

The Salisbury Review

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought



“Oh no! — The badgers are not taking the forthcoming cull without a fight!
— They’re getting radicalised!”

The Tory Wipeout
Guy Stagg

Kicked into touch
Theodore Dalrymple

Guardian Angels
Myles Harris

**Will Labour pop
the question?**
Lindsay Jenkins

**Right and left
wing food**
William Sitwell

**Midnight’s
Children**
Christie Davies

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Contents

3 Editorial

Articles

- 4 **When the Tory Party Disappears**
Guy Staggs
- 6 **Will Labour pop the Question?**
Lindsay Jenkins
- 7 **Am I a European?**
Jens Wendel Hansen
- 8 **Deus ex IBM**
Myles Harris
- 10 **Kicked into Touch**
Theodore Dalrymple
- 12 **The Queen's Diamond Jubilee**
Peter Mullen
- 14 **Midnight's Children**
Christie Davies
- 16 **Divorced from Reality**
Stephen Baskerville
- 18 **Death comes to us All**
Diedrick Boomsma
- 20 **An Angel to Watch over Me**
Myles Harris
- 22 **Merkel's Hemlock**
Napoleon Linardatos
- 24 **Robert Harris and the Heart of Darkness**
Ralph Berry
- 26 **A Mysterious Pudding**
Alec Marsh
- 28 **Electronic Pearls before Swine**
Dan Collins
- 29 **Right and Left Wing Food**
William Sitwell
-

Columns

- 31 **Conservative Classic — 47**
Oliver Twist, Charles Dickens
- 33 **Reputations — 36**
Sir David Nicholson
- 35 **Roy Kerridge**
- 36 **Eternal Life**
Peter Mullen
-

Arts & Books

- 37 **Robert Crowcroft**
on The Conservative Party
- 38 **Anthony Daniels**
on Bernard Mandeville
- 39 **John Jolliffe**
on Trevor Roper in Wartime
- 40 **Celia Haddon**
on Cheap Meat
- 41 **Richard Packer**
on Green Philosophy
- 42 **Martin Dewhirst**
on Vladimir Putin
- 44 **Patrick Keeney**
on Western Civilisation
- 45 **Frank Ellis**
on The Red Army in WWII
- 47 **Penelope Tremayne**
on American Politics
- 48 **Merrie Cave**
on The Tower of London
- 50 **Theatre: Jane Kelly**
on *Can We Talk about This?*
- 51 **Art: Andrew Wilton**
on Brian Sewell
- 53 **Music: Robert Hugill**
on César Franck
-



54 In Short



The
Salisbury Review

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Archbishop Rowan Williams is more outspoken since he announced his resignation. I think they call this syndrome 'demob happy'. He must be mightily relieved to be leaving the bed of nails that is the Archbishop of Canterbury's job. But Dr Williams is simply following his predecessor George Carey who kept his head well below the parapet when he was Archbishop, but since his retirement has been firing away, both barrels almost every week. Now he is in the papers again for his direct and formal appeal to the European Court of Human Rights to complain that Christians in Britain are being 'vilified' and 'treated as bigots.' He claims that traditional Christian values have been 'effectively banned' in this country where he detects 'a new secular conformity of belief and conduct.'

Well said, Carey, even if it's a bit late in the day. It's well-known that there is an aggressive atheist and secular elite in Britain who wish to diminish, if not erase altogether, the place of Christian belief in public life. I am not inventing this out of a sense of paranoia. These people have stated their aim clearly on many occasions and I don't at all mind naming a few of them: Richard Dawkins, Polly Toynbee, Harriet Harman, Philip Pullman, A C Grayling and Joan Bakewell. They are entitled to their view and to state it vigorously. But, having so stated it, having kicked off this secular aggression, they are not then at liberty to accuse Christians of over-reacting.

Christian values are scorned and marginalised. In today's secular climate you are permitted any moral point of view, however outrageous, so long as it isn't that set out in Christian teaching. Having drawn attention to this secular aggression, I think I stand in need of correction. It is not precisely a secular aggression – for that would oppose the public presence of all religions. But this is not the case. There is no corresponding criticism of Islam. In fact politicians and the mass media, especially the BBC, go out of their way to show the gentlest tolerance and the kindest hospitality to Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists and especially to the Muslim faith.

I once saw a delicious cartoon in that scurrilous satirical magazine *Viz* – surely one of the most entertaining creations to have come out of the North East in recent decades. In this cartoon, the filthy-minded media man Roger Melly – 'Roger

Melly the man on the telly' – begins by saying, 'I think I'll wander down to the mosque and make a few jokes about Islam'. But in the very next square he has changed his tune and he says instead, 'On second thoughts, I'll just go down to the parish church and take the **** out of the vicar.' We know the reason for this change of mind. If Roger, or anyone else, started taking the Mickey out of Islam, there would be dire, if not murderous, consequences.

So we are not facing a strictly secular aggression. One religion in particular has been singled out for attack: Christianity – the faith which shaped public life and institutions in Britain for 1500 years. It is not so long since anyone you asked in the street would affirm that we are a Christian country. Not any longer; don't let's pretend that we can ditch Christianity and all the benefits bequeathed by our historic faith will still be available. They will not. If Christianity goes, the lot goes with it

T S Eliot put all this more eloquently in 1934 when he said:

Such modest attainments as you possess in the way of polite society will hardly survive the faith to which they owe their significance.

And he added:

An individual European may not even believe that the Christian Faith is true, but what he says and makes and does will all spring out of this history of European culture and depend upon that culture for its meaning. Only a Christian culture could have produced a Nietzsche or a Voltaire. I do not believe that the culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian Faith. And I am convinced of that not merely because I am a Christian myself, but as a student of social biology. If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes. Then you must start painfully again, and you cannot put on a new culture ready-made. You must wait for the grass to grow to feed the sheep to give the wool out of which your new coat will be made. You must pass through many centuries of barbarism. We should not live to see the new culture, nor would our great-great-grandchildren: and if we did, not one of us would be happy in it.

What will Happen when the Conservative Party has No More Members?

Guy Stagg

Joining a political party is an odd thing to do. These days just one per cent of people in Britain are members of one. Taken together, the three main parties have fewer members than the RSPB, the Girl Guides, and even *match.com*. A generation ago it was normal to socialise or volunteer through a political party. Two generations ago, political parties were the largest membership organisations in the country. Now they are a fringe pursuit less popular than bird-watching or online dating.

Membership figures have collapsed over the last half century. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Conservative Party. In 1951 the Party numbered 2.9 million members. By 1981 that was down to 1.2 million members. And, for all that David Cameron has tried to broaden the Conservative Party's appeal, since he became leader the number has dropped from 258,000 to 177,000. Labour's own statistics are not much better. In 1951 they had had 876,000 members; today just 190,000.

Why is this? Falling party membership has been a long-term trend in most modern democracies. Political science students in Europe and America have proposed a variety of reasons – from the state funding of political parties to postmodernism. In this country, the reasons most often given are the expenses crisis, the closeness in terms of policy between the three main parties, and the fact that politicians increasingly rely on the media or the internet to engage with voters – reducing the need to knock on doors or hand out raffle prizes.

Added to these, polling companies and focus groups find that people no longer identify with politicians. Not only do they increasingly look the same, sound the same, and have the same life story – but as people they seem ever more alien. What other group in society watches re-runs of elections on the BBC politics channel? And is there any other walk of life where Ed

Miliband could rise to the top?

The shifting patterns in voter turnout suggest another, stronger reason why people don't join political parties any more. The decline of political parties has been the most extreme example of a wider diluting of political participation. In 1950 Labour won the general election with a turnout of 83.9 per cent. In 1951 the Conservatives won with a turnout of 82.6 per cent. Fast-forward half a century and the picture is very different. At the last election 65.1 per cent of the population voted. In 2001 the turnout was just 59.4 per cent. And when you look at the demographic makeup of those voters, the figures become even more striking. In 1983 almost three quarters of people aged between 18 and 24 voted. But in 2005 half that amount of young people voted – just 37 per cent.

More people are deciding not to vote, and the biggest drop is among the under-25s. But at the same time support for the major parties has seeped away. In the Fifties, more than 95 per

cent of voters chose one of the two main parties at the general election. In 2009 – the last European elections – less than half of the population voted for Labour or the Conservatives.

Young people are not giving up on politics, but on the traditional methods of political engagement. For some this means voting for outsiders – George Galloway's shock victory in Bradford West was largely because of his support among the city's youth. For other young people this means expressing political views through an alternative medium, such as protest marches or internet campaigns. Among the most popular of these is *38 degrees* – which offered an online platform for the opposition to things like new planning laws and child benefit reform.

These alternatives are much easier than the political activism of the past. By supporting a single cause,

polling companies and focus groups find that people no longer identify with politicians. Not only do they increasingly look the same, sound the same, and have the same life story – but as people they seem ever more alien

or a single-issue candidate, young people are able to engage in the political process while keeping their own ideological priorities almost entirely intact. They don't have to fit their views into the watered-down and conciliatory arguments of party politics. However, there is something immature about backing candidates and causes without engaging in the frustrating responsibilities of government or opposition. It is myopic and stropic, and ever so slightly spoilt.

Society has played a part in fostering this attitude. On the one hand, young people have more of the freedom of adulthood. A permissive consumer society brings you whatever you want, whenever you want it. On the other hand, young people have none of the responsibilities of adulthood. They take longer to find jobs, longer to start families, and much, much longer to get onto the property ladder. In short, young people live rootless lives – and this is directly reflected in the way they engage with politics.

Granted there is a sense that Parliament is an inadequate forum for debate, but the probability is that whatever replaces that forum – an Occupy movement, an online campaign – is a far less representative expression of public opinion. Likewise, most people see no reason to join a political party. What will replace these institutions? There are two options. The first is the adolescent politics already described, which consists of pot-shot campaigns and *à la carte* policy choices, or single-issue parties and protest votes. At its heart is a refusal to compromise on ideology, or to engage in the often concessionary process that is politics. The second option is more worrying: and that is that nothing replaces these parties. We would risk losing not only the institutions, but the values they protected as well, and instead have causes stripped of their history and crowds robbed of their identity. In some ways Tony Blair and David Cameron anticipated this void, because their lack of political conviction hints at nihilism.

If this sounds apocalyptic, then it is a necessary contrast to the apathy with which the political class approaches its own impending irrelevance. There will always be parties within Parliament, but beyond Westminster? If parties disappear from public life, there is no guarantee we will ever be able to rebuild them, but without them we have mass disenfranchisement. Although young people are not being denied the vote, they are growing up in a society that does not demand any civic responsibility.

So what can be done? Devolution of power and the spread of direct democracy offer some hope. Indeed

the popular interest around the Mayoral elections – in London and other cities across the country – may strengthen popular politics. Meanwhile, as the high turnout for the AV referendum suggested, there is an appetite for such inclusive political debate, even about something as dry as the Alternative Vote system.

Neither of these solutions will fortify political parties. Instead we might look for lessons from one of the most successful political movements in British history. In 1881, following the widespread grief at the death of Disraeli, thousands began wearing his favourite flower, the primrose, in their buttonhole. This was quickly adopted by Tory strategists, and the Primrose League was born. Appealing almost entirely to working-class Tories, their membership grew and grew. In 1910, when only 7.7 million people were eligible to vote, the Primrose League could boast almost 2 million paying members. It was more successful than any trade union, more popular than any protest movement. And the secret of the Primrose League's success was simple: it wasn't that interested in politics. The League hosted dances in country houses and fetes in town halls. Its members were called squires and dames, or given baroque titles like knight harbinger. It was friendly and sentimental and ever so slightly vulgar. Best of all, beyond a few blandishments about democracy and the Empire, it was free from over-earnest ideological debate, and avoided dreary discussions about specific policies.

In 2004 the League was finally shut down for good, but its early success still has something to teach us. First, any democratic movement must have widespread support among the working classes in order to be genuinely popular. Second, people are not drawn to policies so much as principles. Third, and most importantly, political organisations must offer something more than politics. The Primrose League, like the best institutions, recognised that there were more important things in people's lives, and shaped itself to fit them.

Guy Stagg was a political advisor at Conservative Campaign Headquarters during the 2010 election and now works for the Daily Telegraph.

If parties disappear from public life, there is no guarantee we will ever be able to rebuild them, but without them we have mass disenfranchisement.

Will Labour pop the question?

Lindsay Jenkins

The polls have been pretty consistent: around half the country would vote to leave the European Union if given the chance. The other half would stay, at least for now. If the question is hedged with 'Do you want to renegotiate the treaties', another quarter of the country would agree with that. Let us put to one side that renegotiation would at best be difficult and in all probability impossible. Clearly the balance of views today is in favour of a radical change in the UK's relationship with the EU.

Yet as we all know the three main parties are rooted to the spot. As the wave of elector disapproval of the EU rises, so Labour and Conservatives make increasingly loud Eurosceptic noises. But noise is all it amounts to.

No doubt the Fresh Start group of Tory MPs, plus Frank Field and Gisela Stuart from Labour as sympathetic associates will take exception to that description. But George Eustice, Chris Heaton-Harris and Andrea Leadsom, the Conservative MPs leading the Fresh Start group, are merely writing yet more papers on farming, fishing, regulation, employment law. They are repeating much of the Eurosceptic investigations of the last twenty years or so. They say they will 'Establish a process for achieving change', but they are just going through the motions.

The more cynical might say that the Fresh Start Group is a useful tool for David Cameron. It says we are taking action, but comfortingly for Cameron, doing nothing. Is Fresh Start a case of 'false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing'?

Why is this, will it change and soon? Is there the political will?

Of course it is a natural human instinct to prefer the status quo, often against all common sense and sometimes even when survival may be at risk. Are we all subconsciously waiting for that Black Swan moment described by Nassim Nicholas Taleb in his book of the same name; that rare occurrence which has a tremendous impact? Taleb called them unpredictable events and a surprise to the observer. His momentous example was 9/11. Yes it was a great shock; yes it did change politics and much more, but for those few who specialised professionally in tracking al Qaeda it was not totally outside the box.

But it was beyond the Presidents and politicians of the time. To convince the US Government of the extent of what could happen was to court disbelief – until

those four planes were deliberately crashed.

Today twelve EU countries are in recession, including the UK. Worse, unemployment is rising across the Eurozone. Austerity policies pile on agony and distress as more people are thrown out of work. Commentator after commentator asks 'Where is the growth?' There is not much of that, nor much planning for it.

Surely this is Taleb's Black Swan moment. We all know that the euro cannot survive without a Europe-wide dictatorship to impose it though we may not say so in such a direct way. We all know that Greece, Spain and Portugal in particular cannot continue with so many out of work. Among the under 25s more than half have no jobs, a lost generation.

Yet in the face of all the evidence, the UK's three main parties remain obdurate: here we are and here we stand, they say, part of the EU forever. But it is an EU without a future.

Steadily the UK Independence Party is picking up the support of the disaffected. In recent polls UKIP is hovering about ten per cent. In the May local elections the former tail end Charlie came second 130 times. The trend is clear: UKIP is a serious threat.

The Liberal Democrats are losing support for many reasons; coalition is not good for the party, only for those on the Government front bench. So the focus for the immediate future must be on the traditional two parties.

Cameron's Conservatives are on a losing streak, but at heart like Cameron's support for the Fresh Start Group, it is because the Party is failing to face up to this country's problems. It is much more than the mid-term blues.

If Cameron is unable to take control of his party and turn its fortunes around, and there is no evidence that he can, then it will be a case of the 'men in grey suits' long before the proposed 2015 general election. Indeed with no change the Conservatives could even be beaten into third place at the European elections in 2014, with UKIP taking top place.

With that in mind, Ed Miliband and the Labour Party should take heed that their present poll advantage of ten to twelve points over their Conservative rivals may not long continue. Miliband is not yet every voter's dream of a leader. Labour is in front because everyone else is so bad. That is quite an indictment. In the old days of two parties that would have just about been enough, but not today. UKIP is growing in stature and in the polls.

Labour could yet take the big prize, the goal is wide open. Miliband has already dipped his toes in anti-EU waters and Mandelson has called for our entry to the EU after the crisis is over. The Labour front bench has asked one or two of the backbenchers with consistent, principled and long held opposition to the EU to ask pointed questions in the House. Kelvin Hopkins, the MP for Luton North, has been just one of them.

Miliband should take the next step and emerge from behind the shelter of his backbenchers. He should campaign to leave the EU. After all it was one of his

principled predecessors, Hugh Gaitskell, who was poised to take the job of Prime Minister when his untimely death handed it to Harold Wilson. Gaitskell understood that our membership of the then EEC would be 'the end of Britain as an independent European state, the end of a thousand years of history!'

It has taken the country nearly fifty years to catch up. How much longer will it take Ed Miliband?

Lindsay Jenkins is author of the seminal trilogy, Britain in Europe: Campaigns for Better Off Out. www.lindsayjenkins.com

Am I a European?

Jens Wendel-Hansen

I was born and raised in a country closely linked to the continent. One of my great grandmothers was a Swede, one of my great grandfathers a German. On my bookshelf, Hans Christian Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard are joined by Plato, Augustine, Burke, Tocqueville, Goethe and Dostoyevsky. I was born and raised not only in Denmark, but in Europe – and I love it. During my youth and university years, I have been all over Europe in order to listen and learn, to meet new friends, to bond and to network.

Am I a European?

In this question lies not only a fascination for European culture and history, but the question of nationality, of patriotism. But what is nationality? Nationality transcends political squabbles and links a person to history, to a territory, to a culture, but not to answers. In one's nationality, one finds a starting point, a base from which to confront life. This makes it easier, but not easy. One's nationality does not deliver certainty in every aspect of life, but it makes you certain about where to start and where to find rest. Patriotism is the will to keep this up, to want to secure this starting point and resting place and for later generations as well. Do I find this in Europe?

In other words: Am I a European?

The European Union claims to be the outer manifestation of a European spirit of unity, but how does this unity express itself? In harmonization of everything from Greek feta to the European foreign policy. This does not have deep roots in history or culture. The European Union satisfies only politicians and bureaucrats who feel an aesthetic pleasure they see cucumbers of the same shape, or make a clear definition of a pizza Napolitana. If you watch a broadcast from Brussels on the day of a treaty referendum you can see it in their eyes. They are not concerned with peoples' existential reluctance to become more European and less national. Such worries are only bumps on the way toward harmonization.

How can the bureaucrat's harmonized uniform dream world not be everyone's dream? And this lack of understanding is not just reserved for those in Brussels. When a referendum turns down a treaty change, the regular answer from lawyers and political scientists specializing in the European Union is that this has nothing to do with the treaty itself. It is typically a protest against the government or because of the voters are stubborn and ignorant. Is this the basis for a sound political analysis, or are we supposed to believe that people mixed into the European system become instantly blinded by a love of European uniformity?

Am I, then, a European?

I was raised on the hilly and green island of Funen in the middle of Denmark with small market towns supplementing its natural beauty. My mother taught me my mother tongue, and read me the fairy tales of the local author, Hans Christian Andersen. It was here that I heard the cry of a whole neighbourhood when Denmark won the European Football Championship in 1992. My interest in history quickly developed into a passion for Danish history, not because it was especially interesting, but because it was mine.

If bureaucrats and politicians in their manic fight for rationalism and simplicity think they can deprive me of this, perhaps irrational, preference for my homeland, if they think that they can make me feel as connected to German or French as my mother tongue, if they think that my culture is just mine out of lack of something better and more rational, their education has clouded rather than broadened their minds, and their careers, their entire contribution to the Union, is based on a serious misunderstanding of what Europe is.

No, I am not a European. Life is too complicated for that. I am me.

Jens Wendel-Hansen is a PhD student at Aarhus University in Denmark.

Deus ex IBM

Myles Harris

In the film *Terminator 2* two robots return from the future to search for a young boy, who, if he survives, will grow up to lead the human race to victory against an army of super intelligent machines whose forerunners scientists created in the 20th century. One robot has been sent to save the boy, the other to kill him. The one sent to kill him is designed by the machines, the one to save him by humans. The film, an amusing sci fi romp employing spectacular side effects and starring Arnold Schwarzenegger as the 'good' machine, explores the question whether intelligent machines can develop a moral sense. The story of course is nonsense. Nobody will ever be able to make a machine as intelligent as a human being, and the idea of time travel is manifestly absurd.

'Well, up to a point Lord Copper'.

In 2010 scientists working on the Blue Brain Projects at the École Polytechnique de Lausanne in collaboration with IBM created a digitised version of the basic unit of the rat brain. Called a neocortical column, each unit can be thought of as a key on a giant keyboard upon which thoughts, images and impulses play.

The team created the column by studying the pattern of discharges in slices of rat brain, digitising them, then feeding the resulting algorithms into a super computer. A rat brain has 100,000 columns, a human two million. A rat column contains about 10,000 neurones or 'wires', a human column 100,000. The more columns you pack together the more intelligent the creature. It is just a matter of multiplying things up. To the delight of this hugely talented group of mathematicians, software engineers, biologists, physicists and physicians, the resulting artificial unit behaved exactly like a portion of a rat brain.

A brain, be it human, cat, rat, or leopard, shark, hyena, banker or priest's, consists of a vast network of interconnected neurones. A neurone looks a little like a many-legged spider. Neurones are electrical gates, receiving large numbers of signals from other neurones along the spider's 'legs', processing them and passing some of them on to other neurones along

a special outgoing leg. The entire brain is thus a huge flashing maze of coursing electrical signals, each held momentarily within a neurone while it finds a suitable connection, and then passed on. Even in sleep or under an anaesthetic, the orchestra never stops playing.

Science does not talk about purpose, but it is extraordinary that embedded in matter is something that violates a fundamental rule of the universe, decay. The sun is hot, but will grow cold, the stars will eventually go out, we age. But while all material things decay, information constantly seeks to increase itself, to know more; from a child playing sand castles on a beach, to the Hubble telescope peering light years into the past knowledge feeds upon itself. What we see we build.

A few weeks ago I found myself staring into the eyes of a computer at Gatwick Airport. While it was deciding if it would let me out of my own country I wondered what might happen when such scanners are connected to an artificial brain, wired in turn to other artificial brains all over the world?

The brain, like all intelligent systems, seeks to continually associate information. A pulse of charges pauses fractionally within a neurone while it seeks a partner somewhere within the vast forest, links with it, and the new more complex charge that results in turn seeks a new fellow,

and so on. Brains are self-rewarding devices playing, according to the late John Von Neumann, a zero sum game that seeks the most rewarding and stable coalition of information over the greatest distance.

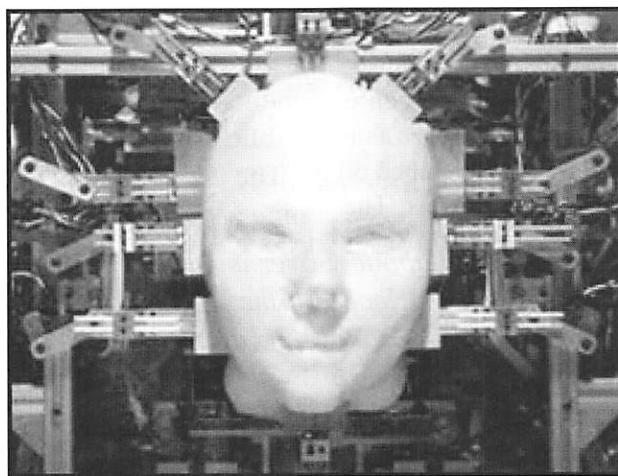
There are many types of self-rewarding information systems. According to George Dyson the one that strikingly imitates ours is the world electronic banking system. Shifting the equivalent in flashing digital pulses over 24 hours of 180,000 tons of gold or a 1500-mile high stack of hundred dollar bills, it seeks maximum value, either in property, ideas, Rembrandts, war, slaves, democracies, wheat, crime or self sacrifice.

The leader of The Blue Brain Project, Dr Henry Markram, believes an artificial brain is only ten years away. Interviewed by the 'Wired' in 2009 Markram said, 'The column has been built and it runs..... now we just have to scale it up.' He added, 'In ten years, this computer will be talking to us.'

The computer he refers to is in four refrigerator sized boxes humming in a dust free room. The rat column whose information it holds consumes the

equivalent in computing power of a laptop. A digital computer powerful enough to run a full sized human brain would need enough power to light both shores of Lake Lausanne. But the reason each of us doesn't go around with a small nuclear power station in tow is that our brain requires less than the power of a 30-watt light bulb. How this is done is disputed. There is a growing body of opinion that at the very root of the brain's activity is a phenomenon, which processes information according to quantum rules. The brain may be a quantum computer.

Quantum computers use very little power because they compute enormous numbers of possibilities at the same instant. Maybe this why ideas 'suddenly pop into our heads.' Pursuing this analogy, and it is only an analogy, this ability, called superposition, to process information everywhere at once as it were, is not shared by digital computers. To reconstruct a face, or recall an idea, digital computers, although fast, have to assemble an image, in sequence or in parallel, line by line, shadow by shadow rather as old film negatives were developed in hypo, albeit at speeds of millions of bits a second. To do this they require a great deal of power. Huge sums of money are being invested in developing quantum computers, for which some new ideas may well come from the Hadron Collider fifty miles down the road from the Blue Brain Project.



The general opinion seems to be, although there are dissenters, that an artificial brain, however powered, but outstripping us in intelligence, will be here by 2050. In the meantime digital computers will serve science's purposes well enough, allowing scientists to see electrochemical interactions translated into thought, thus allowing the human race to take its first steps inside another consciousness.

Should we be summoning the ghost of Ned Ludd at this news?

They said Ned Ludd was an idiot boy
That all he could do was wreck and destroy, and
He turned to his workmates and said:
Death to Machines
They tread on our future and they stamp on our
dreams.

In *Terminator 2* the turning point came when an artificial brain was distributed across the internet which

may be the way that we will solve the power problem of modern artificial intelligence. It quickly became self aware, decided human beings were its mortal enemies and, as it was originally part of the US military complex, began to make machines to defend itself against being switched off. It then went on the attack detonating a series of nuclear bombs over our cities. We laugh but America is already developing autonomous drones capable of deciding who it is ethical to kill.

Computer scientists take a more optimistic view of digitised intelligence. It will be used to explore treatments for mental disorders, to control complex systems such as energy and agricultural supplies, to run factories and control traffic. It will also explore the philosophical nature of thought and consciousness. Solutions to ethical and existential problems will open

doors to us, which have hitherto being firmly closed. Is the universe a giant thought? Does thought exist in the absence of thinkers? Future Bishop Berkeleys will be hunched over their keyboards.

A few weeks ago I found myself staring into the eyes of a computer at Gatwick Airport. While it was deciding if it would let me out of my own country I wondered what might happen when such scanners

are connected to an artificial brain, wired in turn to other artificial brains all over the world? The giving of electronic permission such as this is the bureaucrat's dream. With a computer everything can be forbidden unless specifically permitted.

What will happen when all information presently held on us is fed into the memory bank of an autonomous intelligence? Are we prepared for a future battle with robots? It may be that the Blue Brain Project will fail, or only secure a minor advance in artificial intelligence, but in the end it, or something like it, will succeed and much sooner than we think. Then will come the machines. As the robot played by Arnold Schwarzenegger says in the film.

'I'll be back.'

Myles Harris is a consulting editor

Kicked into touch

Theodore Dalrymple

No one this side of insanity would select players for a professional football team as he would select a population sample for an opinion poll. The fact that the demographic profile of the resultant team did not remotely match that of the surrounding population, or even that of the spectators, would worry no one. I have never seen anyone object to the gross over-representation of black players, under-representation of Indian ones, or the total absence of women-players, in the English football league; nor have I ever heard any calls for positive discrimination in favour of players of middle-class home background: a background that seems to be at least as much a handicap in becoming a professional footballer as a working-class one does in becoming a member of what used to be called the learned professions. The middle classes are at an unfair disadvantage, then, in this route to great wealth and fame at a young age: great wealth that, mysteriously enough, does not enrage even the fiercest of egalitarians.

Football is far too important a matter to be left to the social engineers and their moral enthusiasms, unlike almost every other aspect of national life. On the day on which I sat down to write this, *The Times* carried an article about Mr Clarke's attempts to increase the numbers of women and members of ethnic minorities in the judiciary, to make it more demographically representative of the population as a whole. Of course, Clarke has only to hear of a demagogic gimcrack idea to embrace it with all the enthusiasm of his careerism; but he is far from the only one to consider the composition of the judiciary as far less important a matter, and therefore more properly a subject of frivolous reformist tinkering, than the Football League. And it is a moot point whether, in the modern world, sheer malignity does as much harm as frivolous tinkering.

The supreme importance accorded to professional football in contemporary British life is, of course, evident in other ways. When the Labour Government came to power in 1997, I looked up

the members of the cabinet in *Who's Who*, and discovered that not a single member avowed an interest in an extracurricular activity other than football. (I was unsure whether this would be worse if true or merely an affectation.) Mr Blair famously, but unconvincingly, claimed to be an ardent follower of Newcastle United; and almost every prominent person profiled in our newspapers feels obliged to avow support for one football team or another as one of his interests. It is shorthand for the democratic political beliefs and virtue necessary to avoid defenestration from public esteem.

The *Times* newspaper for 2nd April, 2012 had nine pages on which foreign news appeared (not all the pages were wholly devoted to it); it had twenty-one pages wholly devoted to football. On 8th April, 2012, the *Observer* newspaper had

eleven pages devoted to foreign news and twelve to football. Presumably, as commercial undertakings, the *Times* and *Observer* make some effort to reflect the interests of their readers, who are in the upper quartile of the population, educationally speaking, to put it mildly; and so we may conclude that football is of more interest even to the educated in Britain than all that happens in the rest of the world put together.

And yet there is something simulated, not quite spontaneous about this excessive interest in football, as if someone were protesting too much, or as if it were the result of the circuses-promoting arm of an official policy of bread-and-circuses. There is also something disturbingly emblematic about British professional football. Very few of the clubs make a profit though they are supposedly commercial enterprises, yet they continue to pay their players salaries that would make even bankers blush. (It is again a sign of the importance accorded to football that salaries unjustified by the commercial performance of employers evoke

When the Labour Government came to power in 1997, I looked up the members of the cabinet in Who's Who, and discovered that not a single member avowed an interest in an extracurricular activity other than football.

no protest when paid to footballers, but cause outrage when paid to bankers.) The sums are not trifling. Chelsea Football Club, for example, lost a cumulative £424,222,000 between 2003 and 2008 on a turnover of £726,522,000. Even a relatively modest club such as Middlesbrough – a town whose principle industry to all appearances seems to be state-subsidised take-away pizza – lost £54,964,000 in the same period.

It can hardly be contested that many football clubs in Britain are by no stretch of the imagination normal commercial enterprises, nor is it easy to avoid the conclusion that their economics are murky, with the odour of legalised money-laundering and tax-evasion hanging over them. Football has created a substantial class of multi-millionaires whose wealth is largely, if not entirely, derived from subsidy.

The richest of these players are, of course, not British. About fifty per cent of the players in the Football League are foreign, and the percentage rises dramatically with the wealth (or perhaps I should say the extravagance) and eminence of the club. Thus 3 of Arsenal's 27 players were born in Britain. Ten of the Premier League's teams are foreign-owned, and all of those that are most famous: Manchester City and United, Liverpool, Arsenal and Chelsea. The resort of the clubs to foreign players as the easiest and quickest way to create a good team, albeit at the cost of long-term financial instability, means that they do not bother to encourage local players: one of the reasons, but only one, why the English are not much good even at that which most enthuses them, namely football.

The loyalty of the crowds, often fanatical, to a supposedly local team, composed mainly of foreign mercenaries and owned by foreigners, and

the gullibility with which they buy the expensive-tatty merchandise associated with it – is there any more pathetic sight than that of an English man-child aged about forty, too fat and beery to run for a bus, kitted-out in the latest cynically-marketed paraphernalia of 'his' team? – is therefore profoundly dispiriting. While his city crumbles around him through neglect, incompetence and corruption, the fan is 'proud' of 'his' team. By comparison with the English football system,



the military system of Renaissance Italy was rational and effective. Of course, stupidity has always accompanied organised sport, but that is no reason to rejoice over it.

English football reflects and resembles the wider economy (and society) of which it is a part. Like the British economy as a whole, there is something insubstantial about it; part of it glitters, but as a rotting fish

by moonlight glitters; the figures don't add up, collapse is a distinct possibility, wealth and debt are confounded, as are appearance and reality, there is no thought for the morrow, and meretriciousness has replaced merit. In short, football reflects contemporary Britain well: government of the spivs, by the spivs, for the fools.

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

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

Peter Mullen

I cannot believe it is sixty years since the headmaster called us into the schoolyard, in the drizzle and under a filthy yellow sky, and intoned the sombre news that the King was dead. Long live the Queen! But now Her Majesty is the longest lived of all the English monarchs and she has reigned for longer than any of them except Victoria

In 1928 Winston Churchill visited Balmoral and saw the two-year-old Princess Elizabeth for the first time. He wrote to his wife: 'She is a character. She has an air of authority and reflectiveness astonishing in an infant.' A year or so later, Sir Owen Morshead told of an incident at Windsor. The officer commanding the guard strode across to where the pram stood and said, 'Permission to march off, please, Ma'am?' There was the inclination of a bonneted head and a wave from a tiny paw.

The Queen has often deployed her ready wit, especially to defuse embarrassing occasions. Once when she was in a tea-shop near Sandringham, a woman leaned forward and said, 'Excuse me, but you do look awfully like the Queen'. The Queen replied, 'How very reassuring!' Again, at a banquet she was served with asparagus and her neighbour at the table watched her to see how she would deal with the stout, buttery, home-grown stems. When he came to be served, the Queen turned to him and said, 'Good. Now it's my turn to see *you* make a pig of yourself!' On another occasion the Queen's car splashed mud over a pedestrian in Sandringham. The pedestrian, a woman, shouted something and the Queen answered her, 'I quite agree'. The Duke of Edinburgh turned to the Queen and asked, 'What did she say, dear?' The Queen replied, 'Bastards!'

Much later at a public ceremony Mrs Thatcher felt embarrassed because she had arrived in an outfit which closely resembled the Queen's. Afterwards, Downing Street discreetly asked the palace whether there was any way by which in future the Prime Minister might

know in advance what her Majesty intended to wear. The palace phoned back with a message directly from the Queen: 'Do not worry. The Queen does not notice what other people are wearing'.

The levellers, following that great 19th century fraud Walter Bagehot, try to persuade us to regard the dignified aspects of our constitution as outmoded habits of mind which belonged to the bad old days before, in a plethora of ludicrous and unworkable declarations of *rights*, we were urged to replace our traditional understanding of ourselves as *subjects* with the alien and republican term *citizens*. There are many

who would reduce the Royal Family and make the remnant of them abandon the state coach and take to bicycles. Polly Toynbee has written that the Queen should move out of Buckingham Palace and into a council house. I won't suggest where Ms Toynbee should go and live.

And now a Labour Party think tank – surely an oxymoron? – says that a useful role for the monarchy would be to travel round the world apologising for the sins of the empire. They say future monarchs should be educated at comprehensive schools – like what they are. And even their grudging support for the retention of a little royal ceremonial is only out of the pig philosophy that



says it's good for the tourist industry.

Ceremonial is not useless trimming. *Things* cannot be adequately replaced by mere *thoughts*. Because we are bodies as well as minds, we need the externals. Appearances are themselves part of the reality they point to. This is the sacramental way of being. We remember from the days of our Confirmation classes that a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The Orb, the Sceptre and the Crown embody what they represent. The Coronation Service is sacramental, complete with holy oil. There is a nice remark by the poet Robert Graves, who met the Queen not long after her Coronation. He said:

‘The holy oil has taken for that girl: it worked for her all right’.

Some will say that in the modern world the Queen does not rule. They are mistaken. The Queen rules through her ministers just as the ministers govern through their civil servants – or at least they used to before the coming of the spin doctors. Of course the minister does not attend to every small item of business. It is his job to secure the coherence of his department. It is the Queen’s function to secure the coherence of the realm. T S Eliot wrote in 1939:

You cannot expect continuity and coherence in politics, you cannot expect reliable behaviour on fixed principles persisting through changed situations, unless there is an underlying political philosophy: not of a party, but of the nation.

The Queen is the centre and guarantee of the nation; its embodiment.

Having defaced and deformed institutions such as parliament, the church, the law and the university, the whole modernising political clique, in a fit of hysterical self-hatred, egged on by ignorant, envious and sensationalising sections of the mass media, regularly turn their destructive spite on the monarchy which too will have to be *modernised*. We recall with embarrassment and shame the shambles in which the Queen was forced into a nauseating, sentimental linking of arms in that other temple to the modernisers’ obsession, the Dome.

They know not what they do: for the monarchy is the living symbol of the nation. Any lack of esteem for it

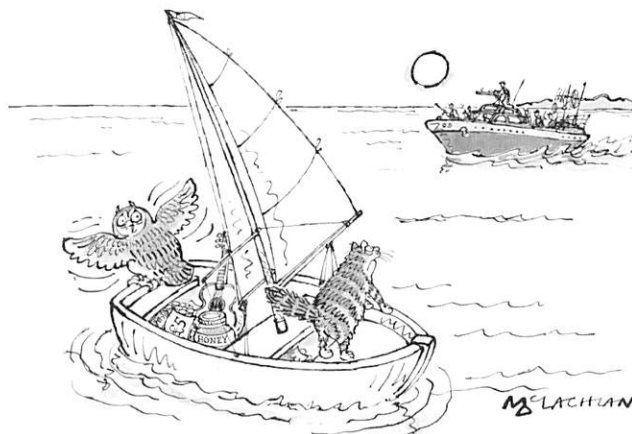
is the outward and visible sign of self-contempt. We need to value something. And what you value shows you what you’re worth. People will revere *something*: better a thousand year old monarchy than *Strictly* and *Britain’s Got Talent*. The marvellous tide of popular enthusiasm for a new royal yacht has demonstrated that most British people still prefer *Rule Britannia* to Cool Britannia.

We have been here before. In the 17th century the monarchy was abolished and the country was governed for eleven years by a puritanical, politically-correct dictatorship until the Cromwellian totalitarianism was shown up for what it was and we got our king back. The cries at the time of Cromwell were eerily similar to what we are hearing today: the need to *modernise* – think of the new model army – and so destroy the traditional institutions which had served the country well for centuries. Even a bad king is better than a so-called Lord Protector who in reality was a dictator, for Cromwell abolished parliament. There are those today who would do similarly by bypassing it at every opportunity and governing instead by a close circle of cronies and a horde of unelected advisors. Both Greece and Italy are now run by bureaucratic, unelected commissars. Where’s the democracy in that?

By contrast, Her Majesty has served this country with distinction and self-sacrifice for sixty years. Every day she gives us a living example of what love of country means. Long may she reign. God bless her!

Peter Mullen is Assistant Priest at St George’s Headstone, Harrow.

This and other originals of Ed McLachlan’s Cartoons published in the *Salisbury Review* are now available for sale. If you are interested please get in touch with the Managing Editor.



“Somali pirates!..... I’m off.....?bye.”

Midnight's Children

Christie Davies

As I write, a gang of five Muslims from Birmingham have just been convicted in Telford of abducting a child, rape and sexual assault and a further gang of nine Muslims from Rochdale have been convicted of rape, sexual assault and trafficking of children for sexual exploitation; a further six Muslims from Oxford have just been charged with similar offences. The press and the BBC have coyly described these malefactors by the term 'Asian' which is an insult to our much respected and law-abiding British Sikhs, Hindus, Jains and Parsees; it is not usual for the above to have names like those of the convicted and accused such as Mohammed, Hussein or Abdul.

The man who foresaw all this was the prescient former Lord Chancellor Jack Straw, who in January 2011 said on television that there is in Britain 'a specific problem which involves Pakistani heritage men – who target vulnerable young white girls', viewing them as 'easy meat' for sexual abuse. The screams of indignation from Muslims and leftists were even greater than at the time when he revealed that the proportion of Muslims in jail for serious criminal offences (even when terrorism is left out) was twice that of their proportion in the general population. After the May 2012 verdict on the Rochdale villains, though, even the local imam confessed to feeling disgusted, and Mohammed Shafiq, chief executive of the Ramadhan Foundation, accused Pakistani community elders of 'burying their heads in the sand' on the issue of on-street grooming.

What prompted Straw's candour was the conviction in late 2010 of a gang of Muslims from Derby for rape, false imprisonment, sexual assault, sexual molestation of children and perverting the course of justice. The judge told the ring-leader Abid Mohammed Saddique, 'Your crimes can only be described as evil' and described him as 'evil, manipulative and controlling' and 'in the truest sense, a sexual predator'. This was not just a lone story of a single gang of Muslim rapists and child molesters, for there had been many other similar cases involving the 'on-street grooming' of victims, victims as young as eleven, for sex by Muslim gangs in Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Rotherham, Keighly, Skipton, Blackburn (Straw's constituency), Oldham, Rochdale, Preston and Burnley. Fifty of the 56 men convicted in 17 prosecutions were Muslims.

Lest the denunciations by his fellow leftists should become too shrill, Straw added that most groomers of under-age girls for sex were white but then, given that the great majority of the British population is white,

that is hardly surprising. What is important is the disproportionate involvement of Muslims in these sex crimes and their working together as gangs; these are not lone weirdoes with a computer. Likewise Straw's phrase 'Pakistani heritage' is an unhelpful euphemism. I am sure that no Christians of Pakistani origin would have been involved in these orgies. Furthermore, there have been essentially similar problems in the Netherlands and in Scandinavia where the perpetrators have been Arabs, Kurds and Turks who can hardly be described as of 'Pakistani heritage'. Rape in Sweden has risen massively over recent years and has become one of the highest in Europe. In Australia there have been horrific gang rapes by Muslim Lebanese in which the victims were subjected to racial taunts; the penalties in Australia for gang rape have been drastically increased. No Christian Lebanese have been involved. A key religious leader among the Muslims, Sheik Faiz Mohamad, blamed the victims and exonerated the rapists. Politically correct Scandinavian academics have told the rape-victims that they need to adjust to a 'multi-cultural society' and dress with all-enveloping Muslim modesty. Yet it is clear, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said, that multiculturalism has failed. There are many instances of this clash between cultures, which has a detrimental effect on all our lives.

Multiculturalism in its present form was bound to lead to severe problems in countries with substantial numbers of Muslim immigrants, confident of their divine superiority, and liberals practising the worst kind of moral relativism. The dogma that says that it is impossible to make moral distinctions between cultures is in all senses amoral.

What clearly underlies these stories of rape and child molestation is the degraded position of women under Islam. The recent sex crimes are a product of a wider pattern of behaviour that includes forced marriages, domestic violence, and honour killings. All of these abominations stem inexorably from the religious as well as the social view that women are inferior, merely a kind of disposable family property who must be denied proper autonomy. You would think this would lead to an outcry from Britain's feminists but they have been silent, for they are more concerned to protect the purity of their leftist egalitarian ideology than with the fate of individual women.

It is not enough to create shelters for victims of violence and help for those subject to sexual molestation. These

are necessary and valuable but they are just a palliative; unless there is vigorous public condemnation, these patterns of planned assaults on girls by Muslim gangs will get worse. Feminists are usually extremely punitive in such matters, as when they advocate undermining central principles of British justice like the autonomy of juries or the presumption of innocence in order to get more, if dubious, convictions of those accused of rape. Likewise they want all accusations of domestic violence to end up in the criminal courts, even where the complainant does not want this and it will harm all concerned, and they have sought to have prostitutes' customers treated as criminals.

Why then are they so unwilling to acknowledge that the proportion of Muslim men involved in sexual assaults and domestic violence may be far greater than for men of other religions, or none? In either case only a minority of men are involved but the relative size of that minority is bigger for the Muslims. It is proportion and probability alone that matter and where these differ an explanation is called for, and one rooted in the differing religion-based cultures of the two sets of men. It is here that our attention must be directed; yet the leftists and feminists are unwilling even to consider and thoroughly to investigate the matter. For some feminists 'all men are rapists', an absurd and vilely prejudiced proposition. Their unwillingness to talk about Muslims is part of a much more general and deceitful ideology of 'underdoggy', involving a perverse politics of blame that compulsively avoids looking at the dire cultural weaknesses of any group that they have labelled underdogs.

Likewise, no one is willing to suggest that these are not merely crimes of lust but of the domination and humiliation of unprotected women defined as 'other' and through them of the communities from which they are drawn. Everyone – police, prosecution service, judges, journalists – have been avoiding using the term 'racially aggravated' yet, in my view, the crimes I have described above smack more of racism than many others that are prosecuted under this heading. Such is the bias, the hypocrisy and the mendacity of our liberal elite. The only honest straight talking has come from the British Muslim reformer Mohammed Shafiq who said after Rochdale:

There should be no silence in addressing the issue of race, as this is central to the actions of these criminals. They think that white teenage girls are worthless and can be abused without a second thought; it is this sort of behaviour that is bringing shame on our community.

We also should feel shame at the cowardice and political correctness of those whom we allow to hold power in Britain. By their silence as much as by their lying they are driving ordinary working people into the arms of the thuggish BNP.

We have experienced the usual bleating by Muslim leaders that this is not the 'real Islam'. Yet both in the Koran and in the *hadiths* it is made clear that forced

sex with women captured in war is permissible, even virtuous, whether the woman is maid or matron. No doubt Christians, too, have used the New Testament to justify practices that today we deplore.

Our peerless Crown Prosecution Service and noble police forces were until recently very slow to act. In the case of the Rochdale Muslims recently convicted of rape, causing or inciting child prostitution and paying for the sexual services of a child, the existence of such activities had been known as early as 2008; young vulnerable girls from a children's home had been used as sexual toys. An earlier police investigation collapsed and no charges were brought because the local police were 'crippled by fears of racial insensitivity'. Young girls continued to be abused for over two years because of the failure by an 'institutionally anti-racist' police force to act decisively. Such is the legacy of the Macpherson report. What kind of a society do we live in when those in authority try to purchase a spurious 'community cohesion' by denying truth, right and justice?

We may also note the last Labour government's abandonment of plans to use the criminal law against forced marriages. Various unconvincing reasons were given but the real one was their unwillingness to affront those Muslim leaders who claimed that their religious community would be 'stigmatised'. Those who, like the Labour MP Anne Cryer, consistently and courageously sought strong prohibitions were vilified as culturally insensitive and Islamophobic. David Cameron has said he supports tightening up the law on forced marriage and has compared it with 'slavery' and Theresa May has promised to 'stamp out this appalling abuse'. But would such a prohibition be rigorously enforced or would fears of seeming 'culturally insensitive' in practice nullify it? The British stamped out the slave trade in the nineteenth century, so why are they afraid to stamp out the slavery of forced marriage, even of children, today?

Here we come to the heart of the problem, which is the unwillingness of so many leftists to confront evil and defend rights if it might offend the Muslims. Hence, all matters involving wrongdoing by Muslims have to be hushed up or explained away in dubious and irrelevant ways. We need to condemn utterly this obsessional and dogmatic egalitarian ideology, which is the very antithesis of our common moral understandings. It is undermining any attempt to deal firmly with the distinctive problems associated with the failure of the Muslims to assimilate.

Christie Davies is the author of The Strange Death of Moral England (Transaction).

Divorced from Reality

Stephen Baskerville

Don't blame the gay lobby for the decline of marriage.

Defenders of marriage must face some hard facts or they are going to lose their fight—and with it, quite possibly, their religious freedom as well. Federal judge Vaughn Walker's ruling nullifying Proposition 8 in California illustrates that, unless we can demonstrate very specific reasons why same-sex marriage is socially destructive, it will soon be the law of the land.

With conservatives as prominent as Glenn Beck and Ann Coulter joining those 'influential Americans', in the words of the *National Review*, who 'have been coming increasingly to regard opposition to same-sex marriage as irrational at best and bigoted at worst', we can no longer rely on vague assertions that homosexual marriage weakens true marriage in some way – which in itself, actually, it does not.

Considerable nonsense has been written by some opponents of same-sex marriage, while some critical truths are not being heard. Confronting the facts can enable us to win not only this battle but several even more important ones involving family decline and the social anomie it produces. First: Marriage exists primarily to cement the father to the family. This fact is politically incorrect but undeniable. The breakdown of marriage produces widespread fatherlessness, not motherlessness. As Margaret Mead pointed out long ago – yes, leftist Margaret Mead was correct about this – motherhood is a biological certainty whereas fatherhood is socially constructed. The father is the weakest link in the family bond, and without the institution of marriage he is easily discarded.

The consequences of failing to link men to their offspring are apparent the world over. From our inner cities and Native American reservations to the north of England, the *banlieues* of Paris, and much of Africa, fatherlessness – not poverty or race – is the leading predictor of virtually every social pathology among the young. Without fathers, adolescents run wild, and society descends into chaos. The notion that marriage exists for love or 'to express and safeguard an emotional union of adults', as one proponent puts it, is cant. Many loving and emotional human relationships do not involve marriage. Even the conservative argument that marriage exists to rear children is too imprecise: marriage creates fatherhood. No marriage, no fathers.

Once this principle is recognized, same-sex marriage makes no sense. Judge Walker's 'finding of fact' that 'gender no longer forms an essential part of marriage' is rendered preposterous. Marriage between two men or two women simply mocks the purpose of the institution. Homosexual parenting only further distances biological fathers (and some mothers too) from their children, since at least some homosexual parents must acquire their children from someone else – usually through heterosexual divorce.

Here is the second unpleasant truth: homosexuals did not destroy marriage, heterosexuals did. The demand for same-sex marriage is a symptom, not a cause, of the deterioration of marriage. By far the most direct threat to the family is heterosexual divorce. 'Commentators miss the point when they oppose homosexual marriage on the grounds that it would undermine traditional understandings of marriage', writes family scholar Bryce Christensen. 'It is only because traditional understandings of marriage have already been severely undermined that homosexuals are now laying claim to it.' Though gay activists cite their desire to marry as evidence that their lifestyle is not inherently promiscuous, they readily admit that marriage is no longer the barrier against promiscuity that it once was. If the standards of marriage have already been lowered, they ask, why shouldn't homosexuals be admitted to the institution?

'The world of no-strings heterosexual hook-ups and 50 per cent divorce rates preceded gay marriage,' Andrew Sullivan points out. 'All homosexuals are saying is that, under the current definition, there's no reason to exclude us. If you want to return straight marriage to the 1950s, go ahead. But until you do, the exclusion of gays is simply an anomaly – and a denial of basic civil equality.' Feminist Stephanie Coontz echoes the point: 'Gays and lesbians simply looked at the revolution heterosexuals had wrought and noticed that, with its new norms, marriage could work for them, too.'

Thus the third inconvenient fact: divorce is a political problem. It is not a private matter, and it does not come from impersonal forces of moral and cultural decay. It is driven by complex and lucrative government machinery operating in our names and funded by our taxes. It is imposed upon unwilling people, whose children, homes, and property may be confiscated. It generates the social ills that justify almost all

domestic government spending. And it is promoted ideologically by the same sexual radicals who now champion same-sex marriage. Homosexuals may be correct that heterosexuals destroyed marriage, but the heterosexuals were their fellow sexual ideologues.

Conservatives have completely misunderstood the significance of the divorce revolution. While they lament mass divorce, they refuse to confront its politics. Maggie Gallagher attributes this silence to 'political cowardice': 'Opposing gay marriage or gays in the military is for Republicans an easy, juicy, risk-free issue', she wrote in 1996. 'The message [is] that at all costs we should keep divorce off the political agenda.'

No American politician of national stature has seriously challenged unilateral divorce. 'Democrats did not want to anger their large constituency among women who saw easy divorce as a hard-won freedom and prerogative,' writes Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. 'Republicans did not want to alienate their upscale constituents or their libertarian wing, both of whom tended to favour easy divorce, nor did they want to call attention to the divorces among their own leadership.'

In his famous denunciation of single parenthood, Vice-President Dan Quayle was careful to make clear, 'I am not talking about a situation where there is a divorce.' A lengthy article in the current *Political Science Quarterly* is devoted to the fact – at which the author expresses astonishment – that self-described 'pro-family' Christian groups devote almost no effort to reforming divorce laws. This failure has seriously undermined the moral credibility of the campaign against same-sex marriage. 'People who won't censure divorce carry no special weight as defenders of marriage,' writes columnist Froma Harrop. 'Moral authority doesn't come cheap.' Just as marriage creates fatherhood, so divorce today should be understood as a system for destroying it. It is no accident that the divorce court has become largely the means of plundering and criminalizing fathers. With such a regime arrayed against them, men are powerfully incentivized against marrying and starting a family. No amount of scolding by armchair moralists is going to persuade men into marriages that can mean the loss of their children, expropriation, and incarceration.

The fourth point is perhaps the most difficult to grasp: marriage is not entirely a public institution that government may legitimately define and regulate. It certainly serves important public functions. But

marriage also creates a sphere of life beyond official control – what Supreme Court Justice Byron White called a 'realm of family life which the state cannot enter.' This does not mean that anything can be declared a marriage. On the contrary, it means that marriage creates a singular zone of privacy for one purpose above all: it is the bond within which parents may raise their children without government interference.

Parenthood, after all, is politically unique. It is the one relationship in which people may exercise coercive authority over others. It is the one exception to the state's monopoly of force, which is why government is constantly trying to undermine and invade it. Without parental and especially paternal authority, legitimized by the bonds of marriage, the government's reach is total. This is already evident in those communities where marriage and fathers have disappeared and government has moved in to replace them with welfare, child-support enforcement, public education, and tax-subsidized healthcare.

Marriage is paradoxical in a way that is critical to our political problems – and that causes

homosexuals did not destroy marriage, heterosexuals did. The demand for same-sex marriage is a symptom, not a cause, of the deterioration of marriage. By far the most direct threat to the family is heterosexual divorce

considerable confusion among conservatives and libertarians. Marriage must be recognized by the state precisely because it creates a sphere of parental authority from which the state must then withdraw. Government today can no longer be counted upon to exercise this

restraint voluntarily. We must all constantly demand that it do so. Marriage – lifelong and protected by a legally enforceable contract – gives us the legal authority and the moral high ground from which to resist encroachments by the state.

Prohibitions on homosexual marriage will not save the institution. As Robert Seidenberg writes in the *Washington Times*, 'Even if Republicans were to succeed in constitutionally defining marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman, some judge somewhere would soon discover a novel meaning for 'man' or 'woman' or 'between' or 'relationship' or any of the other dozen words that might appear in the amendment.'

This is already happening. Britain's Gender Recognition Act allows trans-sexuals to falsify their birth certificates retroactively to indicate they were born the gender of their choice. 'The practical effect will inevitably be same-sex "marriage"', writes Melanie Phillips in the *Daily Mail*. 'Marriage as a union between a man and a woman will be destroyed, because 'man' and 'woman' will no longer mean anything other than

whether someone feels like a man or a woman.’

So what is the solution? A measure already before Congress may show the way. Though not intended primarily to save marriage, the proposed Parental Rights Amendment is the first substantial step in the right direction. It protects ‘the liberty of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children.’ How does this strengthen marriage?

Reaffirming the rights of parents – married parents particularly – to raise their own children would weaken government interference in the family. Especially if worded so as to protect the bond between children and their married fathers, such a measure could undermine both the divorce regime and same-sex marriage by establishing marriage as a permanent contract conferring parental rights that must be respected by the state. Within the bonds of marriage, it would preserve the rights of fathers, parents of both sexes, and spouses generally, and it would render same-sex marriage largely pointless. Marriages producing children would be effectively indissoluble, and there would be fewer fatherless children for homosexuals to adopt. Men

would come to understand that to have full rights as fathers they must marry before conceiving children, and they would thus have an interest in ensuring the institution’s permanence.

This is not a small undertaking. It would mean confronting the radical sexual establishment in its entirety – not only homosexuals but their allies among feminists, bar associations, psychotherapists, social workers, and schools. It would raise the stakes significantly – or rather it would highlight how high the stakes already are. It would also focus public attention on the interconnectedness of these threats to the family and freedom. It would foster a coalition of parents with a vested personal interest in marriage and parental rights. The alternative is to continue mouthing platitudes, in which case we will be dismissed as a chorus of scolds and moralizers – and yes, bigots. And we will lose.

Stephen Baskerville is associate professor of government at Patrick Henry College and author of Taken Into Custody: The War Against Fathers, Marriage, and the Family.

Death comes to us All

Diederik Boomsma

Death comes to us all – but people have traditionally felt it shouldn’t be ordered to come. In the Netherlands however, a country long since eager to declare taboos taboo, death-on-demand seems now to become a reality. Recently the Dutch Association for a Voluntary End to Life (NVVE) launched a scheme for mobile euthanasia clinics, where a team of doctors and nurses pay house visits to people who express a wish to die. You can fill in the request form online on their website, with questions like: Do you wish to end your life in the short term? Does your family know of your registration with our clinic? How do you suffer? Mark one or several from the list, including *pain, physical deterioration/loss of strength, losing the ability to have social contacts, losing dignity, loneliness, or exhaustion*. After filling in the form, a doctor and nurse visit the applicant at home, discuss their wishes, and will determine whether giving them a lethal injection would be legal and appropriate. If an independent doctor then agrees with the request, bob’s your uncle. Not quite as easy as ordering from ‘Meals on Wheels’, then, but certainly designed for comfort. The service is presented as a solution for patients with a death wish whose own doctors refuse their request.

This is in fact quite common. Euthanasia – identified in this journal as one of the least onomatopoeic words in the English language, with the sense furthest from the sound – was legalized in the Netherlands ten years ago under two strict conditions: an adult of sound mind must make the request, and the patient must have an incurable disease causing unbearable suffering. But since then, three things have happened: First, the interpretation of those conditions has been broadened, so that now, for example, mental suffering, dementia, or a combination of age-related ailments not lethal in themselves are now accepted as qualifying reasons. Second, from being recognized as something that should be restricted to exceptionally harrowing circumstances, support is growing for euthanasia to be understood as a full-blown human right. There is a prominent lobby urging for a fundamental ‘right to die’ to be included in the Constitution. And yesterday, parliament discussed a petition from the ‘Out of free Will’ organization, signed by 117,000 people, to legalize euthanasia for anyone over seventy if they are weary of life and consider it to have been completed. Third, perhaps as a result of these developments, some of the former enthusiasts for legalized euthanasia

have developed misgivings. Many doctors are now focusing more closely on offering patients palliative care, instead of suggesting euthanasia. Meanwhile however, new guidelines from the Royal Association of Doctors stress that reluctant doctors have a ‘moral obligation’ to refer their patients to a more willing colleague. A third of the Dutch public think that doctors are legally *obliged* to comply, although this isn’t true. Another survey revealed that one third of Dutch doctors are willing to carry out euthanasia on patients in the early stages of Alzheimer’s, and immediately sparked progressive parties in parliament to ask questioned such as: ‘what does the minister think of the fact that *only* a third of doctors would agree to fulfilling a euthanasia-wish?’ What adds to the worries this ought to prompt, is that patients in the early phases of dementia list the fear of having to go to a nursing home as an important reason for requesting euthanasia. No wonder doctors are voicing concern that they are being ‘pushed to cross borders’. Two thirds say they feel pressured to perform euthanasia and that pressure, particularly coming from relatives, is increasing.

Now, however, there is the mobile life’s end clinic, to put an end to all that, and ensure a patient’s ‘right to self-(de)termination’, meets even fewer obstacles – such as the obstacle of a doctor who actually knows his or her patient and has a longstanding relationship with them. All this testifies to the success of the euthanasia lobby, which through a steady and well-funded bombardment of op-eds, books, documentaries and prize-winning films manages to imprint its ideology that a good death necessarily implies the choice to end it yourself. Twittering under the name ‘dying with dignity’, the name ‘life’s end clinic’ is equally misleading – for euthanasia by lethal injection is

the only option to end your life there. They do not offer the possibility for a natural death aided by pain-relief, possibly followed by palliative sedation. Even psychiatrist Boudewijn Chabot, who wrote a book with practical tips on ‘self-euthanasia’ and became notorious in 1991 for ending the life of a woman who didn’t want to live on after losing both her sons in an accident, has doubts about the clinic: ‘Emotionally, I’m only capable of helping to die one or two of my patients a year. Do we want doctors for whom killing becomes routine?’

It is a sad thing – or perhaps not – that people and societies are rarely aware of what upholds and sustains their community. True freedom is sustained by laws and limits, and often, by what restricts or binds our desires. The euthanasia clinic is heralded as another victory for freedom and enlightenment. It is inevitable that this choice, as it increasingly filters into the general consciousness, will evolve to assume a looming, tyrannical presence, preying on the fears of the old and sick that they might suffer and their worries that they may be a useless burden to their families. The option of euthanasia may erode the resolve for a natural death, and it may poison the willingness of relatives to offer other kinds of relief to the suffering of their loved ones: care and companionship. That such a clinic is even suggested as a solution for those lonely or weary of life, stands as a morbid testament to the dehumanization of our failing society.

As the choice for death spreads through the culture, euthanasia may even cease to be a matter of individual choice, but instead develop into an *expectation*. Death must be faced, but it cannot be domesticated.

Diederik Boomsma is an Amsterdam city councillor



“And finally, can you confirm that you have a clean driving licence?”

An Angel to Watch over Me

Myles Harris

Each time you pick up a knife and fork you are rehearsing the rise of mankind from Hobbesian brutality to the idyll of safety, longevity and good government we enjoy in the 21st century. Life, explains Steven Pinker in his wonderful book *The Better Angels of our Nature* was short, nasty and brutish until we began to sit at table together. The modern table knife with its rounded end and blunted edge was developed to discourage medieval people from bringing their own sharpened, pointed knives to table with which, before the development of manners, they were inclined to stab fellow diners. Our medieval ancestors had short tempers and were of a childish temperament, and, as Barbara Tuchman observed, 'a marked inability to restrain any sort of impulse'. One moment you might be enjoying a chop with a friend, the next he might be holding a knife to your throat with every intention of using it.

Desiderus Erasmus was so appalled by the manners of his fellow citizens he wrote a handbook on how to behave when eating. 'Don't blow your nose on the tablecloth, don't gnaw on a bone and put it back into the dish, don't pick your nose while eating, don't put back on your plate what has been in your mouth. His strictures on how to deal with urination and defecation are even more startling. 'Don't foul the staircases, corridors, closet, wall hangings with urine or other filth.' Just how nasty and brutish life was in the Middle Ages can be judged by its amusements. Along with the human gibbettings, impalements, burnings and rapes, ritual drownings and casual torture, cat baiting was a popular sport.

Players with hands tied behind them competed to kill a cat nailed to a post by battering it to death with their heads, at the risk of cheeks ripped open or eyes scratched out by the frantic animal's claws.

The outbreak of manners in the Middle Ages is part of a civilising instinct that has been at work since our ancestors began making meaningful grunts on the savannah. Pinker emphasises this is not a strictly linear process, good manners and restraining one's instinct to do violence to others waxes and wanes, but on the whole the trend toward civilised behaviour is relentlessly upward. Much depends whether you live in what Pinker describes as a 'state' or a 'non state'

society. Non-state societies are tribal, isolated, often migratory and illiterate. Pinker claims they were not particularly brutish, (victims of the Iroquois or the Fore tribe of New Guinea might dispute this) but as populations rose and land became scarce, fighting broke out. It was vicious and continuous.

State societies, ruled by Hobbes' Leviathan, are settled, usually govern from fortified cities, literate, practice the division of labour, enforce a system of laws, raise taxes and maintain standing armies. The robber bands of medieval Europe were no match for the organised armies of the city state. Wagner's Ring Cycle, which dresses these raping brutes in togas holding hands with shrinking maidens, omits to sing of how possession of a magic ring is no defence against withering, co-ordinated fire by massed taxpayer funded flintlocks.

Leviathan invariably makes a better general than a tribal chief. Forensic archaeologists have discovered that the prehistoric peoples of Nubia between 12,000 and 10,000 BC lost around 30 per cent of their warriors in battle, as did hunter gatherers such as the Ache of Paraguay and the pastoral Yanomamo Shamatan of the Amazon. Modern tribal societies are just as bad. The Telefomin of New Guinea between 1939 and 1950 had a death rate in war of 750 per 100,000, albeit proportional to their small numbers. This is not so among state societies. If you were caught up in a 20th century war or genocide, your chances of being killed were a mere 80 in 100,000.

Death in street brawling shares the same decline. A young Tybalt swaggering down a London street in Shakespeare's day stood a 25 per cent risk of being killed in a brawl compared with today's gangsta whose chances of being gunned down in London are by Tudor standards ridiculously small. In 13th century England the murder rate was seventy-five per hundred thousand of the population, today it is 1.3. Critics quote better medical care, more victims' lives are saved, but most of the falls occurred before 1900 when doctors were useless.

The greatest of all contributors to this decline has been the Hobbesian Leviathan, state power. In return for a surrender of autonomy, the right to demand an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, the Leviathan offers protection (or coercion) by centralised government.

People learn, albeit it slowly, that it is much cheaper and safer to allow an indifferent state to administer justice than to do it themselves – and in any event they will be forced to obey because the Leviathan will either kill or imprison them if they do not. Pinker is not starry eyed about the Leviathan. Its early versions were dreadfully brutal, as were some modern incarnations such as Mao's China and Stalin's Russia, and if the modern Leviathan neglects its duty to protect people, for example as it did by inadequately policing the crime ridden slums of New York in the sixties, then crime rates will rise. If certain groups, in this case black New Yorkers, see justice is not been administered because the police do not think they are worth protecting, they will take it upon themselves to do so. Thus violence breeds violence.

Pinker readily admits that there were other important causes of a surge of violence in American cities other than police cowardice and inertia. Its wellsprings were a general loosening of societal bonds by the rock 'n roll generation, drugs, liberal attitudes to black crime and fear by the police of being accused of racism.

Offenses against civil order like vandalism, graffiti-spraying, turnstile-jumping, and urinating in public fell off police radar screens. Thanks to intermittently effective antipsychotic drugs and a change in attitudes toward deviance, the wards of mental hospitals were emptied which multiplied the ranks of the homeless. Shopkeepers and citizens with a stake in the neighborhood, who otherwise would have kept an eye out for local misbehavior, eventually surrendered to the handlers, panhandlers, and muggers and retreated to the suburbs.

However those wedded to the satisfactions of decline will find their delight short lived. The annual US homicide rate at the very worst of these troubles was 10.2 per 100,000 a number that turned out to be a high water mark, dropping to 4.8 in 2010. A smaller rise and fall occurred in Britain. People became fed up with the Marxist posturing of liberals and demanded the return of their streets. It seems conservative rules eventually win.

Nor was this decline confined to the streets. On deaths in warfare among postcolonial countries in the 20th century Pinker writes.

Among the surprises in the statistics are that some things which sound exciting, like instant independence, revolutionary Marxism (when it is effective) and electoral democracy (when it is not) can increase deaths from violence, and some things that sound boring, life effective peace keeping, law enforcement, openness to the world economy, UN peacekeepers, and Plummy'nut can decrease them.

I can confirm from personal experience that Pinker is right. In the seventies the Fore tribe of New Guinea

of the Eastern Highlands (members of whom I very occasionally doctored) were living the same lives as they had done for 10,000 years. Of all the ghastly rituals they practiced, the most repellent was Tokabu, (which a medical colleague who lived among them described to me). It consisted of inserting sharpened cassowary thigh bones in the groins of captured enemies, then staking them out so they died slowly. They then ate them. They believed the flesh, especially the brains, of such victims, were especially efficacious in passing on an immunity to witchcraft. Accordingly they fed them to their children at special ceremonies. Nor did they confine themselves to eating their enemies. 'Everybody' said my friend, 'who died was eaten'. The result was kuru, a slow, terrible and invariably fatal disease of the nervous system caused by the transmission of an infectious agent to the diner's brain, of which our own mad cow disease is a cousin. This was a non-state society pure and simple.

Meanwhile one hundred and twenty miles away on the northern New Guinea coast Australian bureaucrats in a state society were collecting rates and taxes from the citizens of the capital Lae (where I worked as a doctor) to provide the locals with street lighting, housing, roads, drains, hospitals, schools, a defence force, a harbour and an airport. Sadly the territory was brought to its knees by politically correct ideas of anti-colonialism in the late sixties. Even though the country was peaceful under Australian rule, with a falling murder rate and increasing longevity, such benefits were outweighed – declared fashionable Marxists – by the absolute evil of colonialism. In consequence during the early seventies a society that firmly believed in the widespread existence of witches, and the need to exterminate them, was offered the vote.

The Fore, along with the rest of New Guinea, elected to return to savagery and the country is now in ruins. Gangs roam the highways, AIDS is rife, much of the rainforest has been felled, no fish remain in the sea, hunger stays the child's hand from its bowl, payback killing, and worse, is endemic, and the countryside, once a scene of pastoral beauty, is in many places an utter wasteland.

The Australian colonists, on the other hand, left New Guinea for their own country which, under a benign, Leviathan continued its progress toward being one of the most successful societies in the world, its citizens enjoying a level of freedom, wealth and security no other 21st society enjoys.

Pinker offers no single cause of this general trend toward non violence, although he favours Hobbes, the growth of trade, the feminisation of society and the advance of reason as catalysts. His best idea is to suggest the Prisoner's Dilemma (he calls it the

Pacifist's Dilemma) as the mechanism by which societies advance toward a more peaceful state.

The Pacifist's dilemma is as follows. Can you afford to co-operate with an adversary whose intentions you can only guess at, and who can only guess at yours? Extend the hand of friendship and he may cut it off and eat it, on the other hand he may shake it so both of you prosper, until, that is, circumstances change. He might not want to shake your hand if there is a food shortage, there are females to compete for, or worse, he is in the grip of an existential delusion; that you are a witch, a Leveller, a Republican, a Democrat, a communist, a Blairite, even a reader of the *Salisbury Review*.

We are prisoners of our primate genes, which wire our brains with a pack mentality, making it hard to think for ourselves. Like the vicious chimp, our males fight for territory, food and females, the latter in turn seeking power by trading their vaginas. But we have the gift of speech 'The Word'. My mother, an Irish Catholic, called it my guardian Angel. I am not sure it takes a 700 page superbly written book, packed as it is with extraordinary facts, to remind me of my angel's existence.

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Merkel's Hemlock

Napoleon Linardatos

In a general election that might be described as one where 'the best lacked all conviction, while the worst were full of passionate intensity', Greece's two major parties were dealt a colossal defeat. The nominally conservative New Democracy and the socialists of PASOK that together usually get 75 to 85 per cent of the vote, this time got only 32 per cent. The Coalition of the Radical Left is exactly what its name indicates, a league of bizarre and unreconstructed communists, eco-socialists and violence-prone anarchists. Every time you see Athens burning and violent clashes with the police, it's the supporters of the Coalition of the Radical Left at work. During the election they used violence to intimidate and silence their political opponents, often quite successfully. How has this far left and wacky group come so close to power in Greece?

At the end of 2009 the emirate of Dubai got into financial trouble and immediately everyone started looking for the nation who would be the next big target of the financial crisis; Greece fitted the profile. In May of 2010 Greece was cut out of the private credit markets; the Greek and the European political class have been working on a rescue ever since. Greece owes this vast amount of money because of the European Union and the Euro. Previously, if a country wanted to experiment with a huge and inefficient state it had to mostly rely on its own resources, which made things quite dismal from the very beginning. Greece could rely on the Euro in order to borrow with similar rates to those of Germany, spend like America and produce

like Cuba. No austerity programme can bring this debt under control. Luigi Zingales wrote that 'in the last 25 years, Greece ran an average primary deficit of 2 per cent per year. To reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to 70 per cent, Greece would have to maintain an average primary surplus of 4 per cent for the next 30 years, a level that it has temporarily achieved in only four of the last 25 years.' This is close to impossible.

Since its entry into the Euro Greece substituted wealth creation with borrowing. In 2001 the Greek government borrowed 1.5 billion, by 2009 it was borrowing 24 billion Euros just to cover that year's budget deficit. The government machinery became a mechanism for distributing the borrowed loot, with the public sector unions getting the lion's share. Kostas Kallitsis, a financial commentator, described it: 'Each year we were generating a 10 billion government deficit, we were increasing public debt by 12 billion and private by 27 billion, saddling the trade deficit with 5 billion, and all that in order to increase the GDP by... 16 billion Euros – of that 16 billion, 6 billion were coming directly from the European Union as aid.' Both the Greek political class and Brussels got fooled by the false sense of relative progress. They both imagined Greece was in some path of convergence with the most advanced European countries thanks to the accounting semiotics of public finance.

A deep and abiding multi-party faith in statism had created a social model that sooner or later would collapse. Just before the crisis reached its peak, the 2.7 million Greeks working in the private sector were

supporting directly 1 million government employees, 1.7 million retirees, 500 thousand unemployed and indirectly 800 thousand subsidized farmers. That kind of social structure would even bankrupt feudalism and take it back to the Stone Age, but it all seemed sustainable as long as there were lenders willing to pay for it. The international press has been quite vociferous about the new austerity measures imposed on Greece by her last remaining creditors. The truth is that nothing has changed. The Greek government pretends to reform and the European authorities pretend to monitor.

Europeans are inundated with daily reports of a neoliberal onslaught terrorizing the whole of Greece. Two years of the so-called neoliberal onslaught resulted in a record new drop in the Index of Economic Freedom in 2012 for Greece. 'Greece is ranked 39th out of 43 countries in the European region, and its overall score is below the world and regional averages.' Not a single privatization has occurred in the two years of the supposed neoliberal blitz. There have been some cuts in pensions and salaries, but the reform of the wasteful public sector started and ended there. The main focus has been taxes: Increases in income tax, increases in VAT, new and increased property taxes (11 of them now), new trade taxes, new 'solidarity' contributions, new and increased taxes in the cigarettes, electricity and gas. Greek politicians and their European backers ignore public corruption, and conspire to agree that the state is underfunded.

Greece could have left the Euro and reached an agreement with her creditors for a significant haircut of her debts that would have made it viable but is now left with a diminished productive capacity, nothing much to export and nothing to pay for necessities that need to be imported. A humanitarian crisis would follow a disorderly default or an exit from the Euro now. Greek politicians are dependent on a European Union dominated by a Franco-German bloc, which is ideologically hostile to all solutions (low taxes, deregulation) that would pull Greece out of its present crisis. The Socialists have been the natural party of government since 1981 and every other political party has sold itself as some past or future version of it. There is no new political force and no alternative narrative has made it to the public square.

Unemployment, which is exclusively generated from the private sector, is nearing 20 per cent. Those who have paid for the crisis are those least connected to the political system. Of the one million unemployed, half are heads of families. Of those who still have work in the private sector, 400,000 have not been paid for the last six months – Greece by the way is a country of a mere 11 million people. Half of young people ages 18-24 are unemployed and they were the most

important source of votes for the Coalition of the Radical Left and the neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn, which entered parliament with 7 per cent of the vote for the first time in Greek history. Many of the young have left the main towns or have emigrated. Suicides were up 17 per cent from 2007 to 2009. In 2010 they were up 25 per cent and in 2011 they were increased by another 40 per cent. Newspapers are filled with stories about desperate pensioners who cannot afford to pay for their bills on reduced pension checks while children arrive at school hungry. In a recent BBC TV programme Michael Portillo showed the human cost of this political disaster. He visited soup kitchens with middleclass people having their one meal of the day but nearly everyone this Euro sceptic interviewed didn't want to leave the Euro and didn't understand the causes of their misery.

European subsidies created a political and social culture that makes the management of the present crisis particularly challenging. Greece has lost its ability to govern. Instead the politicians learned to just throw money at problems as a way of managing crises. In 2007 when huge fires destroyed large parts of southern Greece the government's mismanagement cost hundreds of lives but it was able to manage the situation politically when it handed out 3,000 Euros to everybody affected by the fires. A month later the party in power was re-elected for a second term. What do you do in a crisis when you cannot bury its mistakes with taxpayers' money? And how do you handle a public that is used to the idea that prosperity comes only through government jobs and handouts? Neither the Greek political class nor the Eurocrats have an answer.

Future scenarios do not look good: a party or a coalition of parties that wants to be doing business with the European Union will carry on the present course while Greece pretends to reform, continues to increase taxes and goes down the slippery slope of high unemployment and a deep recession. The Eurocrats may offer a kind of Marshall plan or Eurobonds that might ease the pain for a while, but they will not fix Greece's problems. In the alternative scenario, sooner or later radical left parties will win parliamentary majorities, but they will clash with the European Union bringing an end to financial aid. Greece will leave the Euro and must face a world on which it depends heavily but to which it has nothing much to offer.

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Robert Harris and the Heart of Darkness

Ralph Berry

For Joseph Conrad, the heart of darkness lay in the jungle. For Robert Harris, it lies in or leads through the forest. In five of his novels, the forest is at the core of his imaginative vision, around which he composes his story. In each case the symbol is actuality.

The motto-theme is announced early in *Fatherland* (1992). The novel is set in a post-war Germany of 1964, in which Hitler still rules and great efforts are made to suppress all knowledge of the Holocaust. Xavier March, homicide investigator with the Berlin Kriminalpolizei, is investigating the death of Josef Buhler, a high party member, and searches his house. There he finds Buhler's diary for 1964, together with a package in his mailbox, and takes them away before the Gestapo can intervene. And then he drives off on a picnic in the Grünwald Forest. But the heart of it – as it had been a thousand years ago, when the plains of northern Europe were still forest – the heart remained the chilly woods of melancholy pine. From these forests, five centuries before Christ, the warring German tribes had emerged; and to these forests, twenty-five centuries later, mostly at weekends, in their campers and their trailers, the victorious German tribes returned. The Germans were a race of forest-dwellers. Make a clearing in your mind, if you liked; the trees just waited to reclaim it.

The symbolism is clear if understated. March 'walked carefully up a steep path into the forest,' where he found 'a spot which commanded a clear view of the Havel.' And there, opening the diary, he found the trail leading from the late Buhler to the still-suppressed Holocaust, about which March knew virtually nothing. That is the forest secret.

In *Archangel* (1998) everything is explicit. The forest is not a shadowy symbol on the margins of the action, it is the central locale of the crucial events. The snow-bound forest near Archangel dominates everything, and the investigators find a cabin where dwells the son of Stalin. He has been 'Reared in the forest...like a wolf.' The bodyguards set over him have all died and he now lives alone, occasionally taking his boat to Archangel

for supplies. This strange creature venerates his dead father, reading obsessively the thirteen volumes of Stalin's collected works and thoughts, the *Sochineniya*. That log cabin is the heart of darkness, and near it is the wide river Dvina 'like finding a cathedral in the middle of a jungle.' The young Stalin is sprung from the forest by an old-style Communist oligarch, who has plans to make him the instrument to overturn the Russian government. Placed on the train to Moscow, Stalin's appearance is already the subject of television footage and great excitement. As the train pulls into the platform in Moscow, the investigator 'hears a noise like a high wind roaring through a forest', and Stalin alights to await his fate. An old Russian proverb had earlier been cited: 'We are born in a clear field and die in a dark forest.'

Enigma (1996) is set in Bletchley Park, the code-breaking centre of the British effort in WWII. Four German intercepts have disappeared from the files. What can have happened to them? The investigators set off to Beaumanor Hall, which houses the wireless interception service and would keep full records. They drive into hilly country, heavily wooded, and pass into Charnwood Forest. 'They followed the road through the forest for about five miles.' At Beaumanor they are able to appropriate secretly the four intercepts missing from Bletchley, and bear them away. They stop in 'the crepuscular gloom of the forest,' and examine their find. It consists of signals between an Army unit in the Ukraine and Army HQ in Berlin. The codebreaker, Jericho, can make no sense of it. 'And where was he? In some primeval bloody forest in the middle of bloody nowhere...' Back in Bletchley, the team are able to crack the Enigma code, and thus enable Jericho to take down the four cryptograms to the cellar where captured Enigma machines are kept. He taps out the messages and cannot understand them, for they consist of meaningless letters with a high proportion of consonants. And then the secret dawns on him. The letter-blocks are names, Polish names. They come from the Army unit in the heart of another forest, Katyn. They point to the Soviet massacre of 10,000 Polish

officers. And this knowledge must be kept at all costs from the British public. The story of *Enigma* is a tale of two forests, Charnwood and Katyn.

Harris has not finished with the forest theme. *The Ghost* (2007) tells of a professional ghostwriter who is commissioned to write the biography of a recently-resigned prime minister, Adam Lang. The original biographer has just been drowned, and the replacement/narrator is despatched to Martha's Vineyard to take over the MS and re-write it to the publishers' specifications. There he will interview and record Lang's memoirs. Just

as the landscape in *Archangel* dominates the action, so does the environment of Martha's Vineyard, which is bleak and wintry. (Polanski's film captures the overcast, brooding atmosphere.) 'It was eerily quiet in that forest, as if there had been some volcanic catastrophe that had bleached the



vegetation white and poisoned the wild animals.' That is an open allusion to *Pompeii*, and here too the symbol is sustained. The writer cycles to the site where his drowned predecessor was found, where he 'followed the perimeter of the state forest'. At the seashore he learns of the great secret: the body could not possibly have drowned where it was found, owing to the local tides. And a likely witness has just suffered a mortal fall in her home. Then comes the key episode, a brilliant invention of Harris's. The ghost writer – we never learn his name – takes over the car driven by his predecessor on his last journey, and turns on the sat-nav, which conducts him to the ferry and mainland. There the route leads to dense woods. 'I'd be happy not to hear the deep, vegetative silence of ten thousand trees for a very long time.' Through a gap in the trees he sees the dwelling of the CIA man, and through him he is able to make the decisive connection: Lang and his wife were run by the CIA. Then he leaves: 'My immediate priority was to get clear of those trees.' The dénouement takes the ghost writer on Lang's private plane back to Martha's Vineyard, 'Looking out at the dark forest beyond the perimeter of the airport...' And

there Lang is assassinated. The 'dark forest' is Harris's permanent symbol for the darkness in mankind.

The two Cicero novels, *Imperium* and *Lustrum*, stand apart from the forest theme. But *Pompeii* (2003) confirms it. In this book every reader knows what is happening, but nobody in it does, with the exception of the aqueduct engineer Attilius. He has been sent in to replace Exomnius who has unaccountably gone missing. There have been disturbing features of the water supply to Pompeii, and Attilius decides to ride up to the top of Vesuvius to investigate. He passes through

the lower slopes and rejoins 'the track that led into the forest.' 'It took him perhaps another hour to pass through the forest... Soon afterwards the forest began to thin.' The summit of Vesuvius was a rough circular plain, from which poisonous vapours were rising. 'This is

the place, thought Attilius. This is the heart of the evil.' This evil is not man-made, but is Nature's. It has already killed Exomnius, whose body Attilius finds, and then kills Corax the foreman. Soon it will destroy a town. And Attilius rides down from the summit, 'following an old hunting trail through the forest'.

But there are no forests on the Vesuvian slopes, now or then. Martial says so: 'And here, Vesuvius but yesterday shaded with green vines' (*Hic est pampineis viridis modo Vesbius umbris*). The slopes are given over to vineyards, which thrive in the soil enriched by past eruptions. The 'forests' are authorial licence, the powerful myth that is Robert Harris's signature. Everything centres on the dark heart.

Ralph Berry spent most of his teaching career in Canada. He has written extensively on Shakespeare.

A pudding with mysterious ingredients

Alec Marsh

While the word 'Commonwealth' is still etched proudly in the brass nameplate of the Foreign Office, you wonder how vital it is to those Mandarins who toil inside.

Does anyone apart from HRH care about the Commonwealth any more?

For the *Salisbury Review*, I put this to Kamalesh Sharma, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

'People are beginning to realise that the world will not be a place at ease and at peace with itself unless they all share values by which they agree to live', says Sharma, the fifth Secretary-General since 1965, and the first Indian national to hold the post.

'A lot of the focus, particularly after the collapse of the Cold War, has been market economy, economics, growth, which is all very important but together with wealth creation, you need value-creation to go hand-in-hand with it.'

Sharma is very softly spoken, with what I imagine to be an old school Indian accent, bringing to mind perhaps an academic from *A Passage to India*. But while that may be the enunciation, the words that come out are more reminiscent of a chief executive of an NGO than the head of the Commonwealth, an organisation of eight countries born on the deathbed of the British Empire in 1949.

'The Commonwealth has always understood that human communities and individuals have a sense of the values and principles that constitute irreducible dignity and decency', he says, in his quiet but firm voice. 'If somebody were to ask me, give me in one sentence what the Commonwealth does, I would say that, working unremittingly for the rights and dignity of the citizens of the member states. But because we are a modest organisation, people tend to lose sight of its contribution, which is inevitably a very diffuse one. It's like nailing a pudding to the wall.'

A pudding with mysterious ingredients to many.

'Like most organisations it doesn't carry in its name what it does', he accepts, 'but that's precisely its strength. The leaders meet, they look at the world, they look at themselves and the state of the times, and say, 'All right, this is the contribution we want to make. So they haven't locked themselves in to a predetermined view of what they would like to do which is why we

have a contribution from the Commonwealth in so many different fields.'

Sharma, 70, has a successful career as an Indian diplomat behind him: he was previously Delhi's man in London and New York, before becoming head of the Queen's favourite quango in 2008 and moving into Marlborough House, a Queen Anne-palace a stone's throw from Buckingham Palace. The day of our interview also happens to be the day of the Queen's Speech and through the windows of Sharma's office overlooking the Mall, a Guards band intermittently passes, sending Colonel Bogey into the room. Amid the flummery of the past I ask about the future. Thick with members such as India – one of the leading emerging 'Bric' economies, does he think the Commonwealth will grow in significance in the years ahead?

'The potential of the commonwealth has ballooned', he says. 'If you look at India, Malaysia, South Africa, Singapore, many of these countries have enormous ability now to share materially and in experience what they have gained with the others.'

When the organisation came into being, he says there was a 'north-south divide' in the world between the haves and have-nots. 'Certainly [that] differentiation is no longer there', he adds. 'The world has become an archipelago for successful economies. Formerly the 'north' was pretty much America, Europe and Japan, but now we have pockets, regions and countries doing well. The Commonwealth is the most regionally diverse organisation in the world.'

Some questions are painful but I have to ask them: with Britain on the slide and India rising, do we in Britain need the Commonwealth more than ever? 'It's both ways', he says. 'It's a huge asset for Great Britain to be in this family of nations but over time, the relative position economically of countries in the world will keep on adjusting.'

Sharma likens the rise of Asia's economy to those of Germany in the 19th century, to the US in the 20th and Japan since the war.

'It will keep on happening', he says. 'It's good for the world, capacities and markets are increasing – that's the economics side. On the values side of it, it's very important that the UK, while it may be getting adjusted economically, is always going to be one of the leading

countries. In the value terms it [the UK] still remains very strong for Commonwealth countries because [their] education traditions and legal codes, derive from British cultural practise.’ He insists that when the Commonwealth leaders, in all their flowing robes and exotic headgear, sit down, they commune in English. ‘They use one language literally but they also use the language metaphorically’, he explains. ‘When they talk about a subject everybody knows what they’re saying because they have a version of it themselves.’

Looking to the next decade, Sharma says the Commonwealth may grow further, drawing more members from beyond the old British Empire. The newest member, Rwanda, a former Belgian colony, joined in 2009, after applying in 2007.

‘It’s possible it’ll be a bigger organisation. It has passed the test of successful organisations which is that people want to join them. Certainly the interest in the Commonwealth now all over the world from all kinds of people is enormous. It is a club you want to join.’ He adds: ‘Many more people make informal inquiries than convert them into formal applications.’ Some applications are surprising to put it mildly, including Algeria and Yemen, and the world’s youngest country South Sudan has put out a feeler. On this basis the Commonwealth could have four new members by 2014, swelling its membership to 58.

Part of this enduring success, Sharma says, is down to the organisation’s head, the Queen, who has led the modern Commonwealth for all but two of its 63 years.

‘It’s mind-boggling that virtually from the inception, it should have had one head’, says the Secretary-General. ‘The Queen has participated in virtually all of the summits, the visits she has made to all these countries and her own personal example of loyalty to a cause and discipline and stamina have been seen by member states.’

‘The Queen’s involvement, participation and contribution will always be inseparable from the success of the modern Commonwealth.’

A second factor in its enduring popularity is that it continues to look out for the little guys – the countries that don’t get meaningful air-time at the United Nations.

‘The Commonwealth is the only organisation in the world which has always served those members which in the international system are small and weak’, says Sharma, adding that some 34 of its members have populations of under one and a half million. ‘The world tends to get divided between decision makers and decision takers, but the Commonwealth has never been like that. Irrespective of your size the decision which goes forward is one in which everyone is an equal stakeholder. So in creating bridges in the world of various types and across regions and across time, and across countries, the Commonwealth has been one

of the most active.’

‘We have found the platform, which is trying to serve global ideas which are truly democratic. We are the only organisation which has held a mini summit to prescribe the principles that should guide multilateralism, [the] inclusiveness and equity which must be seen everywhere. So we have a tremendous credibility in various organisations and in various settings.’ As a result he says the UN, World Trade Organisation and other international bodies seeking to promote education, health, democracy and commerce have imitated or borrowed Commonwealth initiatives.

‘The Commonwealth today is in one very important way a consolidation of the Commonwealth of the past’, he says. ‘It’s what we’ve been able to do over the last six decades which has created a huge capital on which we can grow. Over six decades you can have any set of values but if you’re not abiding by them it’s not accumulating to anything.’

Is the Commonwealth really so very different from other international organisations?

‘Definitely’, he says, going on to remark that in a recent index of Africa nations for good governance, seven out of the top eight were Commonwealth nations. ‘This can’t be by accident,’ he says. ‘It’s because over decades what you have proscribed for yourself is also something that you have tried to internalise.’ That may sound like management-speak, but Sharma’s approach is realistic – people only change if they want to, and then can keep it up. That said, his is a pragmatism rooted in idealism.

On the mantelpiece of his office, which itself is at the top of an ornate staircase with frescoes marking the Duke of Marlborough’s victory at the battle of Ramillies in 1706, is a bust of Gandhi. The small statue is turned to face Sharma’s desk.

‘That was here when I came’, he says. What does he think the Mahatma would say of Kamalesh Sharma, his fellow Indian running the Commonwealth?

‘I don’t think he’d judge me by my nationality, but by my deeds’, replies Sharma. But Gandhi took on the British Empire and wasn’t much impressed with us, I counter.

‘He said, ‘I want the British to measure themselves by the principles which they themselves hold dear’’, says Sharma. ‘I think that is the core of the Commonwealth.’

He quotes two of Gandhi’s aphorisms – that there’s enough for everyone’s need, not everyone’s greed, and you have to be the change you want to see.

‘He spoke for all times’, says Sharma. ‘These precepts are ones that mankind ignores at its peril – and I think that people recognise that in some ways he’s an archetype of collective sanity.’

Alec Marsh is a journalist.

Electronic Pearls before Swine

Dan Collins

Are electronic 'eBooks' – as distinct from the paper variety – the work of the Devil, a way to put trash before readers at rock bottom prices? Two years ago, I would have considered them the work of Satan, now I'm not so sure. Theodore Dalrymple – a regular contributor to these pages – offers an instructive case.

I recently agreed with Dalrymple that we would republish his back catalogue as ebooks – including those books written under his real name, Anthony Daniels, and lost no time in revealing this on the 'Skeptical Doctor', a website run for Dalrymple obsessives.

I imagined that some devotees might go so far as to thank me for blowing the dust off the neglected classics of a master. A copy for example of *The Wilder Shores of Marx*, costs £29.99 on Amazon; *Utopias Elsewhere* £51.72. As ebooks they sell at £2.99. Thus you could read his entire oeuvre for the cost of one dog-eared old hardback.

I was being naïve. While my announcement was greeted with a few murmurs of approval, it was not the universal sentiment. A couple of keen Dalrymplistas took the trouble to write to me (by email interestingly) to inform me loftily that they would not be buying the new-old titles unless I made them available on paper. 'I have no interest in these "Kindles", whatever they may be,' said one like the proverbial elderly High Court judge. 'If you can't be bothered to do this properly, may I suggest that you don't do it at all?'

Stung, I replied that I was happy to cede him any interest I might have in the rights to works such as *Monrovia Mon Amour* and *Fool or Physician* if he would pay for a paper back reprint. It cost him a mere £5,000 a book and he could look forward to an income of around £40. In eight years he would break even although inflation might add another 12 years to this date. He would also have to persuade bookshops to stock the works at less than punitive levels of discount. I heard no more of this visionary Gutenberg.

But I did not allow my disappointment to deflect me from my original plan. First it is worth explaining something of the work and cost required to create an eBook compared with a paperback. First, the physical pages of the original – if you can find it – must be scanned and converted to a Microsoft Word-compatible text file – either in-house, which takes at least a day, or

by a contractor at a cost of perhaps £350. Then the text must be thoroughly proof-read. Tiny imperfections in the original paper – millimetres-long slivers of wood in the pulp, for instance – can be converted by the unseeing computer into rogue letters or punctuation marks; original letters and punctuation marks are also misread. A lower-case 'l' is often transformed into a figure '1', and vice versa.)

Next, the resultant MS Word file must be converted into an eBook file. Since the various platforms employ different software, this may have to be done several times. Amazon's Kindle, for instance, requires a different conversion to that required by Apple for the iPad or iPhone. This, again, can be done in-house (as are ours) or sent to outside experts. Finally, a jacket design is required. At this point, the eBook is effectively ready to be bought via Amazon within 24 hours. (iTunes takes a little longer.) The cost – whether in time or fees or both – is around £1,000. This is less than the £5,000 needed to reprint a paper book: printing roughly £3,000 for a 2,000-run, typesetting £750, jacket design £700. Much more expensive than for an eBook, which does not require a spine or a back cover, and is produced to a lower, internet-standard resolution than is necessary for print. Total £10,000.

But for the paperback book seller, as opposed to the happy seller of eBooks, there is still a lot of hard work and misery ahead. Tesco (who are increasingly important to the trade) prefer to fill their shelves with the memoirs of unfunny comedians, thrillers about rape and books by Martina Cole, whoever she is, ahead of even new Dalrymple titles; I can safely say that they would not fall over themselves to bulk-order reprints of *Coups and Cocaine* or *Zanzibar to Timbuktu*.

The same is true of Waterstone's and the independent bookshops. This leaves Amazon as the only real outlet for books of this sort. When you factor in the charges associated with selling, distribution, and warehousing, all to sell in single figures each month, one calls to mind the old joke about making a small fortune from owning racehorses – that it's easily done, provided you start with a large fortune.

The sad truth is that only an extremely wealthy individual, or a major publisher with a cunning plan to minimise its tax bill by means of issuing commercial flops, or a man with a cavalier disregard for trifles such as bankruptcy could afford to republish

Theodore Dalrymple's/Anthony Daniels' early works as paperbacks (or many other very fine but now out-of-print works). This is a shame, and does not reflect well on the readers of the United Kingdom; they are brilliantly written, extremely interesting and often very funny, and different in character to almost anything else being published today; they deserve to be in print until Ahmadinejad or the Mayans or bird flu wipes us all away. But it is just not possible.

But as eBooks it is a different story. As I write this, Daniels' memoir of his early life as a doctor, *Fool or Physician*, is available and selling on Amazon and iTunes as an eBook. Unfortunately for Osborne and

Cameron, the sales figures will not make an impact on the nation's GDP – I doubt even on the GDP of the village in which I live – but the production costs are such that this is not an issue. By the time you read this, *The Wilder Shores of Marx* and *Coups and Cocaine* will have joined it (and many others). Books-proper are better, no doubt – they do furnish a room, whereas a Kindle lies next to the bed and looks ugly. But it's hard to think of a better way to spend £2.99.

Dan Collins is director of Monday Books.

Right and Left Wing Food

William Sitwell

When politicians subject themselves to the rigours of being interviewed on Radio Four's *Desert Island Discs* perhaps one can forgive them for putting a spin on their musical choices. Gordon Brown famously chose a track by the Arctic Monkeys when he was on the show in a vain attempt to display some youthful left wing street cred. He later admitted he couldn't actually name a single track from their debut album and that actually the band he really liked was Coldplay. The problem was Coldplay were a bit too middle-of-the-road, privately educated and Tory-loved for a Socialist to admit to liking. Similarly scrutinised for their choices more recently were David Cameron and Nick Clegg. Was Cameron's pick of Bob Dylan, Felix Mendelssohn and The Killers indicative of his right-of-centre politics? Was Clegg's choice of Johnny Cash and Shakira similarly revealing?

But what if the show's name and subject matter were tweaked and instead Kirsty Young grilled the great and the good on their favourite *Desert Island Dishes*? Would Clegg have picked lentils, Cameron caviar? Or in a desperate bid to prove his more earthy credentials would Cameron have chosen chickpeas, with a dish of hand-dived sustainably-sourced scallops?

Surely the Green party aren't just Green because they care for the earth. It's also the colour of the food they eat. I haven't seen recent statistics but it seems probable that they still have more vegans and vegetarians than any other political party.

Perhaps it's ironic that the Tory colour of blue is the one colour that is truly unpalatable. No one likes their food blue, it looks odd when it happens, poisonous even. The only blue food that I would allow past my

lips are Smarties, which, anyway, don't count as part of one's five-a-day programme.

The idea of left wing food being made up of the likes of pulses, quinoa and hand-ground oat flour whereas right wing food consists of the likes of fillet steaks, lamb chops and potatoes (if a vegetable is really necessary), relates of course to class.

It is still alive and well in some small quarters. Take the menu at Pratt's for example, the subterranean and exclusive back street St James' club; the membership unashamedly posh and right wing. The food served is essentially an Edwardian breakfast. You'll find smoked salmon, sausages, scrambled eggs and a mixed grill all heartily swashed down with claret. Vegetables do not play a prominent part. And there is a direct line from this type of dining to that of the nobles of the medieval age.

For hundreds of years while peasants ate cabbage, bread and potage (the latter basically a constantly bubbling mix of the former: cabbage and bread) the nobles ate meat, and lots of it.

Provisions, for example, for a feast given by the King and the Duke of Lancaster on 12 September 1387 (and recorded in the manuscript *The Forme of Cury*) includes '14 oxen lying in salt...120 carcas of shepe fresh...140 pigs...210 gees...12 cranes...' And there's no mention of any lettuce, or carrots or purple sprouting broccoli.

When they weren't eating meat they ate fowl. The earliest known printed cookbook, *This Boke of Cokery*, has recipes for partridge, quail, crane, heron, egret and goose among others. Such books read more like ornithological texts than recipe tomes.

And while the first law to conserve birds was enacted shortly after the above book was published, Green enthusiasts should not take a crumb of comfort from that. Such laws were introduced not to save species but to preserve them for the tables of nobles.

Vegetables, meanwhile, were looked down upon, frowned upon and even thought to be unhealthy. Indeed, even as late as 1861 the famed Mrs Beeton was urging people to boil their vegetables well, 'as they are apt to ferment in the stomach'. Tomatoes were long considered poisonous, a cousin of deadly nightshade.

So the Tory-leaning menu at Pratt's has a firm and meaty heritage. But those who are left of centre also have their high-minded food credentials.

Take Carlo Petrini, for example, the left-wing journalist who went on to found the now global movement Slow Food. He wasn't a vegetarian but the food served at meetings had to be that of authentic artisans, produced with a love for the environment.

What other organisation meeting in Paris to draw up its manifesto would boldly state that the food cooked for the occasion saw a starter of flan of sturgeon with black cabbage sauce, potatoes and thyme before a

main course of pasta stuffed with veal and served with white truffles finishing with a pudding of honey jelly with balsamic vinegar with wild strawberries? It was champagne (or rather single-variety, organically-harvested prosecco) socialism at its best.

When Petrini and his band of followers met with some fellow lefties in the Tuscan Hills in October 1982 to exchange ideas while celebrating the Festival of the Thrush (a wine harvest feast) the food was not up to scratch. Petrini stormed off, later writing to the communist organisers:

'We are writing this letter to discuss the lunch we had at your club,' he stormed. It was 'a spread worthy only of an army barrack or a fifties diner'. The food he said was 'hideous', 'unacceptable' and included 'cold pasta, inedible ribollita, unwashed salad greens' and an 'unedible' dessert.

Today's politically astute need to order plates of food that show they are all-things to all men: meat (a modest display) and three veg.

A History of Food by William Sitwell is published by Collins (£20)



"Given the size of his salary and pension pot at least he'll be able to afford to go private if he ever develops any health problems."

Conservative Classic – 47

Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*

Christie Davies

Charles Dickens is the most celebrated of the nineteenth century British novelists. He cannot match George Eliot or Joseph Conrad for literary quality and some would judge him inferior to Hardy or Thackeray but Dickens is the best loved and remembered. He is the very embodiment of England and Englishness and the only novelist to be placed on an English coin and an English banknote. Dickens' plots are contrived, tortuous and lacking in credibility, his understanding of the society in which he lived was limited and his weakness for melodrama, moral indignation and sentimentality does not fit well with modern sensibilities, yet two hundred years after his birth his work still gives pleasure and incites enthusiasm.

The characters he created remain vivid and memorable, particularly the dubious ones – grasping Ebenezer Scrooge, the obsequious Uriah Heep, Wackford Squeers of Dotheboys Hall and the boozy Sairey Gamp. They and their phrases are so well known that they have become part of our language. The words of Wilkins Micawber in *David Copperfield* who is always in debt due to his own improvidence but convinced that 'something will turn up' are inscribed on the edge of our new £2 coin which has a profile of Dickens on the reverse side from the Queen.

Everyone remembers *Oliver Twist*'s plea: 'please Sir. I want some more'. This simple statement by a half-starved workhouse orphan seeking a small extra porringer of meagre gruel is sandwiched between Dickens' imaginative description of the hungry boys that precedes Oliver's being chosen by lot to ask for more and the moral outrage that follows Oliver's plain and polite request.

...at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger that one boy who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook's shop) hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel *per diem*, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next to him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age.

This is a splendid Dickens fantasy, absurd but to the point. The use of the phrase *per diem*, not one with which the boys would be familiar and pompously calling the potential cannibalee 'a weakly youth of

tender age' are masterly. No film, play or television programme could ever capture the flavour of Dickens' descriptive writing, unless it were to use that most vital but unacceptable of methods 'the voice-over'. That is why these imitations are so inferior to Dickens' original writings, which are best presented as lectures composed of dramatic readings of his exact words, an art at which Dickens himself excelled. Only Emlyn Williams has ever been able to match him and he did so by dressing as Dickens and speaking from a lectern at the centre of the stage. The responses to Oliver's request for more have the same fantastic quality:

The master (doling out the gruel) was a fat healthy man but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper.

The matter is reported to the board who are 'sitting in solemn conclave' when Mr Bumble the beadle, a man of importance in the workhouse, tells the chairman Mr Lempkins of Oliver's crime:

Horror was depicted on every countenance.

'For more!' said Mr Lempkins.

'Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer more distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more after he had eaten the supper allotted by the dietary?'

In reality no one would have reacted like this. The master might well, as he did, have hit Oliver but he would not have clung to the copper nor would the board have been informed. The board might have responded in a cold and dismissive way to Bumble's information and sentenced Oliver to one day a week with no gruel but they would not have been morally outraged. Dickens' genius lies in his ability to endow this scene with an unlikely degree of emotion and comedy.

This undermines the notion of Dickens the social reformer. *Oliver Twist* like many of his works is a denunciation of 'the experimental philosophers' and political economists by which he means the utilitarians who had been seeking to reshape Britain's institutions. Dickens' workhouse is not a coldly efficient modern institution designed by utilitarians but a traditional one in the grip of bullies and moralisers governed by their own unworthy passions. I am strongly reminded of accounts of the Mount Cashel orphanage in

Newfoundland run by the sadistic Christian Brothers, eventually closed down by the Canadian government. A former inmate of that wretched place said of it, 'It was like something you'd read about in Dickens'. Mount Cashel was not inspired by Mill and Bentham. Dickens' strength lies not in any social understanding but in his mockery and condemnation of individuals who are mean and cruel, two vices particularly widespread in closed total institutions.

Dickens' protests are effective but only against the heartless behaviour of those who enjoy a little brief authority. This is important but it tells us little about the institutions that have given them that authority. What we see is not the fruits of political economy but a comic presentation of petty grasping individuals who flourish in any society, but whom Dickens makes speak in a crudely calculative way. After leaving the orphanage, Oliver is apprenticed to Mr Sowerberry, an undertaker for whom the workhouse is an important supplier of corpses.

'I have taken the measure of the two women who died last night, Mr Bumble', said the undertaker.

'You'll make your fortune Mr Sowerberry', said the beadle as he thrust his thumb and forefinger into the proffered snuff-box of the undertaker: which was an ingenious little model of a patent coffin..... 'Think so?' said the undertaker in a tone which half admitted and half disputed the probability of the event. 'The prices allowed by the board are very small, Mr Bumble'.

'So are the coffins', replied the beadle: with precisely as near an approach to a laugh as a great official ought to indulge in.

Such passages make *Oliver Twist* a classic, passages imbued with a grim comedy, almost farce, here derived from Mr Bumble's own 'inappropriate' humour, the snuff-box shaped like a patent coffin and Mr Sowerberry's calculative approach. Yet why, a political economist might ask, are the paupers given coffins at all?

After leaving Mr Sowerberry's employment and trudging to London, Oliver falls among thieves, youngsters led and trained by Fagin, a dealer in stolen goods. Oliver, who is destitute but innately good, at first fails to understand that Fagin's boys are pick-pockets and when he finally realises what they are is completely horrified. By contrast Fagin and his associate the brutal housebreaker Bill Sikes are evil. In his preface Dickens wrote of Sikes, 'I fear there are in the world some insensible and callous natures that do become at last utterly and irredeemably bad.' Dickens was insistent on this point and violently opposed to works of fiction that portrayed vile criminals in a romantic or sympathetic way. Fagin and Sikes come to a bad end after Sikes, incited by Fagin, murders

his mistress Nancy, a prostitute disguised as a thief, who had assisted Oliver. After the murder both men are relentlessly pursued by ferocious mobs seeking vengeance and both are hanged, Fagin by the decree of a judge in a black cap and Sikes by hideous accident while fleeing the mob. Murder most foul is followed by the thrill and excitement of the chase, by the terror and torment of the hunted criminals and the delightfully just and horrible deaths of these vermin. Some of Dickens' contemporaries who saw him as a social reformer and wanted him to stick closely to the party line of 'poverty causes crime' were not best pleased. Dickens had every sympathy with the poor but truly hated criminals, as when he speaks of an area as 'the residence of none but low ruffians who under various pretences of living by their labour, subsisted chiefly on plunder and crime'.

The irony is that Dickens, having divided the world up into the uncommonly good and the uncommonly bad, was able to describe only the villainous ones in a vivid way. His most virtuous characters are, unless possessed of some eccentric quality, boring and unmemorable. When I read the novel again after fifty years, I could still vividly remember not only Fagin and Sikes but all the petty scoundrels such as Mr and Mrs. Bumble, Mrs Sowerberry the undertaker's spiteful wife, Mr Gamfield the cruel sweep who wants Oliver for a climbing boy, sneaky Noah Claypole, a robber of young children who turns Queen's evidence and graduates to being a police informer, and the cheeky, irrepressible pickpocketing Artful Dodger. I could remember nothing at all about those who behaved generously and honourably such as Mr Brownlow who rescued and adopted Oliver, Rose Maylie or indeed Oliver himself. After re-reading *Oliver Twist* I can still not tell you anything about them. They are featureless. The petty villains are unattractive but they gave Dickens scope for his great talents for descriptive language and for comedy.

We can see these talents at their best following the downfall of Mr Bumble the beadle, a man dominated by his unscrupulous and determined wife. After the pair of them had been revealed as participants in a plot by Oliver's half-brother Monks, to deny him his inheritance either by concealing his existence or by driving him into crime, Mr Bumble begs that he may retain his parochial office and not entirely unreasonably tries to blame his wife. He is told '(you) are the more guilty of the two in the eye of the law; for the law supposes that your wife acts under your direction':

'If the law supposes that', said Mr Bumble squeezing his hat emphatically in both hands, 'the law is a ass – a idiot. If that's the eye of the law, the law's a bachelor; and the worst I wish the law is, that his eye may be opened by experience – by experience.'

Christie Davies is the author of The Strange Death of Moral Britain, 2004 and Jokes and Targets, 2011.

Reputations – 36

Sir David Nicholson

Jane Kelly

At, owlsh, with a passing resemblance to Abel Magwitch, you wouldn't pick him out on the bus as someone distinguished but Sir David Nicholson, 55, is probably the most vitally important person in your life. As Chief Executive of the English NHS, he holds the fate of fifty-one million of us in his hands. 'I am responsible for a hundred billion pounds' worth of taxpayers' money,' he says contentedly on a YouTube video he made for a careers advice site. And perhaps more tellingly: 'I like bossing people about, that is a constant throughout my career.'

We seem to live in an age of emperors and galley slaves, and Nicholson, as supreme commander of Europe's largest public institution, has his own court headed by his first lady, Birmingham Children's Hospital boss, Sarah Jane Marsh. At 32 she is the country's youngest chief executive, like him with power enough to change our lives. She is currently planning to move BCH out of the city to a new site, at a cost of at least £350 million. Between them they are in overall charge of a £90 billion budget and 1.3 million employees.

In April 2006 he was appointed Chief Executive of the newly formed London Strategic Health Authority, but it was then announced on 27 July 2006 that he would be taking the top job at the NHS, his fifth job change in a year. Taking this job made Nicholson one of the country's best-paid civil servants, with a basic salary of more than £200,000. As chief executive of the NHS, he has also enjoyed a second home in one of Westminster's most exclusive apartment blocks at taxpayers' expense, as well as free train journeys home and the use of a chauffeured car. Sir David's annual expenses claim of almost £60,000 for the flat is three times the £19,900 MPs can claim in accommodation expenditure for a second home in the capital.

According to a *Daily Telegraph* Freedom of Information request, he has made allowance claims totalling £154,613 over four years, at the same time as ordering the health service to make drastic efficiency savings. Miss Marsh, who used to work as his assistant, after a meteoric rise through management ranks adds to the family fortunes with around £155,000 per year. Living quite this high on the hog is a little difficult to justify in the light of the 'Nicholson Challenge,' which he issued to the NHS in June 2009.

The public were probably not aware of him until he made this decree. According to Clare Gerada MBE, Chairman of the Royal College of GPs, a fan of Nicholson, this rather scathing term was coined by Stephen Dorrell, Chairman of the government's Health Select Committee. Whatever you call it, it amounts to stringent belt tightening. He demanded that the English NHS should cut spending by 4 per cent a year, making £20 billion in 'efficiency savings' by 2015.

Like many Czars he perhaps sees his society from a comfortable distance. Because of mass immigration, attendances at A&E departments, emergency admissions to hospital and referrals to specialists are rising inexorably, and this new challenge was imposed on commissioning groups regardless. To make the necessary cuts without closing whole hospitals, Primary Care Trusts have started postponing non-urgent referrals by GPs. So if you can't get your hip replaced or your hernia sorted, you know why. On 18 October 2011 allegations by doctors of an immediate decline in care as a result of this measure were backed up by an exposé in *The Guardian* revealing how it particularly affected children, the old and disabled.

His 'challenge' was issued completely separately from the Government's health bill which became law in March. Some commentators feel that the delay in the bill allowed Nicholson time to claw back his power to the point that the NHS is now more centrist than it was under Labour, rendering the government's bill almost pointless.

'The N in NHS now stands for Nicholson,' says Roy Lilley, former NHS manager and author of over twenty books on the health service.

'Commissioning support services that didn't even appear in the health bill are now sprouting up everywhere,' he says. 'Their leaders will all be appointed by Nicholson's board. They'll tell GP commissioners what they can and can't do and what they can buy, and for how much.'

What ever your view on the NHS, it's an impressive rise for a northern working class lad. His grandfather was a labourer who wanted his son to become a skilled man. His own father was a plasterer who hoped young David would never wear overalls, and would work in an office. He certainly got his wish. Nicholson was educated at Forest Fields Grammar School in

Nottingham. He says it was a good school which gave him support and had high expectations of him. He studied science subjects and stayed on at school working in a fruit shop on Saturdays and a pet shop on Sundays. He got to Bristol Polytechnic just as it was being re-branded 'the University of the West of England.' He started in bio-chemistry and physiology but switched to history and politics, all the while helping his father in the building trade.

At university he became class conscious for the first time, thinking other people were cleverer and more articulate, and had more money. He became a Marxist and graduated with a 2:1, which still showed serious application at that time. He remained a communist until 1983. His first application to join the NHS general management training scheme was turned down, but he assumed they'd made a mistake and applied again. They saw the error of their ways and he has spent the rest of his 30 year career there. His first job was working in a hospital for the mentally disabled in Doncaster, where patients shared toothbrushes and clothes. There was also no wheelchair access. He set about changing things, very excited to see how he could make a 'massive impact' on people's daily lives. In his video he says: 'It's a fantastic privilege that you can make such a massive difference to people and that was what I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing.'

After such a background it is understandable that Nicholson is interested in power. He has always been in the vanguard of change, most of it very far from his Marxist ideal. For 10 years he implemented Mrs Thatcher's policy of closing down the institutions and developing 'care in the community,' where government parsimony made an uneasy marriage with modern ideas on disability empowerment.

In 1988 he became Chief Executive of the Doncaster and Montague NHS Hospitals Trust, a national pilot for such mystifying new notions as 'Total Quality Management.' Under his leadership the Trust promised all staff 'a job for life, it may not be the job you are doing now, but you have a job for life with this trust.' In 2000 as Regional Director of Trent NHS he began to earn the big money that the modern NHS offers its leading apparachiks. Unstoppable in his rise, in April 2002 he became Director of Health and Social Care for the Midlands and East of England. A year later he

was appointed Chief Executive of Birmingham and the Black Country Strategic Health Authority (SHA), in August 2005 taking on the additional role of Chief Executive of Staffordshire and West Midlands South.

This is perhaps where the rise and rise of Nicholson becomes more of a challenge to comprehend. Journalist Ian Birrell who writes widely on the NHS, describes how shocked he was when Nicholson went on to get the top job in 2006, 'incredible' says Birrell, 'after overseeing the biggest scandal in recent NHS history.' There were 1,200 'excess' deaths in Stafford and Cannock hospitals between 2005 and 2008, caused

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by a litany of failings and an obsession with meeting targets. Red tape and a focus on management reorganisation led to drastically poor nursing and needless patient deaths. Patients were forced to drink water out of flower vases and heart monitors switched off because incompetent nurses didn't know how to use them.

For Sir David's career the scandal was like Belloc's lead bullets hitting the hide of a hippopotamus. In 2004 he was awarded a CBE and an honorary doctorate from Birmingham Poly, now re-named the University of Central England. In 2010 he ironically became a Knight Commander of the Bath, which is far more than many of the patients in Stafford hospital got. Surprisingly he does not have an entry in *Who's Who*.

Despite the pressures of success he has a blissful home life. Divorced from his wife with whom he has two sons, one a recent graduate and one studying at University, he is now engaged to the beautiful Miss Marsh and is quoted as saying, 'We are very happy, there's been lots of congratulations and cards.' He will retire with more than £1million in his pension, and his beloved Nottingham Forest Football Club is in the championship. After thirty years of bossing and changing people's lives, everything is running just as he wishes. In the NHS of course he can rely on obedience and silence from the workforce. Or as the loyal Clare Gerada put it: 'We were critical of the recent changes but now we are getting on with it and trying to make it right.'

Jane Kelly is a freelance journalist.



Roy Kerridge

I love to listen to my Jamaican friends reminiscing about their youth before they came to England

We had big draught oxen on our plantation with humps on them. Them pull cart load o' sugar cane bundle all the way from the field to the still house. When the tractor dem come in, the cattle all was butchered. Me operate the crane, lifting up the bundle. You should see the great vat o' boiling cane made into rum. Rum running everywhere man! Then both rum and sugar be put on boat for England.....

That was in the days of Empire, 'the good old days', according to many Africans, West Indians and even to some Irishmen. Democracy has not been kind to Jamaica, for the people there take politics so seriously that it has become literally a matter of life and death. Armed youth take sides, and in my friend's neighbourhood fifty shootings were heard on one election day.

I was delighted to read this extract from the diary of James Lees-Milne, referring not to Jamaica but to post-war England:

A whole social system has broken down. What will replace it beyond government by the masses, uncultivated, rancorous, savage, philistine, the enemies of all things beautiful? How I detest democracy. More and more I believe in benevolent autocracy.

All over Britain I have heard again and again how much older people miss the village squire or great landlord. This leads me to believe that two of our three main social classes need new names. 'Working class' no longer describes council estate dwellers with regional accents.

Thanks to the government decision to allow teenagers straight from school to draw the dole, the 'working class' under fifties have largely given up organised work. Many of them enjoy casual employment in the building trade, but they have one eye on the Job Centre clock, and take time off to sign on for the dole. However there ought to be a statue made to honour the Internal Combustion Engine.

The allure of driving cars, lorries or vans is so great that honest working men feel completely fulfilled as long as they can get behind a steering wheel. Without a motor vehicle they lose heart and apply for a course at a college or university. Do the ruling classes of any

other country think as we do, that the best way to help the 'working class' is to get its members to abdicate and become middle class through exams? Then we wonder why all non-driving manual work is done by immigrants.

Why do we imagine that Old Etonians form a 'Ruling or Upper Class'? The greatest duke in the land cannot so much as order a hen house to be built on his land without begging permission from the Council. Obviously, the Council is now our Ruling Class. Lees-Milne must have been thinking of the Council when he wrote of rancorous, savage philistines. When Old Etonian Cameron declares that the Council must restore weekly bin collections and cease categorising everyone by race, the Council takes no notice. Prime Ministers are paid less than Council leaders, so who is this upstart Cameron telling them what to do?

My own council is 'Brent', its members as aggressive as any African politician who changes the name of his country. Brent is really Willesden and part of Middlesex. Whenever I go back to look at my old Middlesex home, I am saddened to see "Borough of Brent" in huge letters above old familiar street signs. It makes me feel as if I am in a conquered nation. Brent newsletters address themselves to People of Brent in true dictatorial fashion.

As philistine as any of Lees-Milne's masses, Brent Council is chiefly engaged in closing down public libraries. Middle class residents oppose them on this issue, but are much too nice to realise what sneering barbarians they are dealing with. To a Brentian Ruler, books are middle class and the middle class is inherently ridiculous. All they are good for is paying the Council Tax.

Books, not only in libraries but in private homes are anathema to Brent. Social workers look askance at them, and an elderly lady of my acquaintance was asked, in great disapproval, 'How can *you* afford a book?' Councils all over Britain seem to share this attitude. A woman I read about who had applied for permission to foster a child suddenly noticed that the visiting social worker's eyes had fallen stonily on books displayed openly on shelves.

'I have to read books because of my job as a journalist', she screamed, but it was too late. The damage had been done, and the Council withdrew

its help. In describing this scene, the would-be foster mother did not bother to explain that the council hates books. She assumed that everybody knew this.

The protestors against Brent library closures made a pop-up library of their own, on the doorstep of a recently closed library. At first, volunteers guarded these books day and night, but after decision after decision went against their cause, they lost heart. For weeks now, shelves of books, protected by cellophane, have been standing outdoors unsupervised. Any other goods would have been stolen, vandalised or strewn about in the road long ago. Obviously the many local delinquents regard books with superstitious dread and leave them well alone. Probably these delinquents will eventually join Brent Council.

ETERNAL LIFE



I love the story of the near punch-up at the parish meeting in the holy and venerable village of Long Melford. 'Shut your mouth!' and 'One more word from you and I will thump you now!' And all over a villager's criticism of another villager's handling of the tombola draw. Forget the Cold War, Armageddon and World War III, the real aggro goes on in the English countryside. There are people there, I can tell you, who would shoot one another for the second prize in the Saturday whist drive. I know what I'm talking about because I was a country parson in Yorkshire for twenty years. Sometimes it was total carnage.

I ought to have gleaned some hint of what I was in for when I went for the appointment and my interview by the Parochial Church Council in the big house next to the common. I imagined I would be asked whether I was High Church or Low, did I prefer the old Prayer Book to the new Noddy version, or even did I believe in the Apostles' Creed and subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles. Not a bit of it. They talked for an hour about money and how much those 'swine' in the diocesan office were swindling the parish out of every year. Then there was a long silence before a lady with a big hat and an eminent moustache said, 'I have a question for you, Vicar: do you think whist drives are sinful?'

That was a showstopper. I fended it off with as good a humour as I could manage: 'Could be, I suppose. Especially if you cheat.'

'No', she said 'only the reason I ask is that our last Vicar preached against whist drives. Said it was gambling. He turned up at one and started a rumpus during the prize-giving at the end.'

Far from being bewhiskered chieftains, the Scottish Nationalist Party appears to resemble councillors as far as petty mean-mindedness goes. They seem determinedly anti-Laird, out to avenge the Highland Clearances. In their desire to fill huge sporting estates with a flourishing peasantry they resemble Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. I pity the future Glaswegians about to be chased onto the moors and ordered to be crofters.

I could be wrong, as I once thought that (as an African leader) President Obama would expel the white people from America, and then go on to persecute Indians, Red or otherwise. So far, much to his credit, he has done nothing of the kind. His main crime seems to be that of attempting to impose democracy in places where it is not needed. I must lend him the diaries of James Lees-Milne.

She appealed to the assembled PCC for support and addressed the chairman, 'You remember, Fred, it was Connie Hardcastle who'd won the bottle of sherry. Our last Vicar was against booze as well. Anyhow, he kept blathering on until he'd right got Connie's goat. She just flung the bottle of sherry at him. Missed. And it smashed against the wall. Glass everywhere. And you can still see the stain on the wall. Ah yes, we've had our moments in this village!'

I tell you, recent events in Long Melford were tame compared with some of the rural aggro I've witnessed first hand up i'Yorkshire.

One of our wildest excitements happened – as all the best excitements do – at a village funeral. It was one of those permafrost winters we used to get in the 1980s and the ground was solid. Old Jack Stevenson, blacksmith's assistant, was going to his last repose. Trouble was, they hadn't dug the grave wide enough to accommodate his generous frame. We had to send for the men with the shovels. It took them half an hour to make the necessary indentations in the ice-earth. In the process they got very hot and one took off his woolly jumper to reveal a t-shirt bearing a very rude logo.

I couldn't work out whether the red cheeks were owing to embarrassment or the gale blowing off the North Yorks moors. The tedious interlude was enlivened by Jack's son, Dennis. I should explain that Jack had been a steady – or unsteady – imbiber all his days. Dennis relieved the considerable tension by calling out, 'Dad, you were tight all your life, and now you're too tight for your bloody grave!'

Peter Mullen

ARTS AND BOOKS

The March of the Blues Robert Crowcroft

The Conservatives: A History. Robin Harris, Bantam Press, 2011, £30.00.

Robin Harris has written a splendid single-volume history of the Conservative party. It will prove enjoyable to multiple audiences – from the specialist to the general reader – and is an important contribution to the existing literature. Harris was an insider's insider: he acted as Director of the Conservative Research Department and later worked in the Downing Street Policy Unit under Margaret Thatcher. Following the overthrow of his chieftain, he too left Downing Street, and assisted Thatcher with her books (she herself describes him in *The Downing Street Years* as being her 'indispensable Sherpa'). Despite evident enthusiasm for the cause, the book is fair throughout. Moreover, it is *very* funny. There is a laugh to be found on almost every page, and the book is liberally peppered with amusing anecdotes, witty observations, and healthy pessimism. Harris is a skilled writer who knows just how to pitch his work. Readers will study the book with profit.

It begins with Burke and Pitt, and, through a broadly chronological structure, proceeds up to the present day. Harris adopts a 'Great Men' approach to history: this is a story with people at its heart, and he writes the history of the party through the lens of its leading figures. Harris produces some very good character sketches. Given his concern with personalities (the 'dominant reality' in the party, we are assured), the book is less interested in 'ideas', but this is not necessarily a weakness. Even so, Harris does offer many perceptive comments on conservative principles and the challenges of conservative statecraft. For my money, Lord Salisbury emerges as much the most impressive leader. Realistic rather than nostalgic, and more of a 'progressive' than many imagine, Salisbury nevertheless perfected the use of obstruction as the central weapon of Conservative party strategy. None has come close to matching his skill, before or since. Salisbury had solid instincts. He grasped the value of coercion for dealing with intransigents. If his desire to end the commitment to Belgium had come to fruition,

the idiocy of British involvement in the First World War could have been avoided, and the nation's power not frittered away in a spat among foreigners. And Salisbury vividly understood the dangers posed to sound finance and the size of the state by mass democracy – 'to loot somebody or something is the common object, under a thick varnish of pious phrases'. Although he did not repeat William Beresford's unforgettable rant to a crowd that 'they were the vilest rabble he had ever seen, and he despised them from the heart', nonetheless Salisbury's conviction that democracy would only retard liberty looks sounder with every year that goes by. What Burke termed the 'policy auction' has dominated British politics since the First World War, and it is about time that historians started to recognise that this is the defining trend of recent national history. (Given that there is little prospect of restricting the franchise once again to fix the problem, conservatives really do have grounds for pessimism.)

Overall, the book is a triumph. That said, it is not without some flaws. There could have been more on the party in the Edwardian era. Meanwhile Harris's gift for withering sarcasm generally works well, but some of his comments on contemporary politics are overdone: the backhanded compliment that Cameron understands the 'proletarian culture' of the majority is a tad snobbish and quite possibly incorrect; and the suggestion that Sayeeda Warsi 'may yet sink' the Conservative party is silly. More substantively, Harris perhaps exaggerates how much of a break Thatcher represented with the past. Thatcher's allies and enemies alike have always had a vested interest in talking up her radicalism, but a historical perspective may suggest that we now need to step back from the old partisan warfare and recognise that the continuities with the pre-Thatcher era are at least as significant as anything she did differently. It is absolutely clear that she failed to rewrite the social contract by convincing the public that the state (the politicians themselves) should not act as the universal provider. Important economic reforms merely generated a more effective means of paying for the existing settlement; the settlement itself endures. This is the real crisis of post-war Britain, and our current travails indicate that The Iron Lady was less transformative than most people think. The other substantive criticism is that, as mentioned above, Harris's book is a study of *personalities*. He shows that ideas were of limited importance to the leading figures within the Conservative party. In itself this is

not a problem, but Harris's basis for judging people is usually *ideological* soundness. So, for instance, Baldwin and Macmillan are seen in broadly negative terms, while Churchill and Thatcher are treated sympathetically. This is something of an inconsistency. But it does not change the fact that Harris has produced a fine book, and probably the most engaging single-volume history of the Conservative party ever written.

Hypochondriac Passions

Anthony Daniels

Bitter Honey: Recuperating the Medical and Scientific Context of Bernard Mandeville, Phillip Hilton, Peter Lang, 2010, £44.

The debt to doctors of political economy as a special field of study (knowledge being something else entirely, of course), at least in the English-speaking world, is little appreciated; but four of its founders – Sir William Petty, Nicholas Barbon, John Locke and Bernard de Mandeville – were medical men. Of these, Mandeville (1670 – 1733) practised the most, Barbon the least; and Mandeville's second best known work is his *A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions*, the word *Passions* being changed in the title of a subsequent edition to *Diseases*.

Mandeville, however, is now mostly remembered for his *Fable of the Bees*, in which he puts forward the argument that private vices conduce to the public good. He is like Adam Smith without the refinement of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. He was, in effect, the ideological (or philosophical) forerunner of Gordon Gekko in the film *Wall Street*: 'Greed is right, greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit.' Compare this with words from the *Fable*:

For the main Design of the Fable is to shew the
 Impossibility
 of enjoying all the most elegant Comforts of Life
 that are to be
 met with in an industrious, wealthy and powerful
 Nation, and
 at the same time be bless'd with all the Virtue and
 Innocence
 that can be wish'd for in a Golden Age; from thence
 to expose
 the Unreasonableness and Folly of those, that
 desirous of
 being an opulent and flourishing People, and
 wonderfully
 greedy after all the Benefits they can receive as

such, are yet
 always murmuring at and exclaiming against those
 Vices and
 Inconveniences, that from the Beginning of the
 World to this
 present Day, have been inseparable from all
 Kingdoms and
 States that ever were fam'd for Strength, Riches, and
 Politeness, at the same time.

Mandeville was a Dutchman who studied medicine at Leiden, but fled the country when his verses were held to have incited riots in Rotterdam. He came to England and by the end of his life was far more English than Dutch, speaking and writing the language to such perfection that it was only with difficulty that anyone believed that he was not a native.

What influence, if any, did Mandeville's medical background have on his outlook? This work of intellectual history by a man described on the cover as 'an independent scholar,' an increasingly rare bird, alas, traces the connections through an examination of Mandeville's *Treatise*.

Mandeville was a follower of the 'English Hippocrates' Thomas Sydenham, who insisted upon a Baconian approach to medicine, that is to say observation of patients without prior theorising. Irrespective of the deeper metaphysical naivety of this approach, for there is no observation without at least an implicit theory behind it, the emphasis on observation was a salutary influence on medicine. Hitherto physicians had undoubtedly been blinded by their theoretical preconceptions, such that they not only failed to notice anything of value about their patients, but proceeded to act on their completely invalid theories, and in the process not only harmed their patients by their fatuous and often dangerous treatments, but prevented any real knowledge from developing. A good illustration of this is the contrast between Shakespeare and his university-trained son-in-law, Dr John Hall. As every doctor knows, Shakespeare made many remarkably accurate and sharp clinical observations; by contrast, his son-in-law, who published a book with the title *Select Observations on English Bodies*, made none. In effect, he had been educated, or indoctrinated, out of his ability both to observe and to think.

So Mandeville was a radical empiricist who wanted to see things as they really were rather than as an orthodox theory told him that they should be. This, no doubt, predisposed him to tear aside the veil of Christian piety or morality from so much of the conduct of his time. What was underneath was naked self-interest and promotion.

The *Treatise* is cast in the form a dialogue, mainly

between a doctor, Philopirio (Lover of experience), who stands for Mandeville himself, and Misomedon (Hater of medicines), a *hypochondriack* or depressed patient. Between them they paint a damning picture of the medical profession of the day, which rests on fraud, dissembling, credulity, greed, pride and snobbery. Physicians obtain credit from proposing new theories that are fashionable for a time before other physicians come up with yet other, equally vacuous theories. Doctors have entirely self-regarding and selfish motives; they prey on the stupidity and vulnerability of their patients. Apothecaries are even worse, because they do not have the patina of cultivation that doctors have. They are not gentlemen, even if they become rich by means of their fraud.

Mandeville nowhere suggests in the *Treatise* that the vices of the profession conduce to the public good. He might have done so, but he does not: for after all the thirst for scientific glory might very well be selfish, but it might also impel a brilliant man to discover the causes of a hitherto mysterious and misunderstood disease. For Mandeville, the vices of the medical profession are unequivocally bad.

This suggests a contradiction in Mandeville's thinking, usually taken nowadays to justify capitalism red in tooth and claw. If no good emerges from the vices of doctors, why should it emerge from the vices of the rest of the population? Phillip Hilton tries to reconcile this contradiction (which he says is not really one) by claiming that Mandeville is looking at things in the *Treatise* and in the *Fable* from a different angle: that of the patient in the first, and that of society in the second. It is the difference between looking down a microscope and a telescope.

I am not sure this attempted reconciliation works. It is difficult to see why the greed that generates terrible doctors who harm their patients, both medically and financially, should in other circumstances be *necessarily* beneficial. One can see that it might be beneficial in *some* cases, but not overall.

The truth seems to be that Mandeville's meaning, as a satirist, is slippery. Now he really means what he says, now he has his tongue in his cheek; now he is laughing, now he is angry. Be that as it may, this is an interesting book, but it would be useless to pretend that it will ever be a best-seller or interest multitudes.

An Incomparable Gadfly John Jolliffe

The Wartime Journals, H R Trevor-Roper, ed Richard Davenport-Hines, I B Tauris, 2012, £25.

The jacket of this book, showing the 27-year-old Trevor-Roper in army uniform, is a fascinating study. Obviously intelligent and sensitive, there is also something chilly and potentially ruthless about it, a faint reminder of the Nazi officers he was sent to track down at the end of the war. In Anne Widdecombe's glorious phrase, there is 'something of the night' about it. Echoes of this impression recur occasionally in these pages.

The title needs explaining: the Journals are not a day to day account of his activities, which would have been duller, but a series of reflections on life, many of them original and attractive: 'It's no good looking for happiness, you won't find it. It eludes direct search, and only turns up incidentally, and unawares.' This is more convincing than the pursuit recommended in the Constitution of the United States. He is also concerned with ideas, literature, and above all with his contemporaries. His immensely skilful editor points out that these passages are soliloquies, composed as a substitute for the good talk which had been his delight as an undergraduate, and as 'exercises in strengthening his powers of clarification and concision'.

Apart from his contempt for (among others) his less inspired colleagues in the Special Intelligence Service in which he was employed, what shines out with great eloquence is his loving attachment to the hills and moors and rivers of his native Northumberland, seen either from on horseback or on punishing walks of up to twenty miles over rough country. But foxhunting was the passionate outlet for the physical side of his character. (Women barely get a mention.) Tellingly, he compared his beloved thoroughbred hunter Rubberneck to himself: 'its weaknesses are my weaknesses ... it revels in speed and virtuosity ... loves showing off, and hurls itself out of sheer *joie de vivre* at the most impossible obstacles and doesn't care a twopenny damn when it takes a tremendous fall in consequence.' (Prophetic words?) 'It despises all dull and easy ways, exhibits a malicious delight in the discomfiture of its rivals And it never gives up.' His hunting career ended when his back was broken after Rubberneck fell on him. Till then, he preferred the company of earth-stoppers and whippers-in, some of whom are most entertainingly quoted, to that of the



vast majority of more intellectual company. But he is capable of great affection for friends such as Dick White, Stuart Hampshire and that intellectual Narcissus Gilbert Ryle, most of whose quoted observations are more poisonous than the diarist at his worst. Harder to understand is his devotion to the rather footling old pussy-cat Logan Pearsall Smith, who admittedly opened doors for his protégé into a rewarding wartime literary circle.

The reader will be rewarded by many of the literary and purely intellectual judgments. There is for example a collection of magical single lines from Shakespeare and Milton, and exhilarating snippets from Homer, though Virgil surprisingly left him cold. There is no sign of any moral code: the regular attacks on religion in general and Christianity in particular are usually puerile, or at least immature, and always ignore what has ensured its survival for two thousand years against all the attacks of its enemies. Nor does he consider, as a historian might, the difference between the *beliefs* of the Church and the delinquencies of its leaders. Yet he has a soft spot for the Church of England as a force for stability (now perhaps rather weakened?): he seems to think it is possible to be an Anglican but not a Christian, though what this adds up to is hard to say. He also ignores the fact that it was the monasteries which were for centuries the only sources of education, and in particular of the study of history, in England.

The last pages of the Journals are historically the most interesting, as he pursues the surviving members of Hitler's entourage up and down post-war Germany. His years of prosperity which followed the publication of *The Last Days of Hitler* fall just outside these journals. (They were to make his Christ Church colleagues green with envy and disapproval when he came to park his silver-grey Bentley in Tom Quad, which of course made them all the sweeter.) But the glory of the book is the champagne-like style of so many of the entries. As long as you want to be richly entertained, rather than enlightened, let alone edified, fall to and enjoy a rare feast.



Animal Concentration Camps

Celia Haddon

The CAFO Reader, The Tragedy of Industrial Animal Factories, edited by Daniel Imhoff, Watershed Media, paperback, 2010, £16.95.

Animals and Public Health, Why Treating Animals Better is Critical to Human Welfare, Aysha Akhtar, Palgrave Macmillan, hardback, 2012, £52.25.

The initials, CAFO, stand for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. These are industrial units within which animals are fed to gain weight or produce milk as efficiently as possible. They are big business. Three companies now control 75 per cent of the cattle slaughtered in the United States and four companies control more than 70 per cent of the milk sold. CAFOs are not farms, but factories, within which animals spend most of their life without ever seeing sunlight.

CAFOs are on their way to Britain. A planning application for a factory dairy unit in Lincolnshire where up to 8000 cows would be kept on concrete most of their lives was withdrawn last year after numerous objections. A plan for a similar factory dairy in Wales is (at the time of writing) being considered by the Welsh government. CAFOs produce cheap food and lots of it. Indeed, American food is the cheapest in the world partly thanks to this system. The companies running them would also argue that CAFOs supply work for local people and money for the local economy.

Are they right? Producing cheap food must be a good thing for the families that rely on it. Not all the population can afford organic or free range meat. Yet the American meat diet, which has spread with hamburger chains to the rest of the world, has raised the risk of chronic diseases like hypertension, obesity and high blood sugar, by an estimated 24 per cent, according to *Animals and Public Health*.

Moreover, cheap American meat comes with a health warning. Most states still allow prophylactic antibiotics in the feed of meat animals, something now banned in Europe due to the danger of the spread of antibiotic-resistant bugs. Milking cows are injected with growth hormones. Cattle feed can legally contain ground up chicken 'feather meal' and even chicken manure.

Eating an American medium rare hamburger is risky. When researchers tested a thousand food samples in a local market they found *E coli* in 69 per cent of the pork and beef and 92 per cent of the poultry. This was due to faecal contamination – the animals soil themselves in fear when they are being slaughtered.

Worse still, 80 per cent of the *E coli* samples were of types resistant to antibiotics. Grazing animals deposit their faeces on grass where it feeds soil fertility. Cows, for instance, have a stomach designed to process the cellulose in grass. They therefore find it difficult to digest concentrated feed. A diet rich in corn and grain makes them develop acidosis, which in turn encourages the development of *E coli* bacteria. Virulent strains of this get into their dung, even if their milk is thrown away as the law requires.

Manure is a big problem. In these animal factories, five hundred million tons of animal manure, three times the amount of waste produced by the American people, has to be trucked away or held in lagoons. People living nearby suffer from ground pollution, which may seep into the water supply, as well as from the noxious gases emitted from lakes of shit.

The concentrated feed system itself is sheer ecological madness. One third of the fish caught in the world's seas goes to feed pigs, chickens and farmed fish. Livestock is fed 77 million tons of protein to produce a mere 58 million tons. Each pound of farmed salmon requires five pounds of smaller wild sea fish. The animal suffering is vile. Farm animal welfare in the United States has entered the dark ages in the various American states that have exempted CAFOs from their animal welfare laws. Sows are kept in cages so small they cannot turn round, cages that are banned in Europe. Calves are in crates. Cattle can have their horns sawn off without anaesthetics leaving bleeding stumps. Chickens have their beaks cut off.

The CAFO system is particularly cruel to cows. Cows in a CAFO system have to be fed prophylactic doses of sodium carbonate in their concentrated feed to stop them developing acidosis. Their unnatural diet creates more milk production per cow at the cost of their early deaths within three or four years. Where animals are conceived as automata, not fellow living beings, cruelty, in the name of efficiency, flourishes. Cows with laminitis of their hooves (thanks to their concentrated food diet and heavy milk bags) may refuse to stand because of the pain. In one slaughter house they were prodded to their feet by electric shocks – a degree of cruelty that even lax American laws did not allow. Enforcement was non-existent. Only surreptitious filming of these 'downer cows' stopped this practice.

Gone are the healthy Friesian black and white cows that might live for five to ten years. In their place are 'toast rack' Holsteins, whose strength goes into their huge bags, leaving their bodies like a rack. We should not feel too superior in Britain. Cows here may spend some of their day on grass, but they still wear out within three or four years, and have the added stress of having

their calves taken away at birth.

So should we, can we do anything about it? There will be no help from the Cameron government, with its idiotic dithering about a ban on wild animals in circuses. Luckily there have always been individual Conservatives who feel for animals, people like Dr Samuel Johnson who spoke out against the cruel vivisection of dogs, the eccentric Alan Clarke, Roger Gale, and recently Mark Prichard who defied the whips on the circus issue. Conservatives have difficulties with the ideology of 'animal rights,' preferring a concept of human obligation to animals. One of the essays in *The CAFO Reader* puts the case for 'Compassionate Conservatism', arguing that the idea of a human obligation towards animals would be a powerful concept only it is too often used as an excuse for doing nothing.

There is another more selfish reason for making sure agricultural animals are given a decent life. If we want safe food to eat and clean water to drink, we are unlikely to get this from CAFOs. That kind of farming neither benefits the remaining farmers who have not yet been put out of business by the cheap food lobby, nor consumers. *Animals and Public Health* takes the argument further, maintaining that good welfare for all animals, whether domestic pets, wild animals, or animals used in experiments, will also benefit humans.

So if a planning application for an industrialised dairy or a concentrated animal feed operation comes to your neighbourhood, buy *The CAFO Reader* and start campaigning against this system as vigorously as possible. Believe me, not only the animals will suffer. You will suffer too when one is built in your backyard.

Green with envy

Richard Packer

Green Philosophy, Roger Scruton, Atlantic Books, 2012, £22.

Roger Scruton approaches matters from an avowedly conservative perspective, believing, one suspects, as do most readers of this magazine, that this works do with the grain of human nature and hence that policies and plans drawn up on this basis will have the best chance of long-term success.

Scruton's book necessarily contains reference to many facts, supposed facts, conjectures, and suggestions. Many that he mentions are seriously disputed. Since in most environmental areas claims are scientific and/or technical Scruton, like most of us, is not competent to decide on their scientific accuracy.

Fortunately, unlike some commentators, he seems aware of the fact. This means that one of his main contributions to an environmental debate must come not from the positive advocacy of scientific truths but from an analysis of the claims of others, noting any logical weaknesses, illegitimate forms of argument or invalid conclusions. The world of environmentalism as described here contains much worthy of a philosopher's attention according to the above criterion.

Scruton points out the obvious logical and etymological connections between 'conservation' and 'conservative' yet notes that many green issues are in practice the domain of the left both in the party political sphere and in the world of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). He spends some time analysing why this should be so. His persuasive conclusion, naturally with caveats, is that the left consists largely of those who 'see politics as mobilizing society towards a goal'. Conservatives 'see politics as a procedure for resolving conflicts and reconciling interests, but one that has no overarching goal'. Environmentalism is a natural hunting ground for the former type even though, as Scruton points out, more practical environmental good is often achieved by the latter.

Scruton delivers stinging criticisms of 'agenda-driven NGOs'; they are, for example, 'unaccountable and unable to discuss the validity of their goals since they are defined in terms of them'. The well-known leading NGOs are, therefore, unsatisfactory. They may on occasion do good but they are just as likely to bring about harm, as Greenpeace did in the case of Brent Spar where Shell were forced by pressure of public opinion, whipped up by Greenpeace, to decommission an oil platform in an environmentally damaging (and costly) way.

Scruton prefers less messianic groups which he terms 'civil associations'. These are generally quieter with no overt remit to do good in a major way. Yet in their relatively unobtrusive manner, through their activities they add positively to the communities in which they act, embracing environmental issues as well. He cites the Womens' Institute as a leading association of this kind.

Scruton's philosophical interests include psychology and he has penetrating comments about how opinion is manipulated by those with a sense of environmental mission. Certainly some claims made about global warming suggest catastrophe is round the corner. As Scruton shrewdly notes it is relevant that in emergencies (when catastrophe is imminent) we are prepared to obey orders to an extent we would not be otherwise. The ordinary politics of compromise come to a stop. Equally shrill claims on other environmental problems were made relatively recently, which proved unfounded. Scruton cites Paul Ehrlich who in 1968

claimed overpopulation would bring about worldwide famine by 1980. Others not mentioned claimed the world would run out of oil well before 2000; and there are other examples. Ehrlich and his followers brooked no argument then; they were, however, fortunately for us, wrong. The suspicion is that, consciously or not, those who put their claims of environmental doom in the language of hyperbole are seeking to circumvent rational debate. In the global warming context the use of the word 'denier', clearly deliberately intended to resonate with 'holocaust denier', to describe those less than wholly convinced by the more serious claims of imminent disaster, raises suspicions among the uncommitted. Emotion and faith are being deliberately pushed forward in an area where analysis of the scientific and economic facts are the only legitimate components of discussion. This does not help the cause of those concerned to alleviate the genuine adverse effects of climate change.

For Scruton, true concern for the environment grows in each individual out of a love for home and those factors impinging on their life which ought to be preserved, be they architectural, scenic, or biological. An environmental movement should grow upwards, not be imposed from above by messianic (and all too frequently vain) 'leaders'. He cites examples which support this claim.

I found more than a whiff of Oakeshott in many of the points made, but that is a commendation not a criticism. The book discusses a wide range of environmental problems, natural and man-made, through a theoretical prism. In most cases his analysis is convincing, though I have the odd caveat. In a former professional life I had to examine closely the hygiene records of small slaughterhouses in England; they were nothing like as benign as Scruton imagines. He dislikes supermarkets; but surely the vast increase in welfare – time, money, convenience, choice – they bring to millions counts for something? But these are small carpings about what constitutes a major contribution in this field.

The Faceless Tsar Martin Dewhirst

The Man Without a Face: The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin, Masha Gessen, Granta, 2012. £20.00.
The Strongman: Vladimir Putin and the Struggle for Russia, Angus Roxburgh, I B Tauris, 2012, £20.

Is it possible for a person to be both strong (whether politically, intellectually, psychologically, morally and/or physically) and faceless? If so, then both these books should have something to tell us about Mr. Putin.

If not, which of the two authors, highly professional journalists, gets closer to the 'real man'?

Roughly half of Gessen's book is devoted, correctly, to the period before Putin became President of the Russian Federation in 2000. His past is not in any sense 'another country'; he probably really does think and feel that the collapse, not the establishment, of the 'Soviet' regime (let alone the arrival of the Gulag and the Holocaust) was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century, and he (and the other revanchists around and behind him) are doing what they rightly or wrongly think is most likely to restore the political, if not the economic, *ancien régime*. Who would have thought at the end of 1991 that a nondescript KGB Lieutenant-Colonel would be the public and evidently presentable, acceptable and even respectable 'face' of his supposedly 'post-Soviet' country?

Perhaps the greatest value of Gessen's book is the contribution of its author, with the help of several reliable informants, notably Marina Salye, to the debunking of the superficial and widespread rather positive image of Putin and his nominal boss in the first half of the 1990s, Anatoly Sobchak, the Mayor of St. Petersburg. As Gessen writes, 'Sobchak had picked the right right-hand man: Putin hated the wishy-washy democrats even more than he did, and he was even better than Sobchak at working the politics of fear and greed' The 1992 investigation by Salye and others into Putin's and Sobchak's nefarious business dealings at a time of great hardship for the people they were supposed to be serving) made it quite clear back then that neither of them was fit for any public office in what was widely hoped would become an open and tolerant society. Curiously, however, Gessen has nothing at all to say about the 'elite' Ozero *dacha* settlement near St. Petersburg that Putin and his cronies set up in the mid-1990s and most of whose inhabitants, including Putin, became extremely wealthy oligarchs. Where did their 'primary accumulation of capital' to build these very desirable and very private residences come from? Gessen doesn't even ask that question.

A whole range of other misdeeds and bad decisions, the responsibility for which rests on Putin, standing, as he does, at the apex of the notorious 'vertical of power', are briefly discussed by the author and make it clear why he feels such an affinity with colleagues like Colonel Gaddafi and President Assad. Putin can hardly step aside, let alone step down, because of the danger that, whether promised immunity or not, he would be punished for at least some of his alleged past misdeeds. This is why there is such an unfortunate clash between the last chapter, 'Back to the USSR', and the Epilogue, 'A Week in December', about the demonstrations in

Moscow at the end of last year. As the book went to press, Gessen appeared to think that Russian society would make it impossible for Putin to stay in power for much longer and that he would be replaced by someone or something rather better (not worse). One hopes, of course, that her intuition is correct, but this goes against the drift of the rest of the book, some of whose chapter headings ('The autobiography of a thug', 'Once a spy [always a spy]', 'Insatiable greed') indicate a very sober and realistic understanding of Putin's longer-term strategy, (the Russian President is now 'elected' for six years, not four, as earlier).

Roxburgh's volume is as well-written and readable as Gessen's. Like her, he pays little attention to the Russia outside Moscow, St Petersburg and Chechnya, and he too concentrates more on political than on social developments. Both writers rely heavily on their personal observations and on interviews that are of very variable reliability; there is a useful Russian saying, 'to tell fibs like an eye-witness', equally applicable to non-Russians trying to hide the truth and cover up or explain away some of their past mistakes. Neither author quotes from articles by some of the most incisive Russian political commentators like Andrei Piontkovsky, Vladimir Pastukhov and Yuliya Latynina who are mentioned or alluded to only in passing. This is a great pity. There is, however, one crucial difference between the two authors. Gessen was born and spent her childhood in Russia and, as a sensitive and intelligent insider, seems to have had an automatic and almost instantaneous feeling that Putin meant trouble (whether or not he has been and is being controlled and blackmailed by shadowy figures in the background). Roxburgh is an outsider who appears, like so many clever and well-educated people, to take Putin for granted (a lesser evil, perhaps, than if the old Communist Evgeny Primakov had become Yeltsin's successor) and even to trust a great deal of what Putin says and what his advisers give him to say and publish. This is a very dangerous mistake to make when one is dealing with a 'low-trust' country like Russia. A good example of Western naïveté dates from the time when Roxburgh was working for an American firm called Ketchum which was earning plenty of money by trying to present the Russian political Establishment in an attractive light abroad. 'We pointed out why Mikhail Gorbachev had been so successful: he was a communist leader, but his arms-control gestures were taken seriously because he had also initiated *glasnost* and freed political prisoners'. The notion that Gorbachev, regarded not only by Putin in the Russian Establishment as personally responsible for the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century, had been 'so successful' by

permitting 'internal liberalisation' makes one doubt the competence of some of the people working for this PR organisation. No wonder the Kremlin took little notice of Ketchum's well-meaning advice.

Perhaps the blame for some of the weaknesses in Roxburgh's book should be placed on certain people in the BBC and on the producer of a four-part TV series about 'Putin, Russia and the West' who paid little attention to the dubious activities of Putin and Medvedev before they became widely known abroad. The book is considerably better than the TV programmes and contains much of interest that most of its readers either never knew or have forgotten. This is clear from some of the chapter headings alone: 'The Secret Policeman's Ball', 'The Darker Side', 'Enemies Everywhere'. The monograph is in no sense an apologia for the Moscow political Establishment, but it doesn't really explore the deeper reasons for the tragedy of Russia's post-Soviet, or neo-Soviet, development.

So which of the two titles is the more accurate? Roxburgh himself seems to be uneasy about his choice. 'The word *silovik* is often translated as 'strongman', but it really means 'a member of the security forces'. It derives from the term *silovye struktury*, or 'power structures, in other words the FSB, ministry of defence, police, and so on. The *siloviki* are men who derive their power from having worked in one of these structures'. As we know, some 'hard men' and 'tough guys' can behave in a very macho way as they pathetically try to overcompensate for their weaknesses. The Russian PR people may have been only slightly more successful than Ketchum in fooling people about Putin's alleged strength. Russians like the saying, 'God is found not in strength [*sila*] but in the truth'. Putin indeed, as Piontkovsky has written, is an 'outstanding nonentity', a façade rather than a face, a botoxed mask rather than an authentic personality.

Envy of the World

Patrick Keeney

Why the West is Best: A Muslim Apostate's Defense of Liberal Democracy, Ibn Warraq, Encounter Books, 2011, \$23.95.

In 2005, the citizens of Saint-Genis Pouilly, a French town not far from where Voltaire lived, staged a production of his play, *Le fanatisme, ou Mahomet Le Prophète*. Predictably, local Muslim populations protested against the production. But the mayor of the

town, Hubert Bertrand, stood fast and refused to give in to intimidation. He instead ordered additional police protection. As the mayor explained with admirable directness, 'For a long time we have not confirmed our values, so lots of people think they can contest them.'

In Ibn Warraq's view, Mayor Bertrand's pithy analysis can extend to large parts of the West. For some time now, the hard-won freedoms, rights and liberties of Western peoples have been steadily eroded by the naïve and sentimental pieties of 'multiculturalism', working in tandem with the destructive forces of post-modernism and post-colonialism. In brief, the West has lost sight of its foundational values which have nurtured an unprecedented era of human flourishing and well-being. It is the premise of this book that it is time for the West to arise from its dogmatic slumbers, and once more vigorously proclaim and defend those values which made it the envy of the world. Warraq is an independent scholar based in New York. As a Muslim apostate and Koranic scholar, he is uniquely placed to remind Western nations of what, precisely, these values are, and what is at stake should they be overtaken.

The first chapter is a paean to New York City. The author provides an outline of his argument by an entertaining potted history of a city which 'stands as a concrete definition of Western civilization in its energy and creativity' In its cultural variety, in its openness to ideas, in its educational institutions, in its museums and libraries, and in its ethnic pluralism, New York stands in stark relief to the closed societies of the East.

Warraq's thesis is unapologetic: by any measure of human achievement, economic, social, educational, political, spiritual, or otherwise, the West is unequivocally the world's superior civilization. It is the West, and not any competing civilization which provides the template for freedom, democracy and the inherent dignity of the individual. Warraq quotes Arthur Schlesinger: 'When Chinese students cried and died for democracy in Tianaman Square, they brought with them not a representation of Confucius or a Buddha, but a model of the Statue of Liberty'. And the world's people want to get to the West, not to Saudi Arabia or Iran or Pakistan, or China.

The list of Western achievements is a long one. Science and technology have provided the common person with conveniences, entertainments and labour-saving machinery undreamt of by the monarchs of previous ages. Universal education is considered the birthright of Western peoples. Thanks to advances in healthcare, Westerners now live longer and contribute to the economy more productively than any other previous generation. The food supply is both varied and affordable for the vast majority of citizens. And while

social inequalities, particularly disparities of wealth, continue to plague Western nations, by any historical marker the nations of the West have devised a more equitable distribution of society's goods than at any other time in history.

For Warraq, Western advances spring from a particular cultural mindset, which grows out of the Greco-Roman inheritance, leavened by Christian values. At the heart of the Western mind lies the concept of intellectual freedom allied with an open-ended quest to satisfy our insatiable human curiosity. This ideal is in turn deeply imbued with the idea of the inherent dignity and worth of the individual, and the attendant freedom of conscience. Unlike, say, Islam, or indeed any other closed system of thought,

'*Sapere aude*' was how Kant summarized the Enlightenment ideal, and it is this daring and unfettered quest for knowledge, this boundless intellectual curiosity, which has given the West its unprecedented success. The Socratic model is a form of enquiry which cherishes self-criticism and open-ended debate. For Warraq, it is this spirit of radical questioning, what Bertrand Russell called 'liberating doubt' and the systematic rejection of authority in the service of knowledge which accounts for Western superiority.

Warraq's unapologetic celebration of the West's achievements is a breath of fresh air in an age which has been raised on multicultural platitudes. Foremost of these clichés is the dogmatic assertion that all cultures are equal, a proposition which few, if any, ever really believed. Nevertheless, under the sway of various intellectual fashions, we have preached the moral equivalence of the world's cultures for the past 50 years or so, such that it is now considered bad manners at best and positively immoral at worst, to suggest that culture A is (or even may be) superior to culture B. The prime directive of multiculturalism is 'Thou shalt not judge other cultures', at least not in a negative way. Instead, we are enjoined to 'celebrate diversity', without asking difficult or impolite questions as to why, exactly, any particular culture should be deemed worthy of celebration. In short, cross-cultural comparisons are ruled out of court (always, of course, with the caveat that negative assessments of Western nations and peoples are permissible).

What can be done to defend Western civilization? The author suggests that we need to be more vigilant in safeguarding our ideals. Our difficulty increases because our ideals have fallen into chaos in recent years. We need to realize what is at stake, and stop taking Western achievements for granted, particularly our hard-won political freedoms. Students must become reacquainted with the salient events of Western history. Students who lack the equipment to understand

even their own culture cannot interpret any other's, and therefore lack the ability to confute or confront them intelligently.

We need to move away from the old grooves of multicultural piety, ask difficult questions, and not shy away from the implications of our enquiries when certain cultural practices rub against our own. For example, is sharia law compatible with the West? Is it compatible with modern accounts of equality between the sexes, pluralism and the moral autonomy of the individual? To ask the question is already to go some way toward answering it.

The author doesn't mince words, and his learning never prevents him from making his case in vivid and direct language. Despite the multicultural pieties, barbarians really do exist. In Warraq's lucid account, the reader comes to a new appreciation of how high these stakes really are, and what, exactly we might lose if we fail to preserve and defend our values.

The Red Tide

Frank Ellis

Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought: The Red Army's Military Effectiveness in World War II, Roger R Reese, University Press of Kansas, 2011, \$37.50, £32.50.

Before turning to the Great Fatherland War (1941-1945) Reese examines the Russo-Finnish War (1939-1940) in some detail since he believes that this provides any number of insights into the way the Red Army would prosecute the war against the Wehrmacht. To quote Reese: 'Although unappreciated at the time, rather than revealing *ineffectiveness*, the war with Finland showed the Red Army to be highly *inefficient* in its operations against a well-organized, well-trained and determined foe'. Unfortunately for Reese his assessment of Red Army performance in the Winter War does not survive contact with the brutally honest analysis of Red Army failings prepared in April 1940 for Stalin by Nikolai Voronov, the head of Soviet artillery. Among Voronov's many findings was the admission that the Red Army did not know how to conduct war in winter in dense, trackless forests. This is a staggering admission from a senior Red Army commander. Dense forests, the taiga, stretching across vast areas, are a major topographical feature of northern Russia. This is precisely the sort of terrain across which the Red Army had to operate in the Russo-Finnish war. Exceptionally severe winters, with heavy snow and prolonged spells of temperatures

way below freezing are also the norm in northern Russia. Why did senior Red Army commanders fail in their duties?

Red Army casualties, cited by Reese, amount to 546,083 of which 131,476 were killed and listed as missing and 264,908 were wounded. Total Finnish casualties, cited by Reese, were 66,634 of which 22,430 were killed and listed as missing. If the effectiveness of the Red Army in both the Winter War and the Great Fatherland War is shown by the willingness to waste lives and equipment that would be impossible in a Western state, it is clear that such criteria of effectiveness are quite alien to Western armies. In the Winter War there were also very high numbers of frostbite victims. This reflects gross inefficiency and lack of training, a Red Army command failure, and contempt for soldiers' lives. Too many of the Red Army's victories appear pyrrhic. At Stalingrad Red Army losses were a catastrophic 1,129,619 killed and wounded. The Red Army wasted lives because it had lives to waste.

Reese believes that the capture of millions of Soviet soldiers is not explained by superior German generalship or anti-Stalinist sentiment. His explanation for the catastrophe of 1941 is as follows: 'Instead, we have to consider that the loss of millions of Soviet soldiers to captivity and death in German POW camps was due to massive failures in the *efficiency* of the Soviet military, which then led to localised situational failures in *effectiveness*'. This view of the catastrophe of 1941 is perverse. The Red Army was neither efficient nor effective. An efficient army can be wholly ineffective if it is incompetently led but not for long. When an efficient army is led by incompetents for too long morale collapses and you no longer have an army. But if an army is generally inefficient in its mastery of its basic requirements and those failures are compounded by incompetent leadership, and it has the bad luck to encounter the Wehrmacht at full throttle the results are obvious.

Reese is unconvincing about the harsh measures to enforce order and discipline. He argues: 'The idea that soldiers were machine-gunned by blocking detachments and arbitrarily executed by officers and NKVD men *en masse* – and thus kept in line by such treatment – is essentially a myth.' The problem with this assessment is that it ignores the tone and substance of Stalin's orders which clearly provide for the destruction *en masse*, if necessary, of Soviet soldiers and the arbitrary execution of soldiers. Moreover, if the necessary measures demanded by Stalin in Order No 270 (16th August 1941) were not being carried out – in other words they were intended to create a false view, a myth, that this would happen – why did Stalin consider himself obliged to issue Order No 391 (4th October 1941) in order to curb

an execution regime running out of control?

'It was clear that the Red Army viewed encirclement not as a blunder or a crime but as a normative contingency in the conduct of wartime operations.' That is certainly the way encirclement *should have been seen* but it is not the way encirclement was viewed by party functionaries, especially the odious Lev Mekhlis. First, the absence in Red Army doctrine on how to deal with encirclement before the war with Finland was no accident. Any talk of a Red Army unit being encircled would suggest defeatism. In the 1930s, especially during the purges, this would be suicidal and interpreted as wrecking or sabotage. Second, the inflated view of Red Army performance which led to the disaster of the Winter War assumed that if there was any encircling to be done it would be done by the Red Army, not by the armies of so-called bourgeois or fascist states. Third, it is obvious from various documents and policy that the Red Army or rather its political masters and their agencies of enforcement, the NKVD and then SMERSH, most certainly did view encirclement as a crime or at the very least something deeply suspicious, not as an occupational hazard of highly mobile war. All the relevant decrees and documents regulating the duties of the NKVD and SMERSH leave no doubt that *okruzhenie* was regarded as something serious. To be an *okruzhenets* was a mark of suspicion and one in view of the nature of Soviet society that had consequences long after the war had ended.

Among very large numbers of Ukrainians, Belorussians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Latvians and plenty of Russians, never mind huge swathes of the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Soviet state enjoyed no legitimacy and inspired no loyalty. It is the rejection of the Soviet state, not the absence of any doctrine on how to deal with encirclement, that accounts for the collapses and defections in the summer of 1941. Stalin knew this as well, which explains why he lashes out with the vindictive provisions of Order No 270. The pioneering work of Joachim Hoffmann on psychological and physical defection to the Germans (*Why Stalin's soldiers Fought*) is not mentioned, nor does Reese dwell on the role of Vlasov and other nationalist insurrections. One side of the loyalty theme poses an insoluble question: why did people who had suffered so dreadfully at the hands of the Soviet state before 1941 volunteer to go to the front? In such circumstances desertion and even joining the Vlasov movement appear quite rational. Or is such unconditional loyalty to the mother-land the essence of Russia?

On the ebb and flow of loyalties the parallel is not with the Winter War but with the Civil War. In 1941 the Soviet Union was in a stronger position but the nationalities

question had not been solved, merely suppressed, and it was this that very nearly brought the system to its knees. Orders No 270 and No 227 were propaganda gifts for the Germans, but any benefits for the invader were negated by the crazed policy which regarded the nation of Lermontov, Tolstoy, Akhmatova, Mendeleev, Florensky and Dostoevsky as sub-human, turning potential allies into deadly enemies.

Americanophobia

Penelope Tremayne

America, Andrew Alexander, Biteback Publishing, 2011, hb £20, pb £12.99.

This book is not about America, either the country or the people. It is a sustained indictment of American presidents, politics and politicians from 1945 to 2011. The author is a well known and admired journalist with a long record on the *Daily Mail*. This shows in the crispness with which he moves us along from subject to subject, treating them all not as opinions or matters for consideration but as facts; some more convincing than others.

Beginning (rightly) with the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, he recalls President Truman saying at Potsdam that he realised the USSR aimed at world conquest. Alexander insists that Truman made a gross mistake: unlike Lenin, Stalin aimed only for socialism in one country and did not want Communist governments to emerge elsewhere lest they interfere or take power from him. Well maybe, but he certainly laid out a lot of money and men in sustaining other socialist or Communist governments and infiltrating or bringing down non-communist ones. Indeed his 'one country' already stretched from Vladivostock to Berlin and was a justified response to having been twice invaded in living memory. Securing a safety belt out of the small states along her frontiers has been proposed many times and has never sounded convincing. Poland had not invaded Russia, nor had Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary or the Baltic states, whereas Russia had three times invaded, portioned and totally destroyed Poland, so who should be afraid of whom?

Moving forward we are told that MacArthur provoked the Korean war, and that the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was justified by its purpose, which was to save socialism by 'ensuring that no one country put its own aspirations for its own version of socialism before the purpose of the socialist bloc as a whole'. Although MacArthur was dismissed by Truman in 1951, he nonetheless received a spectacular

welcome home in the USA, which shows how wrong-headed they all were.

The Cold War never really existed; it was an invention of John Foster Dulles and ought to have been given up at Stalin's death, but Dulles wanted to keep it going, as apparently did the IMF and other sinister organisations. The military-industrial complex keeps rearing its ugly head here, along with the usual financial and moral culprits, the wicked arms dealers and the greedy arms manufacturers intent only on their own profit. The Churches are brought into it too, or all the main ones. Even the Marshall Plan, which saved millions from starvation, was not charitable but only self-serving. I have always thought it was the greatest example in history of public benevolence although not always easy to swallow, one way or another.

Alexander is naturally critical about the Vietnam war but interesting, and he remarks on a difficulty that faced the south Vietnamese: they did not want the Viet Cong and knew that the Americans would go away eventually, whereas the Viet Cong would not. This is still a current problem in countries undergoing revolutions, but does not often get discussed, so it is good to find it considered here.

Overall the book has an old time, old socialist flavour which makes reading it feel rather as if one were going through a file of long-stored newspaper articles, with the old bees being stirred in the bonnet like alphabet-cards in an old game. This is revealing. Loyalty must always be respected, but when once given to a political theory it can too easily block out understanding of other loyalties. Alexander writes: 'It is impossible to understand the Kremlin's fears without recounting those extraordinary manoeuvres, culminating in serious proposals in Britain and France that the two countries should be prepared to go to war against Russia – just after the war with Germany had broken out – in defence of Finland, then under attack from the Red Army.' He omits the fact that the Kremlin was Germany's ally at the time, not ours, and remained so for another year until Germany turned the tables.

Similarly he accepts that the Soviet seizure of a third of eastern and central Europe fulfilled the pledge to set Europe free, which had been given when we declared war. The rest of us ought to have accepted it too. Exhausted, beggared and longing for a settled peace, many people did accept, however reluctantly, that what had been done could not be undone. But it was a vast act of piracy and it seems unnecessary to pretend otherwise, especially now when piracy is having so successful a revival. He cannot accept that it was a rank betrayal and left behind it the scent of betrayal, the sense that our honour lies rooted in dishonour.

America covers a lot of ground, is easy to read, and

not afraid of dates, which is a great merit in historical writing, but obviously unreliable on facts. Its treatment of the Colonels' coup in Greece is full of errors – I was living in Athens at the time – and events in Italy after the surrender are a good deal distorted. No text editing seems to have been done, the pages are littered with misspellings, omitted or misplaced words, and occasional garbled phrases.

I remain puzzled by the intensity of the prejudice shown against America. Her leaders, civil and military alike, are every one of them presented as fools or villains, yet in reality they do not seem to have been any worse than anyone else. Some would say the record shows that they have come through rather well. Perhaps disillusion is to blame. Countless battalions have believed that scientific socialism offered a form of rightful living freed from the twin tyrannies of God and poverty. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought about disillusionment worse than that which followed the break-up of the British Empire, perhaps because it happened so much faster. (Besides, the British empire's collapse was what might be called a controlled catastrophe). Perhaps that is what has moved Andrew Alexander to sink his teeth so deeply into all men and things American.

Guantanamo-on-Thames Merrie Cave

Tower: An Epic History of the Tower of London, Nigel Jones, Hutchinson, 2011, £20, pb available in June.

'My God! A wonderful land is this, and a fickle; which hath exalted, slain, destroyed or ruined so many kings, rulers and great men'. Last Autumn I visited the Tower at night. Without the distraction of tourists you become aware of its original function and remember the cavalcade of unhappy people who were imprisoned or died there, for it was the main stage on which the drama of English history was played out. It has been the most important building in London for a thousand years and will surely outlast the hideous new architecture that surrounds it.

Harrison Ainsworth's romantic novel about the Tower has been recommended as a cure for insomnia. Nigel Jones's new book would keep you awake through a sleeping pill. It is a skilful synthesis of scholarship and story-telling with fascinating details about daring escapes (one Jacobite with the help of his wife managed to escape in drag), love trysts and heroic deeds. Amusing anecdotes pepper every page:

'Archbishop Arundel at Henry IV's coronation noticed that the King's hair was alive with lice'. This King was hygienic for a medieval monarch, for he took a weekly bath and founded the Order of the Bath.

The Tower was the most important of the fortresses William the Conqueror built to stamp out resistance to Norman rule and served as a royal palace until Elizabeth I's time. Real or supposed enemies were kept in death's waiting room in varying degrees of discomfort, sometimes for many years, and 'harvests of heads' were displayed on spikes in the Tower and elsewhere in London to assert royal power. Continual conflicts between the monarchs and the barons brought brutal violence and Jones gives a vivid impression of the ruthlessness of our ancestral rulers who were rather like the Mafiosi or the Sopranos jockeying for position and power; neither does he spare us the grisly details of the dreadful punishments carried out. Hanging, drawing and quartering comprised only part of them. The Kings needed to be warriors; if they were not, they often displayed cultural interests and built fine buildings like the weak Henry III and Henry VI – although even the latter killed thousands after Cade's Kentish rebellion. What a paradox that our glorious cathedrals were built in this violent age.

'Bad King John' seems to be the worst king: when Maud Fitzwalter declined to become his mistress, he abducted her to the Tower, sacked her father's (Baynard) castle and forced her family to flee to France. When starvation failed he killed her with a poisoned egg. Richard III must rival John in the cruelty stakes, for the murder of the young Princes was deplored as dreadful even for the standards of the time. In 1674 their remains were discovered, confirming contemporary evidence.

The Tower was and still is a community within walls. The Royal Mint appeared at the same time as the Menagerie (1235); by the sixteenth century the entire area between the inner and outer walls was taken up by the Royal Mint and the Ordnance factory. Henry III started the menagerie with presents of animals from his brother-in-law, the Holy Roman Emperor. Those awaiting execution must have been kept awake by screeches, roars and squawks from the wide variety of animals who were kept in cramped and unhygienic conditions. Worse, sadists could enjoy bear-baiting and other amusements then known as sport. Henry VII objected to this cruelty but James I's 'chief delight' was to watch the animals tearing each other to bits. By the nineteenth century attitudes were changing: the RSPCA was founded in 1828, and when Wellington became Constable he was only too glad to transfer the animals to the new Zoological Gardens in Regents Park.

A wonderful film could be made about Isaac

Newton, who as Warden of the Mint (1796) applied his genius to nailing the arch forger Challoner. The shy scientist, now the arch detective, frequented sleazy bars in London's underworld and successfully turned Challoner's colleagues, resulting in his execution at Tyburn.

The Tudors' struggle to secure their thrones was bedevilled by the conflict between Catholics and Protestants, and disagreement over the 'King's great matter' would cost Thomas More's and John Fisher's life among many others. Henry, after being a splendid Renaissance Prince, became England's Stalin, for the Tower was choking with crowds imprisoned at the King's whim. More people were executed then than by any other monarch; his victims included ordinary people, all of whom had suffered from the dissolution of the monasteries.

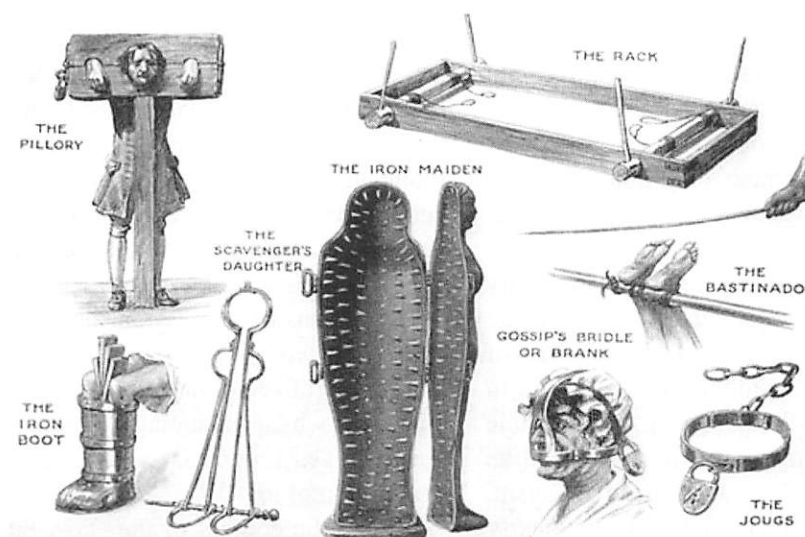
The problem of the Tudor succession worsened with Edward's death and Mary's inability to produce an heir. Elizabeth survived her imprisonment and risk of death at the Tower and hoped on her accession 'not to make a window into men's souls'. This laudable aim was abandoned for the Pope declared that 'it was the duty of good Catholics to kill her', so they were regarded as a fifth column by the government which had to become increasingly repressive. A succession of plots was uncovered by Walsingham's spies and the Tower was filled with genuine Catholic conspirators as well as innocents. Elizabeth disliked her ladies-in-waiting marrying and this led to one of the most famous incarcerations – Sir Walter Raleigh, when he married Bess Throckmorton in secret. He was the epitome of the Renaissance man beloved by many: soldier, sailor, explorer, historian, among other achievements. He also was imprisoned by James I for much longer because he was suspected of being involved in the Main Plot. During his second imprisonment he wrote the most

famous bit of literature written in the Tower: a complete *History of the World*. 'Only my father would cage such a bird', his son Prince Henry remarked.

Charles I saw the Tower as the key to controlling London, but he sacrificed Strafford, the one man who could have saved his throne. In the 1640s and 50s the Tower was crammed with more prisoners than at any time since the Elizabethan persecution; one third of the House of Lords were imprisoned there during that period. General Monck, who restored Charles II, married a seamstress whom he had met during his imprisonment in the Tower, and Judge Jeffreys away from the angry mob looked forward to a barrel of oysters from a 'well wisher'. The barrel only contained the shells and a noose with a hangman's knot.

Lord Lovat was the last person to be executed on Tower Hill. One of the crowded stands to give spectators a better view collapsed under the weight and twenty people died. The callous old Jacobite when told of the disaster remarked 'the more who go, the better the sport'. After the Cato Street conspiracy there were no more imprisonments, so the Tower became a tourist attraction. Then in the First and Second World wars it once again became a state prison. The Tower survived the Blitz, the ravens were scorched or scared to death except one, Gyp, ensuring the tradition that Britain will endure as long as ravens inhabit the Tower.

My favourite English eccentric, Colonel Wintle, not mentioned in the book, enjoyed his month at the Tower. In 1940 he was imprisoned when he had demanded an aircraft with which he intended to rally the French air force to fly their planes to Britain in 1940 and had threatened an unsympathetic RAF officer with a gun. 'After news of my doings leaked out they could not do enough for me. At 11.00 sharp Guardsman McKie would arrive with a large whisky and ginger ale. I was as well cared for as if I had been at the Ritz.'



THEATRE

Can We Talk About This? DV8 Director Lloyd Newson Jane Kelly

Physical Theatre Production at the Lyttelton Theatre, London. Premiered in August 2011 at Sydney Opera House, arrived in London, March 2012. 18-19 May Lowry, Salford, 31 May-3 June Corn Exchange Brighton.

It's not often you go to a ballet feeling that you are so excited and wound up you might not be able to stay till the interval. Here, there was no break in the performance, so a packed house had to sit tight while the DV8 company did the most shocking thing possible in Britain today – openly criticised Islam and questioned why educated, well meaning people in the West have let it bully us into submission.

DV8 stands for 'deviate', which they certainly did, making strange fragmented movements as they attempted to smash through all the cowardly constraints and pusillanimous excuses which stop middle class chatterers chattering about Islam, and the multiculturalism which has transformed English cultural life.

The show started with a direct challenge when Lloyd Newson, Artistic Director of DV8, asked us to raise our hand if we felt morally superior to the Taliban. A cringe of unease spread around the theatre like a Mexican wave and no one moved a muscle. He asked again and then estimated that twenty percent of us put up our hands, adopting a stance that some would see as colonialist, if not racist arrogance.

His dancers then spent the next 80 minutes showing us in dance, text, film and speech, why we *should* feel superior to the fascistic Islamists.

They described the sad litany of the last twenty years when English people gradually threw in the towel on free speech, beginning with the story of Ray Honeyford, who was headmaster of a school in Bradford until, in January 1984, he published an article in this magazine, critical of multiculturalism and its effect on British education. He was accused of racism, subjected to a barrage of abuse, forced to take early retirement, and never taught again.

It was odd to hear this friendly little quarterly mentioned as the first blast in a largely unsuccessful campaign to preserve English democratic freedoms. The shameful story continued with the 1989 book burnings of *The Satanic Verses*, the brutal murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, and the assassinations following publication of the 'Muhammad cartoons' in 2005. We heard the names of people killed for writing something that offended Muslims, papers dropping to the stage like falling leaves.

Michael Billington, theatre critic of the *Guardian*, asked why, if Islam is dangerous, we have a show like this? The scene where the murdered victims of Islamic intolerance were named, gave a clear answer to that. He also complained that the production voiced arguments that have been heard incessantly over the last few years. But he must know that those arguments have never been aired in the theatre, or by the BBC. Dr David Starkey is about the only person on TV allowed to proclaim right-wing views, and he is regarded as some kind of tame crack-pot.

Using talking heads and talking bodies, *Can We Talk About This?* examined how a long list of brutal acts carried out by Muslims in Europe have reflected and influenced multicultural policies, freedom of speech and censorship, underscored by the supine liberal fear of giving offence.

They boldly played the part of cringing journalists, community leaders and politicians such as Baroness (Shirley) Williams, who spitefully objected to Salman Rushdie getting a knighthood, in case it caused 'offence'.

The multi-ethnic cast's ability to speak audibly whilst hanging from a beam, standing on their hands, drawing on their own bodies with a black marker or doing up their flies upside down was certainly impressive. Some found the use of dance distracting. The company twitch and gyrate as if they've got cerebral palsy, and DV8 has used disabled dancers in the past. They deliberately make the audience uncomfortable, but it was the often jarring means of expression that stayed in the mind. A scene where a dancer playing the courageous MP Ann Cryer talked about her campaign against forced marriage, whilst balancing a tea cup and saucer and being moved around by another dancer's body was strangely moving.

But it's the content of the show that remains truly extraordinary, and sadly almost unique. This company

exists in a bubble of freedom of expression that has died in England. At a platform discussion about the show on Monday March 19th, director Lloyd Newson challenged the BBC's Director General, Mark Thompson to put the show on to television. He pointed out that in 2005, the BBC televised *Jerry Springer – The Opera*, a highly controversial satire on Christianity. This elicited 55000 complaints from Christians, and a private prosecution for blasphemy. It was obviously considered worth it, but would they take such a risk with *Can We Talk?* Thompson's spokesperson later replied that there were no plans to transmit the show.

In the past Thomson has admitted that there is a growing nervousness in the country of discussing

Islam, but he added that because they are a religious minority and also often an ethnic minority, they 'should be given different coverage from other more established groups'.

The cultural cringe was obvious again on the BBC's *Newsnight Review*, when black author and 'educational consultant' Dreda Say Mitchell said she disapproved of *Can We Talk?* because it included the scene showing Ray Honeyford. She objected to him because she said he made critical remarks about the black community. As soon as she spoke she satisfied the whole premise of the production, and no one among her illustrious fellow critics dared to challenge her, although a woman from the *Telegraph* gave a simpering smile.

Brian Sewell: a wonderful wit

Andrew Wilton

Outsider, Brian Sewell, Quartet Books, 2011, £25.

Brian Sewell is well known as a reviewer of art exhibitions and books, a prominent member of the arts establishment – hardly an 'outsider', however he may see himself. He may have pitted his opinions against what he calls 'the Serota tendency'; but he carries popular feeling with him much of the time and is the intelligent voice of conservative art criticism in London. His qualifications for that job have always been clear from his writing; but this, the first of two volumes, we gather, of autobiography, seems to have been conceived as confirming his credentials. More than most autobiographies, it is pruriently narcissistic, a quality emphasized by his insistence on the physical details of his rich and varied, though not ultimately satisfying sex life.

His family background was not entirely straightforward: the illegitimate son of an unknown father – who he eventually discovered might have been the composer Peter Warlock – and a promiscuous, bohemian mother, he grew up knowing only a stepfather who turned out, on his death, to have been already married to another woman by whom he had had a daughter: the two ladies descended on his unsuspecting mother and demanded immediate surrender of all the bigamist's property.

After school at Haberdashers Aske's in Hampstead there followed a period of vacillation: Sewell entertained fairly serious thoughts of a celibate priestly career; he pursued his studies with the violin, taught by

Max Rostal; he started to paint, almost sucked into what he soon realised was the sterile manner of the Euston Road School – he is rude about William Coldstream, who 'had the mentality of a haberdashery assistant, measuring everything minutely and costing it to the nearest farthing'. His national service proved more rewarding than he, or the reader, had expected: first a squaddie, and later a subaltern in the army – situations Sewell was hardly cut out for temperamentally, but which in different ways he found character-forming and even comforting: he was attracted to the order and discipline of army life, similar in those respects to that of the priest.

He had already spent a year at the Courtauld, London University's department of art history, and after being demobbed he was readmitted. He had encountered Guy Burgess there, and disliked him – mainly as physically unattractive. But at the Courtauld he found his vocation: a longstanding love of pictures and buildings burgeoned into impressive performances as a connoisseur of Italian paintings and drawings, under the tutelage of Anthony Blunt and Johannes Wilde, both of whom he greatly admired. His account of the genesis of the Courtauld in the 1930s under the impact of European émigré scholarship is worth reading, and for those interested in such things he vividly evokes the daily life and characters of the Institute in his time there.

The rest of the volume, it must be said, is really for art historians and denizens of the London art world: Sewell joins Christie's auction house, to find its

directors ignorant, arrogant and prejudiced. Studies of art-world characters abound, and reputations – some extremely eminent – are trashed with evident glee. Apart from the damning anecdotes of bad behaviour in these exalted circles, there are some useful stories; for instance, how Windsor managed to rid its collection of embarrassing Leonardo erotica; how the Royal Academy sold its Leonardo cartoon; and how Burne-Jones's vast painting *The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon* was damaged at Christie's, and partially repainted by Sewell himself. He has sobering comments on the extent to which art-dealers habitually use restorers to fake works of art: 'this rotten streak ran through every level of the trade', he suggests. There are assorted art-world vignettes – crooks like the prolific faker Eric Hebborn, a sufficiently talented draughtsman to be remembered despite his deceptions; and some saints: his Courtauld teacher Michael Kitson, an authority on, among much else, Claude Lorraine; Michel Laclotte, curator and later Director of the Louvre; and Doreen Lewisohn, the retiring but brilliant restorer of antique globes who went on to care for the distinguished collection of works on paper at the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge.

Those who are with Sewell and those who are against him form up in clear battle-lines. An underlying sense of injury and righteous indignation runs throughout the book, making for a somewhat shrill tone which, added to the long Latinate sentence constructions (Sewell admits to having formed his style on that of Walter Pater), and some self-consciously recondite

vocabulary – why the nonce-word 'sensibilitous' for instance? – makes the book a less than comfortable read. A tendency to somewhat baroque fantasy leads to a few oddly unconvincing images: he claims, for instance, that his only memory of the first performance of *Peter Grimes* is 'the Adam's apple [sic] and excruciating vibrato of Joan Cross'. The text could have benefited from a more thorough editing – there are many misprints and some names are muddled – Lionel Lambourne of the V & A, for instance, comes out as Lionel Lambton. But towards the close we learn the cause of Sewell's longstanding sense of grievance: over ten years at Christie's he nursed the ambition to set up and head an independent department of drawings and prints, a post for which he felt himself specially qualified. Then a charismatic art historian, David Carritt, was taken on, and to his chagrin Sewell found himself passed over in the newcomer's favour. The reason given was that Christie's had no need of *two* homosexuals on its board.

And so the persistent theme of sex is revealed as having some semblance of a serious purpose. But that can hardly justify the truly ridiculous concluding lines of the book, where Sewell debates the value of what he distinguishes as traditional and modern slang terms for sexual activity, and announces that in volume 2 he will move from the former to the latter. Dotty.

Andrew Wilton is Honorary Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Royal Academy.

A Mysterious Composer

Robert Hugill



César Franck, His Life and Times, RJ Stove, The Scarecrow Press, 2012, £24.95.

César Franck is a problem for a biographer, for most composers' biographies can offer an exegesis of a string of masterpieces or of an eventful life, perhaps both. Franck doesn't really offer either. Only a handful of his works are accepted as masterpieces and, once he reached maturity, his life was relatively uneventful. This lack of personal drama was apparently deliberate, as this new biography by R J Stove makes clear.

Stove has returned to as many original sources as possible, relying on the originals or his own translations rather than the traditional, and faulty, English versions.

There are no great revelations, simply an industrious life, industriously lived. Most of Franck's life was spent teaching, at first simply to earn a living and later because he seems to have derived satisfaction from his coterie of pupils, the famous *bande à Franck*. This is understandable perhaps when one learns of his early life as a travelling child virtuoso under the tyranny of his father, Nicholas-Joseph. The only dramatic event in Franck's adult life was the 1870 Paris Commune, when he stayed in the city despite its privations and problems; though the external event seems to have had little impact on Franck's interior musical life.

Stove is lively and entertaining when covering Franck's early period; he has a strong gift for the short pen portrait which means that the various characters in Franck's life

come alive vividly. When it comes to Franck's maturity he has to rely heavily on the testimony of Franck's colleagues and pupils because he left no written record of anything of an explanatory nature and his music is the least confessional that can be imagined.

The puzzle is not why Franck wrote so little, but why there are so few masterpieces. Stove dismantles the common saw that Franck's clutch of masterpieces were the result of a late fling with his pupil Augusta Holmes. We don't have anything like enough evidence of their relationship though there might have been an infatuation. More importantly Franck seems to have had the gift of being able to turn out a masterpiece and then follow it with something eminently forgettable. The rather torrid *Quintet*, written at the time of the putative affair with Holmes, was followed by the Biblical scene *Rebecca* (in effect an oratorio), which seems to have deservedly vanished without trace.

Stove clearly has a great love for and knowledge of Franck's music; sometimes he rates works higher than critical opinion thinks they deserve. Perhaps one of the effects of reading a book like this is to go scurrying back to our CD players and try out recordings of *Les Béatitudes* and *Les Eolides* to see whether they are unjustly neglected.

The text is relatively compact, with an appendix which includes over thirty pages of notes. It is also highly readable and entertaining. This isn't a book where the authorial voice keeps at a distance, so that when referring to Wilfred Mellors' critical opinion of Franck we learn of Stove's critical view of Mellors. Stove clearly thinks that Meyerbeer's Italian operas are negligible, despite much work rehabilitating them by Opera Rara. One or two of the pen portraits would be too long if there weren't

so vividly written. Do we need to know about Cavallé Coll's abortive project for an organ in St Peter's Rome? We also get the whole of Vincent D'Indy's family history in lively summary. However, Stove includes brief musical descriptions, with musical examples; not enough to frighten the non-musical but sufficient to give a flavour of the pieces and whet the appetite for further exploring.

I would have liked a complete list of Franck's compositions broken down by date. As it is you have to make do with the separate composition index. The illustrations are disappointing, though we get a well chosen selection of ten. The author refers to a number of historical portraits, which he has clearly seen, but we are not able to view them.

Stove is an accomplished organist so the appendix is a discussion of the different performing traditions in Franck's organ music, particularly in relation to Marcel Dupré and Charles Tournemire. There is also a very useful Selective Discography. For anyone wishing to explore further there is a bibliography in addition to the comprehensive notes.

I am not sure that Stove manages to illuminate much about the problem of Franck's career and why Franck's compositional catalogue is so patchy. Why could the composer of the *Quintet*, the *Symphony* and the sublime organ music, even in his maturity, spend considerable amounts of time on an unperformable opera and choral works which can seem long and boring? This book will not be the last word on Franck but Stove presents us with a readable portrait which will certainly appeal to those for whom Franck is still a bit of a mystery.

Robert Hugill is a composer

IN SHORT

How Fair is Britain: report of the Equality and Human Rights commission, John Gower Davies, Civitas, 2010.

'Why are there no Jewish rodeo riders?' Jackie Mason used to ask in his stage show, pondering whether it might arise out of institutional anti-semitism in the sport's governing body or from a general disinclination of Jewish people to partake of such exercise. Reading John Gower Davies' thorough dissection of the 2010 report of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, one is tempted to think that, were rodeo a sport from these isles, the EHRC would have tried, found guilty and sentenced the governing body before a single horse had thrown a rider, if ethnic minority sportsmen did not deem it the perfect way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

The report's brief was to consider fairness in the relative treatment of the majority population and the ethnic minorities about life expectancy, health, employment. It was never likely to give a positive answer to the question it posed. In one chapter, Davies highlights how well the EHRC are paid for their work in finding unfairness, a powerful incentive for finding it and for ignoring inconvenient evidence in order to find it.

The worst sin for which Davies holds the EHRC to account is their failure to contextualise their findings either geographically or historically. Doing their job for them, he trawls a wide range of impeccably impartial international reports, comparing the UK with the countries from which most immigrants have come and turns up masses of axiomatic data favourable

to the former with a tenacity which at times borders on the weary. Is it really a surprise, for instance, to find that Britain is less violent than India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, that it has more respect for civil liberties than they do, that it is less corrupt than almost anywhere on earth? It must be to the EHRC who only seem prepared to judge the record of this country against that of Utopia.

Similarly ignorant of history, the EHRC is keen to proclaim that ethnic minorities are dissatisfied with and distrustful of the police; we have heard this again in the aftermath of the retrial of the murderers of Stephen Lawrence. Davies does not find it hard to show that the level of satisfaction with the police has never wavered much from the era of Dixon Of Dock Green to the present day.

This book is at its most telling and poignant when it exhorts those who have been washed up on these relatively peaceful shores by the storms of a cruel and unfair world to stop their ears against the unlovely shrill squeals of entitlement emanating from the EHRC Report. Instead, they should think of the efforts of previous generations to make this country such a welcoming haven, and to adopt that unfashionable yet rather charming virtue of gratitude.

Brian Eastty

Michael Dirda: On Conan Doyle: Or, The Whole Art of Storytelling, 2012, Princeton University Press, £13.95.

In a way Michael Dirda's elegant and delightful little tome *On Conan Doyle: Or, The Whole Art of Storytelling* is misleading. He pretends to be entirely fair in that he warns his readers: this is not a book about Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, it is about Conan Doyle as a storyteller; it is about his other books, a little bit about him and a great deal about the post-Doyle Sherlockian developments, notably about the Baker Street Irregulars, a slightly loopy society of eminent lovers of the canon who 'play the game' of elucidating gaps and contradictions. Having issued this warning Mr Dirda can sit back and smile as his disappointed readers find that he has, indeed, been completely fair.

Those who call Conan Doyle the greatest storyteller are right. His prose, spare in the more modern stories but with mediaeval and eighteenth century overtones in the historical novels, throws enchantment over the reader from the first line. He had a fine sense of pace, an excellent ear for dialogue and a sense of humour that ranged from sly to slapstick. Michael Dirda is no mean stylist himself. He tells of his youthful discovery of the Holmes stories, of his subsequent investigation

of other thrillers and detective tales, of his career as a literary journalist and critic, of his further adventures with Holmes and, finally, his involvement with the Baker Street Irregulars. *En route* he manages to point out that T S Eliot's love and use of matters Holmesian go beyond the obviously villainous Macavity.

His brief analysis of the Holmes canon and its astonishing hold on people's imagination is excellent though he limits himself to the Anglo-Saxon world, specifically Britain and North America. (I do wish, however, that he had not repeated the nonsense about Holmes wearing Inverness capes and deerstalkers in London.) Dirda is less fond of the rest of Doyle's output though Professor Challenger is obviously a favourite and he is good on the supernatural tales and has some interesting ideas about *White Company*, which Conan Doyle valued very highly.

The highlight of the book is his account of the Baker Street Irregulars, their book – collecting habits and fantastic discussions of likely and unlikely events in the lives of Holmes and Watson as well as their real and fictional contemporaries. Dirda's own article about Langdale Pike, a briefly mentioned character in one of the weakest stories of the Casebook, *The Three Gables*, which includes a hitherto unknown 'Case for Langdale Pike' is joyously funny though one needs to read it in full in *Canadian Holmes: The Journal of the Bootmakers of Toronto*. Yes, I think that is real and there are good reasons why the Holmesians of Toronto should be called The Bootmakers.

On Conan Doyle is not an introduction to the life and works of Sir Arthur or the Sherlock Holmes stories and novels but a delightful long essay for those who already know and love the master and his output but would like to read a highly knowledgeable person's opinions.

Helen Szamuely

Felling the Ancient Oaks: How England Lost Its Great Country estates, John Martin Robinson, Aurum Press, 2011, £30.

The landed estate with its country house, whether modest manor or palatial stately home, has been central to English history. The big house and its domain were complementary, with the land providing the wealth and prestige and the house projecting them. This book is a requiem for an institution, which was for centuries the centre of local economies, county government, and the main determinant of parliamentary representation. Without the great country estates, our rural landscape would be different and inferior, for much of it is the direct result of the relationship between the country house and its surrounding land. If agriculture provided the financial

power, landowners had social and aesthetic concerns which modified the impact of agricultural production. They sculpted the land in the interests of the vista from their homes and the views which visitors enjoyed as they approached them, dotting it with follies and lakes, while hunting and shooting resulted in the copses and coverts which transformed the countryside around.

The agricultural depression which began in the late Victorian period had dire consequences for many English estates. Land had previously been the best and safest source of wealth and, despite urbanisation, the 'high farming' of the mid-Victorian period had ensured that the estates were more profitable than ever. A society dedicated to Free Trade had, however, determined that no special protection be given to British agriculture; the connection between the land and the country house was weakened. New commercial wealth was ready to purchase the prestige that came with owning a country seat, but less prepared to buy thousands of acres of land.

For most of the twentieth century England's great estates were in continuous decline. The impact of the First World War has often been exaggerated, but the deaths of so many from the upper classes destroyed the appetite to keep the inheritance intact, while income and inheritance taxes mounted and the inter-war years saw a further decline in agricultural incomes. Whole estates were broken up and great houses demolished or turned into schools, hospitals, and council offices. In World War II much of the damage to houses may have been accidental or the result of uncaring ignorance, but there was also wanton vandalism and 'it was standard to machine-gun the glass houses and conservatories too, as at Alton Towers in Staffordshire'.

The outlook in the post-war years was bleak. Taxation was increasing and a Labour government seemed unlikely to be helpful. Robinson argues that 'by a delicious irony, the Labour party ... saved the English landed estate from complete destruction'. Land was not nationalised and rebates on income tax were introduced for money spent on agricultural improvements, while planning controls and the Green Belt provided protection from urban encroachment. Since the late 1940s much has been done to save houses and estates. National bodies such as the National Trust and English Heritage have played a great part in preserving great houses, gardens and estates, but self-help by landowners with renewed confidence has been equally important, for efficient estate management and enterprising ways of attracting visitors have enabled many estates to survive intact.

The great value of *Felling the Ancient Oaks* lies in its detailed description of the fate of twenty-one of the great estates, ranging from Panshanger in Herefordshire to Haggerston Castle in Northumberland, lost, not only to those who once owned them, but to England. The estates that remain mitigate 'the peculiarly hideous and irredeemable quality of provincial urban existence in England'. If it was ironic that the post-war Labour government helped to ensure a future for the great estate, it will be a greater irony if by bribing landowners to erect wind-turbines and changing planning laws to suit developers, a coalition government led by a party masquerading as Conservative, destroys what remains of the landscape created by the great estates.

A W Purdue

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