educated Western-dressed Kenyan relatives. At least they must have thought that their ancestor might have had a point. Unlike the more perceptive Wright, Obama is not shocked by African folklore, as he never learns of its existence.

Most Americans abhor the memory of the British Empire, but their sympathies with Britain are kept alive by a mutual liking for our nursery rhymes and tales of King Arthur and Robin Hood. Not so Obama, who is no friend to our country. Foolish, but painfully sincere, he looks back to the anti-imperialist ramblings of a typical Perpetual Student African, the dreams of his father.

ETERNAL LIFE

The celebrated astrophysicist Stephen Hawking has outed himself as an atheist. It is an eccentric intellectual position to take since the predominant part of the western philosophical tradition has usually begun with the idea of God: this is true of the Greeks, the Romans and the Israelites of the Old Testament. Remember the words of the Psalmist: *The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.* If Professor Hawking's atheism is eccentric, his reasons for becoming an atheist are even stranger. He says that the creator God is not needed because the laws of physics themselves were sufficient to make the universe. It's a bit like saying that the bylaws about the use of deck chairs in Clacton-on-Sea were firmly in operation before Clacton-on-Sea existed. Hawking's is a very odd view of what sorts of things the so-called laws of physics are. Nothing comes out of nothing

The laws of physics should not be confused with laws in practical legislation, the common law or the criminal law. The so-called laws of physics are presuppositions. Their most important feature is that they change all the time. It is popularly assumed that scientific knowledge is firm , while morality is always in flux. This is not so. The general laws about right and wrong as expressed in the Ten Commandments do not change, but scientific laws do. The physics of Stephen Hawking is quite different from the physics of Isaac Newton who operated in a world which accepted as a fundamental truth that every event has a cause. In the world pictured by quantum mechanics — our world — no event has a cause.

The relationship between science and religion is a major issue today. I want to correct some of the lies about Christianity and science spread by opponents of the Christian faith:

It is popularly believed that the scientific revolution of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment banished the gloom and superstition of the Dark Ages and the Medieval period. In fact the so-called Dark Ages were a period of technological progress. The Battle of Tours in AD 732 was the first occasion when knights fought in full armour. They could do so because of the invention

of stirrups and the Norman saddle. The ancient Romans had neither stirrups nor an effective saddle, so a soldier knight trying to wield his lance would only fall off.

Developments on the battlefield showed European farming technologists how to invent the horse collar. Farmers throughout the continent were able to switch from using oxen to horses for ploughing, bringing an immense increase in food production. The ancient Romans had shod their horses in sandals which slipped off and caused the horses to go lame. During the Dark Ages iron shoes were invented so that horses could travel over hard ground and cover much more territory without injury. Other inventions which preceded the Renaissance included waterwheels, camshafts and the compass

We did not wait until the voyages of Columbus and Magellan to learn that the earth was round. Among the scholars of the Dark Ages who taught that the world is round were Venerable Bede — his dates 673-735; Bishop Virgilus of Salzburg — 8th century; Hildegaard of Bingen — 1098-1179; and St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1275).

Copernicus is usually credited in the book of lies with overturning the flat earth view of the superstitious medieval church but he was taught the heliocentric theory by his medieval theological professors including Nicole d'Oresme who was the most outstanding of all the medieval scientists. The universities themselves were not the product of the Renaissance: they were invented by the Medieval church.

The Renaissance was supposed to begin with the contributions of Islamic philosophers or Byzantine survivors from the fall of Constantinople who had rediscovered classical Greek learning. The reason Greek learning had not been fully assimilated was that the language of the Dark Ages was Latin. The Renaissance was the creation of the church whose scholars for the first time between 1125 and 1200 translated most of the Greek manuscripts into Latin and made them generally available.

Medical science was not held back because the church wouldn't allow the dissection of corpses. Medieval churchmen permitted dissection and improved their knowledge of anatomy and pathology. The Greeks, the Romans and the Muslims all forbade dissection because the dignity of the human body would not permit it. The church was not so hindered, because it believed in the doctrine of the immortal soul — what St Paul called the spiritual body.

Everybody knows the church persecuted Galileo but this was rather for the way he arrogantly presented his ideas than for the ideas themselves. When Galileo published his book *Assayer* in 1623 he dedicated it to his friend Cardinal Barberini who became Pope Urban VIII. Barberini enjoyed it because of the many skits Galileo had included in it about the Jesuits. Galileo is always presented as a rebel against the church. Fortunately, we have Galileo's written record: The book of nature is a book written by the hand of God in the language of mathematics.

I think some theory of the gradual development of life on earth is still the best hypothesis available, but Darwinism does not explain how inanimate matter could have turned into life and how primitive and microscopic life forms could turn into creatures with the mind and consciousness of Bach and Einstein.

There is no conflict between science and Christianity. The conflict is between Christianity and ideological atheists like Rousseau or Polly Toynbee. These people lie about the history of science as a way of attacking the Christian faith. Without the contribution of Christianity there would be no science. Christianity has declared since the opening verse of St John's Gospel that God is reasonable and made the world in his own reasonable image.

Specifically, as R G Collingwood pointed out in his *Essay on Metaphysics*, it is the doctrine of the Trinity, as set out in the Athanasian Creed, which provides the paradigm that makes science possible:

> By believing in the Father, the doctors of the church meant (always with reference solely to the procedure of natural science) absolutely presupposing that there is a world of nature which is always and indivisibly one world. By believing in the Son they meant absolutely presupposing that this one natural world is nevertheless a multiplicity of natural realms. By believing in the Holy Ghost they mean absolutely presupposing that the world of nature, throughout its entire fabric, is a world not merely of things but of events or movements.
>
> These presuppositions must be made, they said, by anyone who wished to be "saved"; saved, that is to say, from the moral and intellectual bankruptcy, the collapse of science and civilisation, which was overtaking the pagan world.

One of the most outstanding scientists of the last century, A N Whitehead, co-author with Bertrand Russell of *Principia Mathematica*, wrote:

> There is but one source for science: It must come from the Medieval insistence on the rationality of God.

Peter Mullen is Rector of St Michael's Church, Cornhill, in the City of London

LETTERS

Sir,

I read without surprise Frank Ellis's article on the teaching of Russian in our schools and universities. In former times some of the more useless upper-class layabouts could leave Oxford with fourths but poor boys could, if lucky, enter on merit. The situation has now reversed itself. The sub-prime students are drawn from under-privileged groups as universities fall over backwards to admit the disadvantaged. If they cannot turn lead into gold, at least they can slap on a coat of gold paint and hope for the best.

Unlike their 19th century predecessors these inadequate students are becoming a majority. In a science fiction novel set in 2020, the main character says 'the difference between a whore and a vice chancellor is that there are some things a whore won't do for money'.

The study of languages requires intelligence and application. To a generation cushioned in amniotic fluid even French must come hard.

We must expect to be succeeded by a monoglot generation.

Margaret Brown
St Davids

Sir,

Penelope Tremayne's letter concerning Nesta Webster was particularly interesting, because so little is publicly known about the second half of Mrs Webster's life. Her autobiography, *Spacious Days*, stops in 1919, the precise point at which her writing career as a conservative analyst of revolutionary action begins. The only biographical attempt on Mrs Webster is *Behind World Revolution — The Strange Career of Nesta H. Webster* by Richard M Gilman (1982). Gilman draws heavily on *Spacious Days* for the first half of his book. The second half is in effect a silhouette, the lines of the subject inferred from a contextualized reading of Mrs Webster's books and journalism. That said, Gilman is thorough in tracing what material is publicly available, including book reviews and other journalistic references. Nesta Bevan met Arthur Webster in India, and married him in London in 1904. According to Gilman's researches, Arthur Webster died in 1942 aged 77 at Bembridge on the Isle of Wight, and Gilman cites his obituary notice in the *Isle of Wight County Press* of 25 April 1942. Jews or no Jews, Bembridge is still is long way from Taliban country, and Mrs Webster's exotic misstatement of her husband's end certainly adds weight to the idea of mental erosion. At the same time the episode of the Meissen figurine perhaps suggests deeper wartime tensions seeking an outlet. Incidentally, Gilman, in the preface to his book, sets himself the task of refuting the 'inconsistencies and glaring omissions' and 'serious flaws' in Mrs Webster's writings. Gilman was not the first to feel this call to action, and it is to be regretted that, in common with his predecessors, he did not respond to his own challenge. The promised refutations were reserved for a second volume but, for whatever reason, they did not appear.

H E Taylor
Switzerland

Sir,

Events have overtaken John Parfitt's warnings in his article *Sea Blindness* (*SR* Autumn 2010) about the folly of reducing our navy to a skeleton. The Government has decided to build one aircraft carrier with no planes and a second one which they will sell. Aircraft carriers are perhaps the most useful tool of the Navy and cutting them back now seems akin to madness.

Within twenty years we may see a Chinese fleet in British waters to oversee the enclaves which they are building in Europe.

Politicians ought to decide whether they wish our country to be defended properly. Co-operation with the French may be a tragic mirage.

Sylvia Wood
Milton Keynes

ARTS AND BOOKS

A Tory Jester

Alistair Cooke

The Philosophy, Politics and Religion of British Democracy: Maurice Cowling and Conservatism, Edited by Robert Crowcroft, S J D Green and Richard Whiting, Tauris Academic Studies, 2010, £54.50.

I became a pupil of Maurice Cowling in October 1963 at the start of my first term at Peterhouse, then Cambridge's leading history college, where he himself had just arrived with the special blessing of the Master, the renowned Herbert Butterfield (though their great amity did not last). He was to supervise me in medieval history which did not interest him. He set my first essay: 'How successfully did Charlemagne exploit the rivalries between the factions at his court?' He then asked me what I thought about the new Prime Minister, Lord Home (as he then still was). I said that he would have little difficulty in bamboozling the people. Maurice beamed. 'So you understand already that duplicity and cunning are essential qualities in politics'. It seemed that I had been born a Cowlingite, totally bereft of those liberal illusions about the nature of power that he excoriated throughout his career.

Of course upright, decent Sir Alec never thought of himself as a bamboozler. But he operated in a hardened, ruthless political system where a straight bat and a sense of honour could never win the glittering prizes. Sharp swords were needed to acquire them, as Home had shown earlier that very month. 'Bamboozle' was the kind of lurid word that Maurice liked. He used plenty of such terms himself. ' Vile', ' bloody', 'horrible' abounded for friend and foe alike. They streamed forth during the tragi-comedy of Hugh Trevor-Roper's Mastership of Peterhouse in the 1980s. Adam Sisman's recent splendid biography of Trevor-Roper includes some choice examples. ' I told *them* that you were *horrible* and *you* that you would *hate* them'.

Malice was a vital ingredient of the Cowlingite formula. Along with irony and geniality it was one of the 'solvents of enthusiasm, virtue and political elevation', the qualities against which his ' Peterhouse Right', as it came to be known, waged war. Some of those who enlisted in this cause were even more ardent than its founder. 'From confidential papers discovered in the Master's Lodge', Sisman writes, Trevor-Roper 'learned that one of his predecessors had received a succession of sneering, insulting and offensive letters' from one of Cowling's younger associates, then a far-left firebrand. Peterhouse specialised in a very idiosyncratic form of enjoyment. The plots and stratagems were not infrequently bungled. That added to the fun.

On the strength of all this Cowling, who died in 2005, could easily come to be remembered chiefly for his withering scorn, as a man who encouraged ideas and habits that were essentially destructive. 'We don't want pessimists in our party', Margaret Thatcher is alleged to have told him on her one visit to Peterhouse in 1977. His eight powerful books do not exactly fly off the shelves. A lightness of touch is nowhere to be found in his remarkable, convoluted prose style. 'Men should always be difficult', said Disraeli; Cowling emphatically agreed. The upshot is that one of the most profound, subtle and original right-wing minds of the twentieth century stands in danger of being widely neglected, and British culture and thought of being impoverished as a result.

That is why this book is so important. It consists of ten quite outstanding essays by divers hands, right and left, united in the aim of revealing and appraising Cowling's formidable intellectual legacy. The three editors fall with particular enthusiasm on the task of proclaiming the significance of Cowling's 'new and complex, conservative framework for thinking about modern Britain and modern historical scholarship'. They celebrate its essential Christian dimension: though he abandoned Anglican worship, Cowling asserted that he felt 'no recession in certainty about Christianity'.

The contributors do not simplify, but they expound and assess the Cowlingite gospel with unfailing lucidity. In a way it is all rather surprising. The book's genesis was a conference — the kind of thing Cowling never attended — in Leeds, a place he probably never visited. Yet if it had been produced in his lifetime it would undoubtedly have been greeted by a tremendous display of the stage groaning and cursing which always signified his serious and appreciative interest.

After two slim volumes designed to infuriate all manner of lefties, Cowling published three large books on high politics (a term coined by C P Snow), followed by a second trilogy, to which he devoted the last 25 years of his academic career, that sought to stop the absurd caricature of modern British history

which leaves religion out. These essayists show how deeply scholarly enquiry can continue to profit by applying the approaches that Cowling pioneered. No one set of methods or values is firmly prescribed. There is, and never can be, a Cowling school for he loved independent judgement as long as it met his high standards and faced political reality stripped of liberal illusions.

Jon Parry captures much of the essence of the man beautifully in his introductory essay. 'Maurice, at root, was a Tory Marxist jester with a sharp eye for absurdities and pretensions. With age one realises how valuable and rare such figures are, in a world where both politicians and academics take themselves so very seriously'. What did he really care about? Religion whose slow, mysterious decline he charted in his great Gibbonian masterpiece and whose future no man can predict. It happened that the arena of secular activity that chiefly interested him was politics where absurdities and pretensions are never difficult to discover and where real success cannot be achieved without realising that it operates in much the way he described. No one should suppose that Messrs Cameron, Clegg and Osborne see themselves as doing the people's will.

Australian Hero

Kenneth Minogue

The Last Intellectuals, Peter Coleman, Quadrant Books, Sydney, 2010, $44.95.

Australians have a remarkable capacity for making trouble for themselves. From the outside, Australia is the lucky country, full of intellectual vitality, an exporter of wit and the occasional brilliant movie, a lure to the oppressed of other lands, fortunate in a history free of the violent civil dissension of less fortunate lands. As a viscerally egalitarian culture, it is often said to be mercifully free of the class divisions of the ancient world.

But there's another story of Australia put about by intellectuals, in which 1788 was the year in which the British 'invaded' Australia and began brutalising the natives. Australia's notable deeds in war merely exhibit a colonial gullibility subservient to the clever imperial designs of the Brits. The other side of that colonial gullibility was the delusory superiority expressed in the idea of White Australia, and the attempt to assimilate Aboriginals to Australian ways. Loosening Aboriginal ties with the tribe became the saga of 'stolen children', in which Australia was arraigned as guilty of cultural 'genocide'. In the wilder variants of this opinion (which has now broken free of its Australian context) genocide is said to be the basic drive of all white settler societies, a piece of historical revisionism that locates Hitler rather on the margins. The 'apology' Kevin Rudd at last pronounced for Australia was the very least that could be done.

Against such a background, it is refreshing to read one brilliant actor on the Australian stage whose 20-20 vision of reality has no truck with this weird form of ideological astigmatism. Peter Coleman is certainly a man of parts. He has been editor, essayist, politician, administrator (of Norfolk Island), and these days a columnist for the Australian version of the *Spectator*. His editorship of *Quadrant* — one of the brilliant journals set up in response to the Congress for Cultural Freedom — was part of that experience. *The Last Intellectuals: Essays on Writers & Politics* — collects his recent essays from *Quadrant* and other journals, including the *Salisbury Review*.

Coleman's account of the Australian Bicentennial in 1988 elaborates the sense in which the self-hating narrative of Australia has captured the media and also become an important element of official culture. Re-enacting the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 was popular (a million people packed the streets) but some thought it was an inappropriate event to celebrate, so that outside funding was needed to supplement what governments provided. The prime minister, 'Bob' Hawke did, Coleman remarks, capture some of the success of a free Australia in his Anzac Day address. 'It touched the heart. But it was not Politically Correct.' The 'real event' of that year turned out to be the publication of *The Fatal Shore* by Robert Hughes — plenty of material for self-denigration in that account of the convict experience.

Multiculturalism added to the emotions of this curious and depressing response to a great success story. As Coleman writes: 'What began as a benign programme to ensure opportunity for Asian immigrants, to excise any Anglo-Saxon sense of superiority and to demystify the British entailment, soon became an official campaign to present the old Australians as contemptible quasi-totalitarian racists.'

It is the rhetoric of this remarkable distortion of Australian realities that must command our interest. If people speak badly of themselves, one tends to believe them. It sounds like honesty — at last! But here is a strange kind of self-denigration which reveals itself, on examination, as a perverse form of self-congratulation by people who are flattering themselves as purveyors of hard truths. Self-denigrators who include themselves in the indictment as Australians are not confessing a fault, but merely making a claim to superior critical honesty.

Australian intellectual life is riddled with this strange self-congratulatory self-hatred. It is the direct source of a great deal of dishonesty and lying in academic life. There may be little sense of class superiority in Australia, but there is a power of intellectual contempt felt by an elite for the average Australian. The novelist Xavier Herbert's remark 'I loathe and despise my countrymen' was far from untypical.

Coleman is too tolerant and balanced a character to spend much time dissecting this curious modern intellectual pathology, but he has certainly played a notable role in elucidating its international role. His *The Liberal Conspiracy* (1989) puts much of the record straight about the great culture wars of the post war period. The Congress for Cultural Freedom had been attacked because at one point it had indirectly received CIA funding. Communist sympathisers turned this into a fake scandal in order to generate an *ad hominem* sneer against anyone who might connect Gulags with Marxist idealism.

Instead of lingering too long in this world, many of these essays are marked by reflective wonderment at Coleman's own doctrinal evolution, or perhaps one might say, his gyrations. Not that, as gyrations go, they have been notably wild, since a concern with freedom has never ceased to be the central theme of his life both as editor and politician. Such a theme brings him close to John Stuart Mill, who appears in these pages however only by virtue of the nervous collapse that overtook him when young on discovering that not even the triumph of his ideals would make him happy. Mill found the solution to his malady (Coleman calls it 'Mill's disease') in poetry, especially that of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Coleman is not convinced that Mill's cure is satisfactory, but by contrast with his discussion of the 'political virus', he is understandably detached.

One central theme of these essays is his disillusionment with politics as an activity and as a way of life. He describes it as a 'virus' which he must have picked up early in life, and from which he took a long time to recover. The crucial point in his recovery occurred when, as a federal MP who had agreed to speak at a demonstration outside Parliament House in Canberra, he found that 'I could no longer bellow, rally, and shake my fist, even in a good cause.' He felt ashamed, but 'the fever had gone'. This story is in some respects an inspiring triumph over a malady, but he confesses to having recovered with some regret. He respects politicians because their essential role is 'to oil the machinery of a free country'. It may be that his disillusion with the intellectual failures of political life merely reflects the parochial character of so much of Australian politics. Every option in life requires some sacrifice.

The spirit of Dr Johnson is one of the haunting presences behind Coleman's reflections on life. He has more patience with *Rasselas* than I have. In a long essay on Milton, Coleman emphasises the fanatic lurking beneath the marvellously libertarian rhetoric of *Areopagitica*; Milton was certainly no liberal. Nor, however, was he a bore. Johnson once famously remarked about *Paradise Lost*: 'No man ever wanted it longer.' Perhaps not, but of Coleman's essays, the reverse is true. Hardly has he expressed a pregnant utterance before he has moved on, and the essay is finished. That perhaps may be part of their charm. It is always better to leave a party while you still have something to say.

Doom and Gloom

Robert Crowcroft

The Uses of Pessimism and the Danger of False Hope, Roger Scruton, Atlantic, 2010, £15.99.

There is a resilient, if misleading, belief that Britain has long been hostile to 'ideas' and intellectuals. This view is, however, incorrect. Instead, Britons have simply had less time for the over-ambitious ideologies of the continent; and there has been more sympathy for ideas shaped by sobriety and moderation. Roger Scruton has always been a part of that tradition and articulates it better than ever in his new book. But what he reveals is that the British suspicion of the abstract hasn't really done us as much good as we might like to think. Scruton's concern here is about much more than politics. It is an odyssey through the human mind itself. His target is the 'irrational exuberance' which we see all around us in society. It is, he argues, an 'unscrupulous' tendency which detaches us from common sense and therefore becomes dangerous. Scruton ranges across the financial crisis, communism, anti-Americanism, the Third World, the Internet, and advances in medicine. What he identifies runs deeper than the usual flawed liberal-socialist vision of man as possessing a malleable nature. With his characteristic flair, Scruton diagnoses certain 'emotional needs' which are 'hard-wired' into our very souls, and lead us to try to control the future, remodel society, and press constantly for innovation. The result is that we have an 'addiction' to fantasy and novelty. This is the ground in which the radical urge to make things anew blossoms. The attempt to construct utopias is everywhere — in multiculturalism, architectural modernism, art, and the ludicrous project that is the European Union. Indeed

Scruton's blistering exposure of the EU project and its terrifying implications for our freedom is one of the highpoints of the book.

The state of Britain's broken society, state and economy means that this is a timely moment for a book such as this. There is, after all, a general consensus that something 'different' needs to be done in modern Britain (which is not to say that it will be). I have often felt sure of the value of such emotions as pessimism, scepticism, and even outright cynicism in fashioning an intellectual paradigm more resilient to the realities of the world than we might glean from the BBC. What Scruton offers is less a roadmap than a lighthouse warning us away from the rocks. The core of the book identifies a conflict between the naturally belligerent *individual*, who demands that his will, not that of others, be done, and a *collective* society inevitably founded upon compromise. He makes the case that 'humane pessimism' — sobriety, caution, and a willingness to forgive rather than polarise and crusade — constitutes the best route to social peace. The argument made is a powerful one. And while the book criticises optimism, it is avowedly not an attack on hope; merely on the desire to reshape society to fit an arbitrary ideological vision. Scruton pleads vigorously for hope. But he stresses that single-mindedly working to change the world is no substitute for attempting to cultivate one's own personal virtues. Indeed he is surely right that the would-be social engineers are so obsessed with their ideological goals that they forget to improve themselves as people. Scruton sees that while the utopia can never be made real, the human mind virtually *compels* us to imagine that it can be. For instance, while there no self-evident need for us to have a vision of the future at the core of our society, that is the way it is.

This social phenomenon, in all its forms, from everyday human relations to government, leads only to emptiness and disappointment. We can see it everywhere, in the deflated, soulless streets of this country; in the town centres; and for many of us within our own hearts. Scruton identifies this as a particular problem for ethnic minority groups, in a country where the majority lack the cultural confidence necessary to bind society together. The problem is that we are conditioned to believe that there is something more to existence beyond the quotidian of normal life, some hidden purpose — and we can't handle it when it turns out there isn't. Once, of course, religion offered that certainty. But in a secular society nothing else fulfils that role, and no amount of new clothes or electronic gadgets can hide it. The materialism and affluence of the last two decades didn't make us happier. If anything the reverse may be true. Scruton therefore sets out to defend a world based on 'compromise and half measures' as a preferable social model to endless Manichean battles between crusading ideologies cooked up by those with too much time on their hands. This is an important book and it makes the point — which seems to me surely right — that the problem is not at root *ideological*, but an *emotional* one that leads us to adopt certain approaches to life. Anyone who has ever shaken their head at the unjustified (and, crucially, assumed) optimism of the average university undergraduate will know what I mean. Despite the very real merits of pessimism, at the very outset Scruton affirms his conviction that the book 'will have no influence whatsoever'; the fallacies he exposes are simply part of the human mind and too entrenched to dislodge. Now *that's* pessimism. And unfortunately it's probably true.

Austrian School

Christie Davies

Ludwig von Mises — a Primer, Eamonn Butler, London, IEA, 2010, £10.00.

We should be grateful to Eamonn Butler for his clear exposition of the ideas of the justly celebrated Ludwig von Mises, one of the founders of the Austrian school of economics and political science. Long before the economies and the political order of the socialist countries collapsed into horrendous ruin, von Mises showed why it was inevitable that this would happen; an economy can only operate effectively when price and profit guide the allocation of resources and this is impossible when there is common ownership of production. Besides, as von Mises pointed out, the very fact of unpredictable individual choice makes the evolution of human society unpredictable; another slap in the face for Marxist historical determinism. As I have often said 'There are no laws of history, only laws of economics'. Likewise von Mises wrote of the wretched 'third way' of Tony Blair and before him of Harold Macmillan that this middle-of-the-road policy is not an economic system that can last. It is a method for socialism by instalments. Each intervention, such as setting a minimum wage or insisting on unnecessary 'credentials', leads to difficulties that lead to more intervention that in time leads to insuperable difficulties.

Eamonn Butler sets out von Mises' theory of the business cycle, that regular swing between boom and bust whose most malign aspect we are now experiencing. Butler writes: von Mises 'showed that

the ultimate source of these cycles was a surge in bank credit inevitably encouraged by central banks and their political masters'. The sub-prime mortgages were essentially the arbitrary granting of credit to paupers to buy houses by Carter and Clinton; a long period of absurdly low interest rates and easy credit compounded the problem. Everyone loves low interest rates: not just governments, but house buyers and aspiring consumers wanting things on tick. House prices rocket and levels of consumer debt grow explosively. Then comes the inevitable crash and the longer it is postponed by keeping interest rates low and increasing government spending, the bigger the crash when it happens.

Both von Mises and Butler are unfair to what they call 'conventional economics'. My university training in economics was conventional, yet I find nothing in these arguments to disagree with. Economists are eclectic and willing to accept many of the Austrian ideas, albeit with scepticism. Indeed in some ways we are more flexible and more willing to deal with reality, rather than speculating about libertarian utopias. Austrian economics is not a substitute for conventional economics but merely a useful critique, as when von Mises points out that capital is an idea not a thing or points out the value and necessity of speculation.

Von Mises did not like the state even in matters not concerned with the economy, and did not like nationalism. Yet the liberal economy and society would not survive but for our blessed 'military-industrial complex'; only powerful well-armed states could have resisted the Soviets yesterday and can resist Islamism today. The liberal order ultimately depends on the use of force, something which libertarians cannot stomach. Von Mises is just as naïve when he argues that '...nations keen to preserve their culture, commonly resist immigration by other groups and raise protectionist barriers against them'. Why shouldn't they? Is protecting a culture not a valid objective? Even if immigration did bring prosperity (it does not), it would be entirely rational for individuals to form a pact against it and choose to lose those gains. Free trade in goods brings benefits. Free immigration may well bring disaster and by changing a nation's culture utterly destroy its commitment to capitalism and democracy. The price of liberty is vigilance at the border. Worse, von Mises argues that 'the net effect is to trap other nations in poor and overpopulated areas, prompting them to simply grasp the territory they "need"'. Yet if there is free movement of investment from rich to poor countries and no barriers to the poor countries' exports, why is there any 'need' for immigration? If an over-populated country can freely export its people it will always remain overpopulated because it has no incentive to change the mores of its people. That is why Mexico became such a dump. There is far more sense in Malthus and in neo-Malthusianism than in von Mises and his followers.

Von Mises likewise repeats the old fallacy that 'when nations are mutually dependent on trade with each other war becomes unthinkable. In 1914 trade between Britain and Germany was substantial and liberal opinion held that this made war impossible. Butler himself says 'Mises was not entirely right that trading partners do not go to war; indeed this is more common than any other type of conflict'. Yet the very nature of this argument contradicts von Mises' central principle of 'methodological individualism', for it involves testable generalisations based on the observation of aggregates. If you can do this in international affairs, why not do so in regard to other social and economic questions?

Methodological individualism, the idea that we can understand an economy or a society entirely by deductions from Misesian assumptions about how individuals act, is mere dogma. Von Mises, like Hobbes before him, was wrong to think that society could be treated as a piece of geometry with its sure movement from axiom through deduction to QED. It is not a dangerous dogma like Marxism which treats 'capital' and 'class' as if they were corporate persons possessed of inexorable motivations, and indeed it is a valuable corrective to such nonsense and a warning to anyone who puts his or her trust in the pointless precisions of econometrics; but still it is a dogma. It is a useful way of looking at the world but an inadequate one. It is merely one tool in the economists' and sociologists' toolbox, just as generalisation about 'social facts' is another. Misesian thought is valuable but its true believers have nowhere to go. That is why they often end up splitting into squabbling factions.

Still at least the author has spared us the continental philosophical nonsense and dreadful neologisms like praxeology with which much of von Mises' thought is permeated. Eamonn Butler has done an excellent job of clarifying von Mises' thought — exactly what a primer should do.

Horse Sense

Celia Haddon

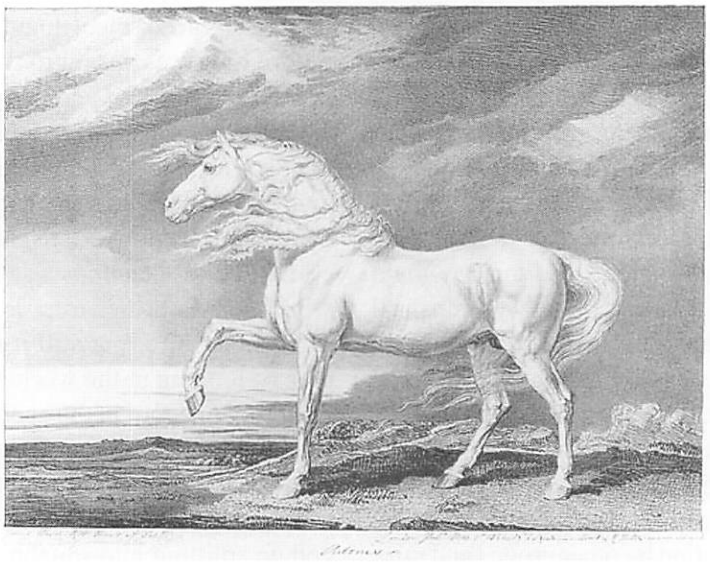
Equitation Science, Paul McGreevy and Andrew McLean, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, £29.99.

Last summer the blood-stained flanks of Prince Harry's polo pony were proof that the young prince, like many riders, is a case of ABT. He just Ain't Been Taught the principles of training an animal. Using spurs repeatedly

to puncture the sensitive skin of the flanks will have given not just painful but confusing signals to the poor beast. But perhaps even his polo trainer has not explained how to give clear and consistent signals to his pony.

In the last decade, an eminent veterinary scientist and an internationally known horse trainer and dressage coach in Australia have set about testing how horses learn with the aim of finding proven principles of horsemanship. *Equitation Science* by Paul McGreevy and Andrew McLean is the result of their research. This very important book has the potential to replace the current muddled way we treat horses with a much-needed emphasis on riding skills rather than ignorant coercion.

This book is about the science of horse keeping and riding. It uses the technical language of science, as well as giving a reference list for the research behind each topic. The fifteen chapters cover the natural behaviour, the way horses learn, how to train them both for leisure and sport, how to troubleshoot problems and thus how to provide effective training for horses. This is a message which needs to get out to the wider world.



As the authors point out, the two basic signals that a rider sends to the horse are kicking or leg pressure for 'Go forward' and pressure on the mouth from the bit for 'Go back.' Both signals cause discomfort, or even pain if delivered hard. The horse is rewarded for the correct response because this discomfort or pain ceases when it performs the required actions of starting or stopping.

This method is called negative reinforcement, a term apparently correctly understood by only 10 per cent of the qualified riding coaches in Australia. Negative reinforcement rewards the animal for a correct reaction by the cessation of pain or discomfort. Though it would be nice if riders could use positive rewards like food, they cannot be expected to interrupt their ride to push a carrot into the horse's mouth. Instead, negative reinforcement is a perfectly acceptable training technique when practised consistently and humanely.

In the past two generations scientists have spent thousands of hours in their laboratories observing rats or pigeons and deducing how animals learn. A whole training methodology, backed up by a huge amount of scientific research, has been the result. We know a lot about how to teach animals. Modern dog trainers use this training theory and even zookeepers are now beginning to use it to manage dangerous animals like rhinos and apes safely. They use it because it works.

Yet training theory is slow in reaching the riding establishment, a group of people who may perhaps be too rich and powerful to be open to new ideas: 'You can teach a horseman but you can't teach him much'. Most riders think only in terms of old-fashioned punishment for the wrong response without even knowing the ways to make this relatively inefficient method work best. Others still think that the horse will 'know that it has done wrong'. In this case it is the traditionalists, not the scientists, who hold the softie belief that a horse is just a furry human with a mane and tail.

Dressage, in particular, is a major focus of this book. Those of us who as children have read *Black Beauty* will remember the cruel bearing rein used on carriage horses. Nowadays the modern equivalent is hyper flexion, where dressage horses are ridden with their necks punitively bent. A video on YouTube shows a well-known competitor pulling the horse's head in so tight that he has cut off the blood supply to its tongue, which has turned blue. Another dressage shocker is the crank noseband, a fierce tightening device that makes the horse's mouth even more sensitive to the pain of the bit.

The authors of *Equitation Science* also have little time for the various horse whispering movements, started by charismatic trainers who are good on TV and celebrated in movies. Despite their folksy theories, the much vaunted join-up or round pen training, in which the horse is meant to accept the human trainer as another and superior horse, is probably just another example of negative reinforcement, according to McGreevy and McLean. They quote research suggesting that though horses learn in the round pen, they do not practise the lessons outside the pen.

Behind the horse whispering myth is the attractive idea that the horse accepts its trainer or rider as the dominant leader of its herd. Riders will talk of the

horse showing 'respect', as if horses understood abstract ideas of status. Yet 'with no tail, fixed ears, a short inflexible neck and only two legs, we can hardly expect horses to regard us as equine' say the authors. Nor would it be a good idea if they did. Equine play involves biting, rearing, boxing and kicking, they warn. This horsing about would be highly dangerous to humans.

Is it worth applying science to the horse world? Both authors believe that there would be fewer human casualties and equine wastage if horse people could be persuaded to break with tradition and borrow these scientific techniques. With its dense scientific language, this challenging book would probably be too difficult for Prince Harry but equine coaches and riding instructors really should attempt to read it. The more intellectual horseman will be fascinated by it. What is needed next is a popular version for riders like the young prince so that he can help his pony follow the ball using light and consistent heel signals, rather than drawing blood.

Losing the Plots?

David Ashton

Voodoo Histories, David Aaronovitch, Vintage, 2010, £8.99.

A conspiracy is a covert combination whereby some people plan an illegal or wicked outcome for others. Its existence can sometimes be demonstrated from its consequences without the need to identify particular culprits. Conspiracies have hardly been rare in the annals of warfare, politics, diplomacy, espionage, religious cults and competitive commerce, especially when these interface with organised crime like the current drugs traffic.

Since this book appeared, the media have reported or alleged myriad examples, ranging from extra-judicial executions in the Middle East to the discovery of Russian sleeper agents in the United States. Other authors have recently chronicled the 'Darwin conspiracy' and the 'Dreyfus case', the 'golden age of paranoia' in the 1970s, the 'transparent cabal' behind the Iraq invasion, the Davos and Bilderberg 'financial elite', 'Climategate', and so on. Last January *More 4* even ran a 'documentary' suggesting that anti-Semitism might be a 'conspiracy *of* the Jews and not *against* them'.

Many 'theories' *about* conspiracies have provoked hostile criticism. As Eva Horn and Anson Rabinach have shown, their critics fall into three main groups: those who attribute conspiracy theories to political 'reactionaries' who project 'real problems on to imaginary enemies'; those who address them as a 'style of thought' which provides its own status to members of a marginalized subculture outside academic respectability; and those who allow some theories to account for specific events on the basis of 'reasonable evidence' and explanatory simplicity.

David Aaronovitch combines all three approaches in his entertaining critique of the 'role' of 'conspiracy theory' in 'shaping modern history'. A prominent pundit at *The Times*, he makes acidulous observations on many topics, including the deaths of Marilyn Monroe, Hilda Murrell and Princess Diana, and over 2000 people on 9/11, although his research into two major questions, the JFK assassination and the *Protocols of Zion*, needs some updating.

His principal targets are the tendency to imagine sinister purposes of gigantic proportions behind relatively banal misfortunes, and the malign concoction of spurious theories, a danger to decent discourse and civic propriety, if not life and limb. He believes the 'idea' of conspiracy more powerful than actual conspiracies, and this is his journalistic attempt at exorcism. Such a belief, however, would not have been popular among the post-war prosecutors of 'Nazi conspiracy and aggression', nor much consolation to innumerable victims of murderous Islamic intrigue.

The difference between a pernicious conspiratorial fantasy and a legitimate conspiracy hypothesis is like the contrast between astrology, which presents seductive patterns that nevertheless exert a baleful influence on behaviour, and astronomy, which makes objective observations that develop as new phenomena or anomalies appear, and improve the scientific grasp of reality.

Appropriate investigation of any plausible conspiracy hypothesis needs an unprejudiced prime focus on forensic evidence (if uncontaminated). It is a mistake to theorise before one has the data, to paraphrase old Sherlock, but whatever survives rigorous analysis could be the truth — however ideologically unpalatable.

Sometimes Aaronovitch scores neatly in this respect, such as his examination of lately declassified naval code information that challenges the contention that the Pearl Harbor episode formed part of a back-door scheme by the Roosevelt administration to get into an unpopular war against the Axis, though his biographical slant on the 'revisionist' John T Flynn is quite misleading. He cannot always resist spicing his narrative with personal vituperation, and his ridicule of an MP sincerely concerned by the death of Dr Kelly

may prove a bit cheap after further investigation into its circumstances. Especially instructive is his exposure of Stalin's conspiracy 'theory' about Trotsky. The paradox is that this elaborate fabrication was itself a gigantic conspiracy. It shows that conspiracy can occur at the highest levels of power and on a massive scale, with vast international success.

David Aaronovitch may seem suitably qualified in this area, since he was himself once a Marxist-Leninist, raised in a London outpost of the Soviet empire, with a father who helped the Kremlin with its diamond trade. He eventually swapped the 'red diaper' for the blue hasbara hexagram, and today enthusiastically welcomes not global communism but the global movement of people and money to eliminate our obstinately British way of life (see *The Times*, 10 June and 27 May 2010).

How ironic, then, that government policy to 'change the nature of our society by mass migration' has been described as a 'conspiracy' by Sir Andrew Green, while US experts under President Obama consider the now 'multi-cultural' UK to be the most dangerous base for terrorists who 'plot attacks around the world'.

Espionage and Faith

Helen Szamuely

Spies; The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America, John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr and Alexander Vassiliev, Yale University Press, 2009, pb £15.99.

Back in the heyday of perestroika I was, for a week, interpreter to Gorbachev's economic adviser, Abel Aganbegyan, when he was visiting London in order to promote a collection of essays and to do some fact-finding. His schedule had been arranged by a PR firm who, not well versed in political matters, allotted far too much time to unknown Communist publications. One representative turned up on his bike with the requisite clips on his trousers, bounced into the hotel room and enthusiastically shook hands, describing himself as being from 'Britanskaya Kompartiya'. His interview was very strange. He was less interested in what Aganbegyan's ideas about the Soviet economy or about the then newly coined phrase 'third way' were and more in why Gorbachev and his allies had felt the need to open up about the problems the country was facing. How could you do this to us, he wanted to know. Do you realize that ever since Gorbachev had admitted that the Soviet economic system was a complete wreck, all sorts of people have been laughing at the CPGB (and, I may add, non-Communist idiots in the academic world) and pointing out how right they had been. Aganbegyan was unmoved. He pointed out politely that the travails of Western Communist parties were of little interest to him. His concern was with his country. It was not a satisfactory interview.

I remember this as I read Alexander Vassiliev's Introduction to *Spies*, the title of which is 'How I Came to Write My Notebooks, Discover Alger Hiss and Lose to His Lawyer'. Vassiliev, an ex-KGB officer (the 30 most boring months of his life, according to him), ex-Soviet then Russian journalist, was picked to be one of those to collaborate with American historians on a proposed series of books on Soviet espionage. He was given some access to KGB (not GRU) papers and was allowed to copy them in order to shape a narrative that would then be re-written by Allen Weinstein, the author of the most authoritative book on the Hiss case, *Perjury*. The project came to a bad end but most of the books were published including Vassiliev and Weinstein's *Haunted Wood*. Vassiliev, who has prudently moved with his family to Britain, found all sorts of interesting things in the dossiers he was allowed to read and copy. To his immense surprise, however, the only thing that seemed to hit a nerve was the incontrovertible evidence he produced about Alger Hiss's guilt (and of Donald Hiss's as well, while he was about it). Not knowing anything about the iconic significance of that case he found himself more and more embroiled in a row that he could barely comprehend, eventually suing John Lowenthal, Hiss's latter-day lawyer and as nasty a piece of work as anyone would not want to meet, and losing. During this long saga he was interviewed by Hiss defender Susan Butler, who later admitted in court that she lied to Vassiliev and about him. Ms Butler tried to enlighten the Russian about the fuss. She was not bothered that Hiss might have been a spy as he had been working for the Soviet Union 'at a time when the two countries' interests coincided'. (Clearly a lady who had no comprehension of Stalin's aims.) What upset her was that, if Vassiliev's evidence was correct, Hiss had lied to all his supporters, thus making them all look very foolish. Vassiliev was bemused. Of course, Hiss lied. He was a Soviet agent. It was his job to lie. It was not his job to bother about the sensitivities of his supporters then or later.

Which brings us to a very important question, asked over and over again but never properly answered: exactly what it is that makes the innocence of Alger Hiss (a proven spy) or of such people as the Rosenbergs (proven spies) a matter of almost religious faith for some people? Why do they labour so mightily to disprove the evidence that has been piling up, sometimes going so far as to try to prove that someone else must have been the agent in question?

Spies is a very solid book. A number of pages from Vassiliev's notebooks, sent out by a trustworthy friend after the family had migrated to Britain, are reproduced but all the material can be read in Russian and in English translation on the internet. The evidence is out there and chapter after chapter ends with the words 'the case is closed'. Some hope! These cases will never be closed until there are people who have invested a great deal of time and energy in proving that agents of America's enemy and one of the most vicious systems on earth were all innocent victims of rampant American reaction.

Nevertheless, questions abound: What exactly made so many supposedly educated people decide that, because some things were going wrong in their own country, the answer was to betray it to its worst enemy and to support a particularly heinous system? Did the scientists who maintained that all things to do with atomic and nuclear energy should be outside national control (not Klaus Fuchs who was a hard-line Communist) not notice that the Soviet Union was sharing nothing? (A related question has to do with the amount of effort invested in trying to steal American atomic secrets rather than developing a Soviet programme.)

The authors of this hefty tome would say that their job is to produce the evidence for what happened — it is up to others to analyse the whys and wherefores. Certainly, anyone who is interested in this topic, a central one to twentieth and twenty-first century politics which, as so much that people appear to take for granted, grew out of attitudes towards Communism and its agents, needs to have a look at this book and the related documents on the internet. But it is not one to read right through, more to dip into.

What Are We?

Peter Mullen

Why Us? How Science Rediscovered the Mystery of Ourselves, James Le Fanu, Harper Press, 2009, £18.99.

This book is a goldmine of information about the great progress made in science since the end of the Second World War. Le Fanu is a practising medical doctor and an outstanding historian of medicine. He lists thirty scientific achievements including the atomic bomb, the electron microscope, the moon voyages, the oral contraceptive and the Hubble telescope. His book concentrates on the two most far-reaching developments in modern medical science: the mapping of the human genome and the development in brain imaging which enables neuroscientists to observe the working of the brain itself.

Le Fanu does not merely assemble a galaxy of facts; he reviews these facts with a combination of pride and humility and makes some trenchant judgements which form the significance of the book. He argues: 'It is simply not possible to get from the monotonous sequence of genes along the Double Helix to the near infinity of the living world, nor to translate the electrical firing of the brain into the creativity of the human mind.'

In other words, no matter how minutely science can examine the genetic code and the workings of the brain, it cannot progress beyond the observation of material phenomena. The most significant aspects of our existence — what makes us human — are not themselves material. We are not just electrical wiring and pieces of tissue: we have consciousness; moreover we have self-consciousness and beyond that consciousness of our self-consciousness. We have memory, predictive capacity, mathematical invention, speech and language, the ability to be moved beyond measure by beauty and truth. We are not just like the other animals — and our understanding of our mortality is one of the things which prove this difference.

It has been demonstrated that human genetic makeup is 98 per cent identical to the genetic makeup of a monkey, a mouse or yeast. But even the stupidest of us has an intellectual capacity far exceeding that of the monkey. Whatever that missing 2 per cent, it must be crucial. If we have merely evolved out of the necessity of adapting to our environment, why is it that we have such large brains, most of which we neither use nor even understand? What monkey ever painted a Mona Lisa? We are more than the sum of our material parts. To suggest that the materials of our genes and our brain cells are all there is to an understanding of the human creature is like observing a game of football and declaring that it is only flesh and blood in motion over turf and soil; or as if being in love is no more than the rise in blood pressure.

Le Fanu nowhere decries or belittles science, but he insists that materialistic science is not the whole story when we aim to give a complete account of what it is to be a human being. It is not a matter of not knowing all the facts. Rather, science has inadvertently discovered that its theories are insufficient to conjure the wonder of the human experience from our genes and brains. The three pillars of modernity — Marx, Freud and Darwin — were all materialists. They regarded anything beyond matter — mind, imagination and creativity — as mere by-products of matter, as what philosophers call epiphenomena. The scientists

who came after Marx, Freud and Darwin discovered to their amazement that the physical world is not as physical as previously thought. Quantum mechanics has revealed a sub-atomic world which is almost all empty space. How much matter and how much space? Well, if a single atom were the size of St Paul's cathedral, it would represent a nucleus the size of a pinhead around which a few specks of dust (electrons) moved unpredictably at velocities approaching the speed of light.

Le Fanu has given us an impressive appreciation of modern scientific progress and he has gone beyond science to marvel at the wonder, mystery and miracle human beings.

The New Cradle of Al Qaeda

Penelope Tremayne

Yemen: Dancing on the Heads of Snakes, Victoria Clark, Yale, 2010. £14.99.

This book is a model of condensation, offering first an historical overview from the 16th century onwards, then a description of daily life in the Yemen as the author has seen it during five years of acquaintance with the country. She has talked to a number of Yemenis, though perhaps not covering a very wide range, and travelled as far as she could to see things.

The country's past history is one of continuous fighting and instability, in which the least painful periods for Yemenis themselves seem to have been during two long stretches of Turkish control and the much looser and shorter British one of Aden and the protectorates. It does not appear that today's troubles stem from past imperial sins; they are temperamental and political. The twin thirsts for commerce and for blood-feuding seem unquenchable. Signs of political infection appeared in the 1930's, first through contact with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, then with the setting up of a Trade Union organisation which compelled tribesmen to define themselves not by tribe but by trade, thereby outraging tradition and stirring western politics into the cauldron. Victoria Clark tells us that by 1956 'some 20,000 workers — the majority of them disenfranchised northern Yemeni guest-workers... were organised into twenty-one different unions, demanding better working conditions but also loudly championing Egypt in the Suez war of that year, fired up by Nasser's pan-Arab gospel'. This potion continued to work even after Nasser's ignominious departure from the stage, and drew fresh strength from the Arab-Israeli war of 1967.

In 1962 the very long-reigning Imam Ahmad died, and almost immediately an Iraqi-inspired revolt against his son was raised by a group of Army officers, one of whom declared the end of the Kingdom and installed himself as president of a new Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). A long civil war followed, funded for their own different purposes by Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria. An Egyptian-supported movement called, like others elsewhere, a National Liberation Front gave birth to one called FLOSY: Front for the Liberation of South Yemen. FLOSY rejected the YAR and declared an undefined area from Aden to the Omani frontier as PDRY: People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Pee Dry, as it was irreverently called, furnished the safe base needed for a guerrilla organisation, PFLOAG: People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf, an outfit first funded and armed by China, then by the USSR which also supplied training. It spent the next five years fighting and losing what has become known as the Dhofar War (the Dhofaris by the way are not Arabs, let alone Yemenis). This campaign was PDRY's main *raison d'être*, but for some reason Clark does not mention it, leaving us to suppose that a communist statelet just happened to coalesce around the Hadhramaut and that it engaged only in tribal struggles with the anti-communist YAR.

Clark tells us a lot about these atrocious and unstaunchable conflicts between North and South, tribe and tribe; also the social backgrounds and the surfaces of modern international sophistication; the looming presence of Saudi Arabia over all, with its pressure against the northern frontier, the huge religious weight it wields, and its hankering for a corridor to the southern sea. After the Soviet collapse, efforts were made to put the warring parts of Yemen together again, and they are nominally so today (Clark has aptly called it a shot-gun wedding); but the result is perhaps less like a wedding cake than a grenade with the pin half-way out.

This book leaves you neither clear about the past nor cheerful about the future, but that is at least partly in the nature of the subject. Readers will look for answers to two questions: is the Yemen really a base for al Qaeda's activities and will it become more so as events in Afghanistan and Pakistan unroll? There is no doubt about the first: it has been for years. The second is discussed more fully: the Imams' interpretations of Islam are of huge importance to them, and how the younger generation might react to new versions remains to be seen. Yemenis as a whole have not tended to be as strongly attached to their religion as other Arabs. The concept of jihad has enormous appeal, and not only for the very young, for the tribal elements are born and bred to battle. But any prospect of wealth and power, however chimerical, appeals to them greatly,

especially to the trade-minded southerners. With oil beginning to run short, new business ideas may look tempting. Which bait will turn out to be the most attractive is an interesting question. Clark does not answer it, but warns us against letting fear of terrorism trap us into giving arms to Yemenis.

Unhitched?

Daryl McCann

Hitch-22, Christopher Hitchens, Atlantic Books, 2010, £20.

The class struggle is over. Christopher Hitchens, Marxist polemicist to the world, is no longer a man of the Left. On some days, confesses Hitchens, apostasy leaves him with a feeling akin to 'the phantom pain of a missing limb'. On other days the sensation is more like 'having taken off a needlessly heavy overcoat'. No more does he believe in a radiant socialist future, but increasingly reflects 'upon the shipwrecks and prison islands to which the quest has led'. Nevertheless, in his lively memoir, *Hitch-22*, Hitchens argues cleverly and in the end persuasively that advancing age has not betrayed the principles of his youth, and that he continues to be as radical and adversarial as ever.

Critics on the Left will, for the most part, remain unconvinced. Certainly Hitchens freely confesses to having experienced 'the uneasy but unbanishable feeling that on some essential matters' Margaret Thatcher was correct. Moreover, throughout the past two decades he has been a vocal if nuanced defender of Gulf War I, NATO intervention in Bosnia, Western intervention in Afghanistan and Gulf War II.

Leftists will also abhor the sympathetic picture he draws of the relationship between George W Bush and the Kurds in northern Iraq. Yet *Hitch-22* does not mark a political transformation in the way David Horowitz's *Second Thoughts: Former Radicals Look Back at the 60s* does. Hitchens is no conservative. He continues to be unrepentant about his opposition to the Vietnam War, Henry Kissinger, Ronald Reagan and even poor old Mother Teresa.

Hitchens' recent bestseller, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, is another example. Though Hitchens' name often turns up on lists of new wave atheists, his anti-religion stance is less Richard Dawkins than Ludwig Feuerbach. On the subject of religion, at least, Hitchens remains a nineteenth-century Marxist who thinks belief in God is a dangerous irrationality, an impediment to greater justice in this world. In a brief interview-and-answer section (à la *Vanity Fair*), Hitchens even offers up Leon Trotsky as one of his favourite characters in history. If one takes Hitchens at his word then the incongruity of his political position begins to take on a certain kind of logic. In the context of today the term 'Trotskyism' has become almost meaningless. There are as many self-avowed Trotskyists prepared to find common cause with Radical Islam as not. Even so, Hitchens is heir to the one valuable tradition in Trotskyism — the capacity (and inclination) to challenge the orthodoxies of the Left from within the Left itself.

Hitchens' acerbic dismissal of the political musings of Leftist icons such as Noam Chomsky, Gore Vidal and Edward Said is a powerful critique, and even more so for all of these characters being his former confidantes. Hitchens says of Chomsky: 'Regarding almost everything since Columbus as having been one continuous succession of genocides and land-thefts, he did not really believe that the United States of America was a good idea to begin with.' Chomsky, like so many others in the New Left, might promote himself as a libertarian socialist, but in that one pointed sentence Hitchens unmasks the man's real political identity — nihilism.

This memoir is not so much Christopher Hitchens leaving the Left, but of the Left leaving Christopher Hitchens. Not only does anti-Americanism and thinly disguised anti-Semitism blight the modern-day Left. There is also relativism, arriving in 1969 in the form of 'The Personal Is Political'. Ever since, argues Hitchens, 'to be a member of a sex or gender, or epidermal subdivision, or even erotic *preference*' has been enough 'to qualify as a revolutionary'. The consequence of this 'sinister' development has already deeply compromised the West and possesses the capacity to wreak even more havoc in the future. He thinks that political relativism has made society and the Enlightenment Project vulnerable in unpredictable ways. 'More depressing still, to see that in the face of this vicious assault so many of the best lack all conviction, hesitating to defend the society that makes their existence possible, while the worst are full to the brim and boiling over with murderous exaltation.' One only needs to remember the trials and tribulations of Salman Rushdie and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, let alone the fate of Theo van Gogh, to understand his meaning. In the immediate aftermath of September 11 it was Hitchens on the cover of *The Spectator* boldly announcing Islamo-fascism as the great enemy of civilization.

Hitchens acknowledges that *Hitch-22* will not rise far above the genre of a 'political memoir'. He describes his mother's disturbing and tragic death, his father's character and his famous friendship with Martin Amis, and yet the colour and depth of these

powerful (and admirable) personal connections are never totally realized. Hitchens admits that he is a polemicist above all modestly contrasting his writing talents with the artistry of his friends. Hitchens conveys an intriguing complexity in the relationship with his 'almost tragically right-wing' brother Peter. Christopher appears to have teased and derided his younger sibling from an early age. Politically, at least, the two brothers could not have been more different. Christopher mockingly asserts that various arguments in Peter's book, *The Broken Compass*, make him 'desire to be wearing a necklace of the purest garlic even while reading them'. Peter is a Christian, after all. Significantly, though, Christopher goes on to acknowledge insights in *The Broken Compass* that are both compelling and unsettling. He even tries to build an intellectual bridge between the two by mentioning (admittedly in a footnote) the possibility of 'there being such a thing as a Protestant atheist'. There is also the wonderful anecdote about the childhood quest for an unabridged version of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

However Christopher Hitchens, atheist and contrarian, is not about to become a conservative like his brother or a conservative of any kind. Hitchens makes it clear on the last page that he feels 'absurdly honoured to be grouped in the public mind' with such characters as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris. Nonetheless, Christopher's grudging respect for brother Peter might signify something hopeful. Here we have the possibility of the archetypal rebel and the archetypal traditionalist lining up, at long last, on the same side of the barricades in the defence of Western Civilization.

A Feast that Stays

Nigel Jones

Parisians: An Adventure History of Paris, Graham Robb, Picador, 2010, £18.99.

'Paris' as Ernest Hemingway, who knew and loved the place well, assured us, 'is a movable feast'. The old fraud was undoubtedly speaking the truth on this rare occasion, because as anyone who has lived there will testify, the city of light ignites a beacon that those who adore it take with them wherever they go subsequently. Just as some cities — one thinks of Venice or Vienna — are necropolises, cloaked in a grey shroud of death, so Paris, despite its catacombs and frequently bloody history, is a city dedicated to glorious life.

Graham Robb is the thinking man's Francophile *de nos jours* and the biographer of Balzac, Rimbaud and Victor Hugo. In his last book, *The Discovery of France,* he revealed the astonishing variety of the country, demonstrating the shallowness of Jacobin state centralisation imposed by the 1789 Revolution and Napoleon. Even at the end of the 19th century, the regions of *la France profonde* had their own distinct histories, traditions, landscape and even language. De Gaulle famously asked how it was possible to govern a country that produced 246 different types of cheese (there are even more today). Robb proved that France's varieties, while they may be a nightmare for its rulers, are the country's true strength.

Paris is a city even more complex than the country of which it is the capital. Like a magnet it attracts not only the most thrusting and talented among the French, but myriads of foreigners as well. The foreigners don't concern Robb — there is no mention here of expat honorary Parisians like Tom Paine, Oscar Wilde, Josephine Baker, or Jim Morrison. Instead, he chooses to tell the story of the city via key episodes in the lives of its denizens since 1750. The life of Paris is too vast and various for a single volume so he selects events which seem more significant than they may have done to the Parisians involved.

Thus Robb examines such convulsions as the 1871 Commune (which killed more Parisians than died in the entire great revolution itself); the mass deportation of Paris's Jews from the Vel' de Hiv cycling stadium; or the 68 *événements* — as seen through the wall eyes of Jean-Paul Sartre, who made a senile attempt to suck back his lost youth by identifying with the revolting students and selling Maoist newspapers on the Left Bank.

The book begins with an embarrassing episode in the early life of Napoleon, then a gauche young officer newly arrived in the big post-revolutionary city. In those days Paris's principal red light district was the (now extremely upmarket) Palais-Royal and the randy young Corsican adventurer went there in search of the first of his many victories — to dispose of his unwanted virginity. The evening proved so shaming and distasteful that once he had achieved power, Bonaparte cleared out the Palais-Royal and closed down its brothels. The moral that Robb cleverly extracts from this tale is the gap between Napoleon's romantic idea of himself and the sordid reality of the world. A gap, Robb suggests, that eventually brought about his downfall.

If the Corsican adventurer was only a semi-Frenchman, then his fellow dictator Adolf Hitler was a fully-fledged foreigner, and is the only one to get a chapter all to himself. This is surprising since Hitler's only visit to the city was brief — as a rubber-necking tourist shortly after his armies had goose-stepped down

the Champs Elysees in the summer of 1940. As a failed artist Hitler had been brought up to venerate classical French culture, especially architecture. In a curious example of the Fuhrer's double-think, it is clear that he adored the 'idea' of Paris, to the extent of wanting to ape the city by rebuilding Berlin on a scale dwarfing the French capital — while utterly despising the French.

Accompanied by his pet architect, Albert Speer, and his favourite sculptor Arno Breker — who acted as tourist guides — Hitler swooped on the city early one morning. There is film footage of his speeding Mercedes being saluted by startled gendarmes as it cruised the boulevards. Hitler paid homage to Napoleon's tomb at Les Invalides before fetching up at the Opera where a grumpy janitor, roused from his bed to show the visiting Nazis around, did his duty — but refused a tip. Having seen the signs, Hitler, mildly disappointed, like Napoleon, that the Parisian reality had not matched his megalomaniac dreams, departed, never to return. His last recorded comment on Paris was his repeated demand as his forces evacuated the city in 1944 as to whether they had carried out his demented orders to blow the whole place up (as they had in much of Marseilles).

As an aficionado of assassinations, I was delighted that Robb gives plenty of space to two attempts, one fake, the other only too real, on the lives of two French Presidents in Paris. The first, known as the 'attentat de l'Observatoire' was staged in 1959 by that slimy crook Francois Mitterrand in an attempt at a comeback at a low point in his political fortunes. In his hilarious account of this farce, Robb makes it very clear that Mitterrand hired a gunman to stage an entirely fraudulent attack on him with the aim of winning publicity and sympathy. The second attempt, a couple of years later, was carried out by the OAS, a right-wing terrorist group of white Pieds-noirs expelled from Algeria and soldiers enraged by De Gaulle's betrayal of Algérie Francaise.

OAS gunmen ambushed De Gaulle's Presidential car in the suburb of Petit Clamart (the attempt forms the opening scene of Frederick Forsyth's *Day of the Jackal*) and though the General claimed 'they shot like pigs', he really owed his miraculous survival to the skill of his chauffeur. Both attempts illustrate not only how close are tragedy and farce, but also the persistence of violence, which runs like a red thread through Paris's history. A third factor is the inter-twined incestuous relationship of politics and crime in France, which has persisted into De Gaulle's respectable and pompous Fifth Republic, with its mysterious scandals and unexplained deaths in high places, just as it disfigured earlier periods in French history.

Perhaps no figure, not even the despicable Joseph Fouche, who went from mass murdering revolutionary terrorist to Minister of Police and a Prince under both Napoleon and the Bourbon Kings, nor the Vichy fascist turned 'resistant' and 'socialist' Mitterrand, has displayed this tendency to be simultaneously both poacher and gamekeeper more colourfully than Eugene Vidocq. Robb, who knows Vidocq well through Balzac and Hugo, who both mined the stranger-than-fiction story of his life, rightly sees this 19th century career criminal who perhaps not so paradoxically became the founder of France's Scotland Yard, the *Sûrèté Nationale,* and the pioneer of modern criminology, as perhaps the most representative Parisian of them all.

Red Flowed the Don

Frank Ellis

The Stalingrad Trilogy, Volume 1. To the Gates of Stalingrad: Soviet-German Combat Operations April-August 1942, David M Glantz, with Jonathan M House, University of Kansas Press, Kansas, 2009, $39.95.

The sheer number of monographs, films and novels about Stalingrad in English, German and Russian poses the obvious question of why David Glantz's massive trilogy is required. There are a number of reasons. The author has set himself the task of writing 'a comprehensive operational history of the entire German 1942 campaign and of the Soviet response to that campaign'. He points out for example that, popular belief notwithstanding, the capture of Stalingrad was not the campaign's original objective. Even after the German Sixth Army was committed to the capture of the city and the battle occupied centre stage in the world's press, other German formations pressed ahead with the plan to seize the oil fields of the Caucasus. Another critical factor which influenced the final outcome in Stalingrad in February 1943 was the protracted and arduous battles waged by the German Sixth Army in Voronezh, Rzhev and in the Great Don Bend in the summer of 1942 which weakened the Sixth Army's fighting capacity. This accelerated the massive attrition it suffered in the city, and so played its part in the 6th Army's ultimate defeat. In my opinion the decisive factor, the availability of fresh sources, especially from the 1990's onwards, justifies a new study.

By the winter of 1941 the attrition of war on the Eastern front had undermined the operational efficiency of the *Wehrmacht*: it had suffered heavy casualties in killed and wounded; it had failed to take

Moscow and the terrain and long distances exacted a very heavy toll on German armoured formations.

This problem was only going to get worse since the further the *Wehrmacht* penetrated into the Russian interior the greater the wear and tear became. Another persistent problem, nowhere near as critical in Western Europe, was the inability of the infantry to keep up with the armoured and mechanised formations. Often this meant that large numbers of Soviet soldiers were able to escape encirclement and make it back to their own lines (where they were suspected of being deserters and enemy agents) or to join up with the incipient partisan movement. As ammunition, fuel and rations ran low frequent halts were required which, once again, facilitated the escape of large numbers of Red Army soldiers and slowed down the momentum of the German advance. Barbarossa failed because the *Wehrmacht* was trying to achieve too much with insufficient men and material.

The path to Stalingrad begins with Plan Blau (Hitler Directive No 41) the primary objectives of which were the seizure of the two oil fields in the Caucasus, a small one at Maikop and the main fields located in and around Baku (now Azerbaijan). Voronezh was to be captured and thereafter German formations would head south along the line of the Don River and from there into the Caucasus region. To quote Glantz: 'Such an advance would be, to say the least, an operational and logistical challenge greater than any previous German offensive' For all the problems besetting the Red Army, among them, poor communications, incompetent staff work and tactical naiveté, Soviet forces inflicted heavy losses on the Germans trying to hold Voronezh and delayed the German advance to the Caucasus.

The fierce battles in the Great Don Bend were critical for the advance on the Caucasus and the attempt to seize Stalingrad. The magnificent Don flows south, reaching Kalach-on-Don, where it swings to the south west, heading for the Azov Sea. This dramatic change of direction creates the Great Don Bend. At the eastern extremity of the Don the distance between it and that other mighty, mesmerising Russian river, the Volga, is only about 50-70 kilometres. Securing the Great Don Bend held out the enticing prospect of seizing Stalingrad, some 50-70 kilometres to the east across open steppe and *balkas* (dry river ravines).

Glantz adds greatly to our understanding of the battles in the Great Don Bend, battles which lasted about three weeks. First, the Soviet attacks were, he concludes, not mere spoiling attacks; they represented a serious attempt to mount a counter-offensive. Second, the battles were much fiercer than normally described. Third, and perhaps most significant of all: 'the combat attrition experienced by the Sixth Army's infantry, panzer, and motorized divisions in this heavy fighting, particularly in infantrymen and panzer grenadiers, would haunt the army when it finally reached and began struggling to capture its ultimate target: the city of Stalingrad'. This makes the offensive *and* subsequent defensive performance of the German Sixth Army in Stalingrad all the more impressive.

Just how overstretched were the German forces, by now, at Hitler's behest, trying to seize the Caucasus oil fields and Stalingrad, can be seen in the dire situation faced by advanced elements of 16th Panzer Division. They reached Stalingrad on 23rd August 1942 and soon came under Soviet attack. At one stage ammunition was so low that the divisional commander, General Hube, in defiance of his superiors, seriously considered giving the order to break out to the West. Hube eventually withdrew to a new defensive line and the Germans lost the best chance they had to take Stalingrad. As a consequence, the Sixth Army now had to engage in protracted urban warfare which largely negated its advantages of mobility. This suited Chuikov, the Red Army commander in the city: 'In the house-to-house struggle for the city, the earthy, practical Chuikov proved more effective than the highly-strung, cerebral Paulus'. Another ominous development not appreciated by the Germans at the time was their failure to liquidate substantial Soviet bridgeheads on the southern side of the Don River. Bridgeheads at Serafimovich and at Kletskaia proved to be major Soviet assets in the later counteroffensive.

In this first volume every major operation and many of the lesser-known ones are scrupulously examined from both the German and Soviet sides on the basis of official reports, memoirs and archive sources. Soviet and German weaknesses and strengths are objectively discussed and analysed. A crippling Soviet handicap was poor communication often compounded by inadequate staff work; whereas a critical German failing was the inability to grasp the massive discrepancy between means and ends and the failure to appreciate the astonishing power of Red Army recovery. Glantz is especially effective at combining the grand strategic narrative, the clash of personalities, the follies of total power, with the tactical vagaries and unique features of the urban fighting. *To the Gates of Stalingrad*'s achievments are two fold. It unquestionably substantiates the author's introductory and bold claim that 'this study offers unprecedented detail, fresh perspectives, interpretations, and evaluations of the Stalingrad campaign, superseding all previous historical accounts'. The 100 pages of notes add great value to this volume. Together with his earlier work, it confirms David Glantz's status as the pre-eminent historian of the war on the eastern front.

FILM

Into the Whirlwind – Bomber Harris

Myles Harris

The film *Bomber Harris* opens on VE Day. Harris, played by John Thaw, is listening to the BBC thank the British commanders who defeated Hitler. His name is not on the list. The politicians, having ordered the laying waste of Germany's cities by his bombers, have decided to disown him. He shrugs and walks out of a hangar into history. Arthur Harris was the C-in-C of Bomber Command from 1942 to 1945. Until the D Day landings this made his aircraft, and later those of the Americans, the only means of attacking the Third Reich from Britain. Harris was certain that if he reduced German's cities to rubble D Day would be unnecessary.

Many, including the Americans, considered his idea to be insane. Far better to bomb selective targets such as Germany's ball bearing factories or synthetic oil plants. Such attacks, plus an Allied landing, would defeat the Nazis without the huge losses in civilian life entailed in mass bombing. In pursuit of their theory the Americans flew suicidal daylight missions against such selective targets, often led in person by commanders such as General 'Bombs Away' Curtis Lemay. Harris, disdaining such dramatics, rarely visited his bomber crews, and never flew on missions.

Churchill, played in the film by Robert Hardy, is shown as a wily flatterer. While courting Harris he never wholeheartedly backs his ferocious bomber chief who, some of his advisors suggest, might bring Germany to its knees before Allied troops could reach Berlin. With no allied troops in Europe, Stalin would occupy the whole of Germany and even enter France. Soviet troops might then face Britain across the Dover Strait. Churchill is determined on a land invasion but in the meantime goes along with Harris.

We see 'morning prayers', the nine o'clock meeting of Harris's staff in the village of Walters Ash in the Chilterns. The stubby finger of the C-in-C moves slowly across the map of Europe until it reached a grid reference. He taps his finger on it and says 'Tonight'. There is actual footage of the raids. Streams of bombers flit backwards and forwards in the blackness, lit by flashes of gunfire; some explode, others cartwheel out of the sky. Great pools of light mark the burning city below.

The early raids were ineffective. In the thousand-bomber raid on Cologne 469 civilians were killed. This compares with the Luftwaffe raid on Coventry in which between 500 and 1000 died. Such numbers would not break civilian morale. For that Harris needed heavy bombers. 'While you were racing seaplanes' he shouts at Beaverbrook, who is trying to deny him such weapons in favour of the desert war, Britain's only other front, 'I was studying the theory and practice of mass bombing for a war which if it came, would have to be used. While that war has now come and all you can offer me are some wretched aircraft which can only fly at 5000 feet.' What Harris wanted was the four-engined Lancaster he was to use in Operation Gomorrah against Hamburg in 1943 (55,000 deaths) and, in the last months of the war, on Dresden (135,000 deaths).

It is possible, using old footage not in the film, witness statements and photographs, to construct a picture of what it was like to be on the receiving end of an RAF raid. First came the air raid warning, known later as 'Meyer's hunting horn', from Goering's boast, 'If the RAF ever bombs Berlin you may call me Meyer.' The actual arrival of the 'Tommies' was marked by the dropping of brightly coloured flares like fairy lights on a Christmas tree. This was followed by a noise like huge pieces of furniture being dragged across a room, with walls suddenly disappearing like theatre curtains to reveal great leaps of fire, falling buildings and people, often in flames, running. Witness Ursula Gray recalls

> Some people who tried to walk along, they were pulled in by the fire, they all of the sudden disappeared right in front of you. You have to save yourself or try go get as far away from the fire, because the draught pulls you in.

By morning the city centre was like a vast crematorium in which the ovens had been inexplicably turned off. Many of the bodies, shrunk by the fires to a third their size, were still in positions of death. A photo survives of the calcined corpse of a mother peering into a pram containing her shrunken twins.

In 1941 Rome had been considered a target. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Carrington, on Harris's staff as an Army Liaison Officer, who later wrote

Soldier at Bomber Command, was alarmed to see maps of the city '.... appearing on the Intelligence table, even in the Ops Room.' He observed, 'It seemed to me that these professional bomb droppers were blinkered, as technicians can easily be.' Bombing Rome, even though the Vatican would be spared, 'would throw the weight of the cultured world against us.' Carrington used Bomber Command's secret telephone to make contact with the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. A few days later the maps were folded up and taken away.

What motivated Harris? How could anybody go to bed knowing he had ordered the slaughter of thousands? In the film his character explains that as war by definition requires the suspension of all the laws of morality, you had best fight it as ruthlessly as you can. The only aim is to win. He was opposed by his station chaplain John Collins, later to head the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Collins was joined by Sir Stafford Cripps, Minister of Aircraft production. At Collins' invitation the latter visited Bomber Command and gave a lecture suggesting a bomber aimer should not press the release button if he thought what he was doing was immoral. Harris, who is seen attending the lecture, did not care what either Collins or Cripps thought. He replies, 'I do not consider all the remaining cities of Germany as worth the bones of one British Grenadier.' Both these figures, especially Cripps, were later prominent dupes of Soviet foreign policy, which makes their opposition to mass bombing surprising but revealing. It might indicate Stalin never thought he could reach the Rhine, or if he did might be forced to face the Allies with overstretched supply lines and lose an ensuing war, a war that many Allied leaders, including Churchill, had not discounted.

While Bomber Command succeeded in flattening a number of German cities it did not break civilian morale. German industrial production was higher at the end of the war than at the beginning. It did however disrupt civil administration. The cost? 55,000 airmen died to kill 580,000 Germans — one Allied airman to ten Germans.

The film portrays Harris as a fanatic convinced that the heavy bomber could decide everything, for whom winning was a justification in itself. An internet video survives of him giving his famous *Reap the Whirlwind* speech in 1942. Looking rather like a small town bank manager, shifting uneasily in his chair as he speaks, he ignores the fact that the Nazis were a minority of the German population. If the Nazis didn't like his planned offensive, he declares, let them shift for themselves. He closes by describing the bombing of Germany as 'an interesting initial experiment'.

It was. War was to be increasingly and successfully fought by technicians like Harris sitting in safety. Three years after his speech a solitary American aircraft appeared over Hiroshima. The crew of Enola Gay, in no more danger than they would be driving to work, let loose a device that killed 100,000 people. Nine days later, following the bombing of Nagasaki, the Japanese surrendered. Today the Americans fight some of their most important battles with drones flown by pilots 6000 miles away. Given such successes more and better machines will be made which in time will fight each other, the winner turning on us. The film *The Terminator* was selected in 2008 by the Library of Congress for preservation in the United States National Film Registry, being deemed 'culturally, historically, and aesthetically significant'. It describes a war started by a self aware internet which, gaining access to the Pentagon's computers, turns America's weapons arsenal on the population.

A whirlwind indeed.

Arthur Harris's speech can be seen on the *Salisbury Review* Website.

The DVD 'Bomber Harris' can be bought at Amazon and similar outlets from around £4.50.

A Delius 'first' — gone and almost forgotten

Nigel Jarrett

The professional musicians who arrived in Newport, South Wales, on the morning of Friday May 28, 1920, for a concert that evening must have wondered what they were doing there. The grubby though bustling docks town didn't look much like a mecca of culture, even compared with at least two of the three other places — Swansea, Cardiff and Mountain Ash —where they had performed on their South Wales Music Festival tour, twice at the last. They would have known, of course, about the Welsh choral tradition and its mania for competitions, and some would have recalled the often disparaging comments of English critics faced with Wales's fiery amateur enthusiasm. One of them, Gerald Cumberland, of the *Musical Times*, had already booked his room at Newport's Westgate Hotel. So had Arthur E Sims, the concert's conductor.

Those professionals drifting into town were members of the London Symphony Orchestra, perhaps jaded by even a short time away from the metropolis. Sir Edward Elgar had conducted them in Cardiff but that would have been a gentlemanly affair. They were probably less excited about the evening's concert at Newport's Great Central Hall than were the all-amateur Newport Choral Society, on a day off for final rehearsals of a programme that would include the world premiere of *An Arabesque* by Delius. Also arriving by train that morning after a longer journey was the baritone Percy Heming. Among other music to be performed at the concert was the cantata *Freedom*, by the Welsh composer Cyril Jenkins (another premiere), and the *Five Mystical Songs* of Vaughan Williams, its first outing in the Principality.

On paper, Cumberland might have had preconceived ideas about Wales and its uncivilised, song-saturated persona. He would probably have had Jenkins down for one of those who had refused to be mired by unseemly conflict at *eisteddfodau* and was already sharpening his pencil for a grudgingly favourable notice. Delius, with reservation — the Englishman's reservation about dubious cosmopolitans feeding off unhealthy appetites — was nonetheless one of his own, Bradford-born, and *An Arabesque* would be in a superior class, unquestionably.

The Great Central Hall was in the town's main street and was not much more than a glorified Non-Conformist chapel. Shoebox-shaped and built on the *konzerthalle* plan, it was host throughout its life to several luminaries, including Rachmaninov, the Hallé Orchestra under John Barbirolli and Thomas Beecham and his orchestras. Beecham had despaired of *An Arabesque*'s ever being performed. It had waited a long time because of its difficult Danish text — a poem by Jens Peter Jacobsen — but Beecham considered the score, for orchestra, baritone and chorus, Delius's most opulent. There must have been a full house, something that had become infrequent by the 1950s, when 'the Central' was well into its decline. As Sims lifted his baton, multiple cargoes were settling in the holds at the nearby Newport Docks.

Cumberland had a while to refine his comments: the *MT* published his report on July 1. The local *South Wales Argus* was smarter off the mark, its anonymous reviewer almost drowning himself in a fulsome 2,000-word torrent overnight. Most of it was devoted to Jenkins's cantata, the Delius work being mentioned at the very end as an example of the 'formless and perverse' kind of music which the festival had taken upon itself to introduce to Cumberland's benighted Gwalian hordes. Jelka, Delius's wife, later wrote to the composer and Delius champion Philip Heseltine (*aka* Peter Warlock), asking how *En Arabesk* had been received. His view would of course have been positively subjective. It was once mistakenly thought that Delius was himself present, as he had been in London in March for a Covent Garden revival of *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. Heseltine may have been at Newport.

'Singing from the heart without intellectual control is the practice of barbarians,' Cumberland intoned in the lengthy preamble to his review of the festival, ensuring among his Welsh readers at least that ostensibly constructive criticism would elicit murderous hatred, though he seemed to think that Wales had taken her many 'scoldings' with a composure nothing less than exemplary. An estimated 7,000 had attended the two concerts at Mountain Ash and their appreciation of Scriabin's *La Poeme d'Extase* almost had Cumberland

revising his estimate of the uncultured. At Newport he hoped he wasn't being prejudiced in describing *Freedom* as 'quite the most satisfactory piece of work that has come out of musical Wales for many years'. Cumberland himself had written the libretto. His confession and praise constitute the supreme example of chutzpah. At no point did he mention *An Arabesque*, lost among festival music (similarly unidentified) by Bantock, Julius Harrison, Wagner, Borodin, Dukas and others.

It is difficult to encompass all the factors militating at the time against what now appears to be gross distortion. Changing taste is just one of them. Another must be a view of music that at some future stage will precipitate decline. And the story of Delius at Newport is of that ilk. In 1960 the Central Hall was sold to a supermarket company. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales has struck Newport, now a city, off its touring venues, partly because of thin public support. A new theatre in the city is struggling to attract audiences for classical music, despite the long-established Newport International Competition for Young Pianists. Newport is regularly full of vandalised street signs commemorating composers: Bliss, Elgar, Sterndale, Bennett, Stanford, Vaughan Williams — and two marking a Delius Close, one of them a few weeks ago informing us in graffiti script that 'Nisha luvs Boyz'. In Bradford, of course, Delius's birthplace is not marked, though there is a Delius centre as part of the tourist trail. At Mountain Ash in 1912, Bantock described Cyril Jenkins as 'the hope of musical Wales', surely a case of the third-rate calling the sixth-rate to its side with their eyes on a posterity that has seen fit to ignore them both.

Perhaps the saddest loss is that of Newport Choral Society, which folded along with any written history just before the 20th century ended. In *An Arabesque* the chorus clings to the soloist, eschewing an independent life, and the Delius premiere must have been a grave, not to say unusual, undertaking for amateur choristers. Whoever prepared the choir for Sims was an unacknowledged and now forgotten craftsman. Listening to *An Arabesque* today, one cannot help experiencing a pleading quality, especially as Jacobsen had an affinity for an icily dispassionate Nature, his words, insofar as they can be meaningfully translated, at one point evoking 'the glow of a dead bride's blushes'. Did the bride die of desertion and were her rubicund cheeks those of embarrassment or rage? We can but speculate.

Nigel Jarrett is a freelance writer and music critic.

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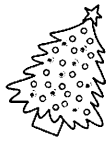

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IN SHORT

Letts Rip! Inside the Parliament of Fools, Quentin Letts, Constable Robinson, 2010, £12.99.

Rich fruit cake, as we well know, is best eaten in thin slices — thick slabs may trigger indigestion. Mr Letts's book contains plenty of comic fruit and nut, but is best nibbled, a little at a time, rather than consumed whole. It consists of a hundred and thirty short parliamentary sketches he wrote for the *Daily Mail*, with a few stage reviews, covering the decade up to May 2010. The author has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the membership and procedures of both Houses, as is suggested by the six hundred or so names in the Index.

He specialises in reducing prominent figures to a frazzle by acidic comment in all dimensions — from physical minutae like trembling fingers, strained neck sinews, or pulsating Adam's apples — to incongruous utterance and ridiculous bearing. He has a kind word to say for some (mainly conservative) figures, Thatcher, Cameron, Widdecombe, and of course the Queen, but he focuses a mercilessly critical eye on most of the others. To quote a few examples: a certain Margaret Wheeler could 'surely stun a water buffalo from a hundred yards with just one curl of her lean upper lip'... 'The Foreign Secretary announced that Mr Michael Mates ... had been made a Privy Counsellor....' 'It means this bushy bore, this authoritarian mouthpiece of sebaceous loyalty to the System, becomes a 'Right Hon'. When presented to King Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz Al Saud, the female Lord Mayor of Westminster 'did an odd little gesture — touched her left breast, then fell into a curtsey. For a second I thought her high heel must have snapped. Prince Philip thought he had trodden in something and looked back at where he had stepped...'

There are the expected digs against Labour Party leaders — Blair, Brown, Prescott, *et al.* Sometimes, though, the attacks get unpleasantly personal. Letts developed an acute dislike of the then Speaker, a hapless Glaswegian, Mick Martin. 'Gorbals Mick' is described as a 'beetroot-gilled incompetent, a bent bullying berk ... a purple-faced disaster for democracy'. However one feels on this occasion, alas, that Letts has gone too far: surely a man who started his career in the Gorbals, and ended it, however incompetently, in the Speaker's chair deserves a bit of sympathy, if not admiration? Many of Letts' assessments are curiously mixed — Lord Mandelson, for example, is described as — 'a soft-soled schmoozer ... a shadowy figure of silken insouciance ... a cabinet twice-reject ... in truth he may be contemptible, but in the flesh he is magnificently sleek and unshakable'.

The presence of so many inadequate souls means that Letts does not rate parliament very highly. 'Why does Britain still put up with this sorry excuse for an elected legislature which has been so trashed by Tony Blair and the European Union?' he asks. 'It will certainly be hard to equate the dignity of the ceremonial Royal opening of parliament with the grubbiness and weakness of today's House of Commons.'

Letts's comments rarely make for relaxed reading, but if you like keen satire you will enjoy this book.

Mervyn Matthews

Scams and Hypocrisy, D P Marchessini, London, Askelon, 2010, £14.99.

This is the fifth book of the Greek author D. P. Marchessini. It is full of aphorisms and close social observation. The quality of the work is best shown by quoting some of these:

> In the grand hotels in Europe before the war, the waiters in the dining room were always Italian, because they were the most charming. But the waiters in Room Service were all German — because they never forgot anything.

What a charming and tactful way of dealing with national qualities such as a lack of charm or an inability to concentrate the mind. Later he writes:

> Another problem today is that, sometimes, women will not wear things to attract men. ....I noticed that an English lady I knew didn't wear scent. I told her, 'You must start wearing scent. All civilised women wear scent'. She replied, 'It's rather difficult. When I got married, my husband asked me to wear scent and I refused. He would think it odd if I started wearing scent now'. It is astonishing that a respectable and high-class woman would refuse to wear scent for her husband and equally astonishing that her husband would accept this and do nothing about it. There are other ways in which women do not please.

As so often it is the international man of Mediterranean origin who is able to point out to the stodgy males of Britain what their women-folk are like. The Hegelian significance of scent and scentibility, as opposed to sententious scentlessness, has suddenly been made clear.

The book contains a remarkable wealth of illustrations including photos of Tony Blair, David Cameron, and

two men on a gay pride parade. Here too are Bill Clinton, Joseph Stalin, a rampant polar bear and some rather under clad young ladies. *C'est magnifique et ce n'est pas Daguerre.*

It is a work whose purpose is in the author's words 'to prick the balloons of hypocrisy'. Pop goes the weasel's balloon. Pop! Pop! Pop!

Marcel Charlus

Mervyn's Russia, Mervyn Matthews, Hodgson Press, PO Box 903A Kingston on Thames, www.hodgsonpress.co.uk

Extraordinary ordinary people are usually more interesting than the so-called great and the good, for they have time to regale you with stories about their adventurous lives without any pomposity. Mervyn Matthews, long time subscriber and contributor to the *Salisbury Review,* is certainly one of them. People who enjoy reading about the backstairs of history will enjoy this book; particularly Mervyn's sardonic humour which suffuses all his three volumes.

In previous volumes of his autobiography he described growing up in poor, wartime Swansea (*Mervyn's Lot*) and then unusually for his background reading Russian at Manchester, working and studying in Russia and falling in love with a Russian girl. *A Russian Wedding* describes his five-year struggle to get her out of Russia and his adventures with the KGB. His eventual success meant sacrificing a promising career in Oxford for he had also fallen foul of the British establishment.

Mervyn's Russia recounts what happened afterwards when he had 'imported his own bit of Russia to England', and Mila's adjustment to life in the West — Russians were always surprised to find poverty here too. A colourful life in London revolved around the London Russian community while he describes their numerous visitors from behind 'the curtain' including his mother in law who had been imprisoned and exiled for twelve years after her husband was shot in the purges. She described England as 'fairyland'. Among other activities Mervyn worked for the BBC Russian service, translated for Rostropovich and met Georgi Markov, the victim of the Bulgarian secret service.

Mervyn became a great traveller thanks to the Jackson Vanik amendment. In the seventies Jews and other small groups were allowed to leave Russia. By the early eighties a third of a million Soviet Jews were living abroad, mainly in Israel, New York and California. He was now able to carry out his Russian sociological researches more accurately, beyond Soviet frontiers, in particular into the privileges of the Soviet elite. After perestroika, of course, Russia started to become a more normal country and the Matthews became a completely Anglo-Russian family. Mervyn was overjoyed to find he was not being followed in the street, and to witness various reforms like the birth of public charity. Poverty was now officially revealed and affected 40 per cent of the population. Even the British Embassy had become less stuffy and Mervyn and his son dined there one Christmas Day. By the nineties Owen Matthews was working in Moscow, had married a Russian girl, and rose to become the head of the *Newsweek* bureau in Moscow. Mervyn had discovered that he could fly on to Thailand from Moscow very cheaply and established himself among thousands of Russian tourists in a coastal resort there, escaping the rigours of the Russian and English winters.

Merrie Cave

New Threats to Freedom, Adam Bellow (ed) Templeton Press, 2010, £9.65 pb, £17.99 hb.

The theme of this volume of varied and fascinating essays is the obvious one that the end of the Cold War did not bring about security. To the contrary, without a large menacing external enemy too many people have relaxed and decided that there was no need to fight any longer. Others have actually sided with the internal enemy of varying hues that is determined to destroy liberty in the West, though mostly in the United States.

There is nothing wrong with those premises and the various essays prove their point very well, indeed, whether it is Ann Applebaum describing the self-censorship exercised by American media and publishing under pressure or Christopher Hitchens railing against multiculturalism. Others take in the concept of fairness and, separately, the 'fairness doctrine' in broadcasting, transnational progressivism and the orthodoxy in international aid. Other topics, like 'the tyranny of the news cycle' or cyber anonymity are more debatable.

There is a missing link, however. The Cold War was not just a fight against the large external enemy and editors who supported their reporters there often became far more cautious when the subject of the internal enemy came up. A widespread refusal to condemn the horrors of Communism tied in well with the New Left insistence on America being the guilty one first, second and last. From being a marginal force (though not in the Democrat Party) in the sixties, as Adam Bellow explains in his Introduction, New Left ideas have moved to the centre of American politics, affecting, as is usually the case, the rest of the Western world. The problems we have to face up to were

spawned by the thinkers and activists of the sixties. It is as well to understand that, before we set out into battle, using much of this volume as ammunition.

Helen Szamuely

In Tuneful Accord, The Church Musicians, Trevor Beeson, SCM Press, 2009, £19.99

'Some to church repair, not for the doctrine but the music there'. Perhaps the enduring high standard of its music is now the only worthwhile feature of the confused Church of England, but this reputation is relatively recent. Before about 1840 music played little part in services. Canon Trevor Beeson has written a lively account of the Renaissance in Church music with detailed biographies of all the important personalities and institutions which contributed to this transformation.

The glories of Tudor church music disappeared with the onset of Puritanism. Music flourished again with the Restoration and the glories of Henry Purcell and John Blow along with restoration of many organs. By the end of the eighteenth century worship in cathedrals and parish churches was again in decline. Village bands in churches had gone and attendance was often a matter of social conformity.

Methodism and the Oxford Movement were driving forces which influenced the changes in the 19th century. The Methodists had abandoned Calvinist theology which was tied to the Bible and considered music as important as the sermon. Charles Wesley, our greatest hymn writer and his brother John, the founder of Methodism, had never left the Church of England. Samuel Sebastian, son of Charles, was a fine cathedral organist, a composer and an early performer of Bach's music in Britain. Once hymn singing began in churches it became unstoppable. In the early twentieth century Ralph Vaughan Williams produced the *English Hymnal*, still one of the best hymn books in the Anglosphere. The Oxford Movement brought about more dignity in services — surplices for choirs, candles on altars and sung responses.

In 1854 Sir Frederick Ouseley started a pioneering choir school at St Michael's Tenbury which contributed greatly to higher standards, while Sydney Nicholson, the organist at Westminster Abbey, founded the Royal School of Church Music which helped to raise the standard of parish church music. Maria Hackett, 'the choristers' friend' made it her lifelong commitment to improve the unsatisfactory conditions of cathedral choristers and travelled all over the country visiting choral foundations. After John Stainer left St Paul's choir, she paid for his organ lessons. He of course transformed music and worship at St Paul's, providing a model for others to imitate.

Beeson takes the story up to the 21st century with biographies of important new composers like James MacMillan and Gabriel Jackson. Anybody interested in church music will find this book an invaluable reference source.

Merrie Cave

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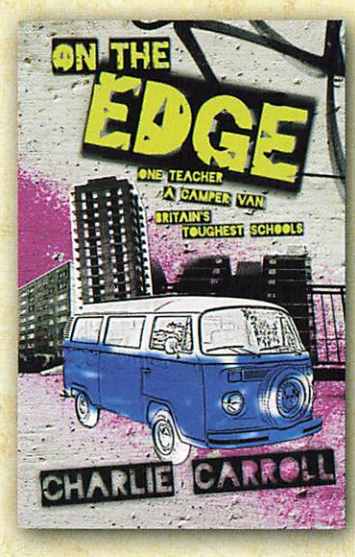

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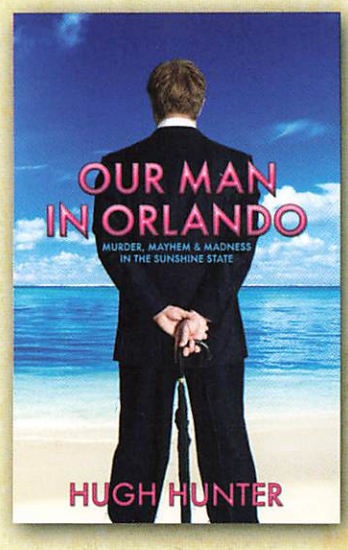

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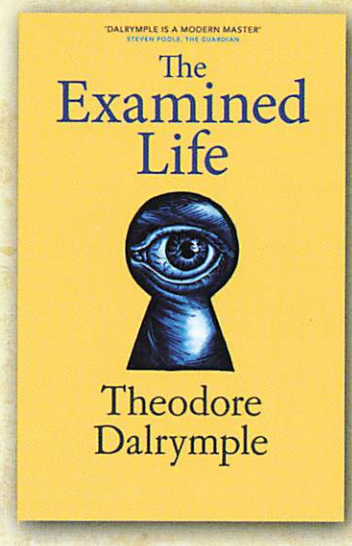

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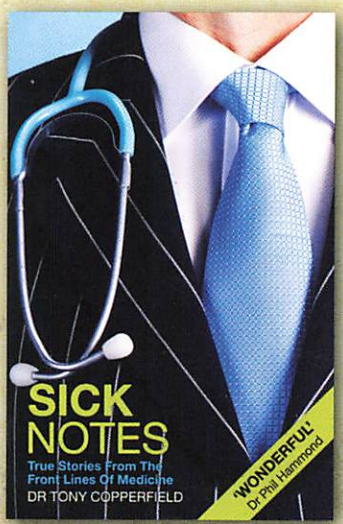

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