

The
Salisbury Review
The quarterly magazine of conservative thought



“ I see the store management is still concerned about the lead level in imported toys from China.”

**A Paperhanger's
Currency?**

Mark Griffith

**Prisons without
Walls**

Theodore Dalrymple

**Museum of Little
Horrors**

Patricia Morgan

One God but Oil

Srdja Trifkovic

Sidney the Infidel Cat

Jane Kelly

Riotous Assembly

Christie Davies

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The
Salisbury Review

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With book assets of €1.8 trillion, just shy of the €1.9 trillion it owes, Italy is relatively solvent. It is also a country of savers (€8.5 trillion in household wealth) without exposure to the ruinous mortgage scams perpetrated by American banks nor the huge debts run up by credit card holders in other western countries. She also runs a small tax surplus, the only country in Europe, apart from Germany, to do so.

Why then the fuss? Italy is a straw woman put up by the Berlin-Paris Axis to prove they can solve a crisis of their own making; the creation of the Euro. In 'A Paperhanger's Currency?' Mark Griffith traces the origins of a misconceived project that has brought ruin and political chaos to the continent. Like all globalists, Europe's leaders believe that the market is superior to the people. It is why all attempts by electorates to vote on it have been suppressed and why so called 'technical experts' are beginning to pick off democratically elected governments.

Berlin has removed Italy's prime minister (a public relations gift in his personal life) because Europe's banks are holding dangerously exposed positions in the Euro. In normal times they would have no difficulty in servicing Italy's debts, bailing her out now would expose their role in creating the crisis. Myles Harris describes how bankers have used the Euro as a chip in a world wide electronic game of 'beggar your currency' in which they have been the only winners. It is unsurprising therefore that Mario Draghi, the head of the European Central Bank and an ex managing director of Goldman Sachs, will not set the presses rolling to create more money. It would devalue bank profits.

We look at Europe's neighbours and NATO's war against Qaddafi, 'an exercise', Srdja Trifkovic writes, 'in pre-meditated mendacity'. It hints at a future European foreign policy which while professing to liberate our Arab neighbours is a cover for a raid on their oil wells. It will serve Europe no good as a motley of Jihadists may soon be in power in Tripoli.

Just over the horizon are the tens of thousands of

refugees who will leave the Middle East when the jihadists begin killing. Such numbers will create even more ludicrous situations than that described by Jane Kelly in 'Sidney, the Infidel Cat.' It is now possible for a British resident to travel to Pakistan for a husband, marry him, have three children, see him leave, and as a reward jump the queue for a four-bedroomed council house. Kelly, while rescuing Sidney the Cat from this establishment, comments, 'We English are the people who, as John le Carré recently put it, 'Will carry the horse uphill'; but in doing so we have somehow created a dependent class who like children and animals exploit us quite unknowingly.'

Theodore Dalrymple reminds us that a council house, 'is one of the most important causes of unemployment in Britain'. So-called 'social housing' creates labour immobility and it is from social housing that last summer's rioters emerged. Christie Davies in 'Riotous Behaviour' has no illusions about the latter. He writes. "What 'nice' conservatives fail to see is the extent to which even stable liberal democratic societies need force to maintain order." But in 'Letter from Amsterdam' we see how far the Dutch authorities have lost their nerve over their underclass. A children's sandpit was taken over by dope smokers but when parents protested the Dutch High Court set out to play legal games and they lost their case.

Across the Atlantic Paul Gottfried examines the contenders for the Republican presidential nomination but finds the same pusillanimity. 'In a race between Obama and Romney, without a third choice, my vote would go to the incumbent, as the lesser of two inexpressible evils.'

Italians may think Silvio Berlusconi as bad as any Republican contender but those shouting 'buffoon' may regret it. Italians famously resent outsiders but Germany is appointing their leaders. The inhabitants of Lucca joke that 'it is better to have a corpse in one's house than a person from Pisa at your door' (ten minutes away). All of Italy may be soon be saying, 'Better to have a corpse in your bank, than a German in the Palazzo Chigi.' There will be trouble on Rome's streets.

The Euro, a Paperhanger's Currency?

Mark Griffith

A longer version of this article appears in the paperback collection of articles about the economic crisis, 'Collateral Damage – Global Crash Phase Two', currently on sale through Amazon.

It is astonishing the euro has lasted this long, because it was never a very good idea. Those with eyes to see were predicting back in the 1980s it would all end in tears. Britain's unnecessary currency decimalisation in 1971 (the one that put a one-off but large inflationary twist into the British price spiral two years before the oil-price crisis did the same again, two twists which took over a decade to unwind) was done so that the UK would be 'ready' to join the euro currency in the mid-70s. We can be grateful Britain didn't join the scheme which was never ready for itself.

Unfortunately, the long decline of the euro currency bloc is going to damage us to some extent anyway. Enough other countries were suckered into the obviously doomed project to turn a medium-sized mistake into a very large one. Its continuing sickness will cause this country difficulties, even though we did the right thing by staying out.

Of course nothing this big ever gets built without some advantages, even if they were clearly outweighed by the drawbacks, so it's helpful to look at what is good about euroland (member countries of the EU who use only the euro), what is bad, then compare the two.

Behind the EU programme to impose only one currency on member countries is the belief among EU enthusiasts that it is the dollar which makes the United States rich and powerful. Broadly, there are three possibilities:

- i) the USA is a rich country because a single currency unit, the US dollar, is used across a broad region,
- ii) the USA's wealth has no connection with its currency,
- iii) the USA is a rich country *despite* having one exclusive currency across the whole of its territory.

Although there are economic arguments for all three, only the first belief is taken seriously by proponents of the euro. There are agreed advantages and disadvantages to being in a large currency zone. The main advantages

of large currency zones like euroland or the US dollar zone are that:

- a) there is more pressure to be competitive when customers or employers can see that identical goods or services in other towns or regions are cheaper without having to convert currencies to notice the price difference;
- b) it is harder for a larger currency bloc to come under speculative pressure in money-market panics than a small currency bloc.
- c) it is cheaper for governments and companies to borrow money and issue bonds in the larger pool of money a large currency bloc affords.

The main disadvantages of large currency zones are that:

- d) a region inside that zone no longer has a currency going up or down in value to correct for payments imbalances. It loses a vital tool for recovering from depression or inflation;
- e) some industries or professions cannot compete against better-entrenched competitors elsewhere in the large currency zone – If you think a famous free-trade argument called 'the theory of comparative advantage' is flawless, you think this is only a political problem, but some economists disagree;
- f) pulling together different economies at different stages of their economic cycles to create the large currency zone is a stressful process – France and Germany for example sustained difficult years of wastefully high unemployment through the 1990s while the franc and the mark converged towards becoming the euro.

So there are perils from being inside the euro zone, and also from being outside the euro zone.

Interestingly, the bigger the euro zone gets, the harder it is to stay outside it. Even if there are high costs to joining, the costs of staying out go up as the bloc grows in size. Countries face an unpleasant choice that Americans might call 'lose-lose'.

Recently, Greece has suffered serious speculative pressure from money markets, suffering strains from being *in* the euro. But speculators are also pressuring

another economy, Hungary, endangered by being *outside* the euro zone. However, by borrowing lots of money in foreign currencies (such as home loans denominated in Swiss Francs or euros), Hungary's population chose the worst of both worlds, locking themselves into a quasi-euro zone anyway. The usual remedy for debt or inflation in Hungary would be to devalue its national currency, but if this means that a significant proportion of your residents then cannot afford higher interest payments on their now relatively more expensive foreign mortgages, you have lost the use of this instrument. In their present predicament, countries like Hungary *might as well be* trapped inside euroland even if they officially aren't there yet. Like euro members, they are forced to follow saver-friendly/borrower-hostile policies that suit the hard-currency lenders their home-buying voters indebted themselves to.

Robert Mundell, a Canadian economist who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in part for his work on 'optimal currency zones' warned that a large currency zone needs workers willing to move long distances to new jobs. This is to correct different regions overheating or being depressed. Importantly, the United States has a much higher 'mobility of labour' than even individual European countries. For example, an American worker is usually cited as three times more likely to move house within the USA to get a new job than French people within France. It's worth pausing a second to grasp that difference – *inside* France. It's *not* about the obstacles to getting a job in another language. A third as many French folk per thousand move from Paris to Marseille or from Lyon to Lille than Americans from San Francisco to Dallas or Atlanta to Chicago, and French people's willingness to get a new job in French-speaking Brussels or Geneva is even lower. In fact France's real high-flyers now come to London, leaving the euro zone altogether, which doesn't help the euro operate either.

Once you add on the difficulties, linguistic and bureaucratic, for a Spanish professional trying to move for work to Denmark, or a German to Greece, it gets worse, but the statistics suggest it isn't a fixable problem, and isn't really about language. The people currently living in the EU (and let's remember the union is supposed to serve their interests) seem to have strong preferences for staying in their own country – their home town even – as close as possible to their extended family. This is rather wholesome and wonderful, and no-one should be criticising Greeks or Italians for wanting to stay close to their grannies and uncles. Quite the contrary. It simply augurs badly for planners trying to force Continentals all to use only one currency.

Why does moving for work matter to a currency zone?

Mundell's work suggests that if a region of a currency zone is in depression, its workers need to migrate in sufficient numbers to another region which is booming, where demand for workers is driving up wages. This migration helps to correct the depression in the region they leave and also reduces wage inflation in the region they go to. If they don't migrate in sufficient numbers, but try to sit out the downturn, most of the serious benefits of using one currency evaporate.

Of course, we do not want a region constantly in depression, so politicians pump in government money to assist that region. This then has perverse and damaging effects – which are the basic cause of problems right now both sides of the Atlantic. That government money does two things. 1) It makes the depressed region increasingly dependent on that money. 2) More insidiously, it stops the flow of skills and assets to firms which are growing (largely made up of skilled workers taking their skills with them) and instead keeps those skills and assets dispersed where they can do no good. Meanwhile, that government money – or cheap loans in the alternative stimulus variation where politicians lower interest rates and push banks to lend to low-income borrowers – leads to a speculative bubble in housing, instead of stimulating those new businesses which didn't emerge.

This point about skilled workers being 'dispersed' is important but not always so easy to follow. If, let's say, Birmingham's local economy is booming, a scattering of engineers currently unemployed or doing dull jobs beneath their real skill level in towns like Hull, London, Bristol or Aberdeen will be attracted to Birmingham to work together on some project and from this new products can emerge. If they do not move, we will never know what might have been – a new kind of lorry that never got made, the British version of Apple Computers that never started up in the 1950s or 60s, some new, cleverer kind of plastic that got invented somewhere else instead. It's crucial to realise that we *don't know* who those engineers are. It's *not* like the bit at the start of the bank-robbery film where someone builds a team recruiting the best safecracker, the best explosives expert, the best getaway driver. It's much more random – when a currency zone is working as it should, enough of these people accidentally find each other, and then a town – like Menlo Park (heart of California's Silicon Valley) – emerges as the place where people with compatible interests and skills meet each other.

In crude outline, this is Mundell's explanation of why high labour mobility is vital for large currency zones.

Separately there is evidence that large currency zones

consolidate economic vigour into a few cities at the expense of the territory in between. This might sound trivial until we notice that there are thirty metropolitan areas of over a million people in the USA, compared to over fifty metropolitan areas of over a million people in the much smaller area of Europe that excludes Ukraine, Russia, or Belarus. Include Ukraine, Russia, Belarus to get a land mass roughly equal to the US, and Europe's one-million-people-conurbation score moves above sixty. That might sound unimportant, but it strongly suggests that a successful euroland would consign at least twenty large European cities to permanent backwater status – also politically unacceptable. There is strong evidence from regional economics that even currency zones only as large as the British pound or the Italian lira already do this. We have seen this damaging sidelining of certain regions – unaltered by decades of subsidies – closing down cities as large as Liverpool or Naples. This helps no-one, and the euro is unwittingly inflicting on dozens more Liverpools and Naples across Europe the seemingly irreversible regional decline we see inside some countries. The euro's very design completely overlooks this near-insoluble regional economic problem, mistakenly thinks this problem does not exist in the US (where major regional economies cycle in and out of depression, partly healed by high mobility of labour), and wants to recreate American problems on a Europe-wide scale, with no hope of the American solution – the high migration levels.

Think back over the decades of government assistance projects from southern Britain to northern Britain or from northern Italy to southern Italy. These problems plague many country-sized currency

zones (Germany, Norway, Japan) where one region persistently lags, is subsidised for decades, yet still lags. Imagine problems like the long-term decline of northern Britain or southern Italy afflicting whole swathes of euroland. Imagine the political resentments in a country condemned to decades as the Marseille or Newcastle of euroland. Mundell and other economists broadly offer two remedies for this problem with large currency zones:

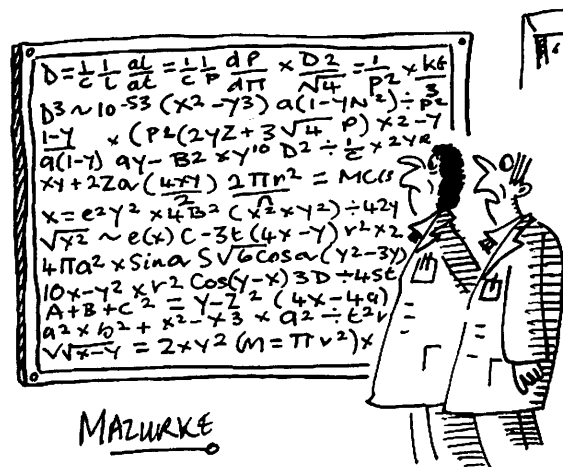
- a) high labour migration – the American solution;
- b) large subsidies to lagging regions – this would be the European solution except that there are insufficient funds, and decades of experience in countries like Britain and Italy suggest government transfers to lagging regions don't actually work.

In other words, the euro project needs one of these two solutions, but it looks like one of the two doesn't work, and in any case it won't get either.

The British press typically presents the difference between the USA and the EU as a contrast between a lightly regulated, laissez faire tradition and a heavily regulated, state-managed tradition. In fact the difference is better understood as two largeish areas both facing heavy costs from running a big currency zone but coping with those costs differently.

Or – judging by bottled-up grievances now emerging in the Occupy Wall Street protests and its spin-offs (Occupy Oakland looks particularly interesting) – perhaps that should readnot coping.

Mark Griffith is publishing editor of *Collateral Damage* – Global Crash Phase Two, see page 39.



"And, basically, that's all that needs to be done to save the euro."

The Nature of Money

Myles Harris

Monday: empty storehouses – a rat became the unit of currency

(Report from a Besieged City, Zbigniew Herbert)

Economists are like 18th century physicians. They sniff the patient's stool making confident predictions but their opinions have proved to be universally worthless. There are any number of economic hucksters: monetarists, inflators, deflators, quantitative easers, taxers, free marketeers, globalists, protectionists and the economic equivalents of The American Shakers who did not believe in having children, the Marxists.

Economists are invariably wrong because money has no existence, it is a feeling, a rhythm, a Roger De Coverley Dance in which everybody knows when the steps are right. Money is like love, it dies when you no longer trust it. *'The Bank of England promises to pay the bearer on demand five pounds'* is like the marriage vow. When city dealers stare at those flickering computer screens they are looking for adultery. As in marriage, money cannot be free with itself. It is why the world's currencies are in the throes of divorce. The culprits are the globalists who, like Marxists, thought money had a life of its own, that it could sleep with anybody and not bring home the pox. Some of us have always begged to differ. The true conservative knows money is a moral concept.

Money can be betrayed. When Europe was young an economy went like this. The country produced 100 bricks and minted a hundred gold sovereigns. Each brick was worth a sovereign. If brick production rose to 200 and the money supply remained the same each brick cost a half sovereign. If the country minted 200 sovereigns but only produced 50 bricks then each brick cost 4 sovereigns. The trick was to keep a tight rein on the money supply. It was why coin clippers were hanged.

This Adam Smith paradise is not possible in a world where economic activity has reached such a frenzy. We have a global population of seven billion and rising, all of whom need money. In 1935 fifteen passengers might disembark from a Dragon Rapide at Croydon Airport which saw around twenty planes a day. At Heathrow eight hundred disembark from a single Super Jumbo, an airport which sees eighty million passenger movements a year. All use Visa Cards and bank accounts and need foreign exchange, as do the tens of thousands of

trading houses around the world doing business with us. This is repeated anywhere there is even a vestige of modernity. As a result money in huge quantities roars around the world like a tide, chased by the super computers of the city.

Because money flows everywhere it frequently ends on dodgy shores. Hans looks at a Euro in his pocket and says to himself, 'Where were you last night?' If it was Greece the coinage will have been clipped by unrepayable debt.

If Hans' Euros find their way to China it is even worse. The American sub-prime mortgage scandal will seem like a prairie dust flurry compared with what is about to hit Guangdong and Peking. China has built not just streets and suburbs of worthless property but entire cities, some entirely vacant, hoping her income from her one-sided foreign trade will pay off their mortgages. Since China did not come up with her side of her free trade bargain with the West – she exported everything, bought little, thieved our technology and refused to trade the Yuan on honest terms – she will get very little back.

Soon, some say, the computers will begin to crunch the Yuan. But are computers reliable? Will they in time become the final arbiters of value, infallible electronic Adam Smiths made of RAM chips and transistors? They are supposed to smell the slightest whiff of an unreconciled national account, placing bets accordingly. If that were true there would be no horse racing, as the number of variables in a horse race are orders of magnitude less than in the global economy. Instead, city computers bet against computers in highly artificial games and pass losses on to their customers, their owners taking 0.1 per cent of gargantuan trades. The City is now a giant Ladbrokes. In city coffee houses they will tell you this massive spread betting is a victimless crime; the only people who suffer are the rich. It is a lie. Money is there to finance the production of goods. Playing electronic poker with it has its domestic parallel in the husband who spends his day in the local betting shop leaving the family with no food on the table.

In consequence we are seeing the death of the dream of free trade. Adam Smith's hidden hand only works if it stays out of other people's pockets. Will trust return? Trust is a funny thing. The dollar was trusted after the war because it was new and fresh and came from a long way away. Not much is new and fresh these days. If

economies cannot grow, maybe we will make a virtue of contracting them.

What a paradise England would be if we were not going to build HS2, Heathwick, more and more suburbs, welcome 250,000 new residents a year and the population was heading toward 50 rather than 75

million. The economic model for the last fifty years is like a repellent pop tune that has got louder and louder by the day. What a relief it would be if somebody turned it off.

Myles Harris is a Consulting Editor.

Prisons without Walls

Theodore Dalrymple

The adjective 'social' abolishes or contradicts the word that succeeds it. This is not quite true; no one can claim that social housing, whatever its undesirable effects, is not housing of a kind.

There was a time when social housing was not as baneful in its effects as it is now. When I see pictures of council housing estates as they were in the 1920s and 30s, I am struck by their neatness, cleanliness and general good order. I have little doubt that the working-class people who moved into them did so with a sense of relief, pride and perhaps even of gratitude, for they must have known far worse conditions in their life. They did not yet think that good things came to them by right.

The world does not stand still. The meaning or significance of things, including social housing, changes. It has become one of the most important causes of unemployment in Britain, and quite possibly also of the riots that opened the eyes of many – though no doubt only temporarily – to what has been wrought in our country.

The word 'social' as appended to housing imparts a warm glow to the hearts of those who see the salvation of mankind brought about by governments and bureaucracies, but the word 'anti-social' would be far more accurate. This is not because everyone who lives in social housing is psychopathic, far from it, but because, thanks to the virtual impossibility of eviction, and the almost complete absence of policing, those who behave worst and most ruthlessly set the tone of whole estates. The design of social housing often does not help; the architects and planners have often thoughtfully provided many nooks and crannies and walkways and pedestrian underpasses and open spaces where muggers and rapists may safely lurk. It is not the physical features of social housing, unpleasant and

social housing has become one of the most important causes of unemployment in Britain, and quite possibly also of the riots that opened the eyes of many – though no doubt only temporarily – to what has been wrought in our country.

charmless as they often are, that determine its character. If Hamlet could be enclosed in a nutshell and count himself king of infinite space, a normal human being could live comfortably enough, in the physical sense, in most of the accommodation provided by social housing. As Sartre said, hell is other people: or at least, it is made by other people.

The myth persists that because social housing is social, that is to say not for the profit of private landlords, its landlords – councils and housing associations – must be good, that is to say compassionate. This idea could not survive more than a few minutes of actual contact with the said landlords, or rather with their bureaucratic employees. In my work as a doctor in an area where social housing predominated, I found myself often intervening with the housing authorities on behalf of my patients, many of whom found those authorities indifferent to their well-being, lazy and mendacious. It was standard practice for the bureaucrats to lose tenants' letters; they denied that telephone conversations of the previous day had ever taken place (always assuming that you could get through on the telephone, which was rarely); they denied that walls dripping with condensation and black with mould had anything wrong with them. The tenants who, by and large, were not articulate, were often reduced to incoherent rage; some of them would no doubt have attacked the staff of the housing department had it not been for the thick bullet-proof glass separating the latter from the former. I developed the technique of dealing directly with the top man or woman in the housing department or association and no one else; my requests on behalf of my patients, frequently copied to the local MP, contained just enough middle-class menace to galvanise the system

into action, and what had previously proved impossible to do in eighteen months or two years was done within a few days. It was very effective for my patients, but it was no way to organise anything.

Despite its neglectful and even negligent landlords, accommodation in social housing remains a sought-after privilege, for subsidies are always pleasant to those who receive them. I do not believe that young girls have babies in order to move up the waiting list for social housing; rather they desire an object upon which to lavish and receive the love that their social and family environment has denied them. A little social pathology or breakdown does advance one's chances. And where privileges are granted on the basis of supposed need, such need can soon enough be generated by bad or improvident behaviour.

The effects of social housing are yet worse. The paradox must have struck many people that Britain is a country with a high level of long-term unemployment (the majority of those in receipt of sickness benefit are in fact unemployed) which nevertheless imports large numbers of foreign immigrants to perform unskilled labour. It is one thing to import people because your economy is so flourishing that it cannot find the workers it needs, but quite another to do so while maintaining equally large numbers of people in state-subsidised idleness.

Clearly the paradox is not explicable solely by the existence of social housing. Britain is the only country in western Europe where nearly all posts in half-way decent hotels and restaurants are filled by young foreigners, and this is because the work, while not highly skilled, requires certain qualities that unemployed British youth so conspicuously lacks: reliability, politeness and helpfulness, all of which much of British youth is inclined to regard as a sign of weakness. They don't want people to like them; they want people to fear them. That is what they mean by respect.

No generalisation exists without exceptions, even many exceptions; social housing imprisons those who receive it, including those who want to work. Since it is a privilege, everyone who has it is reluctant to relinquish it; and since it is not transferable from one authority or location to another, it prevents mobility in search of work. It is thus much easier for a young person to come from Poland for a job in rural Cornwall than for a young Briton who lives in social housing in Somerset, or even Cornwall, to find one. The only way you can move once you are in social housing is to find someone who wants to move to your place from

the place you want to move to, a process which takes from years to infinity. No employer can wait that long; and it is probable that more jobs are available in areas that people want in any case to move to than away from. Thus social housing is a prison without walls and without warders. As any prisoner will tell you, the prisons where the prisoners have most power are by far the worst and most brutal.

Not long ago, I visited Sark, within which it is scarcely possible to get more remote while remaining in the British Isles. Managing to lose myself in that most magical of places, smelling of wild flowers and resounding with birdsong, I came across some labourers working on an extension to a house, and asked them the way. They were Polish and spoke little or no English. So the phenomenon I have described is like a certain brand of beer that, according to advertisement, reaches parts that other beers cannot reach.

Decades ago when it was assumed that a region's industries would continue more or less unchanged for ever, with the same number of jobs, this was not so much

of a problem, but however much we may lament the world we have lost, that world and its economy has changed. Social housing is a recipe for unemployment at the very stage in life when flexibility and mobility should be at their greatest; instead, we coop youth up in a cage by means of a housing subsidy.

I do not intend to excuse the rioters, or to imply that were it not for social housing they would have been fine, upstanding citizens, but behind almost every form of social pathology you will find a state subsidy of one kind or another. Social housing is antisocial. It promotes bad behaviour first by rewarding it and then by failing to punish it. It imprisons people wherever they receive it, and unfits them for the labour market. It creates the impression that housing is a right rather than something that ought ordinarily to be earned. It is therefore demoralising, because supposed rights to tangible benefits are always, before long, demoralising, both for those who receive and those who supply them. At the very least, then, we should demand that the term no longer be used; perhaps 'subsidised informal imprisonment' would be better. It would certainly be more accurate.

Theodore Dalrymple's latest book is Anything Goes (Monday Books)

Sidney the Infidel Cat

Jane Kelly

Perhaps because we are spinster ladies, a friend and I have noticed a large number of animals abandoned in London lately. I recently rescued a mother and three kittens from my coal-hole and my friend fed a stray for months before taking him in. She was accused by her Pakistani neighbour of stealing her cat which had gone missing. Then the woman said it didn't matter because she had got another kitten, for her young son Abu.

Later my friend met this woman again who told her the cat was so scared of Abu it never came out from under the bed and was 'pissing' everywhere. This was the third kitten she'd acquired for him. My friend went round to the house, didn't manage to see the beast but could smell the pee. She asked if they had a litter tray for him but didn't get an answer, the woman was vague. Was it neutered? She didn't know what that meant but asked for help to get rid of the kitten. My friend gave her some numbers to call but weeks went by and nothing happened.

I saw Abu outside one day. He obviously had what they now call 'learning difficulties'. I could imagine the effect he'd have on a frightened feline. I had just had a major surgical operation and was supposed to be on bed-rest, but perhaps because of my background, brought up on English children's stories, the thought of the kitten under the bed preyed

on my mind. I couldn't stand to think of it alone and scared. I called a small local welfare society. The voice on the end of the line was dismayed. She already had stray cats filling bathroom, bedroom and garage, but she said she'd help if I would go to the house and find out if the woman would let her in.

As I entered the house I had to get permission by phone from her older son to take the cat. He was curious about who we were and why we were there. Although it had no name, no choice of food, there was only one packet of food in the place, and lived in hiding, it wasn't being subject to active cruelty. I couldn't very well say that he and his family just weren't able to provide it with a good enough standard of life. It had

rights and without knowing it he was violating them. I just said the situation would be easier all round if it went somewhere else.

As I waited for the woman from the charity to arrive with her trap, the mother, who was born here, told me she had gone to Pakistan to find a husband, brought him back, they'd had four children, but after Abu was born he'd left. They'd been living in a flat locally but Abu had started pouring garbage on to the balconies below and pelting neighbours with tins. She didn't seem inclined to control him and his behaviour had led to them being re-housed by the council in one of the new built, four bedroomed houses put up in the Labour building boom.

The place looked a tip, with all the door handles sawn off for some reason. The walls were bare apart from framed phrases from the Koran in gold letters; outside was an untidy litter-strewn garden. But the place was bigger than anything any of my friends or I could ever

afford. I couldn't help noticing the spacious new kitchen with its elegant slate floor and two giant fridges, speckled with facility buttons I'd never seen before.

'It's lovely', she said, 'and such a nice area'.

Living in my one-bedroom basement flat with our street increasingly filled with foreigners, it doesn't seem quite like that to me. Two teenage girls sat on the stairs

staring at their smart phones, Abu also had one. I asked one girl if the cat had some food we could take with him. At first she didn't bother to reply and then said she didn't know. Any toys? She looked at me incredulous, with scorn on her face and laughed. I was struck by their total sense of entitlement and lack of interest in what I was doing. They made no connection between me taking away their cat because he deserves a better life, and the wider society they inhabit, which insists that single women with handicapped children should also have a better life, be well housed, from the public purse. Our standards are why her family and her husband first came to live here in this land of eccentric, do-gooding spinsters like me, but the girl



regarded us with contempt and the mother as something merely useful.

The woman from the animal rescue arrived and spent ages trying to catch the traumatised kitten which was in fact a large furious cat. The family stood outside the bedroom door watching as if it was an amusing sport. When we got it outside on the pavement I saw that he was a dark tabby who had somehow remained resiliently beautiful. The family gathered outside to wave us off, smiling as if we'd been welcome visitors. No shame about what had happened, no thank you, or offer of a donation: the mother just glad someone had fixed her latest problem, it was all part of the service,

a small helping from the continuing infidel buffet.

I felt saddened at the gulf between us. I belong to a different culture, the best of which is the part that escaped the sarcastic girl; we English are the people who, as John le Carré recently put it, 'Will carry the horse uphill'; but in doing so we have somehow created a dependent class who like children and animals exploit us quite unknowingly.

Jane Kelly is a freelance journalist who contributes to the Daily Telegraph.

Only One God but Oil

Srdja Trifkovic

Interventionists and their neo-conservative twins on both sides of the Atlantic were jubilant as Libyan rebels took Tripoli. From now on 'the right question for the United States and its allies isn't whether to help oppressed people fight for freedom. It's "when"' declared the *Washington Post* on August 24th. The answer to that question is right now, opined former US ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton, who wishes to effect regime change in Syria. According to Lord Owen, former British Foreign Secretary, 'we have proved in Libya that intervention can still work and a precedent for the future is now set. Who, today does not thrill to the spectacle of freedom in Tripoli?' Fouad Ajami enthused in the *Wall Street Journal*. The spectacle in the streets of Tripoli was no more thrilling than that of young men brandishing Kalashnikovs, flashing V signs, and smashing kitschy statues anywhere else in the world: and thrill is a poor substitute for policy.

As the dust settles, the fruits of the Libyan intervention are likely to prove detrimental to the American interest and harmful to regional stability. As Afghanistan and Iraq indicate, it is far easier to defeat a regime in the field than it is to stabilise a country and make it governable in accordance with the wishes of a distant intervening power. The claim of 'success' in Libya needs to be met with the question that resonated with the French in the summer of 1940: *pour qui? pour quoi?* Like the 1999 Kosovo war (to stop a non-existent genocide) and the 2003 Iraq war (to remove non-existent weapons of mass destruction), the Libyan operation was an exercise in premeditated mendacity.

The justification for intervention has been the claim

that government forces were about to carry out a massacre of civilians in Benghazi. But subsequent reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have cast doubt on various atrocity stories produced to justify the NATO bombing. Systematic disinformation and atrocity management are by now an integral part of US-led interventions, however, and the media played on cue. The quality of mainstream media analysis of the Libyan conflict has been worthy of *Pravda* 30 years ago, analysing Brezhnev's policy in Afghanistan. It has not occurred to a single *New York Times* or *Washington Post* editorialist that the way to save civilian lives is to urge a ceasefire followed by an attempt to reach a negotiated settlement.

In reality the United States, Britain and France had encouraged, armed, and financed the rebellion from its earliest stages. Having groomed them, they provided the rebels with 20,000 air sorties over the course of 150 days and beefed up their ranks in clear violation of their mandate with as yet unknown numbers of British and French special forces. In the end it was NATO that brought down Gaddafi, notably by intensifying bombing raids in the first three weeks of August, with the rebels playing an auxiliary role on the ground not dissimilar to that of the Afghan Northern Alliance in the fall of 2001.

NATO's role as a tool for aggressive out-of-area operations, unconnected with its member states' defence requirements and unimaginable under NATO's 1949 Charter, has been further cemented, to the detriment of restraint and realism. Regime change has been the three Western powers' objective all along, and the UN Security Council resolution authorizing

limited action for supposedly humanitarian goals was misused accordingly. It remains unclear why Russia and China abstained from the vote last March. The Russians may have expected a protracted rise in oil prices, the Chinese may have hoped for a long quagmire, and both were fairly indifferent to the fate of the erratic Libyan dictator. It is certain that they will not provide another 'Responsibility to Protect' authorization any time soon, however, least of all *vis-à-vis* Syria. That will not make much difference to the advocates of interventionism, who will simply bypass the United Nations if it proves uncooperative to the application of David Owen's 'precedent for the future' just as President Barack Obama has bypassed the requirement for Congressional authorization by making the preposterous claim that the United States was engaged in 'non-hostile action' in Libya.

After the US Army deposed Saddam, Iraq was the scene of a protracted vendetta and simultaneous bloody struggle for power, which the occupying 'coalition' forces were unable and unwilling to prevent. The absence of such forces on the ground in Libya means that the rebels will be even freer to settle their political, personal, and tribal scores with Al-Qaeda supporters as they deem fit – which will be a nasty business – and to try to 'disarm' one another, which may turn into a bloodbath in its own right. At the time of this writing, the signs are ominous.

On August 26, Amnesty International accused the rebels of shooting scores of unarmed prisoners and mistreating migrant workers, despite repeated promises by the transitional national council that its forces would not repeat the violations of the former regime. On the same day foreign reporters came across a former government forces camp in central Tripoli where pro-regime fighters were found massacred, including a number who were bound before execution. Dozens more bodies of pro-Al-Qaeda soldiers were found in a field hospital. On such form, many ordinary Libyans with no commitment to either side may soon become nostalgic for Gaddafi just as their Iraqi counterparts turned wistful only months after Saddam's fall for the predictable stability of his rule.

It is an even bet that the eventual winners will be Cyrenaica's jihadists of various hues – the best armed and organized rebel faction by far – who are different in style but not in substance from the Shiite clerics who are now in charge in Baghdad. An indication of what the new regime has in store for the country is provided by the new Libyan constitution. Drafted by the transitional national council some weeks before Gaddafi's departure and founded on Islamic law, the first general provision of the draft constitution reads: 'Islam is the religion of the state and the principal

source of legislation is Islamic jurisprudence'. Ordinary Libyans may not be the only ones to conclude that they would be better off with Gaddafi, if the overall winners turn out to be local affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In the developing power struggle among rebel factions it is possible that there will be no clear winner for a long time. The disintegration of the Libyan state, the revival of core tribal loyalties, and the ineffectiveness of the 'transitional national council' have the potential to turn Libya into a more sophisticated version of Somalia. The tribes – starting with those loyal to the fallen dictatorship – are already arming themselves and moving away from the central state. A Hobbesian free-for-all would turn Libya into a hotbed of regional instability and a safe haven for the assorted Fourth Generation Warriors such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Gaddafi had stockpiled 20,000 man portable anti-aircraft weapons which could be used by terrorists to shoot down passenger aircraft. Many of these weapons are unaccountably missing, with Andrew J Shapiro, the US assistant secretary of state for political military affairs, admitting that this is 'one of the things that keep me up at night'.

If Libya unravels, the United States and her European allies would be under pressure to intervene to impose order. A long and costly exercise in nation rebuilding remains a possibility. As Seumas Milne has noted in the *Guardian*, the British government's refusal to rule out sending troops to take part in a 'stabilisation operation' is an ominous sign of where Libya may be heading; and if Libyans end up with the kind of democracy foisted on Iraq and Afghanistan, courtesy of their Western advisers, that will be no liberation at all:

There are many in the region who now hope that the fall of Gaddafi will give new momentum to the stalled Arab awakening, bringing down another autocrat, perhaps in the Yemen. But the risk could instead be that it sends a message that regimes can only now be despatched with the armed support of Washington, London and Paris – available in the most select circumstances. Nato's intervention in Libya is a threat to the Arab revolution, but the forces that have been unleashed in the region won't be turned back so easily. Many of those who have fought for power in Libya, including Islamists, clearly won't accept the dispensation that's been prepared for them. But only when NATO and its bagmen are forced to leave Libya can Libyans truly take control of their own country.

In the meantime, further tens of thousands of North African 'asylum seekers' will land on Lampedusa, the first stop *en route* to the Muslim enclaves in Milan, Munich and Malmo. Europe will be further multi-culturalized, one step closer to its demographic self-annihilation.

Perhaps the most harmful consequence of our engagement with Libya, from the standpoint of the American interest, is the brazen manner in which Obama and his legal team have evaded the strictures of the War Powers Resolution of 1973. The White House claims not only that the US action in Libya is made legitimate by the United Nations, but that UN authorization *per se* makes congressional approval unnecessary. This is some light years from candidate Obama declaring in 2008 that the 'President does not have power under the constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation'. The claim that a war involving the United States can be 'legitimated' by a multi-national agency – the United Nations, or NATO, or the Arab League

– is legally absurd. It is also immoral and potentially treasonous. It opens the way to any number of future 'engagements' that bear no relevance to American interests, security, or welfare.

Yet again NATO has intervened militarily in pursuit of a hidden agenda that had little to do with its formally stated goals and which produced results objectively detrimental to Western interests. As the country braces itself for the second half of the double dip recession, the Balkan Syndrome of the 1990's has been transferred to a grander, strategically more significant scene. Interesting times, indeed.

This article was first published in *Chronicles*.

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Votes for Jesus

Paul Gottfried

The most interesting aspect of the continuing race among eight or ten (I've forgotten the number) GOP presidential contenders may be what has not happened. Contrary to early predictions, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney has not wrapped up the nomination two years before the general presidential race scheduled for November 2012. Romney was working toward the GOP nomination even before he got into the race in 2008 – and then lost in the stretch to Arizona senator John McCain. While still governor in the very left-of-centre state of Massachusetts in 2007, Mitt, the son of former Michigan governor George Romney, carried out a breathtaking about-face in positioning himself for the Republican primaries. He moved across the political spectrum, from somewhere near Barack Obama on social issues, immigration and a state-run medical program, to what looks like a made-to-order right-wing position-package aimed at conservative primary voters.

In less than six months Mitt went from coddling illegals and including them in the state version of Obamacare that he and the democratic legislature produced – a plan, by the way, that paid for abortions

Romney advocates the appointment of 'democracy supervisors', who under his presidency would be placed across the globe to monitor each area's progress toward human-rights democracy (American style).

– to sounding like a member of the Religious Right. Never in my lifetime did a major presidential candidate change his colours so completely and with so little appearance of conviction. The one quality it is hard not to admire in Romney is chutzpah, which he seems to wear well on his handsome, movie-star exterior. Other candidates may have a better moral right to the presidency, but no other couple seems to look as presidential (in the cinematic, photogenic sense) as Mitt and his strikingly Nordic-looking spouse Ann. Although I would never vote for this shameless opportunist for any elected office, he would be my first choice for someone to play the American chief executive in a movie.

Apparently a lot of American voters feel exactly as I do. No matter how hard Mitt runs and no matter how flawless his slick answers in televised debates with other presidential contenders seem to be, the sincerity factor continues to work against him. Most Republican voters don't trust him; and those who identify themselves as conservatives don't think 'he is one of us'. There are also widely read website publications, like *World Net Daily*, which speak effectively for the Religious Right and which denounce Romney for his ardent support of

gay marriage while Massachusetts governor. Romney also moved to the left of the late Ted Kennedy on abortion rights when he ran unsuccessfully against him for the Senate in 1994. From all evidence, Romney found Kennedy to be insufficiently enthusiastic in his endorsement of a 'medical procedure,' which many Republican primary voters strongly disapprove of. Finally Romney's close association with the Mormon Church (to which his wife is a convert) has generated displeasure among grassroots Republicans, who tend to be traditional low-church Protestants. No matter how hard FOX-News and other organs of the Murdoch media empire have worked to eliminate religion from this presidential contest, religious Christians don't feel quite comfortable voting for a polytheist. That is what Mormons are; and the head of the Southern Baptist Convention, Robert Jeffress, when he endorsed Texas governor and outspoken Evangelical Rick Perry (whose candidacy seems to be collapsing) in early October, had the audacity to explain that Mormons are 'not Christian at all' but 'belong to a cult.'

So far Romney's support among Republicans has fluctuated between 25 and 28 per cent and rarely goes above 30 per cent. This indicates the limited power being exercised by certain elites that usually can shape the nominating process. Romney is the clear choice of the GOP establishment, which sees him as the candidate who may be able to appeal to the centre and the left. The phoniness of Romney's conversion to the social Right and his hypocritical attacks on the evils of Obamacare may be precisely what make him electable. No one but the self-deluded could believe, as one hears on GOP networks, that the majority of Americans are politically right-of-centre. Whenever I hear this astonishing statement, I shout 'right of what centre? The European Greens?' Most Americans continue to adore Obama and seem to be almost as far to the left on social issues as their president. What distresses our voters is that Obama's bail-outs and other pay-offs to his constituents have not resulted in a better employment situation. Romney may be a Republican candidate who could win because he is perceived as not being all that different from the incumbent but can boast a corporate background, as the head of an equity company, before going into politics.

Not only would Republican operatives, like Bush advisor and FOX-News fixture Karl Rove, be delighted with Romney as their nominee; the neoconservative power-brokers would be equally overjoyed with this choice. Like George W Bush, Romney is fully in sync with neoconservative interests and policies. He sounds all the familiar themes about exporting

democracy and getting behind the Israelis in building more settlements on the West Bank. In *No Apology: the Case for American Greatness*, a book ghost-written for him in 2009, Romney advocates the appointment of 'democracy supervisors', who under his presidency would be placed across the globe to monitor each area's progress toward human-rights democracy (American style). Romney would also be unlikely to make noise about being reborn in Christ or follow Governor Perry in denying without counter-evidence the theory of evolution. Although some (Jewish atheist) neocons went ballistic when the Reverend Jeffress told us that Mormons are not Christians, this for Romney's apologists is not a theological issue. It's a matter of clearing the way for their candidate, who is not likely to bring his religion into his administration.

But his media friends can't close the deal for him; and lately the neoconservative *New York Post* has begun to complain about the skeletons in Romney's closet, particularly about how far he went in Massachusetts to accommodate illegals. Romney's fair-weather fans have also looked for fallback candidates, who agree with them on international affairs.

Among these alternative candidates who have attracted their attention is long-time neocon favourite and former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich. An articulate debater and, until recently, a predictable crusader for global democracy, whose spouse did public relations work for the Israeli government, Gingrich would be the perfect neoconservative candidate, were it not for several negatives. Already in his late sixties and a notorious philanderer, who recently married his one-time lover, and now his third wife, Gingrich has been around the block too often to be a serious contender. In his most recent incarnation he converted to Catholicism and now combines his positions on rolling back taxes with calls for renewed religious faith. Unfortunately the public may still remember his playboy days, together with his ardent support a few years ago of everything Bush did at home and abroad to drive up the national debt to unprecedented heights. Other alternatives to Romney in the GOP primary sweepstakes have been Texas governor Rick Perry, Minnesota Congresswoman Michele Bachman, and black Baptist corporate executive Herman Cain.

All these candidates have shown short-term promise but then succeeded in putting their feet in their mouths. While the national media treat vice-president, and former very leftist Delaware senator Joseph Biden, with indulgence each time he makes up facts (which is every five seconds), it has been brutal about exposing and exaggerating the gaffes

of GOP contenders, and particularly the ones to the right of Romney. At this point, Cain is still ahead of Romney by a few percentage points in the polls, but given his occasional, deadly slips (like coming out for and against abortion rights in the same statement) and his highly vulnerable plan for tax reform, I suspect the media will soon be bringing him down. Although white conservatives feel virtuous about voting for a non-leftist black (which they think frees them from the stigma of being associated with 'racism'), black voters by contrast don't recognize the African-looking Cain as one of their own. He is perceived as an alien rightwing Republican, and like white liberals, well over 95 per cent of blacks polled consider the half-black Obama (who grew up in a white home) to be their real kinsman, for ideological reasons.

Despite the (by American standards) high unemployment rate and repeated scandals that the current administration has had to deal with, Obama remains enormously popular with the American public. Most voters seem willing to blame Republican fat-cats and Republican obstructionist tactics for the failure of his presidency and they remain confident that if Obama could be Obama, we would be able to lick our problems. In the last ten years Americans have swerved to the left on social and other issues, and what has gone on in Western Europe and Germany to move the electorate leftward has occurred just as dramatically in the US. In the latest polls, Obama is beating his most competitive Republican rival, Romney, by about eight points; and if Romney were facing Obama's feminist secretary-of-state in a two-person race, Hillary would win by fifteen points. All other GOP contenders would do even worse than Romney against Obama and Hillary. There is also a good chance that conservative-libertarian Ron Paul, who has taken steady hits from the neocon media, particularly from FOX-News, may enter the race as a third party candidate. If this comes to pass, Romney's chances of squeaking out a victory would diminish further.

Despite my revulsion for the American and European public that have become putty in the hands of the cultural-social Left, it is impossible for me not to be disgusted with the Republican Party as well. At the national level it cannot free itself from the fatal embrace of the neocon mafia and greasy operators like Bush's grey eminence Karl Rove. From watching FOX one gets the impression that George W Bush was a brilliant, effective president, and that disaster struck only when Obama succeeded him. In some ways

Obama is a more presentable continuation of his silly predecessor, who ran up outrageous debts to pursue a neoconservative foreign policy and who made even more noise about reaching out to minorities than the present administration. Bush did less than Obama to control illegal immigration; and the foreign policy that Romney and the neoconservative media are seeking to return us to seems even less prudent than the one that we have with Obama. Dithering may be better than an armed campaign to spread 'American democratic values' worldwide.

If Romney becomes the Republican candidate, an Obama victory wouldn't be all that terrible, and particularly with Ron Paul playing a spoiler's role. By then Congress should be in the hands of relatively responsible Republicans, who could frustrate the plans of the stumbling novice now in the White House. One

might also hope that Obama will show his leftist, quasi-academic side more disastrously the second time around and that the white, predominantly Christian electorate would recover from its infantile infatuation with the views of the mediocrats and public educators. The worst outcome from my perspective would be having Romney in the White House. He would likely creep in with the old neocon gang and Bush's handlers and provide a third Bush term, albeit one that would tack to the left. In a race between Obama and Romney, without a third choice, my vote would go to the incumbent, as the lesser of two inexpressible evils.

Paul Gottfried's latest book is Leo Strauss and the Neo-conservatives, Transaction.



Riotous Assembly

Christie Davies

Between the 6th and 10th August 2011 Britain was hit by a wave of riots that began in Tottenham, and then spread to other parts of London and to other towns, particularly in the Midlands and Lancashire. The rioters had no purposes and the riots had no political meaning. They were a mere orgy of violence and looting by the members of Britain's disorganized underclass. They set fire to shops, homes and buses, attacked and robbed passersby. Yet senior BBC presenters and reporters insisted on referring to them as protesters. What does that tell you about our 'objective' BBC? Curiously the use of the word protesters defined the rioters as being mainly black, something the BBC otherwise wanted to avoid pointing out. Why would white rioters want to protest about the death of a black gangster and drug-dealer at the hands of the police?

The under-class that riots and wrecks was well known in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain, and especially in London. The eradication of the 'dangerous classes' was the great Victorian achievement. In the inter-war years, a time of great unemployment and deprivation, levels of both violent and acquisitive crime were lower than they had ever been before and far lower than today. From the mid-1950s onwards, under the stimulus of secularisation, the elephantiasis of state welfare and the growth of a culture of excuses and entitlements, crime, illegitimacy and drug and alcohol abuse have soared to new heights. The underclass is back. Britain's moral downfall began not in hard times, nor ones of rising inequality but during the prosperous late 1950s and 1960s. Crime is also a product of 'social' justice that undermined ideas of justice based on individuals being held responsible for their actions. The riots are an extension of routine everyday violence, the burning of buses an extension of the regular evening harassment of bus drivers and the looting is burglary on a larger scale. Likewise the illicit excitements of petty drug dealing were replaced with those of rioting. Riots are inconvenient for drug dealers because there are too many police around and so those higher up the chain instructed the petty dealers to loot to order instead.

In speaking of 'protesters' the BBC admitted what

it simultaneously sought to deny: namely that a high proportion of the rioters were black, something that had been equally true of the riots of 1981, 1995 and 2005. White ruffians joined in because they too enjoy the excitement of rioting and the gains of looting; but the core of the rioters were drawn from the black members of the underclass. The North East of England, an area of high unemployment, and with a criminal underclass but with a relatively small black population, did not have any riots.

The absence of riots in Newcastle gives the lie to the self-interested boasting of the Scottish National Party's leader Alex Salmond, who claimed that Scotland had no riots because of its different 'social fabric'. Like the North-East of England, Scotland is only different in that it has fewer blacks. In most respects Scotland is and long has been a more violent society than England, with a murder rate that is the second highest in Europe: murder there is 60 per cent higher than in England. Even in Britain's crime-free period between the wars, razor gangs fought each other in the streets of Glasgow and then, as now, Scottish inebriety led to a higher incidence of violence, including domestic violence. Scotland, claimed Salmond, has

'no history of this kind of disorder', casually ignoring the long trail of sectarian violence that characterises that society. Even the IRA

feared to commit outrages in Scotland, lest it lead to savage reprisals against the Celtic-supporting minority. After the present disturbances a man in Ibrox Glasgow and another in Dundee have been arrested for inciting others to riot. Salmond should stop making cheap points in order to drive a wedge between our peoples. The craven BBC, of course, gave way to pressure from Salmond and after his intervention spoke of English and not UK riots

Meanwhile back in Tottenham, so-called community leaders are still blaming the police and calling the death of gunman Duggan at the hands of the police murder. In 1981 when Michael Bailey, a black youth who had been stabbed by three other black youths, died while being checked by the police, the incident led to a riot. In 1985 the death of Cynthia Jarrett from a heart attack during a police raid became the excuse for the Broadwater Farm riot. Even now the 'Tottenham Defence Campaign' is

Clarke says that the existence of recidivism shows that our prisons have failed but the main purpose of prisons is containment, keeping dangerous individuals away from their potential victims

dragging up the names of the four black individuals who have died while in contact with the police during the last quarter of a century. Yet Duggan died as a by-product of Operation Trident, a police initiative to prevent black on black killings. In the three years between 2007 and 2010 there were 39 such murders of blacks by blacks and 890 shootings, usually involving gangs. It does rather dwarf the four deaths still being protested about, none of which were murder. Only 12 per cent of London's population are black yet in 2009-10 67 per cent of those proceeded against for gun crime were black males. It is impossible to sympathise with the complaint that the 'institutionally racist' police are more likely to stop and search blacks than whites or Asians. How else can Operation Trident be carried out, an operation designed to save black lives? It is time to tear up the McPherson report and treat its conclusions with scorn.

David Cameron and Theresa May took to using strong language about the rioters but wasn't it a bit too late? Can our newly fierce Home Secretary be the same woman who urged the Conservatives not

to be the 'nasty party', even though an even nastier party would have captured the votes of England's respectable working classes? Can the now outraged Ken Clarke

be the same easy-going, cigar-chomping chap who wanted to reduce the number of people in jail, even though the numbers incarcerated are few given the high crime rate? If we were to imprison malefactors at the rate we did in the 1950s we would need well over a quarter of a million prison places. Clarke says that the existence of recidivism shows that our prisons have failed but the main purpose of prisons is containment, keeping dangerous individuals away from their potential victims. We should aim at having two-thirds of the male members of the underclass aged between 17 and 25 incarcerated at any point in time. Had more of the underclass been safely locked up, there would have been fewer of them to riot, probably not enough to form the critical mass that set them off. The riots ought to lead to the end of 'nice' conservatism and the realization that a decent society has to have a nasty edge.

As the Lord Chief Justice declared, rioters and looters should be more severely punished than those committing similar crimes in normal times. His ruling was a severe, if indirect, rebuke to the Director of Public Prosecutions, Keir Starmer, who had wanted the judges to stick to the 'sentencing guidelines' and eschew severity. Starmer ought to resign.

Perhaps the most foolish comments on the sentences

were those of Ken Livingstone who complained that those sentenced after the riots would have been more leniently treated if they had come from privileged backgrounds. He has clearly forgotten the Garden House Riot of the 13th February 1970 when Cambridge University students, protesting against the government of the Greek colonels, smashed up a hotel, attacked guests and the police and felled Professor Charles Goodhart with a brick. That most wise and measured judge, Melford Stevenson, sent six of the students to prison and two to Borstal. Jack Straw, then President of the National Union of Students, accused him of discriminating against students! Rioting is a crime not just against individual victims but against us all. Whether it is a riot by the dregs of society enjoying themselves or by élite students convinced of some political cause, it should be met with the heaviest of penalties.

What 'nice' conservatives fail to see is the extent to which even stable liberal democratic societies need force to maintain order. Policing in Britain is by consent but that consent is necessarily punctuated

by outbursts of coercion. Even in the best of societies, with low crime rates, public order is fragile. Should the police go on strike, as they did in Liverpool in 1919, in

Melbourne, Australia in 1923 or in Montreal in 1969, public order soon breaks down and looting starts. When I was a child, my grandmother's brother, who was living in Liverpool in 1919 during the police strike, liked telling an anecdote about an old woman who had looted a shop, hid the goods up an alleyway and gone back for more. When she returned, she found that someone else had made off with her stash. 'You can't trust anyone these days, can you?' she said angrily. After the recent riots I no longer find the story so funny. We would also all like to forget the extensive looting that occurred during the blitz in World War II, when not only professional thieves but ordinary citizens and even auxiliary firemen looted, not just from bonded warehouses but from the homes of those who had been bombed out. Those who slept in the air-raid shelters might wake to find their pockets had been picked, their possessions stolen and their homes burgled. Thieves would even remove the wedding rings of the dead. This was our finest hour, a time of patriotic solidarity. Even so, once the threat of detection and punishment was seriously attenuated, the ordinary social controls proved inadequate.

During the 2011 riots every politician used the language of condemnation but some tried to make cheap points about how cuts in government expenditure

We would also all like to forget the extensive looting that occurred during the blitz in World War II, when not only professional thieves but ordinary citizens and even auxiliary firemen looted

were to blame. One Labour MP managed to drag in the rise in university fees, as if this would have persuaded the semi-literate to riot. More worrying still was the continual 'blethering' about how deprivation and racism had 'caused' the riots. Deprivation does not cause crime; young males are hardly the most deprived group in society. Those who commit crimes make individual moral choices for which they alone are responsible. Yet they still like excuses that enable them to suppress the qualms of their residual consciences. The excuses are provided by those who preach equality and social justice. What was particularly depressing about the interviews with rioters was the extent to which they expressed no remorse or even regret but excused their actions in social-worker speak. 'We are no worse than MPs and bankers with their fingers in the till', 'there are no opportunities and jobs for us'. Yet in London and the South East, at least, there are jobs to be had. The jobs are taken by new immigrants who are willing to work hard. The situation was summed up by

a Polish immigrant working the till in a Poundshop who was forced to leap down sixteen feet from the window of her home that had been set on fire by the rioters. The woman, who could have died, said 'If you want nice clothes or a new TV you don't smash up windows to loot them, you work to pay for them'. It was an accurate reproach not just to the Croydon looters but to all in London who claim they cannot find work.

Inequality does not produce riots; rather the ranting and whining rhetoric about social justice that provides the rioters with excuses in advance. It was not the exercise of police power that set things off but the sense by the rioters that those who lead and control the police are irresolute. They were irresolute because they are not willing to rebut their critics on the left. It is time to bring back the nasty party.

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

Can We Talk About This?

A DV8 Physical Theatre co-production, conceived and directed by Lloyd Newson.

This is a complex theatre work about Multiculturalism, Censorship and Islam. It starts with Martin Amis asking why we in the West can't say we are morally superior to the Taliban, then moves on to recap the debates around the 'Honeyford Affair'. Excerpts from TV documentaries are used including extracts from Ray Honeyford's writings and interviews. There are also interviews with the publisher of the Mohammed Cartoons; Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Dutch ex-MP; and British scientist and Imam Dr Usama Hasan who recently suggested the Koran might be compatible with Darwin's theory of evolution. For this comment he received multiple death threats and now lives with police protection.

...the production is compelling but also brave because what it says is almost unsayable. Can we talk about this? systematically demonstrates the scale of violent threat posed by Islamic extremism to those upholding or speaking up for Western values.

Daily Telegraph

Can We Talk About This? makes its London premiere at the National, following a world tour.

Brighton Dome, 29th February to 3rd March 2012
National Theatre (Lyttleton) London, March 9th to 28th

Letter from Amsterdam

Diederik Boomsma

Families have been fleeing Amsterdam to settle in the surrounding suburban municipalities for decades. Many politicians have openly welcomed and encouraged this process, extolling a vision of the city as an ‘emancipation-machine’, more suited for the poor, the young, or the hip and creative, than for the middle classes, at least when (ostensibly) grown up and established. As a result, the urban planning of the last decades has not always been attuned to the needs of children. For example, a new neighbourhood built in the eastern docklands was designed to have eight thousand houses, shops, offices, cafés and several marinas, but neglected to reserve space for schools, parks or playgrounds.

Recently however, some attempts have been undertaken to entice families to stay, such as the construction of a series of small playgrounds throughout the city, typically with a sandbox and a swing or two. One of these, located in one of the wealthier areas known as ‘the Pijp’ (the Pipe), has for the last four years been the locus of a drawn out controversy that pitted the interests of toddlers against young adults. On afternoons and evenings when the weather is moderately pleasant, boys roughly between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two take possession of the playground to hang out and smoke dope – naturally using the sandbox as a convenient public ashtray, bin, and urinal. They cycle or scooter in from other parts of town, perhaps to escape the scrutiny they might be subjected to in their own neighborhoods, buy their drugs from one of the three coffee shops in the immediate vicinity of the playground, recline in the swings, and light up.

Unfortunately, the children aged two to six who play there and their parents apparently do not enjoy their society. The owner of one coffee shop (specialising in free-range ecological cannabis grown entirely without chemicals or pesticides) warned the council that to construct a playground so close to her establishment was sure to invite trouble. The presence of a primary school a short distance away was bad enough, she argued. Even in 21st-century Amsterdam, some reactionary parents do not want their children to play while inhaling the sweet, herby smell of marijuana – even when the visitors are kind enough to leave a space

for the little ones for whom the court was originally intended. Parents asking these youths to go and smoke somewhere else were sometimes successful, frequently rudely rebuked, and occasionally threatened.

When these parents phoned the police for help, they were initially told that not much could be done – or at least, nothing that would solve the main source of the problem. Yes, a policeman would come and urge the gentlemen gathered in the playground to be considerate to the needs of others. Cannabis is tolerated in Amsterdam, and playgrounds are part of the public space, which no citizens can monopolise for themselves – or for their children. The police argued, therefore, that these drug users had as much right to a relaxing afternoon on the playground as anyone. What could they do about it?

It is painful to think about a problem that in an even remotely healthy society would not even arise, or at least, remain an issue for very long. And the police are technically wrong. In spite of a three-decade long history of toleration and a powerful lobby of cannabis-growers supported by the multi-million euro drug trade, the use of cannabis is still officially illegal in the Netherlands. Only the sale of small quantities is regulated in coffee shops. Possession is still illegal –

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and how can you use without possessing? Admittedly, the Dutch laws do not make much sense. How could you buy something, but not possess it afterwards?

Hence, the prosecution has a policy of not prosecuting this offence. A confusing situation, especially for the police. Nevertheless, confusion certainly does not suffice to explain why the town authorities responsible wash their hands, Pilate-like, when rowdy drug-users colonize a playground. What if these young adults were not using soft drugs in the swings and sandbox, but playing scrabble, composing poetry, or even if they were actually playing with the sand? Surely they could still be expected to make way for the children.

Much chagrined, parents then approached the mayor of the borough to request that the playground be designated as a ‘cannabis-free’ area. Local bylaws can stipulate that the consumption of alcohol is not allowed in specific areas, and local drinking bans are in place in many parks, where not even a glass of rosé

with your cucumber sandwich picnic is allowed – a prohibition that *is* usually enforced, perhaps because it entails little risk to the enforcers. In addition, one city-square that was once plagued by drug users has had a cannabis-smoking ban in place for several years. This prohibition was marked by a sign featuring a red band crossing out a hand holding a joint emitting puffs of smoke shaped like cannabis leaves. The sign was stolen immediately after being installed, as were its subsequent replacements, until the council gave up and started selling the ‘no cannabis’ signs in tourist shops (interested readers can approach the author to purchase the signs for 90 Euros, excluding shipping). Nevertheless, the ban was a success: after police had starting fining anyone caught smoking in the streets, things quieted down, to general satisfaction. Thus, the parents wanted to have the playground designated as another ‘cannabis-free’ area.

Unfortunately the mayor responded that such a prohibition would ‘not be proportional’. ‘The Pipe has always been a bit of an ‘anarchist neighborhood,’ he told the parents, urging them to be tolerant to all people using the facilities the city had to offer. Instead of a cannabis-ban, the playground got a sign kindly asking all visitors, on behalf of the residents (the police not being allowed to sign), not to use drugs and be respectful of each other – which had as much effect as one of the antique signs one sometimes finds hanging from the wall in pubs, for purely decorative reasons, saying: ‘No lewdness or skylarking’.

After efforts to get city councillors to act failed, the parents sued the city to get a judge to enforce a cannabis-ban, resulting in a two-year legal battle. The first judge to look over the case took the city’s view that a local cannabis ban would be excessive and urged for youth workers to mediate. Seeing that this wouldn’t work when the youth workers were not around, the parents appealed. Finally the case was brought before the Dutch High Court, which pronounced a definitive ruling last month. When the decision to allow a few toddlers to reclaim their sandbox must go to the highest legal authority in a country, what conclusion are we to draw about the state of our civilization? The answer

isn’t blowing in the wind.

Alas, the parents lost their case: the city is not obliged to designate the playground as a ‘cannabis-free zone’. In fact, the city is not even *allowed* to introduce such a ban. For the use of cannabis is already illegal, argued the judges, and a city cannot duplicate an existing national prohibition in its own bylaws. Case closed.

Of course, this hasn’t closed the case for the unfortunate parents of the Hemonystreet playground, who, after spending years in court, are left right at the beginning of a mad, Yossarianesque circle of argumentation, without being closer to a solution to their problem. The judges’ reiteration that the use of cannabis is illegal, may have sent a signal in the overall climate of political opinion, but has so far changed nothing in a city that feels it owes its maverick identity to tolerating its use – and makes a lot of money doing so. One could interpret this ruling as placing an obligation to start enforcing the illegality of using drugs everywhere in the city, or at least in the public space. But this would be difficult, and in any case nobody seems to be seriously considering it. As a result of the ruling, Amsterdam may be forced to lift the one cannabis-ban that was already



in place. One day after the judges pronounced their verdict, the Prosecution office had already told the police they could no longer stop people flouting the ban and smoking on the square. Clearly, they must strictly adhere to new legal developments. At the same time, the one ‘No Cannabis’ sign has so far been left in place. While police, politicians, youth workers, civil servants and prosecutors consider what to do next, the city has decided to pretend to tolerate its own policy of intolerance in that single, drug-free square for the moment, while retaining its tolerance of cannabis-use in the rest of the city – including playgrounds. Until society as a whole re-acquires the moral habit to discriminate, in this case between proper and improper uses and users of playgrounds, parents must pray for rainy summers.

Diederik Boomsma is a writer and Amsterdam city councillor.

Is Social Mobility Possible?

Margaret Brown

By coincidence I am well placed to offer an opinion on social mobility. I was born in 1943 and have five younger full siblings, the youngest born in 1953. Our parents were doctors. We all passed the 11+, went to university, married people we met there and had children. The offspring are now repeating the pattern, minus the grammar schools, an expanding dynasty of meritocrats.

'You succeeded because you were middle-class and inherited privilege!' progressives will cry. No. We were brought up in two batches. The first grew up in the Potteries with our parents. On our mother's death my father married the Head of Classics at the local grammar school. Culturally we had the best start available. Our three younger siblings, brought up in Rotherham, had foster-parents, with a quarter of our parents' income, who only read *The Little Green' Un*. Yet, whatever the cultural and economic background, the level of academic achievement, in terms of the general population, was identical.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, areas like these were numerically dominated by the working class but actually directed by élites of successful manufacturers, professionals, a few Labour representatives, who did not bear the stamp of Eton and Harrow.

Education was evolving. Twenty years earlier poor children rarely had the chance of a selective education. Even if they passed the 11+, uniform was expensive and they soon had to start earning. Post-war free education changed this. Our elementary school was a successful 11+ factory. We were probably the only children there with graduate parents, as the offspring of solicitors, manufacturers etc went to private day schools as infants.

At 11, pupils were directed to the next stage. Real public schools were beyond our ken or interests, though the area's best grammar school clung, or rather its headmaster clung, to its public school status by virtue of a few dozen boarders. John Wain described it under a fake name in *Hurry On Down* and was disowned for it. My grammar school was the newest, created by the 1940s legislation. Broadly speaking, however, if a child's father or mother attended a particular grammar school, the child would, on passing 11+, attend the same one.

Again our position was anomalous. The 11+ was not necessarily that. Bright children were allowed to take it a year early on passing a pre-test, in which I scored 117

of the 120 marks needed to pass. The school entered me for the 11+ all the same. I struck lucky, but my choice of school was restricted. My brothers' school put early 11+ pupils on a four-year O-level course instead of a five-year one. They took A-levels, often getting 100 per cent in science subjects, at 16. Most stayed on to apply for Oxbridge.

So I went to the new grammar school. Its school song was 'Pioneers'. I was the only pupil with two graduate parents. Some of the other pupils were definitely semi-skimmed. Streaming was unashamed. Our staff were high quality and motivated. The head, who had a Manchester first, deputy head and head of sixth form were all History graduates, all devoted to their subject. The head of sixth form had gone from the best girls' grammar school to Girton and returned to the Potteries. This generation had lost matrimonial opportunity due to war but gained professional opportunity. The head owed her staff not only to that generation, but to the breaking first wave of women graduates from new universities like Keele, three miles away. Like other new grammar schools ours had a slow start – only half a dozen university entrants a year.

We were taught, both directly and indirectly, that we shared with Eton and Gordonstoun the unspoken motto, 'To rule is to serve'. In many schools, including ours, enough of the staff were practising Christians to make a difference. A framework and a sense of direction were offered – and accepted by enough pupils to work effectively.

Sixth-formers knew the importance of university. Up the ladder (or remaining on the top rung), a secure well paid job, social cachet – and all free, as long as the recipient fulfilled his or her role. Those were the days!

Oxbridge was in a different class from other universities, because of its public school image and a built-in gender discrepancy. There were seven times as many colleges for men as for women and this was reflected in the relative numbers of male and female undergraduates. Competition was the order of the day, both within and between grammar schools. Joint activities like football, hockey, netball were carried on with other grammar schools, a charmed circle, not schools in general.

Some pupils left after O-levels, but still stood a better chance in life than three quarters of the population. The remaining pupils were sorted out, unofficially, into regurgitators and thinkers, or potential thinkers. In the

arts it was possible to acquire a good A-level without impressive intelligence, by virtually memorising notes issued by an able teacher who was also a competent question-spotter, not so much regurgitation as mini-mass plagiarism. Notes would be passed on like the Olympic Torch. College entrance examinations tested other qualities. However the division between Oxbridge and the others was not absolute. There was a substantial overlap. Many went to London, Manchester and the Scottish universities, later gravitating to Oxbridge for research. I failed to get into Oxford. Fortunately a face-saver appeared in the form of the publicity lavished on the incipient University of Sussex. In 1961 I joined the Foundation Year at Sussex, described in the press as 'pink brick' and 'Balliol-by-the-sea'. It soon acquired less flattering unofficial titles. Of the first 52 students fewer than ten were 'working class'. It rapidly became the 'in' place for the middle classes, a byword for privilege. So much for the new equality.

Whatever its faults, post-war educational selection worked. And once in the circle, you could move inwards to the core. Every effort was made to rectify mistakes. Pupils transferred from secondary moderns at 14 or 16. They could take O-levels at college. The University of London offered external degrees. Many provincial universities started as offshoots of London. On the other hand demotion from grammar schools was rare. Middle class children who failed the 11+ or could not keep up if they passed were placed in private or boarding schools. At a secondary modern they would have been miserable, at worst lynched. At boarding school they were at least with children from the same income band. Deplorably this was the least bad solution.

Again our family was peculiar. If we had failed we would have been salvaged at a boarding school. Our mother's wealthy Scottish family would have paid, though six sets of fees might have stretched resources. The pressure to succeed was intense: bicycles if we passed the 11+ and threats that if we failed we would end up clattering in clogs to the pot banks. As active members of the Labour Party and among the very few local subscribers to the *Manchester Guardian* and the *New Statesman*, our parents were all in favour of the betterment of the working class – but not of the bearers of their genes being consigned to it. The attitude of today's Labour and Liberal Democrat politicians to the education of their offspring would have come as no surprise to them. Our unstated attitude and that of grammar school friends and rivals was that people went to public schools because they were not bright enough to pass the 11+ and save their families money. The secondary moderns were no safety net. Grammar school pupils had to work. Some of our assumptions

were insufferably arrogant. It took years for us to realise that to some of the products of public schools we were oiks.

What, then, was the effect of this multi-pronged attempt to provide equality of opportunity? It mixed working class talent with that of other groups and collected and concentrated it in universities for three or more highly vulnerable years, in terms of biological susceptibility. Boyfriends and girlfriends from hometowns faded from the minds of the new undergraduates, who married the fellow-students met in the union bar.

These graduate marriages slowed regression to the mean. Social stratification of a kind difficult to deal with set in. Far from helping universities to integrate into the community, new recruits to the academic world and the opportunities it offered forgot their roots, temporarily at least. But the professional classes were manned.

Critics claim that children sent to secondary moderns felt the 'stigma' for life and that selection was unfair, inefficient and a projection of the have/have-not divide. In fact in every field selection is practised. Football, ballet, accountancy – all select. Sometimes the ambitious have choices. In a manual labour-orientated society a boy might want to become the strongest bricklayer in the street rather than pass exams, leave that street and rise socially.

The progressives want to give every child the chance to 'rise'. What about the community from which talent has been withdrawn? Did anyone really think that class would disappear? What of the regions? The relatively poor councils of the North paid for many youngsters to be educated in the South. Many never returned to repay the investment. The law of unintended consequences operated. We now have council estates where intelligent children keep quiet and cannot hope for rescue from dysfunctional families and deprived neighbours, except through local gangs. The ladder has been drawn up.

Restratification is continuous, though these days assortative mating takes place between graduates of different universities in their thirties, rather than graduates from the same university in their twenties. Decades of time and enough money to pay off the national debt have been spent 'proving' what to any common-sense perception is untrue – that intelligence, and all that its utilisation brings with it, owes little to heredity. Progressives offer no indication of what the proportion of poor undergraduates should be. Their expectations might be affected by uncertainty about the number of places available. Gross over-expansion of universities might be followed by sharp reductions or concertina-like fluctuations. Any forecast might

be vitiated by present or future social changes. The proportion of the 'poor' might rise. As it is, the 'working class' is not what it was. In 2004 Michael Collins' book *The Likes Of Us* described the mutation of the working class on which Britain's power had been built. The working class had split – and the working class proper, according to *The Independent* in June, now constitutes only 24 per cent of the population and loathes benefit dependants. The Welfare State has split the proletariat. The bricklayer and the lawyer would object to university places for guests on the 'Jeremy Kyle Show'.

Let us take a concrete example – consider Karen Matthews, who three years ago organised the fake kidnapping of her daughter Shannon. She has/had seven children by five men and, after leaving prison, might have another seven. Work is rarer than benefit fraud in her extended kinship network. Denunciations of lack of 'social mobility' are easy to utter, but how can her social group be given mobility in any

meaningful sense? Before throwing good money after bad, the progressive education establishment should ask itself whether 'total equality' is as much an illusion as the Philosopher's Stone. Less dogma and more commonsense would be of benefit. Is it too late? Recent moves to allow grammar schools to expand offer grounds for some optimism. People have been struck by the apparent paradox of mass youth unemployment combined with a shortage of skilled workers – the inevitable result of hostility to ambition and the featherbedding of idleness.

'What does 'social mobility' actually mean?' should be the question. In a personal sense I cannot help wondering if, had the current 'marking down' suggestion been adopted in the 1950s, my two elder brothers and I would, in a tight squeeze for school and university places, have lost out to our three younger but no brighter siblings. How a personal consideration concentrates the mind!

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Planned Vandalism

Jan Maciag

After all, what good is it to me to have an authority always ready to the tranquil enjoyment of my pleasures, to brush away all the dangers from my path without my having to think about them, if such an authority, as well as removing thorns from under my feet, is also the absolute master of my freedom or if it takes over all activity and life that around it all must languish when it languishes, sleep when it sleeps and perish when it perishes.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

The coalition Government has just completed a consultation exercise on its new draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The advice has been entirely varied, ranging from grateful support to warnings of apocalyptic consequences to the environment and countryside if changes to the proposed changes are not made. It is hard to see how any sense of the consultation exercise can be made with such divergent and already entrenched opinions. Anyone with conservative views can be forgiven for being in two minds as worthy organizations such as the National Trust and the Campaign for Rural England have come out against the changes and the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmer's Union in favour. The changes appear to be pitting conservation against the economic well-being of the countryside. Surely, true conservatives believe that

long term sustainable development must underpin the way we value and use our land; and the true problem is finding the balancing point. In the past, it was found by individual owners but it is now the responsibility of government.

The Government has decided the system is not functioning effectively – or, rather, that it is functioning all too effectively and preventing development in town and country. Its answer consists of three parts; firstly, to condense the heaps of central government policy into a small book that all can understand and enjoy. The attempted abridgement might make for an interesting story about the difficulties of stuffing large government back into small volumes. The second ambition is to make 'sustainable development' easier to obtain by default (although defining 'sustainable' development is the devil's own work) and, finally, to introduce a greater level of 'localism' in the planning process. No-one could argue against greater clarity, brevity, common sense and subsidiarity, but government ambitions are traditionally swathed in webs of unintended consequences. Will it turn out for good or still further ill?

No serious thought is being given to a re-assessment of the role of government (both local and national) in the question of land use and private property rights. We are a crowded group of small islands and we are getting inexorably more crowded; we seem to agree that some level of development control is probably necessary. While

the authorities seem happy to 'plan' your right to erect a garden shed they are incapable of formulating any sort of effective grand 'plan' in deciding how many people can settle here before we all sink into the North Atlantic.

In his book *Seeing Like a State*, James C Scott describes this phenomenon as 'High Modernism'. He writes:

I believe that many of the most tragic episodes of state development in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries originate in a particularly pernicious combination of three elements. The first is the aspiration to the administrative ordering of nature and society,... a sweeping, rational engineering of all aspects of social life to improve the human condition. The second element is the unrestrained use of the power of the modern state as an instrument for achieving these designs. The third element is a weakened or prostrate civil society that lacks the capacity to resist these plans.

In replacing the market mechanism all attempts at comprehensive and large scale planning seek to 'second guess' outcomes in the greatest detail. If you are planning a forest you will seek to organize every tree. If you are planning a city you will end up deciding where each bedroom is to be and how the curtains hang. The planner replaces the messy decisions of thousands of individuals with 'Policy'. To be effective, policy must be relentlessly more detailed and increasingly intrusive. We see this trend with the EU as much as in the behaviour of Lower Snodbury District Council. But, let us not forget that it requires Scott's 'weakened or prostrate civil society' to succeed.

An understanding of how we joyfully shuffled into our current mess is salutary, and an informative guide about the prospects of the current changes. A journey through the post-industrial midlands will reveal a foreign land scarred by the detritus of 'development' both old and new. A drive along almost any urban main road unfolds against the backdrop of senseless sprawl, packing-box architecture and the feeling that the land is in the grip of an occupying barbarian force with no aesthetic feeling whatsoever. Most of our towns and much of our countryside have become a giant, trash-strewn 'Hunnic' camp.

Pre-industrial England (as well as Scotland, Wales and Ireland, of course) was, indeed, a different country. Industrialisation changed the way we live and it changed where we live. The movement of people from the country to the town dislocated the age old connections, and power shifted from the landed estates and individual land owners to the corporations. The beauty of an Estate reflected well on the owner. The new industrialists had no qualms about responsibilities and were interested in simple exploitation and, of course, in sheltering themselves from its more unpleasant consequences. Industrial 'camp' towns were built near the new factories while the factory owners built

grand villas some way off.

Good architectural manners, civic pride and a concern for tradition staggered on for a further century but the land was changing and coarsening, a trend lamented by Thomas Hardy in his novels. The social and aesthetic degradation of industrialisation was opposed by William Morris whose narrator in *News from Nowhere* (1890) awakes to a benign socialist land of gothic architecture and equality. With more realistic and material success came the various enlightened capitalists who built Saltaire (1860s), Port Sunlight (1899-1914), Bournville (1893), not forgetting the work of the Garden City Movement.

The Great War changed both the perspective and the nation's temperament. A famous cartoon showed a soldier leaving for the front in 1914. He is leaving a green and pleasant land, but on his return four years later he finds a country transformed by suburban sprawl and belching chimney stacks. He asks the question – 'Is this what we fought for?'

Opposition continued to gather. The Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) was founded in 1926. In 1928, Clough Williams-Ellis, who had served on the Western front and subsequently became a well-known architect and builder of Portmeirion, published his book *England and the Octopus*. The 'Octopus' was the blight of suburban sprawl spreading its many arms into the countryside.

The 1939/45 war changed the way we live and how we think almost as profoundly as had the Great War some twenty years earlier. Yet we had forgotten what we had fought for – individual freedom. Post war Britain dumped the traditional messy way of getting things done and enthusiastically grabbed the wrong toolkit. In came the brave new world of State Control, five-year development plans and top-down planning. The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act came into force on 1 July 1948 and, although amended hundreds of times, is still in place.

In *An Outline of Planning Law* by Sir Desmond Heap, the 1947 Act is described as:

containing some of the most drastic and far reaching provisions ever enacted affecting the ownership of land (which for this purpose includes buildings) and the liberty of an owner to develop and use his land as he thinks fit. Indeed, after July 1, 1948, ownership of land carries with it nothing more than the bare right to go on using it for its existing purposes. The owner has no right to develop it, that is to say, he has no right to build upon it and no right even to change its use.... The 1947 Act did not nationalise the land; what it did do was to nationalise the development value of the land...

In the wartime spirit of obedience and common purpose, we gave away almost all our rights to property. The government planners would take care of us. We

relinquished control of our bodies to the mercies of the NHS as well. In the last few years, from fear of terrorism we have been happy to hand over much of our freedom of speech. The pattern is a familiar one insofar as, once lost, any such freedoms are almost impossible to regain because, with each ratcheted step, we are a little more dependent on Government.

Reform of state 'services' (such as the NHS and planning) usually consists of shifting power from Whitehall to some misnamed local authority. When those reforms fail, power is returned to Whitehall before, like the circle of life, it is redistributed back to local control. Power is never shifted to the citizen or patient. Having removed decision-making from the individual property owner the government can only move it between various agencies of the State. Localism never is so local that it is made by the person with most at stake.

Many, with some justification, believe that the planning system is a form of ossified madness administered by fanatical bureaucrats, people who long ago forgot that the purpose of their work is management and not the restructuring of society. Over the years planners have been given such sweeping powers, based on covering 'policies' so vague and open to personal interpretation that they should be printed on fig-leaf shaped paper.

The currently proposed government reforms of the NPPF are well meaning but they will get watered down to suit the various special interest groups that make 'planning' their livelihood. There will be some residual reforms of policy emanating from Whitehall but it will still leave most of the policies and mechanisms used by local government in place. Bureaucrats are practised experts in interpreting whatever emerges from Whitehall to their purpose and it will still be local planning officers who decide what is meant by 'sustainable development' according to their personal whim. The big national house-builders, in close collaboration with the planners, will still be putting up their identikit developments and all will be much as before. When the state gets this powerful and intrusive, there is little that a dependent and prostrate population will not accept.

Freedom has to be removed quietly and to the sound of the sweet song of good intentions. The road to serfdom is much easier if the grateful serfs walk there by themselves. The intention of Planning was to control, 'for the public good', the use of land to prevent unsightly sprawl. It has, instead, handed over the land and its fruits for the benefit of the state through one of the greatest webs of micromanagement imaginable; but I doubt that many would claim that these islands are a better place to live after 60 years of planning control. I also doubt many people could name more than ten post-war buildings that might have any enduring quality. Meanwhile, we have lost thousands of fine buildings while the silhouettes of our

towns and cities have been disfigured beyond recognition. The greatest irony is that planning conservation policy protects a pre-1947 heritage that development policy would, nowadays, not permit. Can you imagine trying to get planning consent for the Brighton Pavilion?

Clearly something is badly wrong with the planning system. But *The Daily Telegraph* has been running a campaign against the proposed changes that has the whiff of panic. Article after article (with the notable exception of Hank Dittmar, 17 Oct 2011) gnaws at anxieties over the fate of the green belt and a house-builders' free-for-all to come. This is irrational on many counts.

- The green belts are not affected by the new NPPF
- Sustainable development would be automatically permitted only if the local authority had not written a plan. Clearly this puts the onus on local government to organize itself and to give thought as to how their areas are to develop.
- If we are to house a population of 70 million we will need houses. Many of those houses will need to be built as 'urban extensions' into the adjoining countryside as there are not enough brownfield sites in well located places. This can be done very elegantly; take Poundbury (near Dorchester) as an example. It is not scary if well planned and designed and there is no need for panic.

However, my fear and prediction is that the proposed changes will be fatally diluted to suit the various special interest groups that make 'planning complications' their livelihood. There will be some residual reforms of policy emanating from Whitehall but they will leave much of the bank of policies and mechanisms used by local government in place. The 'localism agenda' will stop short in the filing cabinets of the local planning authority instead of percolating further to the towns, villages and, God forbid, individuals. It will still be your local planning officer who decides what you can do according to his personal whim.

In time all will return to normal. The energy generated in Whitehall's changes to the NPPF will be dissipated by systemic entropy and bureaucratic paralysis. Rural planning consent will continue to be almost impossible to obtain and the countryside will continue to be 'saved'. *The Daily Telegraph* will congratulate itself on a job well done and we, the concerned citizens, can return to our comfortable economic decline.

Jan Maciag is an architect

Museum of Little Horrors

Patricia Morgan

With so many museums now converted into playrooms and amusement parks, walking into one is like entering an explosion of noise. The Natural History Museum is at the zenith of interactive experience as children charge around randomly pounding buttons and dummy dinosaurs roar. In Colchester, everywhere one is assailed by the Clash, Bang and Ouch from a model of a Celt and a Roman soldier whacking it out. At York, one enters the first Roman gallery to be assailed by a big screening of what appears to be a Roman drain cleaner hectoring us in a broad Yorkshire accent. From the next room comes the shattering noise of screaming children mindlessly stacking and knocking down piles of bricks. Is this supposed to impart knowledge – or rather, a ‘feel’ – for Roman building techniques? Children cannot be taught anything or confronted with images or ideas that are alien to their experience. Objects are there to bring out insights that the child already possesses – like how to cause the most disturbance by smashing piles of bricks.

More and more historians claim that younger generations have acquired no narrative or chronology, and thus no way of placing events, objects and ideas in time, context or sequence. At York, a miscellany of Roman objects is displayed in cases almost as an afterthought, with little or no explanation or even dating. They pale before the ‘relevant’ and ‘accessible’ displays on Roman hairdressing, clothes and cosmetics which invite us to ‘participate’.

Cultural and educational matters are now subordinated to a therapy ethos designed to increase a sense of self worth. I am sure the curators at York follow the reports justifying the merits of small museums in terms of

the impact they can have on individuals and ‘whole communities’ by enhancing self esteem and providing recuperative benefits to heal ‘social exclusion’; any intellectual challenge being taboo.

Moreover, where better to start than in a museum if your aim is cultural and historical amnesia? Nowhere is this more apparent than at York. Here we see a wholesale wiping of the past, a negation of the origins and nature of Western culture.

Constantine, the greatest of the later Roman emperors, is missing. Yet, he was declared emperor in 306 at York whence he marched on Rome to establish sole control of the West. One might wonder what that statue is doing outside the Minster. Converting to Christianity, he ended the persecutions of Christians with the defeat of his last rival Licinus in 324 and went on to unite the Western with the Eastern half of an Empire which had been previously split. He founded a new specifically Christian capital city on the Bosphorus, where Europe meets Asia. This new Roman or Christian Empire in the East — endured until finally overrun by the Muslims



in 1453, after Rome itself fell to the barbarian hordes in AD 476.

Constantine presided over the first ecumenical council of the Christian Church at Nicaea in 325. This agreed the fundamentals of Christian doctrine as they are embedded in the creed heard in churches to this day. Already in 314 the participants at a church council at Arles included British bishops; the first being Aborius from York. Constantine devoted extraordinary time and energy to the church, and his knowledge of Christian

faith developed as he attended councils and formulated his legislation in decades of consultation. His mother Helena was credited with bringing back the relic of the true cross from Jerusalem. She is buried on the site of the medieval church of St Helen on the Walls at York. When this was excavated it was found to have been built over Roman mosaic.

Constantine became the new Alexander and then the new Moses, a leader of the elect who forged the new ark. In death he was a second Christ surrounded by apostles. He was a singular sovereign in an age of Tetrarchs and Dyarchs. Extraordinarily enough considering the pacifism of the gospels, he managed to weld Christianity into the strictures of the imperial Roman theology of victory: 'In this sign conquer.'

This emperor's contributions allowed Christianity to spread into areas it might not otherwise have reached, like Britannia and Hispania, and to peoples like Goths, Alemans and Sarmatians. Barbarian tribes were to adopt Christianity not least because they wished to become the heirs of Rome – after knocking it around. This gave them The Book, which meant not just the Bible itself, but literacy, a written script from whence might be derived a lineage, with a past and a future, record keeping for administration and a law code. All meant status and respectability. Some, like King Alfred and Athelstan, could relate to the Greco-Roman world and access the works of Plato and Aristotle. This was the birth of a Christian Europe continuous with antiquity.

Here are plenty of momentous themes to interest and educate anyone, with more substance than Roman eye shadow. In Paul Stephenson's recent biography of Constantine, he recounts how a tiny pool of Christians grew to become a majority in the Empire not least because Christianity offered a better life to women and their children. Beforehand, women were a minority, not least due to abortion and mass infanticide. Even wealthy families rarely kept more than one daughter and, as a scarce resource, women were closely controlled. Under Christianity abortion and infanticide were forbidden and virginity praised. Child marriage was discouraged and consummation with a child bride banned. The average age of marriage went from twelve years under paganism to twenty. Men were obliged to have virginal intercourse with their wives, not to visit prostitutes of both sexes and, if pregnancy resulted, they were to keep and raise the child. Christians were better at maintaining social networks; nursing their own and others' sick and saving more lives than pagans, who frequently abandoned theirs.

The story of what began in York must scare the

politically correct. It is not possible to deal with Constantine unless Christianity has a central role or is, at least, recognised, and that is what is most impermissible. The answer is to ignore it and hope it all goes away. It is like, of course, the puerile use of BCE or CE – which demands the question – whose Common Era, since it still begins with the birth of him whose name we cannot speak? The effect on me is one of loss and bereavement – for a past declared null and void and which I must not visit.

Baroness Warsi might well speak of not being afraid to be proud of Christianity and not downgrading it, but she should encourage people to say what it inspires in them. Cod paganism is now often cynically dropped into the void left by obliterating the Christian world. It is straight from the Da Vinci

Code School of cultural history, as Christopher Howse has pointed out. In my district, atheists running residents' and scouts' events represent quintessentially Christian activities, like beating the parish bounds, as continuations of pagan rituals. The clergy do nothing to correct this nonsense. Churchmen may not even know that Rogationtide processions led by clergy carrying crosses and banners on the fortieth day after Easter Sunday originated in Gaul in the late fifth century and from there spread to Rome and other parts of the Christian world. Its appearance in Britain as a Christian ceremony can be precisely dated (747). This year, I passed one eager atheist asking the children if they would like to be witches. His script goes all the way back to Tesco's Halloween chocolate eyeball and fingers counter. But I still flinch, thinking of what witches do in Africa and what is done to those suspected of practising – the nails put in children's heads, the trade in body parts and the human sacrifices found in forests. These practices are increasing because of the cultural meltdown left in the wake of decolonization with the absence of ecclesiastical as much as secular authority.

If one could go back in time, would we tell those pagan kings that it really is not worth receiving The Book and taking up literacy and the legacy of the ancient world? Just stay in the forest with your willow wands and heap of skulls because it really isn't worth bothering about – everyone is going to scorn and ignore you in the end.

Patricia Morgan's next book is about sex education and teenage pregnancy.

Wigga as She is Spoke

Marc Blake

Hey, how are you?

I'm good.

Great. Can I get a coffee?

This simple exchange can be heard daily in any of the American-owned UK coffee franchises in London; an Americanism, which misuses the adverb and adjectives 'well' and 'good', and confuses the modal verb of ability (can) with get. Were I to be asked this question I would reply.

'Sure. Help yourself.'

I don't think I'd last long in Starbucks.

It seems churlish to snipe at such a minor linguistic quirk, as American Teen speak (Valley Girl) English has been here for well over a decade, having been popularised by the TV programme *Beverly Hills 90102*, the sitcom *Friends* and the film *Mean Girls*. It has however, worsened. I recently overheard a British schoolgirl use the verb 'like' over one hundred times on a short bus journey instead of said – but it is the fashion. Who was 'sad'? Me – for counting the errors or her for making them? Also much in evidence in everyday conversation is what is known as the moronic inflection. This is when the speaker lifts his *inflection*? At the end of a *sentence*? Even though it's not a *question*? This derives from the Australian Soap, *Neighbours* and has infiltrated society as virulently as the term 'the current climate' – which has replaced 'in this day and age'. The intended effect of the rising inflection is to promote interest in what the speaker is trying to say, however, it merely succeeds in their coming across as needy and insecure. As for the mis (or over) use of 'like': it is a Tourettic twitter that belies the speakers' inarticulacy. But pedants – do not rend your garments just yet, there is a university professor who recently introduced a swear box for its misuse. He is quite a wealthy man.

Is this carping? English is a robust language (and remains the universal business language and default Internet setting) and lets not forget that Britain is a polyglot nation, whose mongrel tongue brims with fascinating lexis, sourced from our Empire sorties to India (pyjamas), Hong Kong (look-see), our military history (Hoist by one's own petard), our sporting activities (fair play, it's not cricket) and our tolerance for bringing in refugees from all over the world be they Huguenot, Jew, Caribbean Irishman or Muslim.

What concerns me more is the level of written

English at under graduate level. On the creative writing courses I teach at Southampton Solent University (admittedly, hardly of the quality of the Russell Group) I have marked third year papers that misspell 'I've' as 'iv', put 'should of' (instead of have) and employ the intriguingly redundant second preposition, he fell 'off of' something.

These arise from mishearing their native tongue (these are all native speakers of English) and from text speak. There is a rise amongst secondary schools to remove the offending instrument from classes but their ubiquity is troublesome. So long as a student knows they are abbreviating for ease of communication, then, OK. If he is completing a written piece at degree level that reads 'I never done it B4' then we are living in, as the Chinese say, 'interesting times'. How did they ever get accepted on the course? None of the tutors I spoke to could offer a cogent answer. How is it that there has been such a consistent rise in GCSE A star grades when the standard of literacy is so low?

Perhaps we have to go further back – but before we do, I have to say that of the US/Canadian students under my tutelage, all have an exemplary written English, punctuation and presentation.

A secondary school teacher I know explained that, 'We cover a range of writing, reading, speaking and listening skills – all set by the English Programmes of Study. Text speech would be corrected unless it was in a script or used for effect. We, as teachers, are expected to use Standard English in lessons. Spelling, capitalisation and punctuation addressed.' The National Curriculum backs this up. At Key Stage one, (primary level) all the skills are there – speaking, listening, interaction and language variation (formal English and taking into account different listeners). In a sidebar on standard English it adds:

it is helpful to bear in mind the most common non standard usages in England, which are –

Subject-verb agreements (they was)

Formation of past tense (have fell, I done)

Formation of negatives (ain't)

'The Key Stage Two Secondary Curriculum' goes on to state, 'In writing, pupils should be taught to use correct spelling and punctuation and follow grammatical conventions. They should also be taught to organise their writing in logical and coherent

forms.’ The reality is less clear. Many school leavers have appalling levels of literacy and there is a considerable rise in Estuarine English or ‘Mockney’ (spoken in London, Kent Surrey, Sussex and Essex) and Multicultural London English (MLE), known as ‘Jafaican’, which is fast gaining ground on Cockney. Estuary English is considered a working-class accent, though by no means limited to that class. In a 1993 article, a London businessman claimed that RP was considered ‘unfriendly’ and so Estuary English was preferred for commercial purposes, the aim being to blend in, to be a ‘man of the people.’ It has been used by such luminaries as Tony Blair and Nick Clegg.

Multicultural London English has its roots in the North London mix of Greek, South Asian and Afro-Caribbean slang, combined with Hip-Hop and Rap, taken from MTV. This mix of second language and Local London English has moved far beyond its roots, and is fast becoming the lingua franca of the young. It is strange to hear a white youth regularising the past of the verb ‘to be’ and to limit his tag questions “I was dere, like innit?” but its ubiquity is so great that it survives attempts to satirize it, such as those by the comedian Sacha Baron-Cohen as Ali G a ‘Wigga’ from Slough. There is even a Channel Four sitcom *Phoneshop*, in which a white character speaks entirely urban ‘black slang’ among black, white and Asian with no repercussions.


Whilst slang has always been the prerogative of the

teen peer group, what is more worrying is a lack of knowledge of standard spoken English. A generation seems to be being raised with no awareness that in the ‘real world’ (ie the one that employs you) such deviations must be put on hold. This is politesse, simple social exchange and, to use the word correctly, all about respect. This is where entitlement must stop. If I want to work in France, I will be expected to speak French. If I don’t, then I will not be employed.


By contrast, in my other job as a teacher I read written English from young people all over the world. In Korea and Japan, they will have studied English since the age of five. German and Russian speakers are far advanced (despite cursive handwriting) and are almost fluent by eighteen. This may be a prudent financial need, and in learning a language you are more likely to be exposed to it in its purest sense (accent-free in the homogeneity of the classroom or via listening tape) but I simply do not come across the same kind of lazy speech. I am not a linguistic purist (that’s why I wouldn’t get that job in France) but there is a growing chasm in communication that must be addressed, if nowhere else, the at least on an academic level.

Finally, any grammatical or spelling errors in this article are the fault of the editorial department. My syntax is impeccable.


Marc Blake is a stand-up comedian, his EBook How a writer dies will be available shortly on Amazon/Kindle



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Conservative Classic – 45

Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man*

Christie Davies

Malcolm Bradbury was one of the greatest humorists of the last half of the twentieth century and *The History Man* is his most famous novel. It is a work of incisive social comment and at times it has a black, even disturbing side to it. Malcolm Bradbury was an academic expert on Evelyn Waugh and presumably influenced by him, but whereas one can often laugh without doubts at Waugh's innocent victims of injustice, there are scenes in *The History Man* which are very close to tragedy.

The central character of *The History Man* is that familiar figure of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the radical sociologist in a new university who is devoted not to scholarship but to revolution, a revolution not seen as leading to a better society but as an end in itself, as a revelling in chaos. All revolutions are destructive and usually lead to something worse, as in the Soviet Union, Cuba and Iran; but the revolutionaries did offer delusions and may have believed in them. Bradbury's Kirk wants destruction and chaos for its own sake, not only politically but in private life, and wants it now. The book begins and ends with a party at the home of Dr and Mrs Kirk to which everyone is invited; alcohol and other drugs are freely and excessively consumed and strangers enjoy promiscuous sex. The party is both a product and an expression of Kirk's mad search for novelty and spontaneity. It is a microcosm of his wished-for replacement of an orderly society by one without restraints, that nullity called liberation and emancipation. Bradbury aptly captures the sheer silliness as well as the degeneracy of Kirk's parties:

The German girl in the see-through blouse has started in a corner, with a group of men around her, to take it off. She lifts it upward, over her head and it whirls in the air above them for a moment.... 'Who's Hegel?' says someone. ...The German girl has joined the dancing and is gyrating in front of him, her big breasts bouncing, a mobile Aryan sculpture of the New Woman. 'This is heuristic, Ja?' she says to Howard. ... 'The orgy is replacing the mass as the prime sacrament', says [a radical Catholic] priest... What [Howard Kirk] sees in front of him is man free, free of economic timidity, sexual fear, prescriptive social norms, man cocky with the goodness of his own being.

In both parties there is a suicide attempt, at the first

one by a despairing social psychologist (he fails) and in the latter by Kirk's wife Barbara, each time by putting an arm through and smashing a window and "savagely slicing it on the glass". The book ends with a characteristic twist as the window smashes noisily for the second time.

In fact no-one hears; as always at the Kirks' parties, which are famous for their happenings, for being like a happening, there is a lot that is, indeed, happening and all the people are fully occupied.

The Kirks were not always like this for they are both graduates of Leeds University, a worthy but boring place, standard red-brickery, rather like the setting of Bradbury's earlier novel *Eating People is Wrong*, which set him on the road to becoming a campus novelist. They are the children of that large mass of people, located on the permeable boundary between the upper working class and the lower middle class. They are northern, chapel and temperance, the people at the core of what I have called 'respectable Britain', having as Bradbury puts it 'a code of ethical constraint, decency and deference'. Bradbury tells us that at this point Kirk had never been into a restaurant, a pub or a woman. Kirk's PhD thesis was a worthwhile empirical study of the Christadelphians; it could well have been supervised by the eminent and eminently sane Bryan Wilson, a Leeds sociologist at the time. Most sociology was, and indeed still is, like that, and a very good thing it was and is. It is, though, not good enough for Kirk who turns radical and writes his first 'committed' political book called *The Coming of the New Sex*, 'weak on fact and documentation; but what it lacked there it made up in argumentative energy'. Not surprisingly it was well reviewed by 'the culturally attuned critics of the Sundays'. Kirk now got a senior post at the in all senses 'new' University of Watermouth with its expensive, exciting and dysfunctional modernist architecture and furniture and staff to match. There has been much debate about whether Bradbury's imagined university was inspired by Sussex, Lancaster or his own University of East Anglia in Norwich but the flight paths of the aircraft overhead indicate Essex.

Within Watermouth there are 'notices for all seasons'. There are notices designed to stimulate self-awareness ('Women's Lib Nude Encounter Group') and self definition ('Gaysoc Elizabethan Evening:

With Madrigals') and revolution ('Start the Armed Struggle Now? / Lunchtime Meeting Addressed by Dr Howard Kirk?').

Bradbury has not imagined or invented this lunacy. Let us compare it with the agenda for the annual meeting of the British Sociological Association held in Brighton on All Fool's Day, 1978 as described at the time by that most perceptive of British sociologists David Martin.

Sunday morning opened with 'Working class Autobiographies' and you could settle for a pleasant Sunday afternoon with 'Language and Discourse' raising questions relating to the 'critique of economism in Marxist theory'. After tea and scones the Women and Film study group investigated *inter alia* whether *Coronation Street* has potential for subversion.... Monday morning, up early for spiritual exercises with John Berger or 'Cultural Imperialism' or else for 'Marxism, Feminism and Cultural Practice'.... 'Marxist Theatre in Britain'.

It really was like that. Radical sociologists had departed from and disgraced the great traditions of Ibn Khaldoun, Spencer, Durkheim and Weber, which is why Kirk is made a sociologist, even though the real person on whom Bradbury based him taught in a department of English. There were at the time just as many Marxist, Freudian and bumpy-daisy buffoons in Departments of English, Economics, Politics, Area Studies and Modern Languages and today many of the latter subjects have taken a clear lead in terms of their ideological idiocy quotients.

The real savagery, though, is revealed when a rumour goes round Kirk's department that Professor Mangel the racist, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, who works on the genetic basis of differences in intelligence, has been invited to speak. In fact he hasn't been but Kirk manipulates the staff meeting to ensure that he will be, since no other issue will so certainly unite the squabbling leftists among staff and students alike and lead them into the paths of disruption.

Mangel is invited and is scheduled to speak at the Beatrice Webb lecture theatre on 'Do Rats have Families?', a rather uncontroversial topic, except perhaps among rats. All entrances to the hall were filled with lying bodies, while massive and hostile forces assembled inside, making the radical point with roars and posters'. Mangel had in fact died at home the evening before and one of Kirk's colleagues Henry Beamish is to announce this. Beamish politely calls on them to disperse. A radical student pushes him to one side and declares that the lecture is forbidden by radical opinion. The audience roars 'Forbidden, forbidden' and 'Fascist, fascist'. Even though he clearly has a badly injured arm from his suicide attempt at Kirk's

party, Beamish is tipped over and trampled underfoot and his office trashed with considerable damage to his research notes.

It is difficult fully to appreciate the humour of this incident; it is too close to reality. Evelyn Waugh's tales of disaster and injustice are comic because they are so obviously wild fantasy, but this incident, and Bradbury's other tale of a student who is to fail his degree because his essays do not match Kirk's radicalism, are not only easily imaginable but may well have happened. Indeed the story of Mangel matches the attack by a gang of Trotskyites on H J Eysenck when he was giving a lecture at the LSE. Like Mangel, Eysenck had written about 'race and intelligence' and come to forbidden conclusions. Like Mangel, Eysenck had earlier in life fled Nazi Germany. Curiously much later Eysenck was to discover that he had Jewish ancestors, something the Nazis would surely have sniffed out. Yet both the real and the imagined incident reveal the joy of belonging to the radical left, of being able to riot and inflict bodily harm on particular individuals with a good conscience in a world where slogans triumph over human decency. Such student radicals have all the characteristics of fascism except discipline.

Such an incident could happen today, though it probably would not, since the Vice-Chancellor would prevent it taking place not from fear of violence but from fear of fashionable left-wing opinion. His or her excuse would be that it 'might give offence to some students'. It is a concern for individual feelings that is not invoked when an anti-Semitic Muslim hate speaker has been invited, though it may well lead to the banning of anyone of a vaguely Zionist persuasion. Vice-Chancellors can be hypocrites as well as cowards and some probably have a distant past of vigorous trouble-making when they themselves were radical students. In the end the Kirks won, and many universities are permeated by 'establishment radicals'. The portly felines who run such places are referred to contemptuously by the scholars beneath their feet as 'the suits' but beneath many of these bespokes lurks the ghost of a Che Guevara T-shirt. The 'long march through the institutions' succeeded and yesterday's radicals control the institutions they once defied. They have proved to be consistent in their dislike for free speech but they now seek to preserve the orderly turning of bureaucratic cogs rather than disrupt them. I laughed heartily at *The History Man* when I first read it in the 1970s. I am less sure now. *The History Man* repeats itself first as farce, second as tragedy. Perhaps that was what Malcolm Bradbury, that most subtle of authors, really meant.

Christie Davies is the author of Jokes and Targets Indiana University Press, 2011.

Reputations — 34

Erwin Schrödinger: Nature and the Greeks

Brian Ridley

Erwin Schrödinger, Nobel Laureate, one of the founders of quantum theory, was born in Vienna in 1887 of mixed Austrian and English family. He is famous for his cat, which, according to quantum theory, can exist in a state that is both dead and alive. Schrödinger, even though he had invented the cat, naturally regarded this as nonsense, and joined Einstein in having grave doubts about quantum theory being an adequate theory of physics. In spite of its resounding success in predicting the results of measurements on sub-microscopic particles, in some cases to remarkable accuracy, unease about the theory persists to the present day.

In our common-sense world of cause and effect, when a batsman hits ball perhaps he scores a six, a boundary or is run out. But not in the particle world.

In a quantum cricket match the spectators face away from the pitch. The bowler bowls, the batsman hits the ball: he scores a boundary, a six, is caught out, makes four runs, is stumped – and his mobile phone goes telling him he has won the Euro Lottery. All these co-exist. There is no time in the quantum world, no and/or, no cause and effect, umpires are redundant.

The decision on what happens is the crowd's. It is only when it turns to look that it sees a single result; the batsman running from the field screaming 'I have won 5 million!' or maybe walking to the pavilion having being bowled out. Physicists call this act of turning to look 'the collapse of the wave function' Schrödinger's equation is a quantum scoreboard, offering us a guess at the most likely result we will see. It would tell us that winning the lottery is most unlikely. Such weirdness caused a co-founder of quantum theory, Niels Bohr, to declare that if you understood quantum physics – you didn't.

Nevertheless, the Schrödinger equation, presented to the world in the 1920s when Schrödinger occupied

the chair of theoretical physics in Zürich, was the foundation of wave mechanics that explained the structure of atoms and molecules, and much else, even though, because of its non-intuitive nature, nobody understood what it was about. We physicists merely follow certain mathematical rules and get verifiable results. However, Schrödinger always maintained consciousness was first. 'Consciousness cannot be accounted for in physical terms. For consciousness is fundamental. It cannot be accounted for in terms of anything else.'



It was with this crisis in science in mind that he set out in 1948 to deliver a course of lectures on 'Nature and the Greeks' at University College, Dublin. What on earth was he thinking of, talking about the ancient Greeks instead of theoretical physics, and why on earth in Dublin? The answer to the latter question involves the very different motivations of two men in the twentieth century, neither of whom were exactly popular with the Brits, namely Adolph Hitler and Eamon de Valera. The Nazi purges of 1933 forced Schrödinger to leave the most prestigious chair of theoretical physics in Germany, that of Berlin.

Friends in England got him a Fellowship in Magdalen College, Oxford, and, in 1936, there came an offer of a chair in Edinburgh. Schrödinger was horrified to learn that, as a full professor, he would be expected to teach undergraduates, and fled from such an unnatural practice to a chair in Graz in his native Austria. This was not quite the whole story.

Schrödinger had continuous trouble with the ladies. Taking advantage of an 'open' marriage to his wife Anny, he took a series of mistresses, often overlapping, one of whom accompanied him to the hotel in the Tyrol during the weekend he wrote his famous theory. Her identity has never been discovered. At Oxford he lived openly with two 'wives', his legal one, and a 'wifelet', Hilde March, the wife of Arthur March, a German

Professor of Physics. This was not well received in the cloistered homosexual world of pre-war Oxford, especially when the 'wifelet' had a baby. Neither did Schrödinger care for Oxford. He told Max Born, 'These colleges are academies of homosexuality. What queer types of men they produce. You never know who your neighbour (at a college dinner) might be. You talk to him in your natural manner, and then it turns out that he is an archbishop or a general – huh!'

The physicist Lindemann, a noted misogynist, when he discovered Schrödinger liaison with March's wife declared, 'we ought to get rid of the bounder'. 'It was', comments Walter Moore, Schrödinger's biographer, 'bad enough to have one wife at Oxford but to have two was unspeakable.' No steps however were taken and when his ICI grant ran out he was offered the Chair of Theoretical Physics at Edinburgh, about to be vacated by the grandson of Charles Darwin. But because of Home Office delays, he decided to return to Austria and a professorship at Graz.

Bad timing. Two years later Hitler invaded Austria, forcing Schrödinger and Anny to flee to Italy, the only country where a visa was not required. This was not before a highly compromising letter he had written supporting the Nazis to the University Senate in an effort to avoid being 'cleansed' from the civil service was published in the *Graz Tagespost*. Not that it saved him. On the 31st of May 1938 he was summarily dismissed under an ordinance for 'the renovation of the Civil Service'.

Arriving in Rome without a lira between them, Schrödinger handled the situation with great panache. He got a porter to carry the three suitcases and call a taxi, told the taxi driver to tip the porter and drive them to a smart hotel and told the commissionaire to settle with the driver, mentioning to the hotel the name of Italy's famous physicist, Enrico Fermi. In the spirit of that invisible college of theoretical physicists, Fermi settled everything.

In the meantime, de Valera had initiated plans for an Institute of Advanced Studies in Dublin and sent a clandestine invitation to Schrödinger in Belgium where he had moved. Eventually, in 1939 the Schrödingers were established in Dublin, in determinedly neutral Eire.

We must remember this was Ireland, and the Irish a disputatious people. Listening to Schrödinger one day in the back row of the Institute of Advanced Studies was the Irish wit, playwright and columnist Myles Na Gopaleen. Writing of Schrödinger's lecture on causality he accused the physicist of trying to

prove 'there were two St Patricks and no God.' Official feathers were ruffled and a libel suit between the Institute and *The Irish Times* ensued, in which Schrödinger, later on friendly terms with the writer, absolutely refused to take part. Na Gopaleen, inspired by Schrödinger's friendship, later published *The Third Policeman*, an Irish classic satirising Pauli's exclusion principle – a police sergeant explains this impossibly difficult concept over a pint of porter – 'a pint of plain is your only man' – and the notion of the alive yet dead Schrödinger cat.

Schrödinger was good at public lectures, and enjoyed giving them on topics of general interest. In book form they appeared as *What is Life?* (1944), *Science and Humanism* (1951), *Nature and the Greeks* (1954), and *Mind and Matter* (1958), every one of them well worth a read today. *Nature and the*

the Schrödinger equation, presented to the world in the 1920s when Schrödinger occupied the chair of theoretical physics in Zürich, was the foundation of wave mechanics that explained the structure of atoms and molecules, and much else

Greeks seems most removed from science but, in fact, it is quite the reverse. Given Schrödinger's perception of a crisis in theoretical physics it seemed fruitful to return to the thoughts of the ancient

Greek philosophers that marked the true beginning of science itself, and discover the origins of the way we think about the world. For, as John Burnet remarks in his book *Early Greek Philosophy*: '...it is an adequate description of science to say that it is thinking about the world in a Greek way.' Without contact with the Greek world there is no science.

It started with Thales and the other thinkers in the independent city and island states that were Ionia: no big empire, no caste of priests to chastise heretical thoughts, as was likely to happen in Babylonia and Egypt and elsewhere. The central message of the Ionians is that the world can be understood through the senses, and without bringing into that understanding the person doing the understanding. They had the intuition that all matter had something in common, be it water, air or even mind, and that everything was alive. Others scoffed at all that, pointing out that the senses deceive, and that the way forward was by reason. Parmenides reasoned that behind the visible changing kaleidoscope of events, there must be an unchanging world, a unity, the One. It is a belief that is found in Plato and, later, in Plotinus and the religion of Neoplatonism. One of the most remarkable ideas was that of Democritus and the atomists, remarkable because it corresponds most closely with our idea of matter. Was that just a lucky guess, or was there a reason? Schrödinger believes the latter. Democritus was a talented geometer and could see that real objects might destroy the exactness of geometry unless matter

was made up of tiny, physically indivisible particles. Thus, in geometry a sphere resting on a plane touched the plane at an infinitesimally small point. If, in reality, the sphere rested on a few atoms, then geometry was still applicable to the world. Mathematical models continued to fuel the supremacy of reason over the senses. From the evidence of musical vibrations of a string, the Pythagoreans deduced that the world was number, again a remarkable insight given our modern mathematical world. That the world can be understood on the basis of pure reason motivated Sir Arthur Eddington in his *Fundamental Theory*; and Paul Dirac (who shared the Nobel Prize with Schrödinger) took mathematics as primary. The Parmenidean belief that the world can be understood by pure reason is very much alive today in some of the activities of string theorists and cosmologists.

Such a belief, as Schrödinger tirelessly points out, can say nothing whatsoever about things that really matter to us. 'It cannot tell us a word about red or blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight; it knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good and bad, God and eternity.' In that Greece of yore, a student might ask his teacher questions about atoms, the shape of the earth, on moral conduct, God, the immortality of the soul. How unimaginable today! For Schrödinger, science and religion have the same aim – to fill the gaps in our understanding of the world, our place in it, and its meaning. Unfortunately, the gaps are all too often filled prematurely. 'In an honest search for knowledge you quite often have to abide by ignorance for an indefinite period.' And more sadly: 'Socially

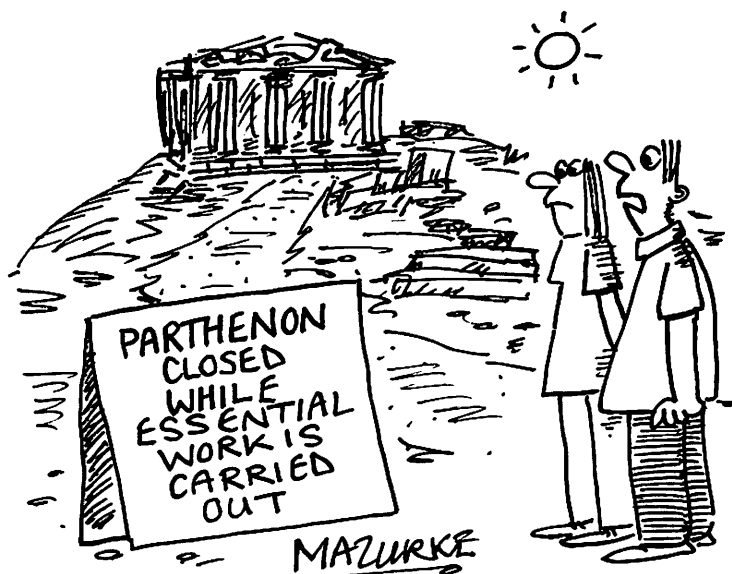
For Schrödinger, science and religion have the same aim – to fill the gaps in our understanding of the world, our place in it, and its meaning.

and morally dangerous misgivings may spring, and occasionally have sprung – not, of course, from people knowing too much – but from people believing that they know a good deal more than they do.' The chemistry of taste, the neurology of touch, the study of the brain are held to be filling the gap, but down-to-earth sensations, such as the act of vision, are not remotely describable. As Sir Charles Sherrington puts it in his book *Man and his Nature*: 'Electric charges have in themselves not the faintest elements of the visual – having, for instance, nothing of 'distance', 'right-side-upness', nor 'vertical', nor horizontal', nor 'colour', nor 'brightness', nor 'shadow', nor 'roundness', nor 'squareness', nor 'contour', nor 'transparency', nor 'opacity', nor 'near', nor 'far', nor visual anything – yet conjure up all of these.'

In writing about nature and the Greeks, Schrödinger was far from indulging some hobby as light relief from theoretical physics; he was posing serious questions about the way we think about the world. Is the Greek way the only way? Can it fill those yawning gaps between mind and matter, living and non-living? Present-day methods seem to be incapable of doing that. Yet science is the only way we have yet discovered for ascertaining relatively safe and incontrovertible knowledge. It is not enough. We will just have to be patient and hope new insights will eventually emerge.

Brian Ridley is a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Myles Harris wrote about Schrödinger's time at Oxford, the quantum cricket match, his politics, views on consciousness, love affairs and Myles Na Gopaleen.



"Apparently they're turning it into a debtors' prison."



Roy Kerridge

Back in the forties and early fifties, my mother had a good friend, Hilda Loftus. She was the sole survivor of a German Jewish family who perished in the Holocaust. Safely in England, Hilda married Joe Loftus who came from a Catholic Irish background. Hilda and Joe did not get on very well, and their children Brian and Barbara led an unsettled childhood. When I knew them, they sided with their father, so I imagined they would both grow up into London Irish, buttonholing strangers and boring them rigid with tales of Queen Victoria starting the potato famine.

Far from it! Suddenly discovering the duo once more, after sixty years, I was surprised to find that they had changed their allegiance and become quite Jewish, particularly Barbara. Always a sensitive child, she has now bloomed into an artistic genius. Against all the odds, she specialises in realistic, figurative oil paintings, drawings and silhouettes. The latter in particular have a remarkable sense of movement, and could be turned into thumb-operated flick books. Her paintings, which nearly all centre on her grandparents' experiences in Weimar and Nazi Germany, show glowing textures on carpet tablecloths and polished mahogany furniture, all with an undefined air of impending doom. Her latest exhibition, with a spin-off book published by Phillip Wilson is called *Sigismund's Watch*. My favourite of all the wonderful pictures shown is the one used as a dust jacket and poster advertisement: *Hildegard Under Table*. Little Hilda, my mother's friend to be, is sitting under a table playing with a splendid collection of dolls, a Minnie Mouse ribbon on her head, an expression of sudden anxiety on her face. She can hear her parents quarrelling loudly in another room. Silhouettes and drawings elsewhere in the exhibition show that quarrel in detail. Angry with her husband for his sudden descent into poverty when the mark devalues, Hilda's mother snatches off poor Sigismund's watch and chain and grinds them under foot.

This family story clearly made a great impression on Barbara who heard it as an adult, not long before

her mother died. In my own family the watch incident is paralleled by the tale of an egg. At one point my maternal grandparents found themselves in such reduced circumstances that the only food in the house was one boiled egg.

'Here you are – *you* have it! said my grandmother.

'No, my dear, I cannot – *you* have it'

'No, you have it'

Finally my grandfather hurled the egg against the wall and no one had it.

Barbara Loftus's exhibition was held in the former Hampstead home of another Sigismund, now the Freud Museum. Barbara writes in her book: 'Teutonic names like Hildegard and Sigismund were favoured by Jews to show their identification with Germany...

but they ironically marked them out since these symbolic names were less popular with non-Jewish Germans. Every London Jamaican named Winston can say Amen to that.

I had never heard of the Freud Museum before, a big comfortable Lutyens-like house that was long home to Anna Freud as well as to her more famous father. In the 1930's my mother's schoolteacher decided

his pupil was a genius, and sent for Anna Freud to analyse her. My mother, who was ten years old at the time, took a dislike to Anna on sight, evidently reciprocated. In a German accent, Anna Freud urged my mother to say whatever words came into her head. Each word was noted down carefully, but after a short while my mother dictated, 'Isit....not...soon... time ...to stop?' End of lesson.

I recommend everyone to visit the Freud Museum, not only for the Egyptian curios collected by the Freuds, or the extracts from Freud's writings which resemble the songs of George Formby (*My little Stick of Blackpool Rock*) minus the humour, but for the most peculiar souvenir shop in London. Here can be bought not only Freudian postcards, but cuddly Freud dolls in various sizes. Each doll has an identical white beard and black spectacles, and resembles a demented Father Christmas.



ETERNAL LIFE



Who are these with wings like frogs who flap around in churchy togs,
And offer us a rusty saw, as if we had not heard before
That money will not save our soul?
This preacher's dug himself a hole.
He tells us we should turn to God but then he leaves us on our tod:
We know we should be better men, our problem is of how and when.
Could we be good by our own will, then Christ need ne'er have suffered ill.
The Creed he declaims is highly risible – offering unseen instead of invisible.
Then when he comes to intercede, it's quite enough to make us plead
For silence rather than his manner of framing petitions for Havana:
Who lives in Hereford and prays for Fidel has perspective worse than Dingley Dell.
He prays for parishes in consternation facing 'pastoral reorganisation'.
What purpose in these weasel words?
Archdeacon, tell it to the birds –
Or speak as we speak in the town: you mean it's churches being closed down.
And that's not Gospel, not even funny, but Church Commissioners wasting money.
The sermon over and on our knees, he offers us "a sign of peace".
And suddenly all hell breaks loose with salutations, lewd, diffuse:
They grab your hand, they slap your back; they squeeze so hard your ribs might crack;
These assailants don't even know your name, but instant intimacy is their game.
So fall to the floor, cower, kneel to dodge that smirking touchy-feel.
The music: Ah mein Vater, Mutter! Dies Schtinking Schtuff is by John Rutter!
No words of judgement here afford: it's like Come into the garden Lord.
I'll burn my hymnbook, run and hide, rather than do this palais glide.
Now at this Eucharistic Feast we need the Altar in the east;
But here they put it in the middle, making a psychological fiddle,
Declaring it's the proper thing to have us standing in a ring,
Pretending this is more inclusive when actually it's most exclusive –
To make a circle – to put it crude – is by circumference to exclude
Not only the traditional bod, but transcendence – bluntly, God.
Every cathedral, every church of which you care to make research
Shows this very same disgrace – the abolition of sacred space.
All over Europe this is done, and wheresoever God is gone.
So now there is no holy fear and Satan is the victor here.
It's atheism, but by stealth – destruction to the soul's good health.
Where now has true religion gone, that mystery so near the bone?
The unutterable sense of the beyond turned into something fey and fond
By modern churchmen throughout the land: banal, bathetic, bloodless, bland,
Bureaucratic, sentimental, euphemistic, detrimental
To the sense we covet most: that haunting by the Holy Ghost.
How dare they still use words like Lord when all their thrust, their every word
Is utilitarian, un-pneumatic, and God himself made democratic,
Preferring not an hierarch priest but a president at their dumbbed-down feast.
He's reading from a PC Bible; his every word a blatant libel
Of Christ, our God, our Prince, our King served by some vain, elected thing.
But let us ask, what is church for? It's to be on earth an open door,
A ladder reaching up to heaven; its rungs the sacraments, all seven.
Here we may hear God's holy Word, but not from a version that's absurd.
Nor give us doctrine that's all wrong, and sermons out of Patience Strong
By wet parsonical, Pelagian chaps who would pull us up by our bootstraps.
No – we come to Mass this day to learn our sins are done away.
That is the Gospel of good news to all who kneel in stalls or pews.
The beauty of holiness must abound in silence, in ecstatic sound.
We should be like that Moses bod when he looked on the face of God.
There should be joy, there must be fear, as we attend the Godhead here,
Who gives to us who have no merit blessings by his Holy Spirit.
We leave as new, regenerate men: lift up your voices, shout Amen.

Peter Mullen

ARTS AND BOOKS

An Arrogance of Intellectuals

John Jolliffe

Treason of the Heart, David Pryce-Jones, Encounter Books, 2011, \$23.95.

This valuable book is a quick survey of English Radicals who have taken up the cause of oppressed peoples, often by trying to fit square pegs into round holes. Sometimes, but not always, they were determined to spit on and damage their own country in the process. The book does not always live up to its title, because many of those mentioned were not traitors and did no harm to their own country. They were merely obsessive followers of their own often generous-minded enthusiasms and fancies.

The standard-bearers of Greek Independence, whether poseurs or genuine; the British Auxiliary Legion in the First Carlist War in Spain (nearly half of whom died of typhus); the supporters of the Confederates in the American Civil War; the champions of the unfortunate Armenians; none of these did any harm to Britain. They were simply gripped by a kind of intellectual superiority complex which they felt (rather than thought) gave them the right to interfere in the internal affairs of faraway countries, of which they often knew less than Chamberlain in 1938.

The real traitors were a different matter. The egregious Tom Paine saw the revolt of the American colonies as the best way to hurt Britain and to achieve his dream of seeing the French tricolor floating over the Tower of London. Attempting to take part in the French Revolution, Paine was lucky to spend only a few months in prison before fleeing back to America, where his drunkenness and savage anti-christianity made him intensely disliked for the rest of his days. Only six people attended his funeral. His disciple Hazlitt regarded Napoleon as 'the destroyer of the grand conspiracy of kings,' only to find that he not only bullied the Pope into crowning him emperor, but installed three of his brothers (briefly, it is true) as kings. In the same sort of way, Shelley and Byron, the spoilt brats of the Romantic movement, were too misguided to be regarded as traitors; and there were those, like Wordsworth, who later recanted, and were only traitors to the Brave New World in which they had invested their hopes. Another such was William

Pitt's cousin Lord Stanhope, who after tearing down the coronets from his lodge gates at Chevening (now the grace and favour residence of the Foreign Secretary) later stuck them back on again.

At the Peace Conference in 1919, wishful thinking set in again. Lloyd George's ignorance of geography, let alone history, was hidden beneath his astonishing powers of persuasion. President Wilson, with the highest motives, ignited the later American creed that democracy was the ideal answer not only for developed countries in Europe but for tribal societies in Africa and the Middle East where it had never existed, and where, when it was introduced, it was rapidly suffocated first by the corruption of whoever got his hands on the levers of power, and secondly by an extraordinary level of general incompetence. The Americans believed for a time that they knew what was best for other people even when disregarding all their national characteristics. This has caused such a string of disasters, not least in the Balkans and Afghanistan, that they show signs of giving up their policy as a bad job, though their vast commercial interests make this unusually difficult.

However, Pryce-Jones ignores the fact that it is unreasonable to expect all these wishful thinkers to have known where their fancies would lead: we know what happened next; they didn't; and if they had had no imagination they would have been much the poorer. Of course, as the list of precedents built up, they might have been expected to see ahead more clearly; but only up to a point. When we come to the 1930s, it is the sheer arrogance of the left-wing activists, their wilful and culpable refusal to face the facts about what was going on in Russia, that is so nauseating. Just because Hitler and Mussolini were disasters, it did not mean that, from the beginning, Stalin was not even worse.

Intellectuals have constantly shown themselves to be more gullible in practice than anyone else. There is some excuse for scientists and economists, who are dealing with human beings only indirectly and distantly and are therefore often out of touch with them. But historians are supposed to be dealing with observable facts. How can we feel anything but contempt for the fellows at Balliol who appointed as their Master Christopher Hill, a man who consistently claimed that black was actually white; who called Stalin 'a great humanitarian'; described the Great Terror which he created as 'non-violent'; and queried, on television, whether the Gulag had ever existed. (It is not likely

that they would have appointed a man who was in denial of the Holocaust.) So breath-taking was, and often still remains, the double standard in attitudes to the Right and Left.

Of the recent traitors, much the most damage was caused by Philby, whose father before him had been not only a traitor but also a thief. Ironically, Philby Junior was regarded by his Soviet masters as a double agent, and so was never given any work of the least consequence by them in his long, dismal twilight in Moscow. Last, but not the least odious on this roll of dishonour, was Anthony Blunt. With a staggering lack of any sense of proportion, the BBC, in a recent discussion programme, disgracefully presented him as an idealist with views for which no apology was really necessary, and censure would have been 'inappropriate'. In reality, Blunt's expertise on Poussin for the benefit of a few budding art historians is completely insignificant compared with his slavish work for the murderous Soviet empire; and this when he was enjoying a role of great prestige at the top of his profession, which included being Keeper of the Queen's Pictures, and a knighthood. He was not an exciting writer, and his study of Borromini must be one of the dullest exercises in the artistic field. Photographs of him at various ages show a strange deterioration, from being a good-looking, sensitive young man, to a puffy, depressed, hangdog wreck. Shortly after he was exposed I was driving round Portman Square on a winter evening, near the office from which he had not yet been expelled, when his baleful figure shuffled across the road in front of my car. For a second I was tempted to put my foot on the accelerator; but luckily I reflected in time that cold-blooded murder was best left to the monsters who he had served so faithfully and for so long. The only charitable explanation is that he suffered from schizophrenia, several of the symptoms of which are observable in his behaviour.

David Pryce Jones's depressing but invaluable book should be on the reading list of every History and Current Affairs course in the country.

Murder in Paradise

Penelope Tremayne

The Cage, Gordon Weiss, Bodley Head, 2011, £13.49.

Here is a serious, unbiased account of the last throes of the Tamil Tigers and it is horrifying. One of the few criticisms I would make of *The Cage* is that, in its short historical summary at the beginning, it appears to date

the Tigers' emergence as terrorists only from 1983, as a reaction to the blood-drenched riots in Colombo when, according to estimates, some thousands of Tamils were slaughtered. This passes over the still bloodier riots of 1971, when (also according to estimates) over ten thousand Sinhalese were slaughtered, by socialist and communist Tamil parties in temporary alliance with the southern, mainly Sinhala, communist JVP party. Prabakaran (then aged seventeen) was already a rising star of LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) whose objective had been settled upon in the early 1960s and proclaimed worldwide from those 1971 riots onwards. Prabakaran distinguished himself in 1975 by personally murdering the Tamil mayor of Jaffna, LTTE having ordered the killing of any accessible Tamils opposing him, particularly those holding government or police posts. It did not thence take him long to gain the leadership.

Those who have not followed Sri Lankan affairs much until the last few years may think that a Tamil national state actually exists, or once did. It never did. Early kinglets both Sinhala and Tamil fought each other, and among themselves, ding-dong, during the first millenium AD and intermittently until the 19th century, but otherwise did not get much in each other's way. In the 1920s the British began to prepare Ceylon for independence, installing first an elected legislative council then a full parliament – in which Tamil representation was much higher than their percentage of the population. The Sri Lankan communist party, which took root in the 1920s, saw that the splitting of Ceylon into active national factions would best serve their own purposes and so set about it. Two generations later Prabakaran and his zealots were not patriots yearning for a stolen heritage, but they were thoroughly organised killers who by using an invented heritage achieved international attention as a 'legitimate' state, imposing its own taxes on the civil population within its grasp, operating its own navy, artillery and air force, and piling up vast wealth (perhaps a billion or two today?) extracted from the gullible all over the world.

The work of both the ICRC and the UN teams throughout the last four catastrophic months of LTTE's rule is beyond praise; in the UN's case, political as well as physical courage was required. The UN has always retained a tendency to accept revolutionaries, especially if they are on the Left, as being in the right; a view which chimes with modern youth's frustrated urge to play in the surf of anything that has Kalashnikovs and claims 'victim' status. Endless political 'liberation struggles' have traded on this weakness, and Prabakaran did so almost to the end: to those last months during which he seems completely to have lost hold of reality. Or perhaps not completely,

for Gordon Weiss shows us that Prabakaran planned to make his own escape after agreeing the surrender terms, and duly made it (unsuccessfully), thereby decisively breaking the agreement and leaving some 300 last ditch followers including his wife to walk out in plain view and be gunned down the next day.

Weiss neither under nor overplays the horrors he has witnessed. He does not make points moral or political, but simply recounts events as they unrolled, with an admirable dispassionate precision. His account reveals the total inhumanity of both sides more clearly than any more emotional style could. He tells us that appalling as its execution became, the government's decision to put an end to the Tigers once for all (and confirmed afterwards by the UN) was right. It is a pity that this and some other very interesting and pertinent things, including a telling quotation, appear in his preface (which readers often omit) rather than in the main text.

There are one or two inaccuracies in the background information given (for instance on the language laws, or the treatment of the Indian Tamils after independence) but they do not affect the author's narrative, and I cannot think anyone could criticise his account of the last dreadful two and a half years. For economy's sake, no doubt, a great deal of highly relevant and valuable information – 50 pages of it – has been tucked away into Notes sandwiched between other lists of useful facts at the end. Not only does this force us continually to interrupt ourselves to look them up with the help of page markers, but they are printed continuously, only a dot between one note from the next, and in a mingy font with line spacing inducing aching eyes for many readers. This very good book is worth better treatment.

What does the future of Sri Lanka look like? Weiss does not hold out false hopes. When Mahinda Rajapaksa became president I asked a well-informed Sri Lankan friend what he was like, adding that I supposed he was 'an intelligent thug'. The reply was 'You are only partly right; he is a very intelligent thug.' Such men tend to last a long time, but perhaps only such a figure could have put an end to Prabakaran's murderous myth. During their Thirty Years War one Sri Lankan task force after another has been (or seemed) on the verge of victory, and each time their government pulled the army back, yielding to international pressure for peace, and accepted new rounds of talks, new mediators, each one leading nowhere. If the job had been done twenty years ago, many thousands of lives on both sides might have been spared.

Penelope Tremayne has written an account of her imprisonment at the hands of the Tamil Tigers (Nor Iron Bars a Cage, 1986).

Collective guilt

John Hughes

Collateral Damage, Global Crash Phase Two, Moti Levi and Mark Griffith, Moving Toyshop Books, 2010, £14.

Collateral Damage is an excellent collection of articles analysing our economic mess from differing perspectives. It is broad ranging, covering China as well as Britain, the United States and Europe. The authors recognize the importance of the historical and comparative dimension. We cannot learn directly from the past because the world changes or from other countries whose circumstances differ but it is absolutely vital to have this knowledge, particularly when confronted with some ill-conceived piece of contemporary conventional wisdom.

The most interesting and outstanding essays include those by Patrice Decafmeyer, *Blind Faith*, Mark Ellegard, *Back to Fundamentals*, Moti Levi on *Risks, Decisions and Market failure* and Paul Ormerod on *Buying into Risk*, on the assessment of risk, together with Jaime Ferrer, *The Impact of the Credit Crunch on Industrial Value Chains* and Doug French *Productive Debt versus Unproductive Debt* on the nature and impact of debt. Neither risk nor debt are easy to understand, particularly in a complex contemporary world where you need a knowledge of mathematics and of complex algorithms. I cannot claim to understand either risk or debt fully, but, having read this perceptive book, I now understand them much better. In particular I am now better informed about why things went wrong. The clear explanation of intrinsically difficult concepts is a defining characteristic of a good book.

Another excellent essay is that by Stefan Karlsson, *Two Swedish Models*, which both analyses Sweden's economic decline leading to the banking collapse of 1990-2 and the policies used to tackle this, and also the long term failure of the high tax, high welfare economy. Today total employment in Sweden is lower than in 1980 and in the private sector lower than in 1950. The real unemployment rate (as distinct from the fiddled government one) is about 25 per cent. Alongside it we may place Mark Griffith's thoughtful piece, *Why is the Euro so fragile?* (reprinted here as our lead article). Griffith had already foreseen the Euro-crisis in 1998 and for very good reasons. There is no way you can have a common exchange rate and monetary policy that will suit all the countries in such a large and diverse currency area containing thriving, efficient economies and chaotic ones, countries with

honest accounting and countries which are corrupt and profligate. Only a political class whose training has been in administration or in nothing could have failed to see this. Griffith, like myself, is sceptical of the idea that having a single currency was necessarily helpful to the United States, the country the dogmatic Europeans hate, envy and wish to emulate in everything except its virtues. Initially the single currency caused great financial instability and political conflict – just like the Euro. Europe could only emerge from this if, as in the United States, there was in practice an extensive free flow of labour between the regions. It is not going to happen.

The world's most important economic power is, or soon will be, China. Niall Ferguson's *Chimerica is Headed for Divorce*, Niall Ferguson and Martin Schularick's *The Great Wallop* and Erwin Tuil's *China's Coming Crisis* all deal with the negative side of the impact on the world of the inevitable rise of China. Chinese economic growth under capitalism and free trade utterly refutes the nonsensical proposition from Gunner Myrdal and his Third Worldist ideological colleagues that poor countries could not grow and prosper in a free trading world economic system. They had quite dishonestly explained away South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong as being creatures of American subsidy and sponsorship. They cannot explain away newly capitalist China. The problem that has arisen is quite the opposite of their predictions. Very high savings in China from her export surplus has nowhere to go and so have been poured into financing an America in which neither government nor individuals save. It was a relationship typical of many in the present crisis. Like low interest rates and spectacular bubble booms in the value of property, high levels of personal debt and Carter-Clinton mortgages for paupers, the Chinese-American link-up seemed fine for a short time but was bound to fail. It was not just bankers who failed to think long term but governments and individual consumers.

Overlords Of Terror

Nigel Jones

Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich, Peter Longerich, 2011, OUP, £25, **Heinrich Himmler**, Robert Gerwarth, Yale University Press, 2011, £20.00.

Himmler and Heydrich were the terrible twins of the Third Reich. Both power-hungry workaholics, they worked in tandem – at least until Heydrich's assassination in Prague by British-trained Czech agents

in 1942 – on building the most fearsome apparatus of repression that Europe has ever known. Although often bracketed together, and sharing the same capacity for bureaucratic Empire building, there were significant differences between the pair.

Heydrich was closer to the Nazi ideal physically, being tall, blonde and physically courageous. Alongside his duties as a mass murderer he flew combat missions over enemy lines on the eastern front (and survived being shot down while doing so); like the British fascist leader Oswald Mosley he was a capable fencer; the son of an orchestra director and failed composer, he was a competent performer on the violin and was probably his boss Himmler's intellectual superior. Though zealous and pitiless in carrying out the most insane tenets of Nazi racist mania, he was primarily interested in power for its own sake and, had he lived, might well have challenged both Himmler and ultimately Hitler himself.

The two men competed in accruing titles and jobs. Himmler began as a bag and flag carrier for Ernst Rohm, whose brown-shirted proletarian SA thugs he was destined to supplant with his own corps of black uniformed SS men, mainly drawn from the middle-classes. He ended as 'Reichsführer SS'; and Interior Minister, his power second only to the Führer himself. Heydrich, having been cashiered from the Navy for breach of promise to an influential officer's daughter, was by contrast a latecomer to the party. It was desperation rather than political commitment that kick-started his murderous career. Advised by his Nazi wife, Lina, both to become a party member and to apply to Himmler for the new post of creating a party security service, he obediently did so. (Robert Gerwarth credits the tough-minded Lina with being a major influence on her spouse).

Though Heydrich had had no experience until then of Intelligence matters, Himmler gave him half an hour to jot his ideas down on paper. His efforts secured him the job – and opened the path to his becoming what his biographer correctly calls 'Hitler's hangman' – the efficient executor of the Nazis' genocidal plans. As head of the SS security service, the *Sicherheits Dienst* Heydrich soon found his true metier. He inordinately admired Britain's Secret Service, to the extent of reputedly writing in green ink and signing his letters 'C' in emulation of the head of MI6, and built the SD into a fully-fledged international secret service.

Heydrich's coups included manufacturing the evidence to get General von Fritsch, the last anti-Nazi soldier at the top of the Wehrmacht, framed as a homosexual; persuading Stalin that the Red Army High Command was riddled with spies and traitors – leading him to purge his officer corps; setting up a brothel,

Salon Kitty, wired for sound to spy on VIP visitors to Berlin; and staging the faked attack on a German radio station at Gleiwitz on the Polish frontier that was the *casus belli* for Germany's invasion of Poland and the start of the war. (Heydrich obligingly provided the murdered concentration camp inmates, their bodies dressed in Polish uniforms, and codenamed 'Canned goods' tastefully left around the station as evidence of the Polish 'provocation').

Once that war had begun, Heydrich was the moving spirit behind both the Holocaust – organising and chairing the infamous Wannsee conference shortly before his own death – and spearheading the brutal Nazi reprisals against burgeoning resistance movements across Europe. At the time of his assassination – for which the Nazis extorted a terrible toll in reprisals against innocent Czech civilians – he was successfully stifling incipient Czech resistance as satrap of Bohemia and Moravia, with a clever stick and carrot policy, alternating naked terror with inducements to lure the Czech working class into producing more for the German war effort.

Robert Gerwarth, like Himmler's latest biographer Peter Longerich, is a German-born historian now based in Britain. Both books are models of German historiography: thorough, dense, cautious, and definitive. There is a huge contrast, almost a yawning gulf, between the pathetic inadequacy of Heinrich Himmler as a man – let alone the Aryan supermen he admired – and the vast evil he wrought. Myopic, hollow-chested, with a weakly receding chin, Himmler was a martyr to agonising stomach cramps and other ailments, probably psychosomatic in origin; never saw combat service, and was violently sick on the one occasion when he witnessed a massacre of Jews as part of the Holocaust he had unleashed.

And yet this unprepossessing little man, in the space of a few short years, built a veritable empire of evil that held not only the Reich but vast swathes of conquered territory in a grip of sheer terror. Himmler's SS was the Nazi party's élite Praetorian Guard and its Secret Police force; it staffed the Death Camps where the Holocaust happened, and provided the Wehrmacht's most ruthless cutting edge in the shape of the fanatical and brutally effective Waffen SS divisions that put up a stubborn resistance on both the Eastern and Western Fronts.

In this massive and truly monumental biography, Peter Longerich, Professor of Modern German History at Royal Holloway College and one of the world's leading authorities on Nazism, attempts to explain how this monstrosity happened. Himmler's 'success' – to use a word that sounds obscene in the context of the subject – lay, we learn, in his being an extremely efficient bureaucrat and empire-builder among the

competing paladins around Hitler; and in his utter devotion to the most fanatical, not to say downright cranky, aspects of Nazi ideology. Indeed, in his puffed belief in such concepts as the purity of the Aryan people, its esoteric origins, and the wilder shores of the Occult, Himmler outdid even his master the Führer.

Born at the turn of the 20th century, the son of a teacher and devoted Bavarian monarchist, Himmler was just too young to see military service in World War One. He compensated for this, and his own all too evident lack of warrior qualities, by enlisting in one of the myriad paramilitary groups infesting Munich in the chaotic post-war years. After wagging a flag in Hitler's abortive 1923 Beerhall putsch, Himmler entered the Nazi party's bureaucratic labyrinth – building a reputation as an efficient paper pusher, and an unwaveringly loyal servant of the movement.

Behind the scenes, however, he had already begun to build the SS – originally merely Hitler's personal bodyguard – as a semi-secret élite with its own arcane rule. SS members had to attain levels of fitness unattainable by Himmler himself, and prove their ancestry free of any trace of Jewishness. After the Nazis obtained power, by fawning to Hitler and steadily expanding his empire and jobs portfolio, Himmler expanded the SS until it became a state within a state and the true engine of Nazism, extending its tentacles into every area of the Reich's life. As the edifice collapsed in 1945 it was the SS, indoctrinated with racist ideology, that held out longest – and went on terrorising and killing to the end.

Peter Longerich has probed more deeply than any previous biographer into the entrails of his monstrous subject's life. He attributes many of Himmler's enormities to his own psychological hang-ups – primarily his need to prove himself a hardened tough guy whereas he was and remained a craven creep. Himmler's malign achievement lay in moulding the SS as a mirror of his own warped personality.

Longerich has spent a decade researching his mammoth book. Its huge length – the endnotes and bibliography alone comprise some 250 of its thousand plus pages – and earnest tone do not make the tome an easy read, but its bulk is commensurate with the seriousness of its subject matter, and as the definitive life of this whey-faced master of terror, it is unlikely to be bettered.

Back in the 1970s an English student of German told me a curious story. He had been staying on the remote north German island of Fehmarn to improve his German. He noticed piles of fine linen in his landlady's airing cupboard monogrammed with the letter 'H'. While sitting with the lady one evening, he idly inquired as to their origins. His landlady became

visibly upset, and blurted *'Mein Mann war nur ein Polizist'* ('My husband was only a Policeman'). Her former name had been Lina Heydrich.

The Fourth Afghan War

Ian Gordon

Cables From Kabul, Sherard Cowper-Coles, Harper Collins, 2011, £20.

The title of this book is misleading because the author didn't have access to his cables; but his honest and fascinating account draws on his memory, helped by the three or four lines he wrote as a diary each day. It provides a vivid picture of what historians may decide was the seminal period of this latest Afghanistan conflict. The book is a pleasure to read with an enjoyable blend of scenic description, humour and thoughtful insights. The characters, many famous and infamous, are deftly described and with more sympathy than some perhaps deserve. Despite the diplomatic constraints, the author reveals with fairness the terrible errors that have got us to where we now are in Afghanistan.

'Sir SCC', as General Dan McNeil prefers to address him in their emails, arrived in the British Embassy in Kabul in early 2007 when it still seemed possible that a happy outcome might be achieved. I was involved in Afghanistan before, during and after the period covered in the book and was present during many of the times described. Like him, I also started out with much optimism. By the time he left in 2010 he seems less optimistic but, like me, he doesn't agree that a solution is unattainable, just a lot more difficult than it would have been if things had been done better, sooner.

However, even by 2007 the disastrous mistakes that the international community, led by the USA, had made had already sown some rotten seeds. The author recognised that he was accepting a most challenging post for which he was ideally suited: a linguist who speaks Hebrew and Arabic; a successful Ambassador to Saudi Arabia; with an understanding of Asian and Middle-Eastern culture and an interest in military affairs. He also had significant political experience having worked closely with Foreign Secretaries. His feeling that this post might define his career was proved right: his ascent as a deservedly rising star in the Foreign Office came to an end soon after he returned from Kabul.

Cowper-Coles provides insights into the events that defined the growing problem. He describes the characters and their decisions which caused a

successful conclusion to slip further from our grasp. He was clear from the outset that the focus must be political, including social, economic and psychological affairs, and not primarily a military matter. However, he realised that amongst all those involved there was a disastrous lack of coordination, with no focus and no overall narrative about the objectives. He describes the bungled attempt to appoint Lord Ashdown to the role of a sort of Supremo who might bring order to the muddle. He was too politely diplomatic to demand at every opportunity that an agreed vision or simple mission statement was vital and that, without that fundamental requirement, nothing could ever be coordinated effectively – with or without a Supremo.

Even where roles and tasks had been agreed, such as the UK's leading role in counter-narcotics, he relates with constrained understatement the tale of the US Ambassador earning the epithet 'Chemical Bill' by deciding to initiate, unilaterally and without reference to the British, a chemical-spray poppy eradication programme. His time in Afghanistan is mired in a stream of such cross-overs and cross-purposes exacerbated by the complexities of communication and misunderstanding between cultures and countries. From the dismissal of Michael Semple to the first meeting between President Karzai and David Milliband – where the Foreign Secretary tries to discuss important issues, in complete ignorance of the cultural need to first establish a relationship with President Karzai – the story is packed with instances of western overconfidence and disregard for the culture and context of the conflict. The US views Iraq and Afghanistan as wars and the UK generally refers to them as campaigns. This is not mere semantics, it informs the whole military approach and contributes to the lack of coherence.

He also rightly blames the rapid rotation of military commanders for the loss of continuity and coherence that results, which is certainly contrary to all the hard-earned lessons of counter-insurgency: the British Brigade commanders change every six months, and the Americans are not much better with a new General every year. The politicians and diplomats seem to do rather better with at least two years in post.

The book reveals that the whole western effort in Afghanistan is often hypocritical and generally lacks consistency. The author is too polite to criticise the decisions made before his appointment but one has to wonder at the arrogance of the West. What would have happened if, at the Bonn Conference in December 2001, the choice of the majority of Afghan elders of an Uzbek as interim President had been accepted? Instead the US decided they knew best and imposed a Pushtun of their choice instead of accepting the Afghan

choice. If the US-favoured Pushtun had then won the subsequent elections, so much the better for the US, and for democracy. And the Europeans suggested that a Federal constitution, similar to that which had been historically effective in Afghanistan, would be better for a multi-ethnic, multilingual Afghanistan. This sensible idea, proved to work so well in land-locked, multilingual Switzerland, was rejected by the very United States of America whose constitution is so similar to that proposed by the EU for a United Provinces of Afghanistan.

The story of British involvement in the saga is one of lack of influence on the US. The UK is involved in a way not entirely of its choosing and it seems not to have waved sufficient 'Red Cards', let alone Yellow ones, when allied actions and policies have been misguided. The author was required to tread a delicate path to ensure the UK could influence US policy from within the tent instead of ending up outside it, but one wonders how much we had to sell our souls to do so and whether we got what we deserved from that sale. We know from our many hard-earned experiences of counter-insurgency, that the solution depends upon a clear political vision and military restraint, but this readable book shows that the UK was unable to prevent the US making some fundamental political and military errors. This was not for want of trying by the author on the diplomatic front.

When Joe Biden quoted to the author at a dinner Churchill's comment that 'Democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried', Cowper-Coles responded that Churchill also said 'You can always count on Americans to do the right thing, after they have tried everything else'. Almost everything possible must by now have been tried in Afghanistan and one can now only hope that the only option left for Americans to try is, at last, the right thing.

A Funny Thing Happened To Me

Russell Lewis

Jokes and Targets, Christie Davies, Indiana University Press, 2011, \$24.95.

Have you ever tried to explain a joke to someone who has not understood it? Even if you succeed, by the time you've finished, the humour has evaporated. Freud's erudite book on jokes went through the dynamic interaction of the id, the ego, the superego and all that

jazz, but he spoilt it by using a joke to illustrate his argument, which wasn't in the least funny. Shame on old Sigmund not being able to produce one funny joke after all those years in Vienna, which, with its Jews and other minorities, was even more of a joke factory than Aberdeen.

Christie Davies has no such problem; he is a master of the joke-telling art with an encyclopaedic knowledge of jokes. He has published excellent collections on an array of subjects, like Welshmen and Jews, and in path-breaking work, on the ethnic joke. A book of political jokes – *The Reactionary Joke* – was written jointly with me, nearly half a century ago.

The great temptation for joke scholars, Freud included, is to create a universal formula to fit them all. The form of the joke is familiar; it starts with an incongruous narrative, but the main force of the joke is in the punch line. That description, however, does not tell us how jokes arise and where they come from? There is no single answer. Jokes are too varied to be defined in this way, so this book tries to find the sources of the great joke cycles, which have sprung up spontaneously in many different places in the world: jokes about stupidity and corresponding ones about canniness, sex jokes about blondes and the French, about Jewish men and women and about homosexuals. There is also the great American lawyer joke cycle and there are cascades of jokes about the Soviet Union's ascent and collapse. Jokes are arranged according to their targets. Those targets are not about people's virtues but their failings

Why do they enjoy popularity and then fade? The process seems to be similar to Arnold Toynbee's theory of the rise and fall of civilisations: challenge and response. If the challenge disappears, so do the jokes, though in the short run they may increase when the repression tails off, as in the Soviet Union.

The examination of the joke cycles kicks off with the stupidity joke. This is so widespread that it has no single specific target, but is part of a huge body of jokes, created all over the world, which are always awaiting a suitable quarry. Thus, to take just one example, in America and Britain, an avowal of disbelief takes the form of 'Tell that to the Marines'.

Why do Marines like to be surrounded by the enemy?

Because it enables them to shoot in any direction and kill them.

The reason why the Marines are treated as stupid is intriguing. Their well-deserved reputation for toughness and bravery seems to imply brawn not brains. This leads to jokes about their stupidity among those in charge of the sophisticated naval vessels or

aircraft which take them to the battle zone. There are similar jokes about dim army officers and aristocrats. In Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* Lord Mountararat says:

I don't want to say a word against brains – I often wish I had some myself.

In Europe and North America only about five per cent of women have naturally fair hair, yet blondes are everywhere. Everybody assumes that blondes are more attractive, which is why so many women dye their hair. Blondes are regarded as sexy (and, says Christie, have been considered so ever since Roman times). Nowadays there is just as settled a view throughout Europe and North America about the sexiness of French women. In the eighteenth century the taking of lovers by married women in France was criticised and, allegedly, was responsible for the dramatic fall of the French birth rate. The erotic reputation of the French is no invention. French social behaviour sprang from an accumulation of images. These include the licentious life of the 18th century court, the notoriety of France as the home of sex tourism and the associated brothel culture in the 19th and early 20th century. France had a flourishing export trade in artistic erotica and pornography in addition to the sexual impact of foreign wars and occupations. 'The British exported images of political liberty to France and the French repaid them with elegant pornography.'

At the other end of the scale is the Jewish joke about Jewish women who refuse and deny sex. Christie thinks that this tendency is recent and began in America when intermarriage with gentiles rose sharply from 10 per cent before 1965 to over 85 per cent from 1985. Intermarriage threatened Jewish identity, a clear example of challenge and response. The jokes are a protest against the cloying demands of Jewish family life, especially the impositions and pretensions of the Jewish mother-in-law and the spoilt Jewish-American princess.

The ambitious Jewish mother who is asked the age of the children in her pram replies:

The doctor is three and the lawyer is nearly four

What's a Jewish American Princess's favourite erotic position?

Bending over the credit cards.

After a sports contest between two Jewish schools both of them claimed defeat.

Apparently the Jewish repudiation of sports began with the revolt of the Maccabees in the second century BC against their Seleucid Greek overlords from Syria, who sought to deprive the Jews of their identity. In later times the gentle Jewish scholar was

revered much above the warrior or the sportsman. Hence the stereotype in American jokes of Jews not being combative. Perhaps in reaction against those who tried to take advantage of such weakness, the Jewish-American gangsters appeared, including not only accountants of crime but hit men and contract killers like 'Bugsy Siegel' and Meyer Lansky who were more than equal to the Italian-American Mafia. Israel produced a mighty army which successively trounced their Arab neighbours.

Homosexual jokes are associated with certain ethnic, occupational or other social groups, starting with the ancient Greeks, from what classical literature tells us of their antics. This has been reversed among the modern Greeks, for the Greek Republic of Cyprus was the last state in Europe to decriminalise sodomy. However the tradition continues in such queries as:

How do you define a Greek gentlemen?

A man who goes out with a girl for at least three months before propositioning her brother.

Why are American lawyers so much the butt of American jokes? Americans are particularly litigious because they belong to a highly mobile society in which people think nothing of getting a job on the other side of the country. So they are not in thrall to local habit and custom but need to be held to book for their commitments by contract and law. The American constitution, drawn up by lawyers, defines the rights, duties and responsibilities of citizens with more weight and thoroughness than anywhere else. There are over six times as many lawyers per 100,000 population as there are in France. Tort cases are rampant in American courts. Hence the ambulance-chasing joke:

Everybody in my family follows the medical profession. They're all lawyers.

The sheer cost of going to law or being set upon by it has become a leading issue:

Did you know about the new O J ride in Disneyland?

It's a dollar to get on but \$5million to get off.

Of course there were always jokes about authoritarian regimes like those under the Peronist fascist regime in Argentina, but the scale of joke-making which the Soviet system inspired was quite different. They blanketed the whole of Soviet society. It was remarkable that people continued to tell anti-Soviet jokes even when they risked severe penalties. This tyrannical system not only killed and tortured people but also kept them short of food. This is highlighted in a joke from the Gandhi era.

What is the difference between India and Russia?

In India one man starves for the people while in Russia the people starve for one man.'

The Soviet system reached far beyond Russia's borders:

In Slovakia the lavatory paper comes in two layers. Why? One copy has to go to Moscow.

It's ironic that when the Russians finally managed to ditch corrupt Soviet rule, they almost immediately plunged into crony capitalism:

A New Russian urgently needs a new bookkeeper.

'I've got an excellent candidate in mind' says his manager, 'but he's got half a year to serve.'

Christie thinks 'It is a foolish sentimental myth that an entire oppressive political order could be brought down by humour.' Yet the Communist bosses were obviously frightened by the jokes or why should they have been so keen to punish them? Certainly the jokes went much nearer to the truth about the state of Soviet society than the predictions of most of the West's so-called 'Kremlinologists' who thought it would last for decades and were amazed when it collapsed. They ought to have listened to jokes, like this one from Bratislava:

What is the difference between Dubcek* and Gorbachev?

There isn't any but Gorbachev doesn't know it yet.

Jokes are a valuable source of forbidden truths and have brought comfort to many in cruel times. For us they are mainly a source of entertainment. All honour to those like Christie Davies who spreads this precious element of the human comedy by guiding us through the realm of funny story-telling and helping us to understand its workings. He is like Arnold Bennett's hero in his novel *The Card*, dedicated to the great cause of cheering us all up.

*Dubcek was the reformist leader in Czechoslovakia who was ousted by Soviet intervention in 1968.

The Singing Head

M R D Foot

Orpheus: the Song of Life, Ann Wroe, Jonathan Cape. 2011, £17.99.

Greek myths have fallen out of literary favour since Robert Graves's death. This book, far out of the common run, ought to bring them back. Its author works for *The Economist*, that pillar of exactitude, but writes books that fascinate their readers with riddles.

For instance, her life of Pilate, published twelve years ago, presented three parallel biographies, each coherent in itself, each inconsistent with the others, and did not indicate whether she thought any of the three was the true one. Her study of Orpheus is still fuller of mystery.

Hardly anything known about him is precise, but nothing even rumoured about him is dull. Of his mother there is little doubt – she was Calliope, the eldest of the nine Muses, herself muse of epic poetry. Was his father Apollo, god of the sun, or Oeagrus, king of Thrace, to whom Calliope took a passing fancy? His birthplace was most probably in the Rhodope mountains of northern Thrace, now in Bulgaria; several villages contest for the honour. The most likely seems to Wroe to be the hamlet of Gela, beyond Shiroka Luksa 'up a steep winding road', where on a children's playing field there stands, beside an abandoned soviet army truck and a tyre swing, a log and string replica of Orpheus's lyre.

He sailed in *Argos* to help Jason steal the golden fleece; too puny to row, he played his lyre in the prow, and outplayed the sirens who tried to seduce the heroic crew as they crossed the Black Sea. Hercules, among the crew, was an early friend. Wherever he went he made friends, and he played his lyre so entrancingly that birds and animals and fishes would follow him.

He married Eurydice, who died of a snakebite, and his most famous exploit was to go down to Hades – putting Cerberus the three-headed dog who guarded the gate to sleep with his music, paying Charon his obol, and lulling him too to sleep before he poled himself across the Styx – to beg her back from Persephone and Pluto. The gods agreed to release her, on condition he did not look back at her on the way out. He broke the condition at the last moment, and the gods did not relent. He mourned his wife for the rest of his life; and was torn in pieces by the women of Thrace, who all wanted him for a lover. (Alternative version: he was struck dead by a thunderbolt from Zeus, who was angry that Orpheus had revealed so much to the laity about goings-on on Olympus.)

He had written a lot, indeed is supposed to be one of the devisers of the alphabet. He wrote many lyric poems known to the ancients, most of them by now vanished, and is credited also with being the first theologian, for it was he who first settled the names and recounted the characteristics of the Grecian gods on Olympus. Plato quoted him frequently in his *Dialogues*, though Plato's pupil Aristotle denied that he had ever lived. Socrates, very shortly before his death, remarked that a cock should be sacrificed to him.

Poetry remains suffused with him. Homer was supposed to be a descendant. Pindar called him 'the father of songs'. Virgil wrote an *Eclogue* about him.

Cicero often thought of him. Chaucer revered him; so did Monteverdi ; so did Robert Graves. Milton was soaked in him – that half-line, ‘his half-reclaimed Eurydice’, is one of the best known in English poetry. Much more recently, Rilke the great Austrian lyricist was soaked in him also, several times sighted him, and wrote many sonnets to him. Jean Cocteau produced the best film ever made about him (Cocteau’s version of Orpheus’s lyre makes Ann Wroe’s frontispiece.) Poets revere him to this day.

There were extensive Orphic religious beliefs and ceremonies in ancient Greece: secret rituals, for men only, from which the mysteries at Eleusis were supposed to derive; cults of purity and self-abnegation, including the refusal to eat meat or fish (Orpheus’s own preferred diet was barley-cake and honey); several Orphic doctrines, such as original sin, were taken over by the early Christian church.

Did he ever exist? A century ago, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* laid down that ‘It is possible, but very improbable, that Orpheus was an historical personage’. Whether he existed or not, mankind can be grateful for an influence that has led to the development of music, poetry, and respect for the divine; the English-reading world can be grateful to Ann Wroe for reminding us of him in so splendidly crafted a book.

Saving the Dodo Celia Haddon

RAT ISLAND, Predators in Paradise and the World’s Greatest Wildlife Rescue, William Stolzenburg, Bloomsbury, pbk, 2011, £12.99.

Easter Island, with its hundreds of *moai* monumental statues has long been a parable for man’s abuse of nature. Once it was a subtropical forest with huge palm trees and several species of island birds. Then man (bad) settled there about a thousand years ago, cut down the trees to transport the huge stone statues required by its religion (worse), and even as the island’s fertility declined, continued to do so until no trees remained standing (worst of all). Several hundred years later, 21 species of trees and plants and all its land birds had been wiped out by the Polynesian settlers.

That was the great ecological morality tale of our times – man wrecks his world and refuses to change his ways even when facing disaster. Only it may not be true. The true cause may be the rat, in this case *Rattus exulans*, the Pacific rat, a nice looking little creature with a white belly and brown fur which can climb trees like a squirrel. Polynesian settlers used to pack a few

in their canoes, as snacks during long sea journeys. The trees and plants that became extinct were those that were the preferred food of rats.

Rat Island is the story of how conservationists are trying to save various endangered island species threatened by rats (the brown rat and the black rat as well as their Pacific cousins). Other island invaders are mice, feral cats, pigs, and even stoats and weasels. Just as the invading Europeans have often devastated native peoples by importing unfamiliar diseases, so invading predators like rats will often drive island plants, animals and birds to extinction.

Rat Island, which gives its name to the book, is only part of its narrative. The island gained its name half a century after rats deserted a shipwrecked Japanese fishing boat that ran aground on its reefs in 1778. It is an uninhabited island, part of Alaska in the United States, and one of a chain of volcanic islands, the Aleutians, in the North Pacific.

Two centuries after the first rats, the numbers and species of breeding sea birds had crashed and the whole vegetation had changed. Far fewer birds like puffins, murrelets, auklets and petrels, meant far fewer bird droppings. Without the fertilising guano, the tall grasslands with Kamchatka lilies, cow parsnip and seacoast angelica in rat-free Aleutian islands had turned into starved brown tundra. Just as the Pacific rats had done for the trees and birds of Easter Island, so a few brown rats deserting a ship had caused an ‘ecological cascade’ of destruction on Rat Island. The rat cleansing of the island was the third biggest island conservation project so far.

Conservationists had been slow to realise the destructive power of non-native predators. They had wrung their hands and done little while watching the decline and near extinction of the New Zealand owl parrot, the kakapo. This is a nocturnal bird that has lost the ability to fly and is a sitting duck for the cats, weasels, ferrets and stoats that were imported into New Zealand by European settlers.

Even before this a population decline had set in with the arrival of the Maoris and their accompanying Pacific rats. Kakapos, unafraid and easy to catch, had been food for Maori settlers and their nests on the ground had provided eggs and hatchlings for the Pacific rats. Like grouse, kakapos have a curious mating system called a lek. Male birds gather in a mating arena and compete for the best place. Each male creates a sort of bowl in the ground from which he makes a loud booming noise to attract females. Females travel from their own territory and choose their mate. A booming kakapo may even try to mate with a human being if there are no females around.

Captive breeding is tricky. Simply sticking two

kakapos in a cage and expecting them to mate, without giving them the opportunity to lek, will reduce their chances. Moreover, with the rich diet of captivity, the female will produce male not female eggs, the reverse of what is required for increasing kakapo numbers.

The kakapo had almost vanished from the mainland. Finding them a home on an island seemed impossible as all the islands had rats while some had cats and stoats as well. As late as 1976, some conservationists were arguing that the bird's decline was little to do with predators or that predator extermination was a lost cause anyway. Unsurprisingly a few years later the numbers of known birds were down to about sixty. They desperately needed, and finally found, a safe haven on an island cleared of predators. Now numbers are up to about 130 birds.

Saving the kakapo involves slaughtering tens of thousands of rats and other predators. William Stolzenburg acknowledges, as few people do, how delightful are rats – their empathy for one another, their little squeaks of joy when they are tickled, and the way rats will refuse to eat, if eating gives their fellow rat an electric shock. The mass poisoning of island rats to conserve bird life or indigenous island animals is only one of the many cruel deaths we humans inflict on this species.

Rat Island tells the story of conservation island by island – the special species they used to, or still occasionally, harbour; the depredations of the rats, cats, and pigs brought to them by sailors and settlers; and the holocaust of predators, island after island, by conservationists. Exterminating predators is not straightforward. Kill the cats, and the rats and mice will flourish. Poison the rats and the local eagle population, who pick up the corpses, will suffer. And local newspapers, local bureaucracy and local animal lovers will be ready to harass the conservationists at all stages.

To cover this topic requires hopping from one island to another but Stolzenburg's narrative skill carries it off. I didn't much care for one aspect of his style, which is the short-hand piling up the adjectives as in 'pony-tailed, Birkenstocked, self-described hippy sorts. I suspect this is because it is American rather than British usage. That niggle apart, this is an excellent popular science book, well written and researched with an impressive bibliography. It gives a remarkably good insight into the practicalities and ethics of saving island species.



The Last Whimper?

Michael St John Parker

The Passing of Protestant England. Secularisation and Social Change c. 1920-1960, S J D Green, CUP, 2010, £60.00.

The summer of 2011 has not been one to encourage optimism about the future of English society. It has supplied plentiful evidence to confirm the views of those who hold that this is no longer the country in which they grew up. The readership of *The Salisbury Review* has always been aware of living in a changeful state, but there is evolutionary change, and there is transformative change, and part of the shock of this summer's events may arise from a realisation that we have lost more than we knew of our links with the past. Those who think like this no longer feel themselves to be the confident inheritors of a long tradition. In cultural terms at least, they are becoming painfully aware of the sensations of dispossessed *ci-devants*, squatting precariously in territory that was once familiar but has now become strange and sometimes dangerous.

Religious allegiance (as distinct from narrowly measured religious belief or practice) is one of the principal identifying features of any social group, and the English were marked as a Protestant Christian nation from the end of the sixteenth century until some time in the twentieth. S.J.D. Green, in *The Passing of Protestant England*, explores and analyses the decay of this allegiance, and illuminates some of the critical changes that have come upon English society during the last hundred years.

There is nothing apologetic about Green's approach to his subject matter. He is no evangelist, nor is he an exculpator of shortcomings; he takes the decline of religion in England over the course of the twentieth century as a fact, to be examined and understood. Moreover he insists on a holistic approach which gives due weight to the power of religious allegiance over both collective and individual ethics, and which treats the history of belief and observance as elements in a larger social picture rather than as subjects of specialised curiosity. Like the historians of the *Annales* school, he subscribes to the ideals of 'total history' and the '*longue durée*'. 'A social history of religion has to be a political and intellectual history of religion as well.'

A J P Taylor famously declared, in his *English History 1914-1945*, that by the time of the 1927 debate over revision of the Prayer Book, 'England had ceased to be, in any real sense, a Christian nation'. The wish may have been father to Taylor's thought. Green sees

religion, Christianity, Protestantism itself, as complex, variform, capable of mutation as well as decay, and he is correspondingly more cautious than Taylor in assigning dates and defining periods. He denies the conventional wisdom that sees the two World Wars as delivering body blows to religious belief. On the contrary, he points out that both were followed by episodes of apparent, if delusory, prosperity for the Churches. He attaches weight, on the other hand, to the long story of decline in the quality, the status, and eventually the influence, of the clergy. He notes the lowering of the religious temperature that followed the partial settlement of the Irish question in 1921/22; the decline of Non-conformity which accompanied the eclipse of the Liberal party and the impact, after the Second World War, of the Butler Act which greatly reduced the Church of England's educational influence. In the end, though, he has to make his choice – and it falls, not on the Swinging, Satirical Sixties, but on the Frightful Fifties : ‘there had once been a continuum of religious commitment and religious indifference that defined virtually the whole nation. Sometime in the 1950s, that tenuous bond finally broke. The final severing of that mystical chord wrought the secularisation of Protestant England. Its consequences are still with us. Indeed, they have only become more apparent with time’.

Perhaps Green's analysis of the circumstances in which English Protestantism failed to endure in the Fifties lacks both depth and extent. The stresses that bore down upon an exhausted nation in the aftermath of war, the realisation that our days as a world power were ending in ignominy, the demoralising effects of the accelerating retreat from empire, the all-pervading sense of dreary incompetence in government – none of these features in Green's account, which quotes Harold Macmillan's Panglossian ‘You've never had it so good’ with marked approval. The reality, surely, was that this was a period in which the nation lost its self-respect; it is something the English have been prone to do at intervals.

The decline of Protestantism should not be equated with an extinction of religion in England; in fact, as Green points out, new and variant religious groupings were developing as orthodoxy waned, and have grown considerably over the past half-century. This is largely a consequence of the immigration which has transformed English society. Thus multiculturalism has effectively hastened the collapse of national identity.

Green's argument is set out in magisterial style in the book's Part I, which is aptly if prosaically entitled ‘Outline of the problem’. What follows is rather scrappier, and reads rather like a collection of essays, sometimes more lively than the main thesis

but occasionally lacking in unity of purpose. Part II, ‘Disclosures of decline’, discusses aspects of the fading of Protestantism, by way of an interesting and valuable reassessment of Dean Inge, an account of the decay of sabbatarianism, and a discussion of the context as described in the work of Seebohm Rowntree and other social scientists of the mid-century. Part III, headed ‘Resistance, revival and resignation’, contains much to stir memories: Billy Graham, Sunday Schools in the 1950s, Monica Furlong, Bryan Wilson, the Paul Report, *Honest To God*... but leaves a distressing aftertaste of futility, rather like a reading of the economic history of eighteenth-century Spain.

It might seem appropriate that Green should open his brief ‘Conclusion’ with a quotation from Enoch Powell, the elegiac prophet of so much in the story of England's decline: ‘The life of nations, no less than that of men, is lived largely in the imagination’. After a sketch of the evolution of national Protestantism over the whole of its life, Green ends with little more than an undeniable, even if qualified, sigh of relief over the corpse. ‘Religion will not disappear, not even in England. But the social significance of religion will go on declining. This will prove the enduring legacy of the passing of protestant England, far beyond England too.’ That sounds much more like the way that T S Eliot described the end of the world, than anything that Enoch Powell would have tolerated.

Muslim Munich

James Bryson

A Mosque in Munich, Ian Johnson, Houghton Mifflin, 2010, £17.99.

In the last issue of the *Review*, I wrote a piece detailing my naivety, and subsequent education, about how poorly Muslim students at Cambridge understand the message of political Islam, and how Western liberal guilt is at the heart of their ignorance. It turns out that our collective ignorance is a time-honoured tradition: we are in the company of every Western superpower from the Second World war. Ian Johnson's *A Mosque in Munich* gives a careful account of this history.

Since 9/11 it has been widely reported – and become a commonly held belief – that Osama bin Laden received training and funding from the CIA to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. Less well known is that the precedent for courting disaffected Muslim leaders had been set well before the late stages of the cold war, both by the CIA and still earlier by the Nazis.

In attempt to make use of their national ambitions,

thwarted by Soviet hegemony, Hitler's government set up an *Ostministerium*, intended to recruit Muslim leaders from the occupied Eastern territories. After the Nazis fell, the *de facto* leader of this organization, a Turkologist called Gerhard von Mende, continued his work for the West German Secret Service with national interests still in mind.

Soon von Mende found himself unwittingly in competition with the CIA, which had set up a front organization based in Munich called Radio Liberty, eventually known as Amcomlib. The radio station was designated for 'psychological warfare', popular under Truman and Eisenhower. They were keen to find Muslims from the Soviet Empire willing to go on air to testify against the vices of Communism. These interviews would then be broadcast into the Soviet Union itself. Many of the Muslims who worked for the radio station were men recruited by von Mende.

To enhance their Muslim-friendly credentials, it soon became clear to both von Mende and the CIA officer in Munich, Robert Dreher, that building a mosque would be the ultimate recruiting tool. Von Mende's men were eventually sidelined by Dreher in the struggle for control of the mosque in favour of Said Ramadan, a prominent member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The Islamic Centre of Munich has been a base for Islamists and has been linked to extremism ever since.

Johnson shows how, far from learning from our mistakes, Western politicians continue to court Islamists. It is regrettable that those who have tried to bring political Islam onside to serve their own ends would not simply take this exercise on for its own sake. Currently, it is beyond the pale for our political elites to acknowledge that there is something inherently good about Western Christian culture, and that European Muslims could help us to recover it by drawing on many of their own cultural sensibilities, which we ourselves once possessed: a conservative view of sex, religious piety, and the importance of family spring to mind. Johnson's book should alert its reader to the dangers of our utilitarian, dogmatic slumbers.

He makes the point that Islamist *ideas* breed the culture which leads to terrorism. This is a connection Western governments have consistently been unable, or unwilling, to make. This is because cultural confidence is something the West has lacked for some time. One thing we do not lack is ideas. Any politician who has ambitions to make it through the next election knows he is dead in the water without 'new ideas'. In this sense, one understands why liberal democracies feel at home with Islamists – they too have ideological convictions. Yet somehow one doubts that those we do come up with – take Cameron's 'Big Society' – will enjoy the 80-year

run the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood have enjoyed. Instead of looking forward into the utopian distance as our enemies do, we might consider looking backward to the well of resources we have had as a culture, rather than to the latest soul-destroying permutations of Newspeak. It is precisely such weak-minded liberalism that leads to our exploitation by Islamists.

Unfortunately, I cannot recommend Johnson's book as a good read. This is not to criticize his storytelling. He does a fine job of weaving this intricate tale. The sheer quantity of characters introduced and minor events recounted, crucial to telling the story completely, becomes tedious at times. The people and events tend only to be interesting within their broader context, not of themselves.

The quality of research is a testament to Johnson's dedication to this project; he had Congress act to release CIA information on the Nazis. We owe him a debt of gratitude for his fastidious attention to detail, though he leaves us to wonder whether Western liberal governments will ever learn that, ultimately, political Islam is out to undermine them: a frightening prospect considering Islamism's inevitable, prominent role in this present re-formation of the Arab world – euphemistically dubbed the 'Arab Spring' by liberal consensus – and their already fifty-year foothold in Western Europe. This book can only help in our ongoing education about how far the combination of ignorance and a liberal mindset have enabled the rise and sustenance of political Islam in the West.

On the Rock Island Line

Harry Cummins

Raised on Skiffle, Roy Kerridge, Custom Books, 2011, £9.99.

Raised on Skiffle is the latest volume of Roy Kerridge's autobiography. It describes what Marx would call the 'contradictions' that committed left-wing behaviour can result in, even for devoted Communists.

In previous instalments, we met Roy's grandparent, Adolf Frankel, the sort of Marxist who, like Moses, becomes the Founding Father of the culture and ideology of his tribe. Radicalised by Tsarist oppression in Russian Poland, Adolf is a leading Bolshevik, helpmate of Parvus, Radek and Lenin. Sent abroad as an agent of the Soviet Government, he marries a simple-minded Copenhagen shop girl called Magda or 'Mor'. Shepherded by the Kremlin into France and Britain, he proves to be a brilliant capitalist, building up a lucrative business career as a front for his Soviet

'activities', first in Paris, then in London.

When *Raised on Skiffle* opens in 1958, Adolf and 'Mor' are installed in a magnificent Regency mansion in Hove crammed with Rembrandts and Monets. We find that they are bringing up Roy (confusingly called 'Ray' in the book) and his brother Michael themselves. This is because their daughter Thea, moved by Marxist zeal, has contracted a second marriage 'with a pompous West African Communist from Sierra Leone, John Sidbury-Wellings'. 'Thea and John had three children together, two girls and a boy, Tunde, Gameliza and Musa (or Moses).'

As his accumulation and retention of an enormous fortune indicates, Adolf's attitude to the teachings of Marx is rather like Cromwell's attitude to the teachings of Jesus. For Adolf (as for Charlie Chaplin at this time), Marxism-Leninism is simply a matter of supporting the Soviet government. The 'Ten Commandments' of Communism that Adolf gives his family are to be fetishised from afar, not acted on. Confronted by the noble concept of miscegenation so close to home, all Engels' anathemas on racism go out the window. Although Adolf buys Thea and her brood a bungalow in nearby Pupworth (for she has now fled the drunken and brutal John), they are cast out of the family and forbidden the Hove residence.

Thea's version of Marxist 'praxis' ends up disputed by Adolf, the High Priest of Marxist theory, and the same thing happens to Roy. Roy repudiates Adolf's *mitteleuropaische* high culture and his not very revolutionary ambition that the boy should aspire to Oxford and the House of Lords. As far as Roy is concerned: 'His loyalty must henceforth be for 'thicks' and 'thicks' only, if that was the word these left-wing socialist snobs used for decent working class housebreakers!'

Deliberately flunking his 'O' Levels at Brighton Grammar School (he never forgives his grandparents for sending him to this fee-paying bastion of the bourgeoisie), Roy tries desperately to immerse himself in the Sussex Working Class. He flees his grandfather's 'Winter-Palace-sur-Mer' for a series of grimy bedsits, devoting himself to factory work and petty crime (at neither of which he proves at all adept). Above all, he abandons his grandfather's classical LPs for what Whitman would call the 'Chants Democratic' of the local proletariat: Skiffle music and the African-American records on which it is based. Also: 'In front of Tunde, Musa, Gameliza and little Amina, Ray always spoke in a Cockney accent to prevent them from becoming middle class. George Orwell had done the same, when in the company of his adopted son.'

Ironically, as a result of deliberately seeking to sabotage any chance of a bourgeois career, Roy becomes, like his déclassé grandfather before him,

an enormous success. One day, Kingsley Martin, the grotesquely pro-Soviet editor of *The New Statesman*, accepts a piece Roy has sent him about Roy's Rimbaud-like footloose existence. Entitled 'A Teenager in Brighton', it rather fancifully depicts Roy and his 'thick' housebreaker mates as a group of murderous, pubescent West Pier 'Fleurs du Mal'.

'A Teenager in Brighton' creates a sensation and leads to an avalanche of commissions from the national press inviting Roy to become the spokesman for Britain's 'evil' youth. He is even asked to present his own radio and television shows. Ideological and other qualms compel him to decline such a decadent platform, but every article in *The New Statesman* alone brings in twice what he gets each week at the factory.

Unfortunately, all this attention from 'the middle class' rather turns Roy's head, and he decides that he doesn't want to be a 'decent working class housebreaker' after all. What he wants now, he writes, is 'invitations from publishers ... followed by still better invitations to Fabian Old Rectories where geese and bees murmured among the apple trees and gracious ladies in flowing dresses looked down at the genius slum-child with eyes full of pity.'

To that end, Roy spurns his lucrative line in teenage prophecy and shuts himself away to write a great literary novel, supposedly a *roman à clef*, about a Dostoyevskian career criminal who has lots of sex with a thirteen year old girl. It all ends in disaster, alas. The lady typing the manuscript denounces him to the police and he barely escapes prosecution as a paedophile. (The affair with the girl, needless to say, is complete fantasy). The book is rejected by every publisher. Having shunned the limelight for so long, moreover, the middle class commissioning editors have now forgotten Roy. He finds himself isolated and destitute.

However in the eighties, Roy became a success on the 'other side', regularly writing for *The Spectator*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Mail* and others. He frequented the legendary King and Keys with the best of them, like T E Utley, Michael Wharton and Peregrine Worsthorpe. Many books followed, surely establishing him as an expert on West Indian culture and other immigrant groups.

The message of *Raised on Skiffle* seems to be that one will never get what one needs (the fame that comes to Roy, the wealth that comes to Adolf) unless one aims for something completely different. And so it makes perfect sense to only ever do what one wants, even if that appears unwise, as any course dictated by rational self interest will usually backfire. As Polonius observes, the only truly rational course is 'To thine own self be true.' . . . Even if 'thine own self' be a housebreaking communist!

Urban Life is Good for You

Helen Szamuely

Triumph of the City, Edward Glaeser, Macmillan, 2011, £25.

If there are two things we can be certain about in history it is that as soon as man (and woman) came out of the cave they set out to build something resembling a city, and that within months of its completion there were sighs and sobs about the loss of the peace and happiness that had prevailed in the rural paradise that had been abandoned. Both these developments have carried on in parallel with each other and have created a schizophrenic attitude towards cities in the developed world. (In the developing world, there are no such problems: cities are where you can escape from poverty, increase your earnings, make a better life for yourself and your family.) Conservatives are particularly prone to experience this schizophrenia. Unless one believes that the majority of the population should live at barely more than subsistence level, one cannot really be against cities, towns, industry and trade, for they are essential for wealth and the sort of good life that allows people to move, if they so wish, to the rural paradise that has, in reality, been changed by the influence of those factors.

In Britain this duality was exacerbated by two developments: early urbanization and industrialization (the first happening long before the second) and an almost complete taming of nature that made it look jolly and friendly rather than frightening and overwhelming. Other countries found their own problems as they urbanized and moved away from the land, the biggest conundrum being reserved for Americans whose country and culture are rooted in escape, often to new lands, but whose wealth and power grew once that escape was overtaken by rapid industrial development. It was inevitable that as cities grew and ever more people gravitated to them (as they had done previously in feudal Europe because cities had rights and freedoms), poverty became more noticeable. The slums of industrial cities seem so much worse than the poverty of the countryside that is more hidden, except in countries that are developing now, such as China and India, where rural poverty is overwhelming. Another argument against cities was born to add to all the others: noise, alienation, bad air (true for a very long time in the developed world and still true in such places as Calcutta or Beijing), crowds, neurosis and so on.

This is all nonsense, says Professor Edward Glaeser in *Triumph of the City*. Cities are good for you. They engender economic, social and political development, they make people richer and happier, they spread wealth widely; in fact, they make us 'richer, smarter, greener, healthier and happier'. Above all, they brim over with ideas and ideas attract other

people with more ideas, thus creating a virtual organism in which proximity encourages discussion, invention, division into more groups and more discussion, presumably ad infinitum. The future, in fact, belongs to the cities that live on ideas rather than the old-fashioned industries. Of course, *somebody* will have to make things in the grand future of endless Silicon Valleys, but for the time being that problem is solved by the existence of many developing countries where people are happy to flock to cities and to work in industries, as the alternative is dire.

This is a hectic book. It jumps from subject to subject and from city to city. One chapter goes from ancient (not modern though that would be quite interesting) Athens where ideas flourished; and all sorts of very clever people gathered in mediaeval Baghdad, so much more developed and sophisticated than its European contemporaries – to modern Bangalore, the most rapidly growing and developing city in India, to Silicon Valley, which is not a city but has lots of people with ideas who meet in coffee bars, exchange those ideas and generally behave as if they did live in one. This is the kind of problem one faces as one tries to get through the perfectly sound and generally well evidenced arguments. The desire to prove his point sometimes runs away with the author.

Then there are the missing arguments. Once there are people with certain ideas and expertise in a city others with similar ideas and expertise will join them and the development will take off. What attracts them there in the first place? Sometimes we know – an enlightened ruler or rich person who founds a college, or the presence of water; but sometimes it seems fortuitous or dependent on random effects of somebody deciding to lower taxation in one place or raise it in another. We don't hear much about the fact that Bangalore benefited from an enlightened state and city policy on taxes, regulations and attitude to foreign investment, all of which was as important as the presence of, in the first place, a few entrepreneurs with good ideas. London may be a city that is big enough to have many theatres and entertainments but the institutions Professor Glaeser lists benefit from hefty state subsidies as well. There are many problems like this, omissions or elisions that seem to be inevitable, given the hectic pace and the author's tendency to jump about.

With all the caveats the book is worth reading, especially if one has had a surfeit of dirges about the terrible state of the world with all those cities polluting it and people losing their links with the health-giving land and rural life. It is the city that provides health and wealth; it is the city that makes our lives bearable; and it will be the city that will continue to speed the development of our and others' economies so that those who long to be back on the land can have enough wealth to make their choices.

FILM

Praguewood Mark Griffith

East European cinema has an undeservedly dull reputation with British filmgoers for two reasons. Firstly, these films come from a region of unfamiliar and sometimes difficult languages. Secondly, in the half-century when they were Soviet-ruled, state socialist countries gave the region a grey, glum aura.

To be appreciated in the West, a Communist country's cinema usually had to sentimentalise bittersweet love stories set in villages. Europeans in democracies would marvel at elegaic rustic tales of milkmaids falling in love with hard-drinking stable lads, and tell themselves that all the important parts were being left out. The almost hallucinatory magic realism of an early 1970s Czech film like *Valerie's Week of Wonders* (Jaromil Jires' lush film is extraordinary and still worth searching out) about a 16-year-old village girl in 18th-century Bohemia was often more appreciated for what it was not than what it was. Equally, with straight faces film festival critics in France or Italy would describe a cartoon mole playing a violin to the moon (a real children's character, again Czech) as eloquent silence about oppression. We assumed that all those East Bloc cinematographers really wanted to be making gritty dramas of social protest if only they could.

Now younger Eastern film-makers are making what you might call gritty dramas of social something or other, but we're likely to get them all wrong again, because the region was never quite what Western Europe thought it was in the first place. More than film, it might be Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* that introduced the West to another East, a place of idle good-looking rakes and badly-behaved pretty girls: something like the Mediterranean with a serious winter. Moviegoers' sense of what life is like east of the Elbe might still be a couple of decades behind readers of print fiction.

For example, Ildiko Enyedi's 1999 film *Simon Magus* will surprise any westerners who think they know what East European cinema is about. It's an imaginative and haunting story partly in Hungarian, partly in French, set in the present in the unfashionable northern part

of Paris around Mitterand's shiny square La Defence arch. A wizard from Hungary has been invited over to help the Paris police force in a murder investigation. He bumps into an old colleague, another Hungarian magician living in Paris for years. They decide to have a contest to compare their occult powers. This bare outline fails to do justice to the peculiar atmosphere of this sensitive film (not to be confused with a quite different British film also called *Simon Magus* coincidentally distributed the same year). Enyedi's story moves back and forth between the dreamlike and the everyday, and the climax floods with intense but well-handled emotion. It could be called kitchen-sink magic realism, but it works.

A sardonic film probably harder to find than *Simon Magus*, is *Aranyvaros* (Golden City), a film from 2002, director Sandor Cs Nagy, shot in black and white. Every culture, Britain included, seems to think that they, and only they, do understated humour and laugh at themselves. Indeed, almost every country does both. Many foreign films seem humourless when viewers don't recognise the butt of the joke, but a little patience can reveal some very funny material once you tune in to what the humour is about. *Aranyvaros* is an example. It is about a man and a woman heading for Miskolc, an industrial town in the east of Hungary, in search of aliens and portals into other dimensions. Miskolc is something like a cross between Sheffield and perhaps Newcastle (one Hungarian friend on hearing about the film muttered 'now Miskolc really *is* another dimension') and the result is a strangely eerie dark comedy. Bleak housing estates gain an otherworldly ambience and Hungarian stock characters familiar to anyone who has spent time here stumble in confused apathy around the various subplots. Highlights to look out for include regular updates from the garage where one character charges himself up from car batteries in preparation, and a cameo appearance where a former student of mine – himself a film and stage director well-known in Hungary – seduces a middle-aged housewife at her front door by means of hand cream.

One film from 2003 made more of an impact internationally than those two. *Kontroll*, the debut of director Antal Nimrod, has as its unlikely heroes the scruffy ticket inspectors on Budapest's underground train system. Again, the Hungarian penchant for sheer oddness shows through. This film, both thriller and romantic comedy, makes the underground railway network a bizarre, dreamlike nether world of sad

shabby human frailties and surreal fantasies. One young ticket inspector, our hero, falls in love with a girl who roams the tunnels in a furry teddy bear outfit. He sleeps on the platforms, spending days on end down there sometimes. He'll remind some viewers of the hero of Luc Besson's breakthrough 1985 film *Subway*, with its eccentric fugitives living in the tunnels of the Paris Metro. Nimrod's 'runner' character might also remind you of Besson's police-dodging roller-skater. In addition, by making his eccentric heroes a despised group of petty officials, it's natural to ask if this is Nimrod's Hungarian version of *Repo Man*. That was Alex Cox's 1984 cult comedy starring Emilio Estevez as a newly-recruited 'repossession man', paid to steal cars back from hire-purchase owners behind on their payments. What sets Nimrod's underground film apart is his stylish use of visuals and sometimes



music. There are some lovely camera shots which simply have to be seen. As for music, during one romantic dialogue with a girl, quiet jazz seems to be in the background. We are left unsure if the tune is in the hero's head, or is distantly playing from somewhere inside the underground station and therefore 'in' the scene itself: the effect is pleasantly bewildering.

A big-budget Russian release from 2004, *Night Watch*, is an interesting attempt to do a straight commercial genre film and make it every bit as glossy as Hollywood would. This is a supernatural horror movie directed by Timur Bekmambetov, set in a grim suburb of Moscow today where the forces of light and darkness permanently keep an eye on each other to maintain a thousand-year-old truce. The night watch is made up of agents of light who patrol the night, swapping shifts at dawn and dusk with the day watch – the agents of darkness patrolling the day. The overall effect is very much of an expensive American movie, only much better. The strong Russian visual sense shows through: almost every camera shot looks fresh. The scene where a witch on a battered modern housing estate remotely induces an abortion in a pregnant girl just then on a boat trip looks worryingly authentic.

Before state Communism, these countries were in Habsburg or Tsarist or, in some parts, Ottoman Europe, and the deadening mixture of endless red tape, secret-police informers, and arbitrary imprisonment in all three dates back to well before 1917. Living out here slowly puts Kafka's novels into a different light

for anyone who read them first in the West, while Romanian dramatist Ionescu famously complained at having his plays labelled 'Theatre of the Absurd'. He insisted his dramas were completely realistic. The 2009 prize-winning comedy from Romania *Police, Adjective*, directed by Corneliu Poromboiu explains what Ionescu might have meant. In this, a young police detective in a provincial town must compile evidence for a case against some teenage drug dealers. Typically of East Bloc films, the humour is so dry as to be almost unrecognisable as humour for at least the first

20 minutes. What you see instead in *Police, Adjective* is patiently assembled realistic drama, rounded characters, completely believable situations, out of which slowly emerges an increasingly ridiculous yet wholly convincing plot. Without the slight tricksiness of some Hungarian films (perhaps a few Magyars secretly fear foreigners will

never watch films in their language without the odd gimmick) this sly Romanian film is elegantly hilarious. Nothing about it seems out of the ordinary or strains credulity one inch, yet as Poromboiu's story unfolds, the ludicrousness of ordinary life slowly becomes richly funny.

A new Hungarian film, Peter Bergendy's *A Vizsga (The Test)* went on release in late October. Those who saw the debut screening were very excited: one filmmaker I know called it 'flawless'. *The Test* is a puzzle movie which takes place during a Christmas a year after the 1956 uprising. The 'test' is how secret-police officers work out who to rely on inside their ranks. It might be hard to find and watch, since the producers have only found the money to make three prints so far. I haven't seen it yet, but audiences have high praise for this new movie where the new East Bloc looks back at the old East Bloc.



All Human Life: the Vigeland Park in Oslo

Andrew Wilton

Oslo is not a city high on most people's lists of places to visit. But anyone interested in twentieth-century art, and particularly in sculpture, should make it a priority destination. In the Frogner Park there is not only one of the earliest large-scale contemporary sculpture parks in the world; it is also the creation of a single artist, Gustav Vigeland (1869-1943), who proves himself on that site to rank among the greatest modern sculptors. Nearby is a museum in which plaster casts of the works in the park, together with bronzes and maquettes from all periods of his life can be studied. Some of his work is to be found in other Norwegian towns, and the Nobel Peace Prize medal is cast to his design; but elsewhere in the world he is absent, and as a result unknown. This is a loss for all of us.

You enter Vigeland's park through the grand gates that he designed for it, and pass his self-portrait – a rather dour standing figure – as you begin a walk of nearly 1,000 yards that takes you through the whole of life in an astonishing kaleidoscope of vivid experience. It begins with towering, minatory columns topped by men and women struggling with strange insect-like reptiles. There's plenty of surreal fantasy in the park, but the overall impression one gains is that Vigeland was impelled by a consuming love of humanity and all aspects of our life and experience, so that his primary idiom is a naturalism that oscillates between the expressionist and the realist. Flanked by the tall columns, a bridge carries us over the Frogner Lake, its parapets lined with naked figures of men, women and children in a multitude of relationships, with themselves and each other. They are in bronze, a little larger than life.

A mother clasps her infant, parents embrace their children, or punish them; a girl runs joyously, her hair flying; a man dances as he improbably juggles several babies in the air. Two boys look up, as if to spot planes in the sky; a young man carries a woman bodily on his chest. Great bronze rings encircle men and women struggling to fit themselves into the geometric shape – or to escape from it. Below, on a platform close to a roaring cascade, an Infants' Circle contains a series of crawling and experimenting babies, with at their centre

a foetus, upside down, ready to be born.

Vigeland's intention was to present life from cradle to grave, though the subjects follow one another in such fertile variety that no strict narrative is insisted upon. The centrepiece of the avenue is a huge bronze fountain, an overflowing bowl lifted high on the shoulders of six titans, in the middle of a square pool surrounded by groups of figures entangled in trees. The figure-and-tree groups are among the first designed for the park, dating from the very early 1900s. They are reminiscent of Art Nouveau table centres and *épergnes*, sinuously intertwined stems topped with flattened masses of foliage, and with figures sitting, standing or darting among them. A young child sits pensive on a low branch; a girl dives open-eyed through the stems as though under the sea; girls and boys climb and play in the branches; old men and women sit and ponder in the shade. A skeleton sits in one of the trees. There are skeletons too in the square panels that form a frieze round the square basin, skeletons drifting slowly down through deep water, or lying disintegrated on the sea-bed. A skeleton inserts itself between two closely embracing lovers and forces them apart; in the curled horns of a prehistoric monster's skull a child sits comfortably ensconced. Animals and people have curious encounters – a woman and a unicorn; a baby and a bear. Lovers meet, adults console one another or quarrel; a 'hermit' crawls along, surely a memory of Blake's *Nebuchadnezzar*: Vigeland knew British art and had studied the English cathedrals. As a young man, he executed sculpture for the great gothic cathedral at Trondheim.

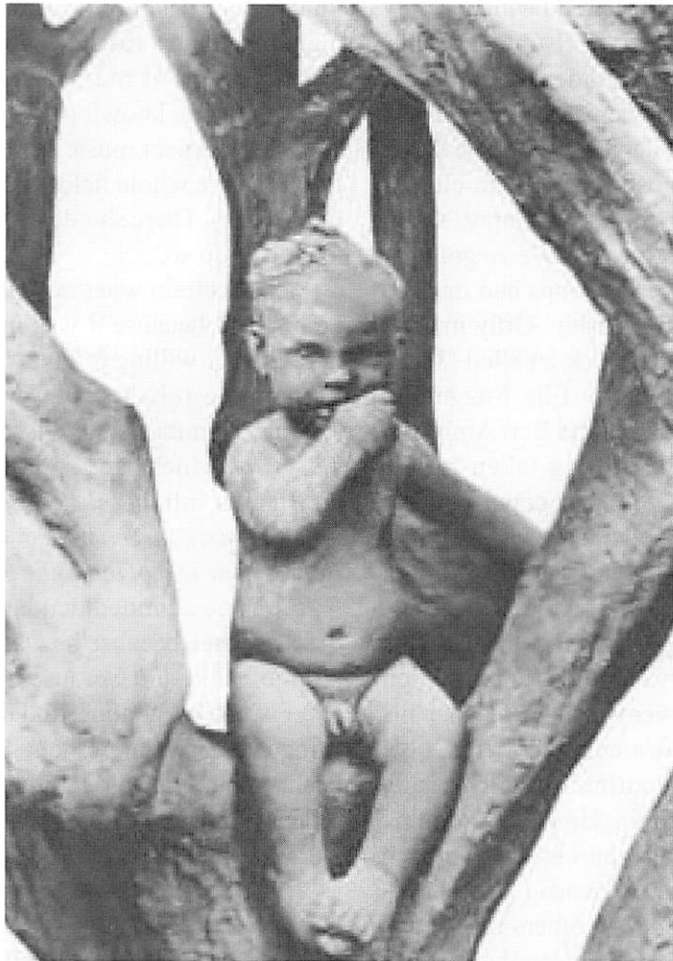
Separated from the basin and frieze by an outer 'moat' the visitor walks round this grand composition on a pavement designed by Vigeland as a labyrinth that symbolises the maze of life, and reaches wrought-iron gates depicting upright nude men, women and children, all engaged in conversation or play. Through their lattice-work we see a low hill surmounted by a tall granite column, the *Monolith*, on which are carved writhing figures that ascend from prostrate elderly bodies at the base to a flourish of small children at the tip – a veritable rocket of life, with a shape frankly phallic. It is both a totem and the spire of an Indian

temple, teeming with humanity.

The *Monolith* is surrounded by flights of steps lined with thirty-six great granite figure-groups, once again presenting humanity in all its variety: children, the elderly, lovers embracing or quarrelling, the old caressing or admonishing the young, figures in repose, in pleasant social contact, in torment, in resignation, enduring the last moments of existence. The style is simplified, as the granite dictates, but the essential details – expressions of compassion or anger, the tension of muscles and veins – are crisply delineated. Cascading in tiers down the hill, these groups seem to spill out from the formal design and blend with the crowds of people who are usually to be found enjoying themselves in this ever-open, free public space.

The long sequence culminates in a great bronze ring of flying figures, once again symbolic of the cycle of life, full of energy yet conveying a sort of ecstasy, an ecstasy that radiates out from this astonishing work – the whole ensemble demands to be seen as a single statement – to become absorbed into the real life going on round it. This is one of the most truly humane aesthetic statements of any age, exhilarating, exalting, disturbing and consoling in equal measure.

The City of Oslo granted Vigeland his park in 1924, and he worked on it for the remaining thirty years of his life. He had begun designing the tree-groups in the first decade of the century, and the plan underwent many vicissitudes before the final form was settled on. Vigeland's style changed in the course of the project; the Art Nouveau figures in trees round the great fountain mark his earliest phase; the bronze panels are from the time of the first World War; the bronze figures on the Bridge are mostly from the '20s and early thirties, while the granite groups round the *Monolith* were begun in a prescient Neo-classical idiom in 1915. The *Monolith* was conceived in the '20s and



executed by a picked team of assistants throughout the following decades; the *Wheel of Life* at the top of the avenue dates from the mid-1930s, as does a large group of figures, *The Clan*, erected some way off across the greensward of the park as late as 1988.

Next to the park is the Vigeland Museum, a handsome building that contains most of his work, either in the bronze or marble original or in the form of casts. The components of the park layout can be studied in tranquillity here, as can maquettes for the fine, characterful portrayals of Ibsen, Grieg and other great Norwegians that were erected in Oslo, Bergen and elsewhere in the country. In particular, the

Museum offers a chance to examine Vigeland's remarkable early work. He was much under the sway of Rodin in the 1890s, and his panels of *Hell* and *The Last Judgement* show the debt, yet are themselves highly original conceptions. His groups of lovers in every stage of bliss and misery are a poignant reflection of his own early emotional troubles, and perhaps of the bizarre family life he led. His father, Eliseus Thorsen (Vigeland very soon changed his name) was a master-carpenter, a devout and gloomy pietist who imposed an intolerably strict regime on his family and later, traumatically, renounced religion altogether. There is, then, a good deal of the

familiar Scandinavian despair about the early work, and it is a miraculous shift of tone that we witness in the much broader, more all-encompassing, we might say Shakespearean, acceptance and celebration of human existence that greets us in the Frogner Park.

This article was first published in the *Jackdaw*.

Oh, play that thing! Philip Larkin the jazz critic

Nigel Jarrett



Philip Larkin was prophetic as well as poetic. In 1971, reviewing jazz records for the *Daily Telegraph*, he made one of his frequent and telling digressions. He identified a trend which is only too plain to see today. Looking for Christmas presents, he had wandered into a few 'record departments' and had been shocked to see jazz given short shrift. Rank on rank of shiny LP covers all depicted the same thing: 'a bunch of young people, mostly male, with clothes and faces appropriate to criminal vagrancy, stood scowling at me in attitudes eloquent of *We're going to do you, dad.*' The names of these groups had implied no national, familial or artistic kinship. Only in a far corner had he discovered a small rack labelled 'Jazz', which contained a few records by Ella Fitzgerald, Ellington, Basie, Jacques Loussier and Bert Ambrose.

By the early 1970s, jazz had long taken refuge from the tsunami of rock 'n' roll, and popular music magazines that once regarded jazz as staple had banished the subject as though it were moribund, which is what for them it had effectively become. Larkin, a great though lugubrious poet, saw his distressing Yuletide discovery simply as confirmation of this eclipse, probably never considering that his ambivalent attitude to jazz as a coherent, indivisible art whose movement was continuing had already helped to fragment it from within. However, trudging home in the snow with what few purchases he'd been able to make as presents for his friends ('that annual conversion of one's indifference to others into active hatred') he had pondered on a few home truths: 'no jazz today is popular; the least unpopular jazz is reissues; the only jazz issues from the big companies today are reissues, few and far between; and current jazz comes on obscure, imported, highly expensive labels, and the ordinary public never sees or hears it.' That was written almost forty years ago. One of the reassuring things about jazz is that little changes except the music itself, and that but slowly. Larkin put up with Eric Dolphy and others who stood unprotestingly between traditions but who eschewed the effrontery of the new – those, like Shepp (the saxophonist Archie Shepp), who had gone astray.

Divisions of taste in music – traditional versus

modern – are not confined to jazz. Popular ('pop') music has its majority following, that bland, middle-of-the road crowd too populous to suffer serious injury. Before a grey, swarming mass in their path, all juggernauts slow to a halt and find an alternative route. We rarely ask of music's supporters that they adopt catholic tastes, knowing that most of them never will; but we do expect music's professional commentators to survey the whole field with something approaching impartiality. There should be no question of their being unable to do so.

It's not certain whether Larkin reviewed musicians he disliked because it was in his contract or because he was ever willing to give them yet another hearing. Perhaps he relished the opportunities for further ridicule. Summarising ten years of reviewing for the *Telegraph* which had begun in 1961, two years before his 'annus mirabilis' (*Sexual intercourse began/In nineteen sixty-three/(Which was rather late for me) –/Between the end of the Chatterley ban/And the Beatles' first LP*), he admitted that he should have declined in the first place because he was 'patently unfitted' to do the job. He didn't because he saw himself as a 'jazz lover, someone 'unquestionably on the wavelength of Congo Square' and although he knew the music had been changing he did not think it could alter out of all recognition any more than a march or a waltz could. Here he made a cardinal error, confusing the music as a whole with just two of its immutable forms, a bit like assuming that jazz was synonymous with ragtime (itself an ever-changing style), and that therefore anything other than, say, a complex eight-in-a-bar with shifting accents would not be jazz, patently an absurd position. However, when it came to contrasting Jelly Roll Morton or his beloved Sidney Bechet with John Coltrane and others, we begin to see what he meant and what he really was – a music-lover with evidence of a tin ear. Increasingly during his stint, he regarded bomb-dropping by drummers, skewed time signatures, the use of harps and cellos and the 'appropriation' of an American Negro art form by others as heresies, whereas to more receptive listeners they were a natural extension of an antecedent, which is how evolution works. One might not like the evolved fact, but that's

a different matter. You don't make a fuss about it as though it were possible to gainsay. 'Something fundamentally awful had taken place to ensure that there should be no more tunes', Larkin observed on realising that he could not become the jazz equivalent of 'the old whores' who had turned the reviewing game into an arena of unalloyed praise and thanksgiving.

The most fascinating aspect of this limitation is twofold: its parallels in other art forms, notably painting and music; and the lack of humility involved in the suggestion that the commentator's denigration of what is not liked or not understood has critical weight. Perhaps most telling is its view of the new by someone who has grown older, a common enough attitude in other areas of life. 'New' can also be interpreted as any stage in development at which one believes things went awry: in Larkin's case, the early 1960s and probably a little while before that. He must have been cheered by the Bunk Johnson phenomenon (the reversion to traditional forms by a re-discovered black musician), something that happens in classical music hardly ever, though 'trad' in jazz was more continuation of a broken line than reactionary, as was the music of Malcolm Arnold and others in this country. Many, of course, perceived the line as maybe obscured for a while but essentially *unbroken*. In visual art, the similarity is the always uneasy co-existence of painting and drawing with contemporary ways of making art 'objects'. Catholic taste requires the ability to see both slowing-down and reversal as part of growth. Trees grow outwards and downwards as well as upwards,

and it is time, not activity, that is of the essence.

Larkin's only interest in musical development was concerned with how jazz might be heading for extinction. In 1963, he observed that racial de-segregation might lead to a break-up of the 'enclosed, strongly-characterised pattern of Negro life' and the dilution of its traditional cultures, such as jazz. 'The Negro did not have the blues because he was naturally melancholy,' he wrote. 'He had them because he was cheated, bullied and starved. End this and the blues may end too.' Let's discount the sinister notion that Larkin was here *regretfully* accepting what would happen if suffering were lifted and instead give him credit for describing the conditions for an evolution in which he nevertheless had no faith. The Negro musician's dilemma lay in disclaiming the 'down-home' minstrelsy side of his profession while desiring the literacy of straight music, or 'looking for the jazz that isn't jazz', as Larkin put it. Being conservative and a tad pessimistic, he returned to what he liked, what had gone before, becoming yet another of the critical fraternity to confuse change with progress and refusing to view the result as stellar rather than linear. As critics of a more accommodating persuasion will know, stars glow brightly and endure, or lose their lustre and peter out; but the firmament, once established, will survive and make room for newcomers. Jazz is not a cakewalking column that will end up on its knees.

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IN SHORT

Guilty Men, Peter Osborne and Frances Weaver, (forward by Peter Jay), Centre for Policy Studies, 2011, £10, 57 Tufton St, London SW1P 3QL, 0207 222 4488, mail@cps.org.uk

Why is it that so many clever people are often so wrong about important issues in public affairs when ordinary people can predict disaster and tears from the outset?

This pamphlet is 'dedicated to all those who worked to keep Britain out of the Eurozone and salvage our national independence... only to be insulted as cranks, little Englanders, racists, maniacs, extremists and xenophobes.' The title mirrors the 1940 book about the establishment stooges who denounced Churchill and his allies as warmongers. The European movement began with laudable ideals but has degenerated into a corrupt and arrogant gravy train run from an artificial

country which itself is in danger of dissolution. The single currency experiment, whose architects and devotees have yet to apologise for its failure, threatens to bring the whole world economy down with it.

Osborne and Weaver give chapter and verse for this sorry saga with useful footnotes and copious quotations from the Europhiles. The activities of the political class and the institutions which embraced the pro-European consensus are analysed methodically: The Foreign Office had a vested interest in their own influence and exercised it from the 'sixties. Journalists, particularly from the *Financial Times*, persuaded many that Britain should not stay out of the Euro while the CBI declared that 80 per cent of the business community supported the Euro until another poll revealed otherwise. Business organisations which disagreed were punished and lies were circulated that the Head of Policy at the

Institute of Directors, Ruth Lea, was mentally unstable, and she was thrown out of her job. The Conservative Party was enjoined to send 'for the men in white coats' to take care of their Euro-sceptics who were accused of wrecking the party and talking about issues which did not interest voters. Worst of all was the BBC whose record is perhaps the most shameful in supporting scare stories like 'Out of Europe, Out of Work' and wilfully sidelining opponents.

Churchill said: 'the use of recriminating about the past is to enforce effective action at the present.' The authors recommend that various lessons should be learnt: conventional wisdom has often been wrong and history has shown that dissenters are often right; cross party alliances should be treated with caution; 'political will cannot overcome economic reality'. Above all it's time for Euro supporters to apologise and celebrate those who fought so bravely to save sterling.

Merrie Cave

Hoodwinking Churchill: Tito's Great Confidence Trick, Peter Batty, Shephard-Walwyn (Publishers) Ltd, 2011, £25.

Much new information has come to light since Tito's death in 1980; the great merit of this book is that it largely succeeds in bringing it all together. Although the author did not have access to the recent book in Slovene *Tito's secret years in Moscow* by Silvan Eiletz, Peter Batty's account ties in with Tito being a Stalinist NKVD officer, as shown by Eiletz. It also supports Churchill's final admission that Tito was his biggest mistake of the Second World War, and shows how Churchill was duped into dropping Mihailovic and arming the Partisans. Churchill's admission of his mistake was correct although even he did not know of the deep penetration of the UK security services by the Soviets. It also illustrates the tension between Britain and the USA over how to deal with Tito – the USA was largely right. Batty deals convincingly with the negative propaganda that was directed against General Mihailovic, the Serbian leader of the Royalist guerrillas, and shows that he was very badly treated by the British. The man who became a hero of sorts in the UK, Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, comes off badly and is shown to be an ambitious and well-connected political operator. The BBC also was biased not only because of its record of behaviour during WWII but in the treatment of Batty's first TV programme on Tito. The author protested about the editing that changed the thrust of the programme and this resulted in protests by others.

The author shows how Tito collaborated with the

Germans to thwart an Allied attack across the Adriatic, and brought a reign of terror and murder after WWII to eliminate all possible enemies. He also conclusively shows that the Partisans hardly harassed the German Army on its retreat in 1944, and did not liberate the country but spent most of their efforts fighting a Civil War to eliminate Mihailovic's forces. It is clear that the Partisans did not defeat the German Army; that was done by the Red Army and the German evacuation. International figures who come out well are Anthony Eden, President Truman and Milovan Djilas, and the British Liaison Officers with the Royalist guerrillas stand out as trying to put the record straight despite overwhelming difficulties.

As more information becomes available the myth of Tito the Liberator and National Hero gets eroded. The opening of hundreds of graves with thousands of bodies of liquidated enemies in Slovenia is part of this process. The author touches on matters that need further research: was Tito an NKVD liquidation squad leader in Spain? Did he and the NKVD spy Klugmann meet and cooperate when they both helped recruit for the International Brigades in Spain? One would like to hear more about the speculations that seemed extreme at one time but now seem all too possible. Was he really a Russian substitute and should we open the grave and check the DNA? Did the Americans secretly finance the Non Aligned Movement to stop some key countries joining the Eastern Bloc?

We know that history is written by the winners and certainly Tito did so without much of a challenge because of Cold War imperatives. Peter Batty's research is impressive and for any student of the period the book provides a valuable bibliography

Keith Miles

Humorists from Hogarth to Noël Coward, Paul Johnson, New York, Harper, 2011, £9.99 Pb.

What a wonder Paul Johnson is! Having written biographies of Winston Churchill and Jesus, he has now produced a very insightful set of essays on the great humorists. It includes studies of the melancholy mirth of Dr Johnson, the lewd caricatures of Rowlandson, the designed oddities of Dickens' work and the unique qualities of that American cult figure Damon Runyon. Johnson's discussion of the humorists is buttressed by his wide knowledge of physics. The Marx brothers are analysed in terms of thermodynamics and entropy and Thurber in relation to quantum mechanics and the uncertainty principle.

Paul Johnson is also remarkable for having known many of the humorists personally like Nancy Mitford

and indeed speaks of ‘my old acquaintance Frankie Howerd’ (who once) ‘said to me “My visage is my most precious possession. It brings me nothing but grief in the shaving mirror, but one glimpse of it by the paying public sets them a-tittering.”’ Most notable of all is Johnson’s ability to converse in fluent French with Jean-Paul Sartre, a great prankster and sketch-writer. Johnson writes:

Jean Paul Sartre told me in 1953 that his ability to make people laugh ‘saved my life’ at school. He said:

I was small, ugly, no good at games, not much good at lessons because my eyesight was so poor... But I could make them laugh. What I found was that it was easier to make a lot of them laugh, than just one of them. And the laughter was louder if I could direct it at a single little boy, even more miserable and friendless than I was.

From this conversation we learn all we ever need to know about Sartre, not just his humour and plays but his politics and philosophy. Johnson cites this conversation in relation to the theory of the humour scholar Henri Bergson that humour is a social corrective, but it relates better to the theory of Hobbes that humour is about putting down others, quite regardless of any social context. No wonder Sartre called Che Guevera ‘the

most complete human being of our age’.

What is surprising about this book is the amount of space given to the sexual shenanigans, serial marriages and extra-marital low jinks of the humorists discussed. It was written by a leading Catholic layman and a staunch upholder of that Church’s teachings on marriage. Do we really need to know that Benjamin Franklin had two illegitimate children and wrote (but did not dare to publish in puritan America) an advice to young men to have sex with old women rather than young ones as being more enjoyable and less risky as a source of the clap that afflicted his contemporary James Boswell? Do we wish to know the confusing details of the many marriages of both Laurel and Hardy or that Georges Simenon slept with two thousand eight hundred women?

What do these tales of concupiscence tell us about the art of the great humorists? Is it that comic genius correlates with satyriasis? Or merely that the sudden wealth and fame that comes to entertainers brings with it temptations to and opportunities for carnal indulgences and routine infidelity from which others are shielded?

Hamish MacIntyre

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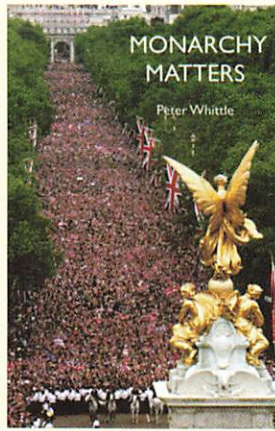
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Monarchy Matters

Peter Whittle

2012 sees the Diamond Jubilee, the 60th anniversary of the Queen's accession. Such an important historical event will certainly be celebrated with the enthusiasm which greeted her Silver and Golden Jubilees - an enthusiasm which on those occasions took much of the country by surprise. Elizabeth II is now an institution in herself - widely respected, and held in great affection. It could be the biggest Jubilee yet. But what about the monarchy itself? In this robust defence of the institution, Peter Whittle - the writer, broadcaster and director of the New Culture Forum - looks at the continuing advantages of the monarchical system, and explores its current state of health.

2011, 91pp, £10



Coalition Government in British Politics: From Glorious Revolution to Cameron-Clegg

T. G. Otte, Jeremy Black, Andrew Adonis, & John Charmley

Single-party government, based on clear parliamentary majorities, is the norm of British politics or so conventional wisdom has it. History tells us otherwise. Coalitions have been a feature of British political life since the Glorious Revolution. And most of them were in office for long spells at a time. At different times, coalitions seemed preferable to single-party administrations, at others a vital prop to national unity in moments of acute national crisis; and sometimes they were seen as something best avoided. At all times, coalitions faced similar problems at their formation, during the lifetimes, and when they broke up, as they all eventually did. In this book the history of British coalitions are comprehensively examined by a quartet of leading historians.

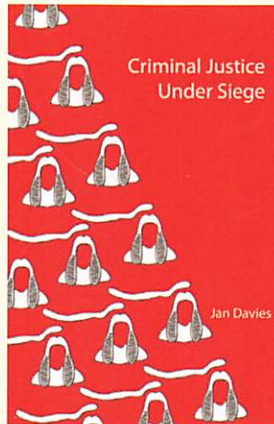
2011, 169 pp, £10

Criminal Justice under Siege

Jan Davies

British criminal justice is reputed to be the best in the world yet everywhere it is under threat from politicians, from bureaucrats, even from some members of the public who do not value its principles. By focusing on changes in some fundamental areas like the right to silence under police questioning, the treatment of witnesses, court procedures and sentencing practices this book shows how the principles of criminal justice are under attack. Jan Davies is a solicitor who has been practising in the criminal courts since 1983.

2011, 171 pp, £10

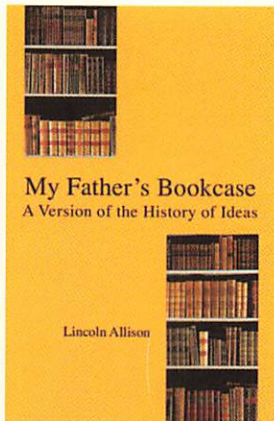


My Father's Bookcase: A Version of the History of Ideas

Lincoln Allison

My Father's Bookcase is a personal journey through modern writing from Sir Thomas More and Niccolo Machiavelli in the early sixteenth century to Kingsley Amis and C. L. R. James in the second half of the twentieth. It consists of fifty essays, retrospective reviews, of books which the author always wanted to read or re-read, but never had the time in normal adult life. Lincoln Allison is Emeritus Reader in Politics at the University of Warwick and is the author or editor of more than a dozen books on political philosophy, the politics of the environment, sport and travel, including Amateurism in Sport.

2011, 324 pp, £10



Too 'nice' to be Tories?: How th Modernisers Have Damaged the Conservative Party

Anthony Schofield and Gerald Frost

In the curious mood of introspection and intellectual atrophy that followed its loss of power in 1997, the Conservative Party convinced itself that its brand had become irredeemably tainted. It was so persuaded by self-styled Tory modernisers who seemed keener to embrace the accusation that their party was nasty than they were to refute it. The modernisers insisted that only a rebranding exercise could rescue the Conservative Party from a downward spiral. The empirical basis for these assumptions was unsound: polling data, which was said to show that a policy became unpopular the moment it was seen as a Tory policy, was either flawed or misrepresented. It is now clear, argue this report's authors, that the modernising programme has been an electoral disaster.

2011, 103 pp, £10

The Cold War

Jeremy Black

The term Cold War has had many meanings since it was used by George Orwell in 1945. Leading historian Jeremy Black offers a new, comprehensive and truly global interpretation of the Cold War. Professor Black dates the start of the Cold War not to 1945, but to 1917 and argues that China has played a much more central role in the Cold War than is often acknowledged. This book will serve as a powerful introduction to the Cold War whilst also offering many fresh insights to those who are familiar with its history.

2011, 195 pp, £10



Mr Clarke's Modest Proposal: Supportive Evidence from Yeovil

Theodore Dalrymple

The first duty of any government is to preserve the public peace and protect the law-abiding citizen. As the guardian of the public purse, and for the sake of the taxpayer, it should do so as cheaply as possible; and if its policy does not work, or provide value for public money, it is duty bound to change it. Crime rates in Britain have remained among the highest in Western Europe despite the fact that Britain also has one of the highest rates of imprisonment relative to its population. Prison doctor Theodore Dalrymple offers his unique insights.

2011, 24 pp, £10

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