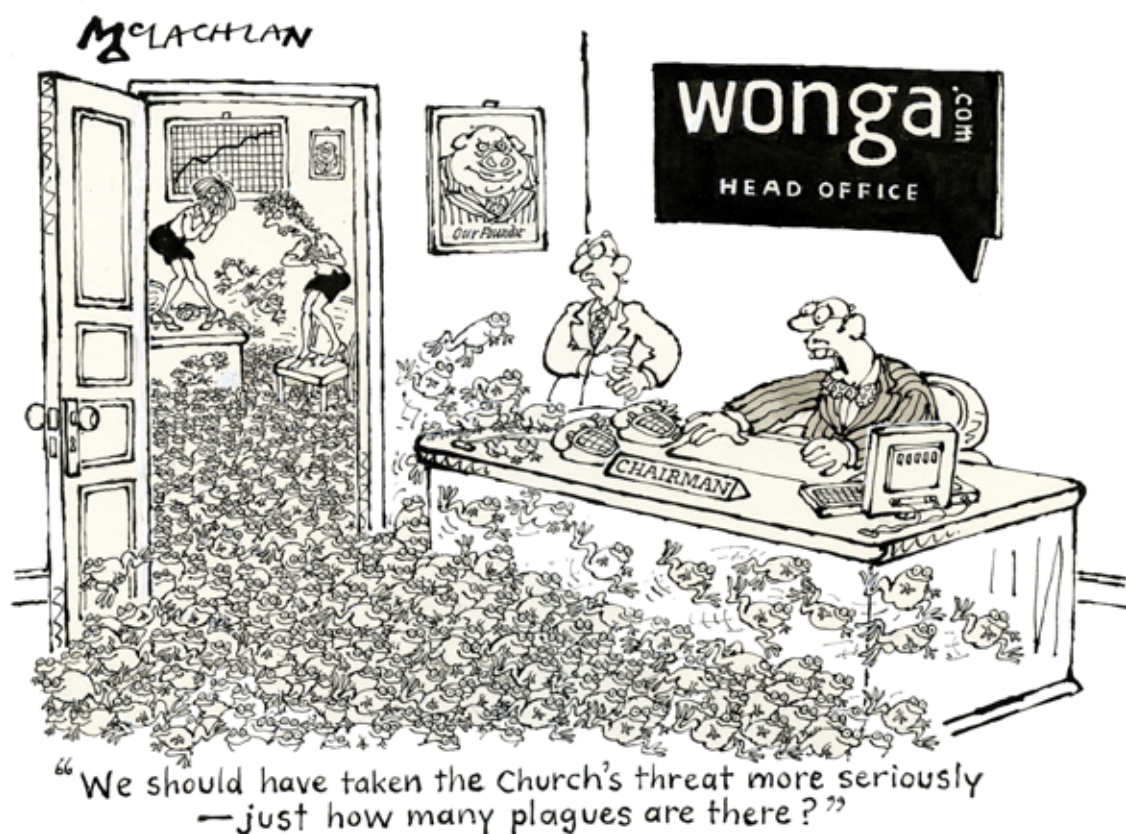


The
Salisbury Review
The quarterly magazine of conservative thought



Motown Burns
Matthew Walther

The Anti-God Squad
Jane Kelly

Life’s Compensations
Theodore Dalrymple

A Tribute to Modern Babylon
Barbara Hewson

A Cure for Love
Myles Harris

Aussie Green Bikers
Daryl McCann



Contents

[3 Editorial](#)

Articles

[4 Lesson from America](#)

Matthew Walther

[5 A World Bounded by a Nutshell](#)

Theodore Dalrymple

[6 No Dogs, No English](#)

Penelope Fawcett Hulme

[9 A Geriatric Tribute to Modern Babylon](#)

Barbara Hewson

[11 Adoration of the Mafia](#)

Mark Griffith

[12 Chuck 'em in and see who floats](#)

Bill Hartley

[14 The most important Man in your Life](#)

Jane Kelly

[16 A Cure for Love?](#)

Myles Harris

[18 Surrendering the Heights of Abraham](#)

Ricardo Duchesne

[22 Silver Threads Among the Gold](#)

John Phelan

[23 Australia's Greenie Bike-Riding Ruling Class](#)

Daryl McCann

[25 A National Drinks Quota](#)

John Lalor

Columns

[27 Conservative Classic – 52](#)

Harold Nicholson *The Congress of Vienna*

[28 Reputations – 41](#)

John Kenneth Galbraith

[30 Eternal Life](#)

Peter Mullen

Arts & Books

[32 Robert Crowcroft](#)

on Margaret Thatcher

[33 Myles Harris](#)

on Immigration

[35 Merrie Cave](#)

on Grammar

[36 John Jolliffe](#)

on Rex Whistler

[37 Nigel Jones](#)

on Eichman's Teachers

[38 Celia Haddon](#)

on Strange Creatures

[39 David Twiston-Davies](#)

on Conrad Black

[41 Jane Kelly](#)

on Family secrets

[42 Mark Baillie](#)

on the Special Forces Club

[44 Penelope Tremayne](#)

on Books

[45 Robert Crowcroft](#)

on Foreign Policy

[46 Christine Stone](#)

on Iran

[47 Martin Dewhurst](#)

on Learning Russian

[49 Alistair Miller](#)

on Education

[50 Boyd D Cathey](#)

on Paul Gottfreid

[52 Alexander Boot](#)

on Bach

[54 Andrew Wilton](#)

on Brian Sewell

[55 Ralph Berry](#)

on Shakespeare

[57 In Short](#)

*In future subscription payments by cheque should
be sent by post to*

**The Salisbury Review,
5 Turnpike Court, Woburn Sands, Bucks,
MK17 8UA**

*Changes of address or other enquiries should be
sent to the same address or by phone to
01908 281601*

Credit card payments by phone remain the same

01908 281601

or

0207 226 7791



The
Salisbury Review

Editor: Myles Harris
Managing Editor: Merrie Cave
Consulting Editors: Roger Scruton
Lord Charles Cecil, Jane Kelly,
Christie Davies, Ian Crowther

33 Canonbury Park South, London N1 2JW
Tel: 020 7226 7791
E-mail: info@salisburyreview.co.uk

Web site: www.salisburyreview.com

Both Conservative and Labour politicians are asking why pensioners should enjoy big houses, free travel, and heating allowances when they have well stuffed savings accounts and index-linked pensions. Why not give the money to families fleeing oil-rich Nigeria, or the 15 per cent of the unemployed who, having fallen prey to the demon alcohol, find it difficult to get out of bed in the morning to attend a Job Centre? Recently two million pounds has been set aside for a scheme in which inspectors visit such families to wake them up. This is one of many schemes where if you are poor every aspect of life comes accompanied by a fistful of banknotes from the state. There are housing subsidies, maternity grants, childcare allowances, healthy start grants and, spectacularly, multi-occupancy cars for poor families who can't be bothered, or do not intend, to use birth control. As the population grows, mainly due to immigration and a consequent high birth rate, so does the bill. 'The cuts' are a fiction. £9 billion pounds of funding was added to last year's bill. It will rise again this year, and every year.

With the state running out of money for its circuses, why not snatch it from pensioners' mouths? After the next election, the old owners of Britain will have to start selling what they have to the new. Pensioners' perks will be radically reduced and, except for the well-heeled, those foolish enough to remain in huge houses will be driven out by re-rating. Why should two old crumbles live in a three-bedroom house when it could house a family of young welfare recipients? In terms of votes the latter are much more appreciative of free handouts than elderly people with outdated notions of civic duty.

Then there are the Olympic Games to be paid for, and will we ever finish paying for the EU or the Afghan War? Perhaps something could be done about the NHS? Politicians are now circulating the lie that a huge proportion of those attending A&E are over sixty-five, many with incurable degenerative illnesses. It is not true. Especially after midnight A&Es are swarming with drunks, many with money in their pockets, while during the day big city A&E departments, with the full approval of the BMA, invite the world to sample our free

medical care.

Until recently politicians feared any attempt to limit spending on the elderly would be a public relations disaster, but lately the *Today* programme's interviewers, who lean so far to the left they are practically horizontal at the feet of Labour, began drip feeding adverse comments about pensioners' incomes into news stories. By the next election, the elderly will be seen as greedy parasites, or, if not, martyrs clamouring to give up their savings to the state.

Such 'Rob a Widow' schemes will not save us. This is because of a far more intractable problem, at least in Britain, our army of undereducated, unemployable and now unnecessary youngsters. The modern state requires fewer and fewer people to run it. Increasingly computers are replacing the unskilled and semi-skilled as well as the skilled. Soon we will enter a world of driverless trains and buses, console farming (a ride on a satellite steered tractor is an eye-opener), automated power stations and factories, robot surgeons, self-steering mechanised street sweepers and checkout-free supermarkets; you walk through the door, glance at a retinal scanner, and your purchases are added to your credit card. Within a decade a fully automated tax system will use subtle algorithms to check your expenditure against income. Any variation will generate an automated enquiry. Failure to satisfy its questions would result in a doubling of your basic rate until the excess is paid off. No inspectors required.

Meanwhile, increasing the population, money-printing and make-work bureaucracies are leading to stagflation and energy impoverishment. Better to deflate the number of consumers and thus the fake jobs we are forced to create to keep them employed. This will thin the ranks of the pensioners they will eventually turn into.

A tax system that reduces the birth rate (ours is the highest in Europe) to the lowest, plus a ban on all further settlement, would be a start. In addition competitive exams should be introduced right through our educational system. Britain needs a highly educated population of 35 million, not the 65 million and rising on which our venal, lying and self-serving politicians rely to keep them in power.

[back to contents page](#)

Lesson from America

Matthew Walther

In 'Nuclear City', an essay written in 1987 for the once-readable *Esquire*, Martin Amis imagined what Washington DC would like after a hypothetical nuclear assault:

Its well-forested malls would go, the silver masonry of its imperial buildings would go, its museums and monuments would go; a good deal of such history as America has would go, along with all the random life that any great city contains...

What, I found myself thinking the other day, would Detroit look like if Iran or some other rogue nation dropped the Big One? How different would it appear to the outsider? Detroit's population is less than it was in 1914. A quarter of the city's residential lots are already vacant. At least ten per cent of houses are said to be unoccupied (a figure that strikes this observer as overly cautious). As I write this, more than twenty thousand wild dogs are roaming the city's streets, as the fifty-nine Detroit postmen attacked by them in 2009 will readily attest. It is almost impossible to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables in most of the city's neighbourhoods, and left-wing activists have resorted to teaching, or rather trying to teach, the large indigent population to plant squashes on abandoned rooftops. The city's architectural marvels – I am thinking especially of the magnificent Michigan Central Station – lie in ruins. (Curiously, a half dozen new windows were installed in the station last year: no one, not even Detroit's Director of Planning, Marcell Todd, knows why or by whom.) The local council can no longer afford to maintain the excellent collection housed at the Detroit Institute of Arts; while any number of private foundations would be only too pleased to own, for example, Fuseli's 'Nightmare' – one of the ten or so paintings that everyone recognizes – it is unlikely that any would wish to keep such works in the city.

How one of the greatest industrial centres the world has ever known, a city that, in the late 1950s, had the highest income per capita of any in the richest nation on earth, has found itself billions of dollars in debt, defaulting or prepared soon to default on virtually the lot of it, is a story that cannot be told in a concise fashion. The usual suspects are, of course, to blame, chief among them the union mafia who enriched themselves by persuading ordinary, decent people that

the highest wages in the world were not high enough and the race hucksters who likewise made a handsome living by fanning the flames of racial hatred until the city literally burned in 1968 – a blaze from which, according to the father of a close friend, a native Detroiter, the city never spiritually recovered. Coleman Young, whose five terms (from 1974 to 1994) as mayor roughly coincide with the years of the city's long slide to destitution, should by rights go down as one of the great villains in American history. More so than any other individual he was responsible for the two things that now define Detroit, namely financial insolvency and rampant crime. But Young, who championed public immorality ('People who go around solemn-faced and quoting the Bible are full of shit'), was only the first in a long line of mayors – most notably Kwame Kilpatrick – whom we non-Detroiters hailing from Michigan regard simply as figures of fun rather than of opprobrium. Kilpatrick and his predecessors were so wantonly, obviously, and unabashedly corrupt that when presented with the long list of their ignominies it is almost impossible to feel angry.

Though the editors and I have never discussed the matter in so many words, I take it that one of the main purposes of these letters from America is to give British readers a perverse sort of hope. What I'm saying in each of these missives is more or less this: 'Listen, mates: the NHS is a patient-killing shambles; the City is built on a mountain of worse-than-funny money; the EU referendum, if it takes place at all, will be an even bigger frame-up job than its predecessor of 1974; the House of Lords, which has been gutted as thoroughly and efficiently as a pig's carcass by the Blair Butcher, and the Windsors are disgustingly acquiescent to the forces that in our lifetime will make Britain a republic – but, look, things are bad in America, too!'

This quarter's dose of trans-Atlantic *schadenfreude* is heavier than usual. For Detroit's situation, bad as it is, is hardly unique in this country; thirty-five other municipal entities have filed for bankruptcy in the last three years, and the fate of Detroit and others as post-industrial waste lands will doubtless be shared by dozens of other American cities in the next decade or so. Nor is the problem confined to my own dear Midwest. The rot has set in from sea to shining sea, from Central Falls, Rhode Island, to San Bernardino, Stockton, and

Mammoth Lakes in California. Dixieland fares little better: Alabama's Jefferson County went bust two years ago. Even when outright bankruptcy is avoided due to clever accounting, the situation on the ground can be equally apocalyptic. Many of Ohio's old steel towns are in similarly dire straits; driving through certain parts of the Buckeye State is like watching one of Mel Gibson's *Mad Max* films. Gary, Indiana, once called the 'City of the Century', is a sort of Detroit in miniature (it has even got its own abandoned Art Deco train station): lost manufacturing jobs drove out virtually the entire middle-class population, leaving it one of America's most crime-ridden cities. Citizens of Oakland, California, have seen a forty-four per cent rise in burglaries in the last year alone, to which the city's bankrupt government has responded by firing one in four municipal police officers.

Still, one hates to end on such a gloomy note; in fact

I refuse to do so. After all, I have a solution in mind for Detroit. Let the city be preserved in its present condition and kept open to the public as a kind of museum where visitors learn about greed, stupidity, idleness, and refusal to face facts; eat concessions (deep-fried chicken); and purchase souvenirs (rusty four-barrel carburettors). There is even a financial angle to my proposal: admission fees from the museum could be used, over the course of a few centuries, to pay off the city's debts; the great-great-great-great grandchildren of those who purchased its seemingly worthless municipal bonds will one day see a reasonable, if not handsome, return on their ancestors' investments.

Matthew Walther is the Assistant Editor at the American Spectator

[*back to contents page*](#)

A World Bounded by a Nutshell

Theodore Dalrymple

When I was young I was enjoined, often in the context of my stubborn refusal to eat semolina pudding, to count my blessings. I detested also tapioca, which looked to me like frogspawn; it sent shivers down my spine; and while I was fascinated by frogspawn as a child, and could look at it for hours, I certainly did not want to eat it, or anything that looked like it.

The argument that there were hungry children in the world did not seem to me a good reason why I should eat up my semolina. How would it help the hungry children of the world if I did so? Besides, it also seemed to me likely that if there were children less fortunate than I, there must be children more fortunate as well. Why was it morally edifying or character-building to look downwards towards the less fortunate than oneself but not upwards towards the more fortunate? I had not yet learned the virtues of asymmetry.

Several decades later I have come to see the wisdom of counting one's blessings. The rich man is he who has enough to meet his desires and who, moreover, exercises control over his desires so that they do not expand indefinitely to torment him with dissatisfaction when they are not fulfilled. Envy – the comparison of one's situation with that of others better placed on the supposition of at least equal desert – is the emotion

most corrosive of all content. It is useful, however: what, for example, would politicians do without it?

It is a curious thing that, while I continually lament the state of the world, I have so little myself to complain of. I suffer no rank injustice and have enough for my needs, even after tax. To call oppression the minor irritations that bureaucracy sometimes causes me would be self-dramatization. I go my own way, more or less.

Although I cannot claim to be poor, I think I could be bounded by a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space – provided I had enough reading matter, that is. Within quite a wide though not infinite range I could be content to live at a lower economic level than I enjoy – and have been so content. And though I am fortunate enough to live in beautiful surroundings and attach great importance to beauty, I have lived long in ugly places without a loss of happiness. A single flower is enough to transport me.

The other day a large toad brought me great pleasure. I was weeding a flowerbed when he crawled away, making for a shrub. Toads do not move quickly and I picked him up. I thought he would make a handsome photograph under a geranium leaf, as indeed he did, and there I put him.

Toads, of course, do not have good reputations.

Larkin, for example, chose the toad to represent the burden of work. The only charming toad in literature (that I know) is Toad of Toad Hall, and I must say that my toad under the geranium leaf rather reminded me of him: he looked a bit like a self-important town councillor, Councillor Toad, who cannot wait to don the scarlet fur-edged robes and chain of office of town mayor and declare something or other open.

What do I know of toads? Nothing, really, I am ashamed to say. Is a toad capable of learning that a human like me does not wish him any harm (I put him back where I had found him after I had photographed him), and would he ever lose his fear of me? What, indeed, does it mean to say that a toad is afraid? Is a toad sufficiently self-aware or self-conscious to suffer? (The philosopher Thomas Nagel wrote a famous paper, *What is it like to be a bat?*) If a toad cannot suffer, if it moves away from noxious stimuli as a billiard ball moves away from another billiard ball that strikes it, why would it be wrong to treat it in a fashion that would be cruel if it had self-consciousness? Would it be wrong because of what such treatment would do to *us* rather than what it would do to *it*?

I don't even know the basic biology of toads and must now find out. They seem to live solitary lives but they must sometimes mate. What are their habits? Where do they lay their eggs? What do they eat? Who are their enemies? How many of them reach the size of my toad (almost as big as my palm)? How long do they live? Are there toad specialists who devote their lives to the study of toads? I assume there must be and I wish I could meet them. They would be much more

interesting to me than Presidents or Prime Ministers.

Then I found a hornets' nest. What is true of my knowledge of toads is true, *a fortiori*, of hornets. The nest was admirably constructed and very graceful – how much better hornets understand the principles of architecture than, say, Norman Foster. Luckily it was time for the bi-annual visit of a man who rids our house of pests, and he taught me the very basic biology of these creatures. Hornets invented paper: they scratch wood and turn it into finer paper than that which private presses print limited editions upon with which to exploit the vanity and mania of bibliophiles.

Hornets, of course, are no more popular than toads. To say that something is a hornets' nest is not a compliment. And yet a hornets' nest is beautiful, and hornets are interesting. One can never come to the end of the interest of the world.

It seems to me that to find nothing interesting is the greatest of all possible miseries, short of famine and civil war. It turns life into a kind of purgatory, from which only crude sensation can distract for a time. I used to tell my patients (when I was still a doctor) that what they needed was not to find themselves but to lose themselves. They needed to be interested in the world, not themselves. 'How do you get interested?' they asked.

That, unfortunately, I could not tell them. But that the world is inexhaustible is, at least for me, the greatest possible felicity.

Theodore Dalrymple latest book is The Pleasures of Thinking, Gibson Square.

[back to contents page](#)

No Dogs, No English

Penelope Fawcett Hulme

I recently visited Camber Sands on the South Coast at the height of the heat wave. It looked like a grand old English beach, just as I remembered them, buzzing with families with children, but there were also an extraordinary number of dogs of many breeds so that it looked like an outing from Battersea Dogs' Home. Once in the sea, which was crowded with people and dogs, I swam into a black Labrador; for a moment it was all fur, paws and ears. I stood up, half apologised as you do when you crash with another swimmer, but the dog just swam diligently on.

It was fun to see the canine swimmers with their owners. A small Pomeranian with two men looked very nervous. When lifted out of the water it

carried on swimming in the air for some time, as if stoically resolved to endure something quite stressful. Apparently there were so many dogs with us in the water because they are now only allowed on half the beach. I don't have a dog, but obviously one of the joys of owning one is walking it. Taking it to a beach must be particularly exciting.

My friend with me at Camber explained that dogs are now restricted on beaches because one child in a thousand every year is affected by toxocariasis, caused by dog faeces, which can cause blindness. Foxes and cats also act as hosts to the *Toxocara* worm. When information about this condition first got into the press it caused hysteria and there were cases of health

visitors telling pregnant women to get rid of their cats. In fact as the eggs of the Toxocara worm take over two weeks to hatch and become active, so there are no health risks to anyone clearing up fresh dog mess. In tests, only five per cent of pet dogs were found to expel Toxocara worm eggs. Of that group the majority were pups between two weeks and six months of age or pregnant bitches. The Dogs Trust insists that the real incidence of all Toxocara-induced diseases in the UK is only two cases per million of the population.

My pal, once a doting dog owner, is now a fond father and agreed with the idea of a dog ban. Useless to say I have seen dogs on beaches in the UK all my life and never seen any dog mess there. I assume it quickly gets washed away. Some aspects of British culture also seem to be washing away with the tide. Most of the voices I heard walking from beach to car park were Polish and Asian. The beach was later closed as it had become so crowded, and ghetto blasters drowned out the cry of gulls. The English beaches I remember, with buckets and spades, collapsing sand castles adorned with shells and moats, poor quality ice-cream, donkeys, dogs and dads in socks and sandals, have been replaced by multi-cultural crowds, where you have to be very careful that you do not offend some ethnic sensitivity or pressure-group shibboleth.

An acquaintance of mine from church, who was registered severely partially sighted two years ago and has had his guide dog, Seiko, for one year, had been refused taxi cabs driven by Muslim drivers, who consider dogs to be 'Haram' or unclean. He has also been turned away from numerous cafés in the Turnham Green area of west London where he lives.

'I tell them that what they are doing is against the law,' he says, 'but if I argue with them too much, it ruins my day. And if they take that attitude I don't want to give them money anyway.'

He contacted Andy Slaughter, Labour MP for Hammersmith, and Guide Dogs for the Blind, who now keep a data base on such incidents, but he says the situation is not improving. It has been getting worse for years. In Nottingham, on November 14th, 2008, a Muslim taxi driver refused to carry a blind man with his guide dog. The driver was fined £300 under the Disability Discrimination Act of 2005, which can award a fine of £1,000. On 16th December that year, a blind man in Tunbridge Wells was refused entry to an Indian restaurant because the owner said it was against his Muslim beliefs to allow dogs in.

On May 20th 2009, George Herridge, 71, a blind cancer sufferer from Berkshire, was hounded off a bus because an Asian woman and her child began screaming at the sight of his dog, Andy. 'I stood my ground,' said George, 'I had not done anything, my

dog had not done anything and I was getting off the bus for no one.'

The retired NHS worker claimed it was the second time he had been forced off a bus. A day after that incident another Muslim woman began screaming, 'I don't like dirty dogs' at him in the Royal Berkshire Hospital. He said he also faced animosity from an Asian couple in Asda.

The bus company accepted their driver was wrong but said it had been placed in an 'impossible situation'. They have since 're-instructed' drivers, ie ordered them to take the blind, and they have sought advice from Muslim leaders. Mufti Zubair Butt, Shar'ia advisor to 'Muslim Spiritual Care Provision,' in the NHS, admitted 'Muslims require some education' on guide dogs.

In July 2010 questions were asked in the House of Lords after a London Muslim bus driver prevented a woman from boarding with her dog. As the woman attempted to complain, the doors closed and he drove away. When a second bus arrived, she tried to embark, and was stopped again, because the driver said he was Muslim.

The problem of guide dogs versus Islam has become so widespread that two years ago transport minister Norman Baker warned that a religious objection was not a reason to eject a passenger with a well-behaved guide dog. This message has not filtered down to the British bobby; at railway stations and airports, police dogs may no longer come into contact with Muslim passengers. A report for the Department of Transport advised that the animals should only touch luggage as that is considered 'more acceptable'. British Transport Police still use sniffer dogs with any passengers regardless of faith, but handlers are now more aware of 'cultural sensitivities.' Sniffer dogs used by police to search mosques and Muslim homes are now being fitted with leather booties to cover their paws, so as not to cause offence.

Critics say the complaints are just another example of Muslims trying to force their rules and morals on British society. Tory MP Philip Davies has said: 'As far as I am concerned, everyone should be treated equally in the face of the law and we cannot have people of different religious groups laying the law down. I hope the police will go about their business as they would do normally.'

No one is listening it seems, as Muslim prisoners are treated to fresh bedding after sniffer dogs have searched their cells. Inmates say their bedclothes and prison uniforms must be changed according to Islamic law if they have come anywhere near dog saliva. Government rules mean prison officers must hand out replacement sets after random drug searches to avoid religious

discrimination claims. Dogs have also been banned from touching copies of the Koran, which prisoners protect in special bags. In July 2008, the Tayside Police Department rolled over and apologized to the local Muslim population after featuring an Alsatian puppy as part of a campaign to publicize its new non-emergency telephone number.

Increasing anxiety about health and safety ties in dangerously with the encroachment of Shar'ia law. In April 2007, Gry Berg, a blind woman, was denied entry by four taxis in the centre of Oslo because of her guide dog. In December, 2011, Marie Laforêt, 72, one of France's best known singers, was prosecuted for discrimination when she advertised for a builder, specifying that 'people with allergies or orthodox Muslims should not apply, due to a small Chihuahua.' She claimed she did this because she knew that Muslims see dogs as unclean. The case against her was lodged by an anti-discrimination group catchily called the Movement Against Racism and for Friendship Between Peoples (MRAP). She was acquitted but Muslims rejected her defence.

The Dutch dogfight started last January after Hasan Küçük, a Turkish-Dutch representative on The Hague city council, demanded that owning a pet dog be made illegal. This caused outrage but Dutch commentators believe he did this to stir up the Muslim population,

now 12% of the city's population of 500,000.

In Spain, two Islamic groups based in Lérida, Catalonia, where 29,000 Muslims make up 20 per cent of the population, told local officials to ban dogs from all public transport as well as from Muslim areas. They claimed the presence of dogs violated their religious freedom and right to live according to Islamic principles. When the municipality refused, in September 2011 more than a dozen dogs were poisoned in Lérida's working class district, heavily populated by Muslim immigrants, and where many dogs have been killed over the past years. Local residents taking their dogs for walks say they have been harassed. Muslims have also launched a number of anti-dog campaigns on Spanish websites and blogs.

The jihad against dogs is now world-wide, including America and Canada, and we submit to this nonsense at our peril. Dogs have been close to us in the developed world as friend, and helper, for thousands of years, as Muslims well know; they are as much a part of our culture as free speech, ferret racing and beer. If malign influences are allowed to curtail that relationship, we will have taken a step closer to a joyless future of enforced alien religious repression and public poppycock.

Penelope Fawcett Hulme is a social observer.

[back to contents page](#)



"Tell me, what qualities do you think you would bring to the post of dog warden?"

A Geriatric Tribute to Modern Babylon

Barbara Hewson

With its emphasis on outcomes over process, the post-Savile witch-hunting of ageing celebs echoes the Soviet Union.

I do not support the persecution of old men. The manipulation of the rule of law by the Savile Inquisition – otherwise known as Operation Yewtree – and its attendant zealots poses a far graver threat to society than anything Jimmy Savile ever did.

Now even a deputy speaker of the House of Commons is accused of male rape. This is an unfortunate consequence of the present mania for policing all aspects of personal life under the mantra of ‘child protection’.

We have been here before. England has a long history of do-gooders seeking to stamp out their version of sexual misconduct by force of the criminal law. In the eighteenth century, the quaintly named Society for the Reformation of Manners funded prosecutions of brothels, playwrights and gay men.

In the 1880s, the Social Purity movement repeatedly tried to increase the age of consent for girls from 13 to 16, despite parliament’s resistance. At that time, puberty for girls was at age 15 (now it is 10). The movement’s supporters

portrayed women as fragile creatures needing protection from men’s animal impulses. Their efforts were finally rewarded after the maverick editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, WT Stead, set up his own secret commission to expose the sins of those in high places.

After procuring a 13-year-old girl, Stead ran a lurid exposé of the sex industry, memorably entitled ‘The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’. His voyeuristic accounts under such titles as ‘Strapping girls down’ and ‘Why the cries of the victims are not heard’ electrified the Victorian public. The ensuing moral panic resulted in the age of consent being raised in 1885, as well as the criminalisation of gross indecency between men.

By contrast, the goings-on at the BBC in past decades are not a patch on what Stead exposed. Taking girls to

one’s dressing room, bottom pinching and groping in cars hardly rank in the annals of depravity with flogging and rape in padded rooms. Yet the Victorian narrative of innocents despoiled by nasty men endures.

What is strikingly different today is how Britain’s law-enforcement apparatus has been infiltrated by moral crusaders, like the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC). Both groups take part in Operation Yewtree, which looks into alleged offences both by and not by Savile.

These pressure groups have a vested interest in universalising the notion of abuse, making it almost as prevalent as original sin, but with the modern complication that it carries no possibility of redemption, only ‘survival’. The problem with this approach is that it makes abuse banal, and reduces the sympathy that we should feel for victims of really

serious assaults.

But the most remarkable facet of the Savile scandal is how adult complainants are invited to act like children. Hence we have witnessed the strange spectacle of mature adults calling a children’s charity

to complain about events in the distant past.

The NSPCC and the Metropolitan Police Force produced a joint report into Savile’s alleged offending in January 2013, called *Giving Victims a Voice*. It states: ‘The volume of the allegations that have been made, most of them dating back many years, has made this an unusual and complex inquiry. On the whole victims are not known to each other and taken together their accounts paint a compelling picture of widespread sexual abuse by a predatory sex offender. We are therefore referring to them as “victims” rather than “complainants” and are not presenting the evidence they have provided as unproven allegations [italics added].’ The report also states that ‘more work still needs to be done to ensure that the vulnerable feel that

England has a long history of do-gooders seeking to stamp out their version of sexual misconduct by force of the criminal law. In the eighteenth century, the quaintly named Society for the Reformation of Manners funded prosecutions of brothels, playwrights and gay men

the scales of justice have been rebalanced’.

Note how the police and NSPCC assume the roles of judge and jury. What neither acknowledges is that this national trawl for historical victims was an open invitation to all manner of folk to reinterpret their experience of the past as one of victimisation.

The acute problems of proof which stale allegations entail also generate a demand that criminal courts should afford accusers therapy, by giving them ‘a voice’. This function is far removed from the courts’ traditional role, in which the state must prove defendants guilty beyond reasonable doubt.

What this infantilising of adult complainants ultimately requires is that we re-model our criminal-justice system on child-welfare courts. These courts (as I have written in *Spiked* previously) have for some decades now applied a model of therapeutic jurisprudence, in which ‘the best interests of the child’ are paramount.

It is depressing, but true, that many reforms introduced in the name of child protection involve sweeping attacks on fundamental Anglo-American legal rights and safeguards, such as the presumption of innocence. This has ominous consequences for the rule of law, as US judge Arthur Christean pointed out: ‘Therapeutic jurisprudence marks a major and in many ways a truly radical shift in the historic function of courts of law and the basic purpose for which they have been established under our form of government. It also marks a fundamental shift in judges’ loyalty away from principles of due process and toward particular social policies. These policies are less concerned with judicial impartiality and fair hearings and more concerned with achieving particular results...’

The therapeutic model has certain analogies with a Soviet-style conception of justice, which emphasises

outcomes over processes. It’s not difficult, then, to

pressure groups have a vested interest in universalising the notion of abuse, making it almost as prevalent as original sin, but with the modern complication that it carries no possibility of redemption, only ‘survival’.

see why some celebrity elderly defendants, thrust into the glare of hostile publicity, including Dalek-style utterances from the police (‘offenders have nowhere to hide’), may conclude that resistance is useless. But the low-level misdemeanours with which Stuart Hall was charged are nothing like serious crime.

Touching a 17-year-old’s breast, kissing a 13-year-old, or putting one’s hand up a 16-year-old’s skirt, are not remotely comparable to the horrors of the Ealing Vicarage assaults and gang rape, or the Fordingbridge gang rape and murders, both dating from 1986. Anyone suggesting otherwise has lost touch with reality.

Ordinarily, Hall’s misdemeanors would not be prosecuted, and certainly not decades after the event. What we have here is the manipulation of the British criminal-justice system to produce scapegoats on demand. It is a grotesque spectacle.

It’s interesting that two complainants who waived anonymity have told how they rebuffed Hall’s advances. That is, they dealt with it at the time. Re-framing such experiences, as one solicitor did, as a ‘horrible personal tragedy’ is ironic, given that tragoidia means the fall of an honourable, worthy and important protagonist.

It’s time to end this prurient charade, which has nothing to do with justice or the public interest. Adults and law-enforcement agencies must stop fetishising victimhood. Instead, we should focus on arming today’s youngsters with the savoir-faire and social skills to avoid drifting into compromising situations, and prosecute modern crime. As for law reform, now regrettably necessary, my recommendations are: remove complainant anonymity; introduce a strict statute of limitations for criminal prosecutions and civil actions; and reduce the age of consent to 13.

Barbara Hewson is a barrister at Hardwicke in London.

This article under the title ‘Yewtree is destroying the rule of law’, first appeared in the 8th May edition of ‘Spiked’ magazine <http://www.spiked-online.com> from which it is reproduced with kind permission

[back to contents page](#)

Adoration of the Mafia

Mark Griffith

An American actor – a very fine actor – died a few weeks ago at the unfortunately early age of 51 from a heart attack. His passing has been marked by journalists with sadness and praise for his talents.

Yet there is an odd thing about the mourning at James Gandolfini's untimely death. It revolves around one role he played, that of a Mafia boss in *The Sopranos*. *The Atlantic Monthly*, not given to hyperbole, breathlessly gushed that his acting 'changed TV for ever', and 'brought Marlon-Brando-style complexity to the small screen'. Leaving aside that parochial dismissal of perhaps a dozen countries who had dramatic complexity on the small screen quite some time ago, like the 1950s, there is something else in the reverent tone here that should make us prick up our ears. Something important.

It's no surprise an actor is missed for the role he crafted as a much-loved murderer and hooligan, a 'complex character' who we feel for because he needs psychotherapy and sometimes looks thoughtfully into the distance. Pirates, bank robbers, bandits portrayed sympathetically are nothing new in fiction. We often want to identify in fantasy with the impetuous youngster who goes for the treasure, the dreamer who refuses to fit in.

Yet this is not quite what we have here. The Mafia in American fiction are not outsiders or rebels. They want to fit in. We sigh at their family weddings, we chuckle as they play with youngsters and speak avuncular platitudes about doing the right thing and honouring promises. We admire their love of old-fashioned suits and elegant women. And the role that Gandolfini made his own was taken seriously because Mafia stories are taken seriously. *The Godfather*, for example, was a well-made film, but look at just *how* heavily it gets lauded, its artistry discussed. Listen to how people mention films like *Once Upon a Time in America*, using words like 'saga', 'grandeur', and 'dynasty'. Their titles either nudge and wink with a hint of menace, or straightforwardly boast of gravitas.

The clue is in the word 'family', repeated *ad nauseam* in every mob flick. The peculiar fascination for Mafiosi among Americans and others brought up on their tastes,

is a deeply buried longing for hereditary aristocrats. Of course, they have it both ways because some 'Made Men' are self-made men, hauling themselves up from the gutter with nothing more than a knack for viciously extorting money from honest people. Yet as soon as this happens, and the coveted cigars and hand-made shirts heave into view, Il Patrone is concerned for what his sons will do, how the family business will continue after his death. What will be his *legacy*? To keep this thrilling private fantasy well hidden the mafia legend needs to oscillate – poor boy on the make one moment, landed grandee with offspring and dynasty the next. The juicily aristocratic soft centre is concealed

because the American self-made myth is so ardently republican and democratic – even if that's not the real history, it's what Americans believe now, and as Orwell said, he who controls the past controls the present.

Patriotic folk of the USA regard themselves as modern people par excellence, freshly-minted rationalists of the 18th century, unencumbered by ridiculous old ideas like inherited power. They of all people can never openly admit to hankering after powerful families using their privileges to uphold values of honour or nation. That (they declare repeatedly) is the bad old Britain they've by now convinced themselves they fought against in the 1770s.

Look how giddy many American women go if you spring a duke or countess on them unawares. Notice the strange fixation with those ill-fated, good-looking yet strikingly oikish politicians, the Kennedys, their name mentioned in reverent, hushed voices. Just one Kennedy generation back from 'Camelot', see the transatlantic fascination for gangster 'dynasties', their obvious yearning for continuity, even from thugs. The still undead love of Bram Stoker's 1890s rehash of the vampire myth, still filling US books and TV shows, is another sign. Vampires, however unhygienic their diets, have family trees. They inherit their status from the deep past. Powerful and aloof, well-dressed bloodsuckers frequent Baroque-looking castles or oldish 'Colonial' buildings.

But fictional Mafiosi (to the disgust of modern Italians who suffer real mafia politics) are the big

The peculiar fascination for Mafiosi among Americans and others brought up on their tastes, is a deeply buried longing for hereditary aristocrats.

giveaway to Americans' guiltiest secret crush. This disguised pin-up is the 'gentyl knight' of European ancestry. He's a hard man, ruthless, able to kill. Yet he has a conscience. If his sense of honour is passed down through his family and his class, we might look to him for protection. He guards his privileges coldly, yet he deals fairly with outsiders. He can punish and reward, unrestricted by two-faced little bureaucrats. Most important of all, he *is* somebody – meaning he has rank over others. In the final scene of Scorsese's film *Goodfellas*, the surviving gangster – now condemned to comfortable anonymity – regrets above all his loss of *status*. Our retired lout picks up a home-delivered pizza off his suburban doorstep and right there in the land of egalitarian classlessness murmurs nostalgically that he just doesn't get proper service any more. In contrast to the good old days when people were terrified of him of course. Minus the violence, he could be a pre-war marquis bemoaning the scarcity of decent staff.

The Cosa Nostra gentleman yob is crucially different from an earlier figure in America's collective subconscious: the Cowboy, the rugged individualist who appears from nowhere to enforce justice and protect the weak. The man in the ten-gallon hat has other guises (many wear underpants outside their leotards), but he's not obviously an aristocrat. The Cowboy is a survivor from an earlier era, perplexing and elusive. He comes, he kills bad people, he goes away again. He's a proud, anachronistic loner stalking the wasteland of 18th and 19th century liberalism, a Don Quixote who packs heat. Someone you hope exists out there as no-one else on the frontier seems bound by any rules at all.

Whereas the mobster, as his name shows, is

a clubbable fellow. The Mafioso has a wife and children. In *Goodfellas* the criminal hero has a brother in a wheelchair! Luigi even has kin (cousins, grandparents) and actually spends time with them. This really is something special for most Americans whose grandparents left their European clans, then kept moving job across the continent for another century every time scraps of extended family started building up around them. The Mafia paterfamilias desires a life filled with dignity, rituals and reminders of the past. He even – God help us – goes to church regularly. *There's* some irony we can feel sophisticated pondering. Does Catholic confession (or candour with your psychoanalyst) make a murderer a better man, or a worse hypocrite? For a nation set up by homesick Puritans, community-conscious criminals in crinkly marble churches are heady stuff.

The interesting question is how long before the USA admits its self-celebration as the post-feudal end of history was never quite honest? Before the old secret known to anyone who reads Latin or Greek becomes public again? That republics are not new inventions inevitably sweeping superstitious nonsense like monarchs aside, but are an old recurrent dream, rarely outlasting a couple of centuries... that republics are brief and fragile, and it is aristocracies of hereditary elites that are the stable norm through history. How long before Americans start looking at their founding myth and hidden yearnings with clearer eyes?

Mark Griffith is co-editor of Collateral Damage, a paperback collection of articles by 27 contributors about the economic crisis. He is currently working on a book titled America's Secret House of Lords.

[back to contents page](#)

Chuck 'em in and see who floats

Bill Hartley

There's nothing quite like Prison Service people when it comes to dusting off old ideas that don't work. The latest example is a proposal by Kevin Lockyer, a former Ministry of Justice deputy director, for the creation of a network of Super Prisons. It seemed such an excellent idea to Justice Secretary Chris Grayling he immediately announced the construction of a new prison near Wrexham with a planned capacity of 2,000.

And why not? A modern prison is substantially cheaper to run than an old Victorian jail like Wormwood Scrubs. Energy efficiency can be an integral part of the design and with information technology wired

into cells there should be no need for expensive staff. Unfortunately the Prison Service has a truly awful record when it comes to the design of new chokeys: Deerbolt in County Durham (campus design, officers isolated from colleagues in the event of a disturbance), Wymott in Lancashire, built on the basis that Category 'C' prisoners could be trusted to behave. Unfortunately they can't and when a riot occurred there was no defensible place from which to retake the prison. The army nearly had to be called in. 'Build your way out of the problem' has left prisons that are less than secure. One (I shall not name it for obvious reasons) has cells with a thin layer of bricks in the outer wall of the house

blocks. A bored prisoner picking away at the mortar was surprised to discover a new source of fresh air in his cell. Incidentally this prison is now to be run by a private security company. I wonder if they know?

Wetherby, a young offender jail in Yorkshire, was expanded using quick build methods. An angry teenager can make a Wetherby cell uninhabitable in minutes. For the officers limiting the damage comes second to reaching the water main, since with a sink off the wall flooding becomes a more serious problem. Advice was sought from contractors who created a cell less prone to vandalism. This was tested (unofficially) by giving it to the jail's most notorious vandal. He wrecked it in half an hour using his bare hands.

Buckley Hall prison in Lancashire is one of the worst examples of the quick build era. It is essentially a prefabricated construction: 'toughened portakabins' would be a good description. Originally under private sector control, the late Judge Tumim, sometime Chief Inspector of Prisons, once asked the director how long the prison was designed to last and received the reply; 'for as long as we have the contract.'

Ex RAF stations are particularly hated by prison guards as they absorb a lot of space and patrolling them is difficult. A prisoner in one took advantage of an unattended mechanical digger and used it to attack the mesh fence. The escape was foiled because the fence collapsed on the digger like a fishing net. Fences also have the disadvantage of allowing friends of prisoners to aim their packages of drugs when throwing them over.

Mr Lockyer believes that a Super Prison can be managed with the use of CCTV. No it can't. All CCTV does is provide evidence for the subsequent criminal investigation. Young prisoners on the rampage will act first and think later, if at all. There are some excellent examples of 'so what if there is a camera?' on file in our prisons. One victim of bullying in the gymnasium found his tormentors conveniently lined up at the food servery where he worked. Pausing only to add a bag of sugar to the day's swill (to make it stick to flesh) he drenched all three in the hot liquid. A well-positioned camera caught all the action. Deterrent value: nil.

Mr Lockyer of course won't have to govern a Super Prison and the question is: where will the man be found to do the job? The modern prison governor has little time for hands-on leadership. His job is to balance budgets and meet performance targets. Nothing wrong with that of course but in addition, governors (including governesses) are responsible for a *mélange* of cuddly politically correct initiatives. These are seen as just as important as hard performance measures. For the modern prison governor the Equalities Act gets more attention than security.

These days governors are selected by an elaborate process of assessment where 'core competencies' such as 'caring' are tested. Leadership is in there too but linked to 'decision making'. This is code for 'don't do anything until you've read the protocol'.

Candidates are so terrorised by political correctness that they are liable to view even innocuous remarks as 'unacceptable'. A role-player on an assessment found himself castigated for using the word 'pregnant' when referring to the condition of a female officer. One senior grade committed career suicide by making a mildly racist remark in an address to staff. Unfortunately there is no link between the words 'mild' and 'racist' in the Prison Service and ironically this was done during an attempt to display some visible leadership. He was rapidly denounced and purged.

In a vast Super Prison it is difficult to see how a governor would have time to check that senior staff are getting out and about to exercise supervision. Some will take their cue from the boss and chase performance targets from the comfort of their offices. Even in small prisons governors will admit they have little time for just walking about. As a former governor referring to his senior staff appointments put it to me: 'We chuck 'em in and see who floats.'

Being 'duty governor', that is, having operational control of the prison, is fraught with peril for a graduate of the assessment process, particularly since more experienced middle managers have left in droves via a series of early departure schemes. Those filling the gaps are often left with an alarming lack of what is known in the trade as 'jailcraft'. For example a prisoner driven to self-harm via bullying became violent and uncooperative and on the instructions of the duty governor was moved to the segregation unit. Unfortunately the perpetrators were already down there and able to continue the verbal torture from adjoining cell windows. The prisoner, by now in an even worse mental state, had to be placed on a very expensive 24-hour suicide watch.

'Out of hours' incidents, as they are known, can be a severe test of jail craft. When a spot of late night cell vandalism led to a wing being flooded due to a delay in turning off the water supply, the duty governor feared this might be a slip hazard when the prisoners were unlocked. She therefore had the bright idea of unlocking prisoners employed as cleaners to assist in mopping up operations. Forgetting to appreciate that prisoners should only be unlocked at night in emergencies she created a situation where the staff on duty were heavily outnumbered by the prisoners. Fortunately there was no riot but next morning the night staff complained to the governor about the stressful situation they had been placed in – before going sick

of course. The hapless duty governor was moved to another prison for ‘career development’.

Presiding over the Super Prisons concept is the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) a body created to get the prison and probation services working together as a seamless whole. In fact the two services show little interest in each other below senior management. Prison Officers view NOMS as an organisation which cares little for them and would much prefer to see prison warders as social workers in uniform. Which is why these days prisoners are routinely referred to as ‘offenders’ in the same way that social workers refer to the socially incompetent and feckless they deal with as ‘clients’. In that way neither group will feel too badly about themselves. However it makes the exercise of serious discipline hazardous to an officer’s career. Social workers are not meant to

confront their ‘clients’, which is perhaps what we are seeing with the man accused of killing Drummer Lee Rigby, Michael Adebolajo at Belmarsh Prison, and the suspension of a number of warders after they tried to restrain him.

This is the reality behind the plan for Super Prisons. Incarcerate 2,000 mostly young men who lack self-discipline and will resent it being imposed on them; overseen by prison officers reluctant or unable to impose firm discipline and governors who are first and foremost performance managers. Unless of course the idea is to put Super Prisons out to contract. Then if it all goes horribly wrong a private security company can take the blame.

Bill Hartley was a management consultant

[*back to contents page*](#)

The Most Important Man in your Life

Jane Kelly

Aged seventeen, Terry Sanderson, the son of a miner from Rotherham, founded a group campaigning for homosexual equality, the first the town had ever had. Unafraid of hostility he also decided to hold a gay disco in the Town Hall. The council refused to allow it, little knowing what they were up against.

The teenager wrote letters of complaint, lobbied full council meetings, persuaded the local press to support him, then took the matter to the government ombudsman, who found in his favour. The council still resisted, so he booked a room under a different name and invited every contact he had. The council caved in and soon he was organising discos for over 3,000 men.

It was the start of Terry Sanderson’s brilliant career in protest and agitation which is now impinging on all our lives. Terry, author of *Assertively Gay*, and *How To Be A Happy Homosexual*, is now President of the National Secular Society (NSS) and one of the most influential people in Britain, his name causing ripples of alarm from Woking Council to Beijing.

The National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh, MP, an atheist and republican, and the socialist Annie Besant. ‘When I joined it was still a Victorian club for atheists’, he says. ‘I have introduced

new technology and social media, and we are fighting for the total separation of church and state. Secularism is the issue of the 21st century, and the impetus for this change is unstoppable. We represent what most British people want, which is a secular society. We have hit the zeitgeist.’

The front door of his town house in a leafy London suburb opens with chimes playing *Für Elise* by Beethoven. In an untidy, crumb-freckled front room, there are busts of the great man, and of Frederick Delius, because one wrote the *Ode to Joy*, the theme tune of European republicanism, and the other was an atheist.

‘It was only later that I came to realise that Delius had written a Mass and a Requiem that were anti-religious,’ says Terry. ‘They are also gloriously wonderful. We like to have our heroes around.’

In crisp yellow shirt, jeans, slip-on shoes and greying beard, he looks like a fit elderly man, but the calm, pleasant manner and friendly blue eyes belie a zeal worthy of St Paul.

‘It is a bit me and Keith against the world,’ he says, referring to Keith Porteous Wood, Executive Director of NSS, his partner of 32 years.

Keith recently gave evidence to a UN Rights of the

Child committee in Geneva, after relentlessly alleging at the UN Human Rights Council that the former Pope concealed facts about child abuse. The NSS's presence at another UN forum was opposed by China, which inexplicably thinks they have a relationship with the Dalai Lama.

Many British people only woke up to their increasing influence in June this year, when the Guides dropped their rather touching 'promise to God'. In 1994 the original promise of 'Duty to God,' was replaced by 'Love my God,' to be more religiously inclusive, but when two parents complained that their daughters had been excluded from a Brownie enrolment because they were atheists, Terry immediately got involved. That was the end of the 103 year old relationship between God and the Guides. Terry has no sentimentality about our hallowed institutions.

'Traditions have to be congruent with the way that society is developing,' he says. 'A huge proportion of the population has no religion.'

In March last year, the NSS put paid to efforts by Christians to discriminate against homosexuals at work or wear religious emblems there regardless of health and safety concerns.

Nadia Eweida had appealed to the European Court after British Airways banned her from wearing a cross.

'The myth of that case has become deeply entrenched,' says Terry. 'But it was based on systematic lying. There was never a ban on crosses, only on wearing jewellery with a uniform. It took on the narrative of Christian persecution which was untrue. She and her supporters wanted religious privilege in the workplace.'

He is dedicated to fighting what he calls 'a hierarchy of rights' privileging theists. In 2010 the NSS made an attack on the tradition of council prayers after a councillor in Bideford, Devon, complained about them. He could have gone out of course. 'Why should he?' says Terry indignantly. 'Prayers should not be on a council agenda.'

The NSS said the Local Government Act did not empower the summoning of councillors to pray. In February 2012 they took it to the High Court who ruled in their favour. In June, Tory MP Matthew Offord, backed by Eric Pickles, introduced a bill to reintroduce prayers, asserting the 'Localism Act,' gave freedom to councils to pray.

'Pickles has made that up out of thin air,' says Terry, oozing contempt. 'There is no legal basis for this assertion. We now need a test case to clarify things.'

He obviously relishes a fight and there is no area where he will not root out unfairness based on faith. In June the NSS took Woking Council to court, under the Equality Act, 2010, because Anglican, Evangelical and Methodist Churches had been provided by the

council with ticket machines valid between 9.30am and 1pm on Sundays.

This 'pray and display' fight started when Keith drove to Woking and was forced to pay £3 in the car park while church goers didn't. Later a Woking resident took out a freedom of information order, which estimated that this exemption costs the council £55,000 per annum. The council estimates it at £41,000. The NSS often seems preoccupied with the issue of taxpayers' money.

They've consulted the European Commission about the rights of non-religious teachers in faith schools, been highly vocal over Bed & Breakfast proprietors who refuse homosexual guests, but their chief target has been the Catholic church.

Terry got 25,000 people out to protest against the previous Pope's visit to the UK, claiming it cost £20 million. Apart from harrying the Holy See through the UN, he is unrepentant about the closure of Catholic adoption agencies in the UK. 'Some were doing good work,' he admits. 'But gay couples can now adopt and they must deal with that.'

It has been an unusual life for a miner's son from Maltby, in south Yorkshire.

'My father was a tough man' he says. 'He never spoke about religion. My mother said she was a Christian but never went to church. The church didn't offer anything to our community. At the age of fourteen he got the impression that you had to be something, you couldn't believe in nothing. I couldn't work it out. I went on a pilgrimage from Rotherham to Kathmandu and came to the conclusion that religion is all crackers and you don't have to believe in any of it.'

He says he had a 'fabulous childhood' with two brothers, one who became a miner and lost a leg, the other an engineer, and endless cousins. He 'came out,' at seventeen. 'It wasn't as hard as I thought,' he says. 'We were such a close family that they wouldn't reject you for that.'

He would have liked to be a stand-up comic but says he didn't have the confidence, 'not the right background,' so he became a nurse in Rotherham General. In the 1970s the rising tide of gay politics swept him up.

'Being gay was the impetus for my feeling for justice,' he says.

By the time he got permission for gay discos he was already interested in moving to London where the gay scene was decidedly 'out'. He got a job in a mental hospital, saw an advert in the *New Statesman* for a job on Claire Rayner's Agony page in *Woman's Own*, got the job and Rayner later joined the NSS. 1982 he started a column on the *Gay Times*, which lasted twenty five years. When a Christian publisher objected to one of

his nine books describing the homosexual lifestyle, he established the 'Other way Press'.

All his adult life he has been involved in protest. 'My mother would say, "I hope you know what you're doing,"' he says, 'and, "don't get into trouble,"' but he says with some relish that he has shared police cells with campaigner Peter Tatchell and gay film director Derek Jarman.

At sixty-seven he shows no sign of mellowing, in fact the opposite. 'I do wish I had started this work for secularism earlier,' he says. He works seven days a week, sometimes sixteen hours a day, often getting up at 5am for breakfast broadcasts. He speaks, blogs and writes a weekly newsletter and they raise all funds themselves.

'If we win in court we don't pay,' he says. 'It's a gamble, but there's plenty of dosh, accumulated over a century, and our members are generous.'

Many of them are wealthy and successful, like Harold Pinter, comedian Ricky Gervais, A C Grayling, Richard Dawkins, and Jonathan Miller.

His next target is Bishops in the House of Lords, and the Monarchy. 'We've been trying to get rid of the Bishops since Bradlaugh's time,' he says. 'In the end we will win, because even the Archbishop of Canterbury accepts that it's no longer feasible for them to be there.'

But it seems that even he can't help liking the Queen. 'The Church has to be disestablished,' he says, 'that's our primary goal, but she can remain as head of state.'

He's not so keen on Charles and has plans for his coronation. 'It can't be Anglican because we are now multi-faith,' he says. 'There is a parliamentary

committee already looking at this.'

He has a clear vision of how a future Britain should look. 'We are nearly there,' he says. But the NSS is also involved in campaigns where the zeitgeist may not help. In 2011 they backed, 'One Law For All,' a bill opposing Sharia courts.

'They are beginning to push their powers beyond arbitration towards custody and inheritance,' he says, 'which directly affect Muslim women who may not know their rights in civil law.'

He lost that one. The bill never made any progress. The NSS is also fighting the Halal food industry, now estimated to be worth \$2.3 trillion world-wide, demanding that all meat in the UK should be labelled so that no one buys Halal by mistake. Two private members bills have tried and failed to do this, but Terry has never been known to back down.

Armed by ruthless certainty and supported, he thinks, by the mood of our times, he believes we are moving towards a more truly equal, secular society. But perhaps some of that mood is based on fear.

'You can't have a state religion if that means one faith is favoured over others,' he says. 'Demographic trends show that Muslims will soon outnumber Christians. Do you want them as your state church? We must fight now for secularism because what's coming is going to be difficult to control. The NSS is your best friend.'

It's one many of us never expected to have, but he is almost convincing.

Jane Kelly worked for the Daily Mail as a celebrity interviewer.

[back to contents page](#)

A Cure for Love?

Myles Harris

How can you tell the sex of a chromosome? Take down its genes,' goes the joke. Is the same true of romantic love? US scientists noticed that the North American prairie vole *Microtus montanus* is a true libertine. It copulates randomly. On the other hand a close cousin, *Microtus ochrogaster*, remains monogamous throughout life. The reason is a sequence of chemicals in one of its genes, which, if inserted into its rakish cousin, *Microtus montanus*, causes the latter to become as continent as a Pilgrim Father.

The MRI scanner allows us to watch the chemical dance of love inside the human head. Confirming the

Rolling Stones' song 'I can't get no satisfaction', love lights up the same pleasure reward areas as cocaine. The switch is a chemical called dopamine, a form of natural opiate released by the same tiny nerve fibrils which, whenever you gain a reward – be it a night of love, a deep drag on a longed for cigarette, or the relief of the obsessive compulsive when she successfully closes the front door of her house fifty times in sequences of five, creates a surge of well being. We are pleasure-reward machines ascending a chemical escalator. The more cocaine you snort the more you desire it, the more you see of the loved one the more you fall in love.

Like all escalators, this one goes down as well as up. Love can be reversed by looking at a photograph of the beloved and counting backward from randomly chosen four digit numbers in steps of seven. But within seconds of stopping the chemicals come crowding back and the dance resumes. Nor does the dance cease if one of the partners quits the floor. Helen Fisher and Arthur Aron from the State University of New York at Stony Brook and Lucy Brown from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, responsible for much of the work described above, examined what happens when love goes wrong. 'We all get dumped at one point or another,' Fisher says, 'so I wanted to see what happens in the brain when you are rejected in love.' Fisher observed 'a lot happens in the brain when you look at a photo of someone who has just abandoned you, including activity in brain regions associated with physical pain, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, controlling anger, and regions that we use when we are trying to speculate on what someone else is thinking. . . it also appears that when you get dumped you start to love your rejecting partner even harder'. After two years the great variety of hormone changes seen in the lovestruck disappear.

*Oh, when I was in love with you
Then I was clean and brave,
And miles around the wonder grew
How well did I behave.*

*And now the fancy passes by
And nothing will remain,
And miles around they'll say that I
Am quite myself again.*

The obvious explanation is that love is blind because Nature desires a thorough mixing of the genes, the less compatible the better, and were it not for the fairy dust of natural opiates we would run a mile from our prospective partners. Instead we enter a dangerous sleep of a couple of years and wake up not only to the loved one farting in his sleep, but the cry of children down the hall.

Will there be a cure for love? Neurology is at the stage of microbiology in the late nineteenth century when a chemical cure for pneumonia was unimaginable. But a hundred years worth of advances then now only take twenty five. We have all heard of serotonin uptake inhibitors such as Prozac which not only lift depression but reduce sexual drive and cause impotence. Neurologists have discovered unusually low levels of the chemical serotonin in lovers' brains. Somewhere there will be a chain of chemicals that can be manipulated.

True, our understanding of the interplay of chemicals in the dense forest of neurones within our skulls, chemicals which flit like birds and insects from tree to

tree in a rain forest, has not revealed the precise pathway that love takes, but we will know it – just as we know of the existence of a chemical pathway in our cells which converts the food derived from the sun's energy into the energy we use to walk around. We once thought we were God's special creatures; instead we are solar powered automatons.

In fifty years time will GPs be writing as many prescriptions for love-reversing chemicals as they now do for antidepressants? Will there be cures for romantic love, even love philtres? Could arranged marriages be made tolerable by doses of a love-inducing chemical, or ones that have gone badly astray resuscitated? Life would be hard for divorce lawyers. Judges might refuse to hear divorce petitions unless they have sight of medical certificates showing a cure has been tried. Literature will suffer. Romeo's call for Juliet will ring hollow when we know we are listening to a hormone-induced psychosis about as willed as a bowel movement.

Such notions alarm philosophers who argue that even if we know the entire chemistry of the brain, it will tell us no more about the nature of love than a piano tuner can explain a Bach fugue. They could be as disappointed as the Princes of the Catholic Church who once thought they had made a corner in the theory of love. Physical love, they taught, was a pale shadow of God's love and should only be indulged in for the creation of new souls, but without pleasure.

In 1543 the marvellous anatomical plates of the anatomist Andreas Vesalius in *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* set the scene, along with many other scientific discoveries of the Renaissance, for the destruction of Christianity. They did not question the church's teaching, but they made educated people uneasy. Why hadn't Christ said anything about the similarity of the human body to other animals, or that the earth went around the sun? Maybe he didn't know? Or was it part of his plan to keep man in ignorance of his physical place in creation?

Similarly neurochemistry makes the modern materialist uneasy. Rightly because of its potential for abuse, but also because it challenges socialist materialism's religious assumption that we are a product of blind, purposeless evolution and consciousness is a chemical accident which, like a spark in a forest, has lit a small fire, but one which will soon flicker out for the meaningless darkness to return. Just as the medieval church was anxious that the faithful should be kept in a constant state of despair, so is the 21st century rationalist. Frightened believers are easily exploited.

Discoveries in neuroscience do not support the idea of creation being blind and one would be a fool to think something as complex as the mind, with its weird ability to understand maths, which has no physical reality, is

just a chemical accident. Neurones, not just those in man, exhibit ‘tropism’; they appear to be purposeful and therefore violate the theory of evolution. The brain can turn immaterial ideas into physical objects which can give us control over our biological destiny. The biologist Leeuwenhoek (1632) imagined a microscope, built it, then looked down it at a world that no one knew existed. Two hundred years later the microscope gave us cures for bacterial disease. Then ‘the pill’, an idea which first took shape on a blackboard, took the ‘natural’ out of natural selection. By the year 2025 another idea, a manned spaceship with men and women on board, will land on Mars. Within the next century we may make radio contact with our nearest star. Far from the forest fire of consciousness flickering out, it is spreading.

While romantic love may be no more than a play on a biochemical stage, blinding its victims to another’s defects long enough to produce offspring, it has a purpose. It

creates new brains, fragments of the cosmos that can think, reason, number, ruminate on moral problems and write ‘Ode to a Nightingale’. What other structures out there might be able to reason? How come the mind has intent when the universe is supposed to be Dawkins-blind?

Meanwhile chemistry may yet relieve the pain of love. Seeing the suffering and violence love causes it will be no more a loss than the Romans giving up the Games. They were fun, but now we have football. Perhaps we will invent the chemical equivalent of the beautiful game as a substitute for love. It will never beat ‘Ode to a Nightingale’.

(Ref *Cupid’s Chemisty*. Royal Society of Chemistry Feb 2006.)

Poem: A E Houseman, ‘Oh When I was in Love with You’, *A Shropshire Lad*, 1896.

[back to contents page](#)

Surrendering the Heights of Abraham

Ricardo Duchesne

Last year, *Maclean’s* (July 9) had a front cover story ‘How Canadian Are You? — bumptiously announcing that Canadians have earned the right to brag as a people with a great culture. It offered an endearing ‘Canada Day Special’ quiz for readers to determine how Canadian they were. How much do you weigh? How many servings of veggies do you eat a day? How many times a week do you have sex? Should the NHL ban fighting? How many partial curl-ups do you do in one minute? If you scored between 20 and 25, you earned ‘bragging rights,’ you are ‘a quintessential Canadian’. But if you scored between 5 and 9, you are lacking in ‘Canadian pride,’ you are not in the right country.

This is what contemporary Canadian identity has become after five decades of mass immigration combined with endless pageants to multiculturalism. The idea that Canada has no other identity than ethnic diversity has been encrypted into our brains starting with Pierre Trudeau’s announcement in Parliament in 1971:

We believe that cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values

within the Canadian context. To say we have two official languages is not to say we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more ‘official’ than another.

According to Trudeau, every ethnic identity in the world is and can become equally Canadian. The British and the French are no more important to the making of Canada’s identity than the Chinese, Muslim, Mali, or Latino Canadian.

The ‘White Canada’ policy laid down in the Immigration Act of 1910, and extended in the Immigration Act of 1952, ended in the Immigration Regulations of 1967, when a non-racial set of admission criteria was adopted. According to those Regulations, the Act of 1952 was unpardonable. Today, no one cares to consider that the justification behind the ‘White Canada’ immigration policy was the preservation and cementation of the primary role of Canada’s founding peoples of European origin. The idea that other peoples (who had taken no part in the settlement efforts and in the centuries-long creation of the institutions and infrastructure of Canada) might simply arrive in mass numbers to claim Canada as equally their own was anathema to Canadians before

the establishment of multiculturalism.

Trudeau was plainly wrong that multiculturalism was a 'more accurate' description of Canada's historical culture than the idea of two founding peoples, the French and British. In 1971, the French and the British still constituted 74 percent of the population, and over 95 percent of the population was European. All the institutions, values, religions, and languages were overwhelmingly British and French. But historical accuracy was not the point: multiculturalism was a project for the future *against the past*. 'Racism and bigotry' were a 'large part' of Canada's 'official' history and tradition as a European nation. This once-official view would no longer be tolerated.

The new 1967 immigration regulations emphasizing skill and education rather than ethnic origins were not brought on by popular demand or even parliamentary debate and initiative, but by senior Ministers and Cabinet officials who, in the words of one observer, 'did not trust the average Canadian to respond in a positive way on this issue'. Gallup polls in the 60s showed that only about one third of Canadians thought that Canada should invite new immigrants, and over 60 percent thought that the fairly low levels of Asian immigration (at the time) were already too high. In complete disregard to Canadian popular wishes, the borders of Canada were set wide open.

The number of immigrants coming each year into Canada since the early 1990s has been staggering, roughly between 225,000 and 260,000 immigrants per year, mostly from non-European nations. By 2011 the foreign-born population of Canada stood at 20.6 per cent. Settling mostly in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, immigrants have radically transformed the cultural composition and socio-ethnic dynamics of Canada's major cities. Today, the mainstream media and the academic world take great pleasure in labelling our immigration policy prior to 1967 as 'racist and exclusionary'. But this cultural Marxist assessment of Canadian perceptions should not be trusted. Canadians then were part of a Western world committed and strongly attached to the idea that every individual citizen of Canada should be treated equally under the law without discrimination based on race, national origin, or religion. They were not racist; they were merely ethnocentric, a people with a natural and normal preference for their own ethnic traditions. Ethnic groups throughout the world exhibit a preference for their own culture.

Recent scientific research shows that ethnocentrism is a healthy evaluation of one's ethnic identity and interests consistent with evolutionary theory and cultural sophistication. This is the argument ethnocentric individuals can opportunely take from

a scientific paper published in *Psychological and Cognitive Sciences* (January 2011), with the fitting title: 'Oxytocin promotes human ethnocentrism'. Written by a research team at the University of Amsterdam, directed by Dr Carsten de Dreu, this article shows that oxytocin is a human molecule associated with in-group favoritism and out-group derogation. Through a series of experiments in which participants were administered doses of oxytocin, the researchers learned that 'a key mechanism facilitating in-group cooperation is ethnocentrism, the tendency to view one's group as centrally important and as superior to other groups' at the expense of an out-group.

How, then, did European Canadians come to accept the idea that it is racist and xenophobic to exhibit preference for one's own ethnicity and heritage, while believing, at the same time, that every non-European ethnic group has a right to preserve its own culture inside Canada? It should be noted that the relentless promotion of diversity and mass immigration, despite some variations, has been a Western-wide phenomenon since the 1960s. The American President Lyndon B Johnson signed the Immigration Act of 1965 that led to a tremendous surge in immigration from Mexico and Asia in the decades that followed. Eight years later the 'White Australia Policy' came to an end, resulting in a massive influx of ethnocentric Asians.

Western European nations have also seen their cultures swamped by immigration and diversity. The British Nationality Act of 1948 affirmed the right of Commonwealth citizens (including those of newly independent Commonwealth countries like India) to settle in the United Kingdom. Commonwealth immigration rose from 3,000 per year in 1953 to 46,800 in 1956 and 136,400 in 1961. Despite some restrictions requiring migrants to have a 'substantial connection with the United Kingdom' by birth or ancestry, in the 1970s, averages of 72,000 immigrants were settling in the UK every year from the Commonwealth; and in the 1980s and early 1990s around 54,000 per year, rising to around 97,000 by 1999. About half the population increase in Britain between the 1991 and 2001 censuses was due to foreign-born immigration. By 2012, White British had dropped from 87.5 per cent of the population in 2001 to 80.5 per cent. White Britons in London, in 2012, accounted for less than half (almost 45 per cent) of its population, and more than one in three London residents is foreign-born. Diversity was strenuously enforced through incessant media campaigns including the transformation of the entire curriculum from *pre-Kinder* onwards away from any historic pride in the British heritage. Similar changes have been brought by liberal elites in France, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, and increasingly as well in

Norway, Switzerland, and Ireland.

Some will argue that these changes were ‘sensible’ components of worldwide trends toward globalization. The fact is that Asia’s now advanced economies have seen international trade and investment represent ever growing portions in their economies, but Asia has not seen migrants grow as a share of its population. In fact, immigrants have accounted for a mere 1.4-1.6 per cent of Asia’s population over the past twenty years – despite fertility rates well below replacement levels in Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and other Asian countries.

If I had to choose one reason why Western countries decided to negate their European heritage, I would say it was the twin ideologies of universalism and egalitarianism. By universal egalitarianism, I mean the idea that humans are essentially the same everywhere, and that our ethnicities and cultural ancestries are either superficial or easy to transform through proper instruction in the acquisition of modern ‘universal values’ such as civic equality, tolerance, affluence, and democratic participation. Liberal elites in the post-WWII era believed they represented the highest ideals of humanity; it was their moral obligation to showcase these values to the world. Humanity could be united under these values with different ethnic groups co-existing and interbreeding in the same lands in an atmosphere of liberal affluence and intercultural dialogue.

These ideas preceded the 60s with roots going back to the Enlightenment and perhaps even to early Christianity. The senior government officials who introduced non-racial immigration rules in Canada in the 60s were influenced by the ideas which led to the creation of the United Nations and a multiracial Commonwealth. The UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights in 1948, the UNESCO statements on race (1950, 1951, 1964, 1967), with their language about a common humanity, which arose directly from the experience of Nazism, made some politicians uncomfortable with a Canada acting on the world stage as a democratic and liberal nation while excluding non-Whites from its borders. The Immigration Act of 1952 seemed old, exclusionary, and illiberal.

This love for a non-ethnocentric humanity, projected onto a benign future that was not real, entailed a growing dislike and intolerance for the actual Canadian population of European ethnic origin. In 1971, this European population constituted about 96 percent of Canada’s demography. This existing European population still sympathized with the observation by Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1947:

The people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the

character of our population. Large-scale immigration from the Orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population.

But liberal elites, as the radical 60s spread, were determined to re-engineer the souls of average Canadians. There was no national debate on multiculturalism and mass immigration. Canadian immigration policy proceeded for the most part by way of non-transparent regulations, executive directives, and administrative discretion, not by legislative action.

Immediately after Trudeau’s 1971 announcement, numerous programs were implemented: multicultural grants, support for Canadian ethnic studies ‘to set the record straight’ by reflecting Canada’s diverse cultural traditions. All ethnic groups were to be seen as equal in the making of Canada. Never mind the actual historical and political fact of the two founding peoples of Canadian Confederation! With grants freely available, there was, in the words of one observer, an ‘explosion of academic research into ethnicity.’ A new discipline, ‘Canadian Ethnic Studies,’ was born, soon to proliferate throughout the halls of academe. This was just the beginning of a ‘bonanza of remarkable proportions’ in the promotion of multiculturalism through every level of society. In June 1984, the Conservative Leader Brian Mulroney told a cheering crowd that his party now stood for multiculturalism and would not allow itself to be called ‘the Party of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants’. Multicultural diversity, he said, was an absolutely obligatory part of Canada’s national identity and to reject it was to reject Canada. He then outlined future changes his party intended to implement in the hiring policies of the federal government, services in non-official languages, more funds for the preservation and advancement of non-European cultures and greater efforts to ‘stamp out racism wherever it rears its ugly head’.

This stamping out was directed singularly against the British people and their legacy in Canada. The French in Quebec had successfully managed to portray themselves, from the 60s onwards, as an oppressed minority within Canada with its own legitimate identity seeking a new constitutional deal framed against Anglo Canada. It was the British, and then the Europeans who had assimilated to English Canada, who were being asked to relinquish any sense of culture deeply grounded in ethnic bonds, ancestry, and homeland. The ethnicity of Quebecers, and of Native peoples, could be viewed in primordialist terms as deeply rooted in their lands, communities, histories, and customary identities. But normal British and English Europeans were prohibited from binding themselves to a geographical and cultural ‘homeland’. Their ethnicity was to be de-linked from a homeland called ‘Canada’.

There was no such thing as a Canadian identity that could be linked primordially to the British or the English-Europeans. The European-Canadian identity was to be witnessed only in multicultural tolerance, pluralist values, democracy, and diversity. But since these values were ‘universal’ — for ‘humanity’ — they would not be seen as uniquely British or European. On the contrary, these values would be used against any British sense of identity for the sake of protecting and promoting the ethnic pride of non-Europeans. Asians, Blacks, and Latinos had the right to preserve their own ethnic roots and culture in a multicultural Canada. They would have hyphenated identities such as ‘I am really Chinese, but I live in mosaic Canada,’ or ‘I have ethnic Chinese roots, but I identify with Canadian diversity and democracy.’

Since the British were allegedly the agents of racist and exclusionary immigration practices, whereas the immigrants (including the millions who were not yet in Canada) were the victims of such practices, multiculturalism thus worked necessarily as a force against British identity and as a force for non-European identities. To this day, every day, media pundits and self-righteous academics insist that racism is experienced by immigrants of visible status and that a ‘major goal of multiculturalism must be to eliminate racism.’ Forget that visible immigrants come from illiberal, racially ranked and backward cultures, and that individual rights and non-racial discrimination policies were unique legacies of the British, and that visible immigrants in Canada are far more uncomfortable with other visible groups than are European Canadians. The point is that racism per se has been inexorably tied to the ethnocentrism of British/European Canada, and so the elimination of racism requires the eradication of British and European identity. Some iconic symbols and practices such as the maple leaf, hockey players, and calendar photographs of Lake Louise may be

allowed. The *Macleans* Canadian ‘with bragging rights’ should ask for no more.

We should critically examine the unfounded notion that European ethnocentrism, and only European ethnocentrism, amounts to ‘ethnic cleansing’, ‘fanaticism,’ and ‘violence’ against outsiders. Japan, Korea, and many other countries, have a very high degree of ethnic homogeneity, as do some Nordic European countries (Finland, Norway, and also Switzerland), but none of them are engaged in wars of exclusion and violence against other ethnic groups. Ending mass immigration and multiculturalism in the West is not an act of exclusion and racism. It is the other way around: these policies have amounted to acts of exclusion and dispossession against the historic British and European peoples of Canada. Ethnocentrism means loyalty and commitment for one’s group; it does not entail hatred and rancour against other groups.

The multiculturalists are the ones who have infused politics with an intolerant ideology in which anyone proud of his European heritage and refusing to join the multiculti choruses is despised as a xenophobic outsider. The irony of creating a ‘universal humanity’ is that it has required the dehumanization of the British people, or any particular European group, wishing to retain its identity. Multiculturalists advocate in-group favouritism for immigrants and cultural Marxists, on the one hand, and, on the other, out-group hate for those Canadians who love their European heritage. Their position runs counter to the actual ethnic diversity of the peoples of the earth. Why would the Japanese, Koreans, and Pakistanis want their countries to look like ‘diverse’ Toronto? Let us defend European ethnocentrism in the name of human nature and the true diversity of the peoples of the planet.

Ricardo Duchesne is a professor in the department of social science at the University of New Brunswick Saint John.

[back to contents page](#)



"If the government continues with its hate campaign against older people it may be safer to wear burkas when we go out."

Silver Threads Among the Gold

John Phelan

To the south are Europe's debtor nations. With their incomes slumping and debt burdens rising and wanting a little inflation they are demanding the monetary authorities start printing more money. To the north are the creditors. Anxious that rising income from their manufacturing output will buy tomorrow what it will buy today they, by contrast, demand monetary discipline.

This is an apt description of contemporary Europe as well as a description of the United States in the late 19th century. Instead of Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal we had the indebted farmers of the South and Great Plains demanding the inflationary coinage of silver. Instead of Angela Merkel and the German Bundesbank, we had the bankers and industrial workers of the north-eastern United States urging sound money and adherence to the gold standard.

The United States Constitution gave Congress the power 'To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin' and a Coinage Act was passed in 1792. If you took your silver or gold to the mint it would be turned into coins without limit and for only a small charge (known as *brassage*). A dollar could contain either 24.75 grains of pure gold or 371.25 grains of pure silver, a bimetallic system in which the ratio of gold to silver was 15:1.

This held as long as the price of gold and silver remained fixed. But if you could get more on the open market for the gold or silver in a dollar you sold. After 1792 gold was undervalued and a *de facto* silver standard came about; after 1834 silver was undervalued and a *de facto* gold standard came about.

Convertibility was suspended on the outbreak of the Civil War so both sides could fund the war with paper money. In order to cure the subsequent inflation a new Coinage Act was passed in 1873 aiming to restore gold convertibility by 1879. Considering the controversy it would subsequently generate this Act passed unremarked but it was a clear break in American monetary affairs. While it allowed for free coinage of gold to resume in 1879 it said nothing about silver. This *de jure* demonetising of silver was little noticed as it had been *de facto* demonetised since 1834.

Two things pushed the monetary question back to prominence. One was a rise in the gold/silver ratio from around 16:1 in the early 1870s to 30:1 by 1896 owing to an increased international demand for gold and an

increased supply of silver. Another was agricultural hardship. Between 1872 and 1895 on US farms average wheat prices fell by 59 per cent. The price of cotton fell by 55.5 per cent between 1881 and 1890. This crippled heavily indebted farmers in the south and Midwest.

There were two explanations. One credited the fall in prices to dramatic agricultural productivity increases which saw cotton production expand by 111 per cent and wheat production by 446 per cent between 1859 and 1919. The economic critic Edward Atkinson poured scorn on either gold or silver having any part to play in a widespread fall in prices. It was due to technology. 'There is not a single commodity which has been subject to a considerable fall in price since 1873 or 1865, of which that change or decline in price cannot be traced to specific applications of science or invention...either to the production or distribution of that specific article without any reference whatever to the change in the ratio of gold to silver.'

The other, favoured in agricultural areas, blamed the fall in food prices on a deflationary shrinkage in the money supply following the 1873 demonetisation of silver, which 'Silverites' called 'The crime of 1873'. Figures emerged showing that money per capita in circulation had fallen from a peak of \$31.18 in 1865 to \$20.00 between 1875 and 1896. 'Money in the business world and blood in the body perform the same functions and seem to be governed by similar laws' commented Illinois governor John Peter Altgeld, 'When the quantity of either is reduced the patient becomes weak and what blood or money is left rushes to the heart, or center, while the extremities grow cold'

A succession of organisations arose seeking the remonetisation of silver at 16:1, a *de facto* silver standard. The most successful was the Populist Party under whose pressure the Democrats adopted a free silver policy in 1896.

These parties nominated Nebraska's William Jennings Bryan for president that year. Bryan, a gifted orator to his supporters, a demagogue to his opponents, thundered famously at the Democratic convention in Chicago 'You shall not press down upon the brow of labour this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold'. To Bryan his opponents were 'creditors; they hold our bonds, and our mortgages, and as the dollars increase in purchasing power, our debts increase and the holders of our bonds

and mortgages gather in an unearned increment’.

The Republicans raised the gold standard with little enthusiasm; their traditional economic panacea was protectionism. Their nominee, Ohio’s William McKinley, had made his reputation on the tariff issue. Unlike Bryan, he won the nomination thanks to diligent preparation. While Bryan stumped 18,000 miles round the country McKinley stayed in Canton, Ohio, reasoning ‘I might just as well put up a trapeze on my front lawn and compete with some professional athlete as go out speaking against Bryan’. There he pushed the themes of the tariff and sound money; ‘We know what partial free trade has done for the labour of the United States. It has diminished its employment and earnings. We do not propose now to inaugurate a currency system that will cheat labour in its pay.’

McKinley won. Just as silver had a popular constituency so did gold. It was found among industrial workers, many of them German immigrants, who saw their real wages increase by 18 per cent between 1879 and 1889. When, in previously Democrat and heavily German Milwaukee, the Democratic candidate said that ‘gold, silver, copper, paper, sauerkraut or sausages’ could serve as money Milwaukee went Republican.

And almost as soon as the election was over prices began to rise as new gold discoveries increased

the money supply. Whether this was due to luck or equilibrating tendencies in the gold standard is still disputed.

What lessons can modern Europe draw? German sentiment this side of the Atlantic has not changed from that of their 19th century Republican compatriots. Last year German Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann reminded Germans of the foolishness of money printing, of how in Goethe’s *Mephistopheles* the Devil dressed as a court jester gets the emperor’s signature on a piece of paper, which becomes money. Then he tells all who will listen that they can use it to ‘drown their desires with love and wine’.

Over the Alps the equivalent of a US 19th century Democrat is the court jester Silvio Berlusconi, who won Italy’s last election for a coalition of quasi-liberal parties by promising to abolish a hated property tax, a move similar to cancelling the council tax in Britain and printing paper to cover the loss. ‘Love and wine’ worked for Berlusconi but will it work for the Southern Debtors?

And here, if not before, the historical analogy breaks down. There is no light at the end of the Euro-tunnel.

John Phelan is a Fellow the Cobden Centre and Contributing Editor of The Commentator.

[back to contents page](#)

Australia’s Greenie Bike-Riding Ruling Class

Daryl McCann

British-born journalist Nick Cater emigrated to Australia in 1989 and his career never looked back. For nine years now he has been a senior editor at Murdoch’s flagship newspaper *The Australian*. Cater’s *The Lucky Culture: And the Rise of an Australian Ruling Class* (2013) argues that the good old days of Australian egalitarianism are now under threat from ‘a knowledge-owning nobility’. Cater asserts that where a spirit of fraternity and mateship once held sway in our young nation, and with it a sense of fairness and non-doctrinaire tolerance, now divisiveness rules. ‘Classless Australia’ might be becoming a thing of the past.

Cater, as a veritable new chum, makes any number of sharp and insightful observations about his adopted homeland. He loves the sheer physicality of the place, the generosity of the people and the warmth of the

climate, and that the promise of ‘wealth for toil’ is not just a throwaway line in the national anthem. He welcomes the fact that the old cultural cringe has mostly gone because Australians have ‘shaken the minatory Englishman from their shoulder’. The Great Southern Land, economically robust and blessed in the most part with ‘lifters, not leaners’, is ready to find its own unique destiny in the world.

The marvel of Cater’s *The Lucky Culture* is the author’s determination to confront the darkness in paradise. Australia’s ‘new class’ might not be beholden to the opinions of the Mother Country, but this clique of post-nationalist sophisticates has embraced the ‘doctrine of the self-declared *world citizen*’ and declared war on everything from traditional patriotism to the nation’s very sovereignty. The heroes in Cater’s narrative, on the other hand, are ‘true blue’

Aussies, low-key versions of Mick in *Crocodile Dundee*, unceremonious and unaffected but never to be underestimated.

There is a degree of romanticisation in all this. While Manning Clark's neo-Marxian rendering of Australia's history has more in common with fiction than actuality, Cater's assertion of an Australian golden age in which there were 'no institutional barriers to success' and the only impediments to achievement were 'personal deficits of imagination, energy and courage' is also partly myth. Sitting 'next to, not behind' an Australian taxi-driver says something about egalitarianism in the Land of Oz, but not nearly as much as a visitor might assume.

Cater, along these same lines, writes favourably of 'the tall poppy syndrome', the long-established tendency of Australians to cut down to size people who excel in their field of endeavour, sport excluded, of course. In many ways, *The Lucky Culture* is intended as a replacement, or even critique, of Donald Horne's *The Lucky Country: Australia in the 60s* (1964), a lament by the granddaddy of 'the *bunyip alumni*' (pommies will have to look this up) on the unimaginative and suffocating provincialism of his fellow citizens. The difference between the two perspectives is that where Horne saw mediocrity and insularity in Australian suburbia, Cater now discovers common sense and pragmatism.

Cater claims that salt-of-the-earth suburbanians are being increasingly subjugated by a tertiary-educated, inner city, culturally attuned *bunyip alumni*. The latter do not 'simply feel *better off* but *better* than their fellow Australians'. The social research figures tend to confirm the idea that those who live in fashionable inner city suburbs and are tertiary educated will more likely classify themselves as 'open minded'. According to Cater, the worldview of this elite is not so much a political ideology – 'only the freakish few are genuinely driven by ideology' – but a consequence of their shared sense of moral, aesthetic, financial and intellectual superiority over outer-suburban vulgarians.

One problem with this is the mechanistic, almost Marxian, matching of left-liberal voting intentions with life-style. It is, after all, possible to be vegetarian, own an apartment in the city, appreciate fine art, enjoy organic coffee, travel the world and *not* buy into Catastrophic Anthropogenic Global Warming (CAGW) theory. Similarly, there are those who live modestly enough in Australia's outer suburbs or remote towns but see the merits of CAGW theory, the anti-Israeli Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, the United Nations and so on *ad infinitum*. For this we can thank the PC cant promulgated by progressive journalists, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) spin-

meisters, cultural institutions, enviro-activists, the education system, American television, religious ministers, academics in the media, and one branch or other of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

The contention of *The Lucky Country* that a great divide has opened up in Australia seems incontrovertible, but his portrayal of the split as primarily sociological rather than ideological might not tell the full story. Cater correctly notes that the ALP was lost by the Old Left as far back as 1967 when Whitlam and his co-conspirators hijacked the organisation for their own purposes. It is undeniable that the Whitlamites were tertiary-educated and middle-class and, to some degree, fit Cater's 'knowledge-owning nobility' categorization. As he says: 'They were doctors, attorneys, architects and teachers; if perchance they worked for a bank, they were more likely to be poverty consultants than tellers.' However, not all professionals – teachers aside, perhaps – were attracted to Whitlam's cause. It was the siren call of cultural Leftism, as much as a taste for an inner city domicile and a four-wheel drive, that drove 'progressives' into the arms of the ALP, and later the Greens.

One cause for confusion is that many of those on the modern-day Left in Australia do not consider their views – weak on border security, soft on Muslim Brotherhood types, and so on – as 'leftist' but as 'open minded'. What latter-day leftists fail to appreciate is that although their 'open mindedness' – which long ago metastasised into political correctness – might not involve the nationalisation of the means of production, their socialisation of the whole nation is nevertheless a form of totalitarianism.

In *The Lucky Culture*'s best chapter, 'The Culture Producers', Cater documents the brazen manner that smug progressives appropriated the national broadcaster in the 1960s for their own purposes. The staff at the ABC – Cater describes them in the first instance as 'salaried bohemians' – abused their charter and ran the place as the propaganda wing of the Labor Left. With a few notable exceptions, none of the culprits today express even the slightest contrition. One of the old dinosaurs still haunting us, Phillip Adams, shrugs off the politicisation of the ABC in the 1960s as 'social evolution'.

For five decades, the ABC has promoted one radical cause after another in the guise of so-called 'open-mindedness'. Predictably, the ABC's advocacy for 'diversity' does not go as far as giving conservatives a 'fair go' in their media juggernaut. Cater might be right to depict the staff who run the ABC as tertiary-educated, middle-class, inner city types who share the same tribal sensibilities, but what they pursue in their

tax-funded activity is less the expression of a form of sociological solidarity than the relentless dissemination of a particular political ideology. Moreover, their propaganda has had its effect not just on latte-sipping trendies but also credulous suburbanians.

Cater, on occasion, seems mindful of the possible inadequacy of explaining the phenomenon tearing apart the fabric of Australian society in strict sociological terms. In the chapter titled 'godless', he posits the idea that although 'progressivism' might not be an ideology, it perhaps has something 'in common with a religious creed or dogma'. Thus, Cater explains the brutal treatment meted out by the leftist-liberal establishment to brilliant Australian independent thinkers such as Keith Windschuttle, Roger Sandall, Geoffrey Blainey, Helen Hughes and Peter Sutton as akin the Exclusive Brethren's practice of purging dissenters in a ceremony known as 'putting out'.

This is fine as far as it goes, but the nub of the problem transcends totemic solidarity or groupthink. The crisis Australia faces, along with the rest of the Western world, is first and foremost political. The fact is, a political ideology – call it cultural Marxism or anti-bourgeois bohemian socialism – has a firm grip on the hearts and minds on far too many Westerners. In

their topsy-turvy parallel universe, Israelis are modern-day Nazis, the planet is frying, Western civilisation a scandal, female circumcision a culturally sensitive procedure, the Muslim Brotherhood a social justice outfit, patriotism hateful and border security a crime against humanity.

Nick Cater's *The Lucky Country* almost – but not quite – persuades the reader to believe Winston Smith's epiphany: 'If there was hope, it must lie in the proles.' The trouble with that, of course, is Orwell's proles were revolting but not in the right sense. I was born in a provincial Australian city with factories at one end of street and council houses at the other, and so do not completely share Cater's very positive depiction of working class Australians and the Old Left. But nor do I reject out of hand his insinuation that a football-loving fellow who has never read a book without pictures, let alone gone to university and absorbed the nihilism of cultural relativism, is less likely to be a dangerous fool than his tertiary-educated, bicycle-riding, greenie counterpart.

Daryl McCann is a frequent contributor to Quadrant and other Australian publications. Mr McCann's website is <http://darylmccann.blogspot.co.uk/>

[back to contents page](#)

A National Drinks Quota

John Lalor

If the state has invaded one area more than any other, it's our privacy. In *For the New Intellectual*, Ayn Rand wrote: 'Civilization is the progress toward a society of privacy. The savage's whole existence is public, ruled by the laws of his tribe. Civilization is the process of setting man free from men.' In an age of increasingly sophisticated technology, perhaps privacy is becoming a thing of the past.

Rand made a similarly astute observation about responsibility – both holding it and abdicating it. In writing about collectivism, she explained how the subjugation of mankind could only come about through the consent of the collectivised. She railed against '...the people who seek protection from the necessity of taking a stand, by refusing to admit to themselves the nature of that which they are accepting; the people who support plans specifically designed to achieve serfdom, but hide behind the empty assertion that they are lovers of freedom, with no concrete meaning attached to the word.' (Oh, don't think just because the USSR is on

the ash-heap of history, collectivism is, too! Or what else would you call environmentalism – the new opiate of the pagan masses?)

Loss of freedom can happen in many ways. Following the defeat of the Nazis, F A Hayek argued that he had by no means been proven wrong about the inevitability of the jackboot suppressing our liberty. The jackboot approach was but one way in which a society can lose its freedom.

What would Hayek or Rand say about liberty in the early 21st Century? As dystopic futuristic movies are my favourite genre – preferably with zombies, the Devil, and an Earthbound asteroid hurtling through space just for good measure – I will hazard a prediction. We are being herded towards a future where liberty is gradually nudged aside to be replaced by 'informed, enlightened choices'. Choice, as the enemies of capitalism argued decades ago, will be seen as imprisonment; intelligently-directed decisions as freedom.

With the pace of technological advancement, it will not be long before any state will be able to afford a system of video monitoring like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Remember Smith being yelled at to complete his calisthenics first thing in the morning via a video screen in his apartment? Oh, this is the stuff of sci-fi fantasy! But why? On what basis?

Consider the ratchet effect of law-making. I remember reading 12 years ago about the State of Maine banning smoking in cars with children in them. A couple of years later at about the same time as the enlightened leaders of Ireland banned smoking at work I was caught out by an April Fool's Day joke: the Irish government would establish a quota of drinks one could buy in a pub. The fact that I fell for the joke, shows how quickly things can change. What faith do you have that, were you to be zapped 30 years into the future, you would not be horrified by the sort of things the police and the courts could arrest you for? If you met a time traveller from 1983, how well do you think he would take it as you list the crimes the police can arrest you for today, or dispossess you of your property or children? From football to American politics, just look at the fabrication and fabulation of 'racist' incidents – a trend that has exploded in a mere five years.

There is more to come. Consider GPS tagging, the elimination of cash, to be substituted with traceable plastic payments, calorie and alcohol quotas. A statist would not ask whether such controls are moral or their adverse consequences, but if they will reduce the problem? Unless you want to be labelled as, say, negligent of child safety, such invasions of privacy will be hard to stop. The more people whose every move is traceable, the fewer tragedies. QED.

'Wars' against smoking, alcoholism, racism, obesity, have one thing in common: the loss of individual liberty and in consequence, privacy. You cannot lose your freedom to drink as much as you choose without conceding the manner in which the state will ascertain how much you drink. The collective punishment of the Scots, raising the minimum price of a unit of alcohol, would have been deemed a shocking infringement on one's privacy a decade ago. No longer. If anyone is the fabulist, it's the person who believes that a minimum alcohol pricing is where state intrusion will end.

The infantilisation of society comes at the cost of individual privacy; infants neither deserve, nor should be given, privacy. In Britain where most people's health care is rationed by the state, why would a pub drinks quota remain a mere joke? The British public wilfully handed over adult-responsibility for their health when they voted for a free, state-run health service. A nudge from behavioural insight scientists was only a matter of time.

Back to Ayn Rand. To be truly private is to be genuinely independent. Of course, we all must trade, sell our labour and buy the products and services of others. There is a pretty clear division; it is a matter of free will – and this is what collectivists cannot abide. Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the founders of the NHS – and the architects of Obamacare

– is to establish a genuine collective; the modern tribe. The hospital A&E breaks down class barriers like nothing else: we are all waiting 10 hours now. In the collective, there is no privacy. It reeks of forbidden individuality.

The crushing of liberty and privacy requires the consent of the public. I live in Switzerland. Perhaps one reason we have smoking and non-

smoking bars here, and a carton of 20 cigarettes costs about £4, is that people pay their way. Personal and civic responsibility is a big thing. It is very hard for the statist to argue convincingly for various restrictions on a citizen's liberty when we pay for our own health insurance. The British signed their own warrant for an illiberal, nudged, monitored world when they voted for a Labour government that went on to create the NHS. To quote Rand, Britons 'refus[ed] to admit to themselves the nature of that which they (were) accepting.'

The British chose not to choose. Rand explained that the mass negation of liberty did not come about instantaneously. Of the self-destructive victims of such an illiberal future, she wrote: 'They expect, when they find themselves in a world of bloody ruins and concentration camps, to escape moral responsibility by wailing: "But I didn't mean this!"'

I can't help but think British people didn't mean this either.

John Lalor is a psychologist living in Switzerland.

[back to contents page](#)

Conservative Classic – 52

The Congress of Vienna, Harold Nicholson

Penelope Tremayne

How many school leavers in Britain today know anything about the Congress of Vienna? Indeed how many young school teachers know much about it, beyond faintly scented evocations of waltz tunes, love-affairs, hot air and rivers of champagne? Yet the treaties signed there changed the world as Napoleon himself had not: they cast loose the battened down Christian Europe that had been set on course twelve hundred years earlier by Charlemagne. Napoleon cut that empire up as a butcher might cut up a side of beef, but what the plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Vienna agreed to in 1814-15 set the nations on course for the divided, devalued, traditionless, rudderless Europe of today.

Harold Nicholson's book on this cataclysmic subject is brilliant, and certainly a classic; but what makes it particularly conservative? The dictionary definition of conservatism is 'a desire or tendency to retain existing institutions, religions, etc'. That is certainly what Lord Castlereagh, the representative of British interests at the Congress, tried very hard to do. Not so his fellow negotiators, and there were good reasons for this difference: the British interest at stake was not territorial, it was almost entirely naval, apart from (or including) a resolve to ensure that Antwerp should not fall into potentially hostile hands. And his efforts resulted in something of worldwide value ever since: the establishment of maritime and riverine rights and the Law of the Sea. The other nations, whether or not they had been in at the kill, were intent only on seizing whatever bleeding hunks of the carcass they could seize or snatch back.

In theory the composition and objectives of the Congress were exemplary. Every state in Europe, however insignificant (San Marino, or one out of the thirty-seven separate German states) plus Russia and Turkey, had its representative. (At the time Turkey was considered, and in many ways was, far more civilised and Europeanised than Russia.) Each representative brought with him his family, servants, horses, carriages, grooms, etc, all accommodated and entertained at the Emperor of Austria's expense: a colossal burden made worse because nearly all of them, having no say at all in the re-shaping of Europe, had nothing to do. The main players (who had far too much to do) were Austria, Prussia and Russia. These three had not intended to admit to the Congress either France (with

its monarchy hastily revived as if by artificial respiration) or Britain; but they were outmanoeuvred, by Talleyrand in France's case and in Britain's by the point that she alone of the allies actually had any money. There was also the unsavoury fact to accept, that Napoleon had defeated Austria, Prussia and Russia, but Britain had defeated Napoleon.

The principal players wielding immense powers were younger than one might expect for a task that required diplomacy above all other skills. The Emperor of Austria, Francis I, aged 45, who as host to the Congress was present throughout, is described by Nicholson as lazy and somewhat puerile.... happier when engaged in his workshop stamping seals on to sealing wax or merely cooking toffee at the stove. The reshaping of Europe he left to his foreign minister Prince Metternich (aged 40): a man of egregious vanity but immense intellectual power who saw that peace could be maintained in Europe only by the establishment of a 'balance of power' in which no one state would be strong enough to make war worthwhile. France was represented for Louis XVIII by his Foreign Secretary, Talleyrand: a cripple, liar, traitor and turn-coat, but clear-sighted and quick thinking enough to be a match for Metternich. These two were the most significant players in this lethal game. Then there was Prince Karl August Hardenberg, Commander in Chief for King Frederick William III of Prussia, 'a weak, unintelligent, rigid and honourable man' whose fixed objective was to annexe as much as possible of Poland, Saxony, Austria and the independent German statelets. Then there was a half-dozen or so of delegates for Alexander I, Emperor of Russia, a man who had assisted in the murder of his insane father and may have been on the verge of insanity himself. His professed determination was to restore Poland to its former independence, but he was in fact hell-bent on incorporating the three previous partitions of Poland. This would of course give him almost complete military and political control over central Europe as a whole; it is difficult not to see it as a blueprint for Stalin's policies in 1945. The Congress devoted a great deal of time to the Polish question, and after much treaty signing and pledge giving, most of it bogus, the creation was announced of a new Kingdom of Poland, fully independent under Russian protection. Of course it was no such thing: its

constitution was not its own but a favour granted by the Tsar, who retained control of its foreign policy, and the state itself was made ‘the hereditary appendage of the House of Romanov’. It did not last long.

Among the throng of emperors, kings and princes at this great and helpless assembly the British hand was played by Lord Castlereagh – remarkably successfully considering that his Government did not agree with his policy and made their doubts clear both at home and abroad. He was unpopular in his own country and party and the Liberals in opposition left no stone unturned to discredit him. He did however have one powerful friend in the Duke of Wellington, who never lost faith in him and never failed to give good advice and support. Castlereagh seems to have been too stern a character to engage many sympathies, but he fought a good fight to the very end, and to the end of his own physical endurance.

The Congress of Vienna makes instructive and delightful reading. Harold Nicholson tells all of the above and a lot more with a light touch and a masterly sense of humour that carry the reader along with him. And he reminds us that, however misguided or dishonest or incompetent the arrangements made at the Congress turned out to be, they kept most of Europe at peace for nearly a hundred years, which is more than anyone, or any international gathering, has done since. ‘Comparisons are odious’ children used to be taught: he does not point out the comparisons to be drawn between the Congress’ efforts and later ones: League of Nations, the powerless because disunited, UN and, since this book was written, the ostrich-like EU. Nicholson probably foresaw a good deal of it; and wherever he is now I should like to think he appreciates the irony of Europe’s position today: bankrupt, leaderless, and tossed once more between the contemporary versions of Prussia and Russia. *Plus ça change.....*

[back to contents page](#)

Reputations – 41

John Kenneth Galbraith
Christie Davies

John Kenneth Galbraith was the Paul M Warburg Professor of Economics at Harvard University but he was not an economist. No reputable economist ever took him seriously. As soon as he was able, he gave up economics and chose rather to use his prestigious title and secure position to write leftist propaganda. Galbraith was a very good writer, clear, urbane, persuasive and witty. He was the greatest master of the clever epigram since Oscar Wilde, though Wilde was arguably the better economist. Galbraith’s books such as *American Capitalism* (1952), *The Affluent Society* (1958) and *The New Industrial State* (1967) were best sellers and made him a very rich man indeed. His books are a mixture of bad economics and bad sociology but he told his leftist readers what they wanted to hear and provided them with a seemingly intellectual basis for their prejudices. He put just enough truth and sound observation into his books to make them seem plausible and they are easy reading in that all the difficult stuff has been left out. Galbraith oozed certainty, even when he was writing economic fantasy. In his books there are no nasty equations, no graphs, very few numbers and no admissions whatsoever of doubt or uncertainty or past error; it is no wonder that he became America’s best known ‘economist’. He was the civilized face of American liberalism.

The central argument of Galbraith’s most popular

book *The Affluent Society* was that America had become so affluent that not only the rich but those of the middling sort, nay even the blue collar workers, were able to fritter away their earnings on frivolous purchases such as cars with tail fins. Would it not be better, he suggested, for much of this money to be diverted into the pockets of the state and be spent on worthier things? One of Galbraith’s images was of an ordinary American driving a luxurious car along a street full of potholes, which the impoverished state authorities could not afford to maintain. He would no doubt have been shocked if anyone had suggested that the cure lay in turning the roads over to private ownership or even to charge for their use as happens in Hong Kong. The largest ever public works’ programme in American history, the Interstate Highway System built under Eisenhower’s 1956 Federal Highway Act, had just begun using tax payers’ money to build roads but in *The Affluent Society* Galbraith wanted even more. He also wanted more money poured into America’s already wasteful and often worthless school system, that was to become the model for Britain’s comprehensive schools. In his recent John Kenneth Galbraith memorial lecture at a Canadian university the erudite Dr Theodore Dalrymple commented on Galbraith’s naive belief that an extra dollar spent on state education results in an extra dollar’s worth of educated individual, that ‘Britain

spends nearly \$100,000 per child on public education and yet a fifth of the population are unable to read with facility or do simple arithmetic'. But, he adds, Galbraith 'always writes as if all be would be well if only \$200,000 were spent.'

Galbraith's views soon became the conventional wisdom and so acceptable to right-minded left-thinking people that he was asked to give the BBC's Reith lectures in 1966. In these lectures he grotesquely flattered the British civil service, admired that very same C A R Crosland who wrecked Britain's educational system and called C P Snow, 'the last universal man'. Galbraith truly deserved to be called a 'public intellectual'; he was never as barmy as Chomsky nor as nasty as Hobsbawm, never as bitter as Said nor a buffoon like Lacan but he qualified to be included in that opprobrious category.

Galbraith hated markets and believed that the governments of democratic capitalist societies were quite capable of deciding and fixing most prices, which had in fact been his own employment during World War II. In 1970, speaking at the Cambridge Union, he proposed the motion 'The market is a snare and a delusion'. No doubt this is sometimes true for a time but what Galbraith was quite unable to see, even when it was clearly put to him during the debate, was that the alternative, namely decisions made by administrators on behalf of the state, are far more of a snare and a delusion. In *American Capitalism* he preferred to emphasise what he called 'countervailing power', tussles between big corporations and powerful labour unions, between big producers and big purchasers. He never properly acknowledged the importance of small entrepreneurs who create not just new products but entire new industries, something that never happened in socialist economies. The Soviet Union had excellent scientists and spent huge sums on military research but none of their work was ever translated into tangible benefits for the ordinary citizen; that would have required entrepreneurs to take their ideas and inventions to the market-place.

Galbraith believed that large corporations were so powerful that they were impervious to the market place and could set their own prices at will. The 'technostructure', as he called it in his book *The New Industrial State*, a consortium of skilled senior managers, learned in engineering, marketing, accountancy and law, at the top of the corporation, could in his view completely ignore the wishes and interests of its shareholders and completely control its customers through the power of advertising. For Galbraith the entrepreneur was obsolete, competition unimportant, markets and with them economists irrelevant and a large corporation, like General Motors,

eternal. General Motors controlled its suppliers and the purchasers of its vehicles and the policy of its competitors. What could possibly go wrong? Strangely enough, General Motors declared itself bankrupt in 2009. Countervailing power had helped bring it about, for America's most powerful corporation had been matched by the United Automobile Workers, one of America's strongest unions. Customers were not willing to buy large expensive cars produced by over-paid workers, when cheaper to buy and cheaper to run imported cars were available to them.

Galbraith was not hostile to the 'technostructure' as such and he saw its power as inevitable and its autonomy as essential. He saw shareholders as an irrelevant nuisance but he was also opposed to the British Parliament exercising any oversight over the nationalized industries. State industries would do just fine, so long as the politicians did not interfere. For him democratic socialism was as outmoded as entrepreneurial capitalism. At least he was right about the first. During Galbraith's time as the American ambassador to India (personally chosen by his close friend President Kennedy), he very likely told Nehru that there were no serious problems with the Indian planned economy and that all that was needed was more autonomy for Indian state enterprises. India's economic development and rapid growth based on a market economy were arguably held back for decades by Galbraith's chummy and welcome advice to Prime Minister Nehru.

Galbraith believed that modern economies, indeed modern societies, were converging because they all faced the same technical and managerial problems, which had led to the rise and dominance of the technostructure. For Galbraith it really did not matter whether the environment was capitalist or socialist, since, except for agriculture and small scale service industries, which still operated under competitive conditions, the technostructure ruled. After a visit to Poland he advocated the freeing up of private small businesses but otherwise declared that the socialist technostructure was performing just as well as under capitalism. In 1984 he went to the Soviet Union and chided those who said that there was an economic crisis in that country. He said that he had been driven round Moscow and seen some fine new apartments, traffic jams and well dressed people. Facts and sampling were not Galbraith's strong points, for what he had been shown was where the elite lived and not typical of Moscow. Living conditions outside the centre were considerably worse. Galbraith had all the insensitivity of a very rich tourist enjoying an insulated existence and able to ignore all evidence of socialist poverty and oppression.

When the Soviet Union did collapse, Galbraith explained that the managers of Soviet state enterprises had been unable to adapt to the complex and varied demands made on them by the newly 'affluent' Soviet consumer. Even in the absence of advertising these wretched people had somehow acquired from the capitalist West a taste for frivolous consumer goods. Galbraith was equally unaware of the hopeless wastefulness of Soviet industry, given the absence of prices that signalled the state of supply and demand, and of the extensive black markets and systematic bribery that had been developed by the Soviet technostucture to circumvent this. Galbraith had unquestioningly absorbed the 'conventional wisdom' peddled by his official Soviet hosts and those managers approved by them who provided him with information about how they went about their work. As he himself said 'the

conventional view serves to protect us from the painful job of thinking.' How good to see a quipster become the victim of one of his own wise-cracks.

Ironically, in 1993, well after the Soviet collapse, the Russians awarded him the Lomonosov gold medal for scientific achievement. The essence of science is the making of clear testable predictions, to which Galbraith was averse. When he did make predictions or when others derived predictions from his work that they tested against independent sets of data, Galbraith inevitably turned out to have been wrong. Indeed his epitaph must be one of his own epigrams: 'Faced with the choice between changing one's mind and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy on the proof.' Galbraith went on working busily at the proof until his death aged 97 in 2006.

[back to contents page](#)

ETERNAL LIFE



When I was first ordained, I served a curacy in a half-smart suburb of Leeds. The vicar, Howard Garside, was a devout, kindly, blunt Yorkshireman. He used to blow out the everlasting sanctuary light every evening to save a penny on candles. One Friday evening we had enjoyed a performance in church of the Fauré Requiem. Next morning the senior curate and I were in the Lady Chapel, having just said Morning Prayer, and we were playing a tape-recording of the lovely solo Pie Jesu. In barged Father Garside, scowled and shouted at us, What's this – a blinking concert?

This incident says a lot about attitudes towards music in church. There is an almost caricature opposition between the parson who tolerates church music because it puts a few more bums on seats and the organist and choir who only come so they can chirrup to their egos' content. They are the artists, after all, and they know that the words of the hymns, the Creed, the Gloria are a load of baloney and part of what Philip Larkin called, that vast, moth-eaten, musical brocade, created to pretend we never die.

I have always loved music in church. It was the music of the Schultze organ in St Bartholomew's, Armley which first attracted me – that and the first Anglican hymn I ever heard – Blessed City, Heavenly Salem to the miraculous tune of Westminster by Henry Purcell. How mysterious that I found myself at St Michael's Cornhill much later, where Purcell first played the organ. I cannot imagine life – let alone religion – without music. I would go so far as to agree with Nietzsche: Without music, life would be a mistake.

Music is no mere accompaniment to religion. And it is not an ornament, for music is the direct presentation of what worship is. When I hear harmony, I am sensing through the ear those relations of number and proportion that resound throughout all time and space. Arthur Schopenhauer put this better than anybody: Music is the soul of the drama or liturgy. It expresses the true nature of the actions and words and makes us immediately acquainted with the innermost soul of the events... Music does not express this or that particular affliction, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment or peace of mind; but affliction, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment and peace of mind as they are in themselves.

The substance of music, like the substance of the world itself, is mysterious. When we listen to a melody, what we hear is movement; but really nothing moves. When we say that a melody moves from, say, C to G, there is no movement, only sequence. We recognise the same melody when it is played in a different key, when it is played more quickly, more slowly. The melody has its own character and we get to know it. Each melody has its own personality. An allegro in a minor key has been compared to someone dancing while his shoes pinch him. And the key of C-sharp like an unprotected woman finding herself at Shepherd's Bush on the Central line and wondering how she's going to make it back to Clapham Common

Music requires clock time in order for us to hear it, but it seems to exist in ideal time, or out of time altogether. This is a mirror image of the soul. Our bodies, our

appearance, our senses are here in clock time and we need it to express ourselves. But the self or soul that we express has another sort of existence which is in what our religion calls eternity. Music is a way of understanding our deepest selves and how we are related to God. We are the music while the music lasts. And the music is eternal. We know that Mozart's Clarinet Concerto would exist even if no one ever played it again.

When we hear the *St Matthew Passion*, we should listen to the last chorus. This is Our Lord being taken down from the Cross and laid in the tomb in the rock. When you hear the *Christmas Oratorio* you are there at the nativity of Christ – and with Bach, the shepherds are German shepherds from Leipzig with snow on their boots but that does not in the least misrepresent the Incarnation: rather it confirms it.

Because church music is part of religious truth, you can't have the music by itself without a corruption of the music. If you separate the music from its purpose, you deny the character, and meaning of the music itself. Bach, the greatest musician of all time, knew this; his statement that he composed all his works to the glory of God was not a delicate pietism, but the literal truth.

Church music does not have any reference except the setting of the religious truths of the oratorio, the anthem or the Mass. If the music is under-rehearsed or badly performed, it diminishes the act of worship. Musicians must take choir practice seriously. The corollary of this is that the words and ritual movements which go with the music have to be performed with the same care and reverence that the choir has for the notes. If you smirk and snigger your way through the Prayer of Humble Access, it's as big a desecration of the sacred ritual as if you sang B-flat where you should be singing B-natural. The priest and the lesson reader have a responsibility to speak the words properly, with attention to both meaning and rhythm.

Because we are physical presences living in a material world, we are obliged to use things in order to enact truths. Like music itself, we have to use time to express eternity.

Pope Francis is turning out to be the new Elvis. Hear him on Copacabana beach offering the kids time off purgatory if they will follow him on Twitter. This morning the BBC characteristically sneered at this gesture as 'medieval.' I'm not sure if they meant the doctrine of purgatory as medieval or Twitter. I would gladly spend more time in purgatory if this enabled me to avoid Twitter, Facebook, Ipods, Youpods and

portable phones in general.

Of course Anglicans take their traditionally high-minded attitude towards purgatory, reviling it in the 39 Articles as 'the Romish doctrine'. Interestingly, John Henry Newman – before he jumped ship – said it wasn't purgatory itself which the Articles condemned but 'the Romish doctrine of'. But there's no other doctrine than the Romish one, John. I can see a lot of spiritual sense in the idea of purgatory because I'm a filthy sinner and I don't fancy going immediately from my customary cesspit into the dazzling presence of God. Purgatory is a variety of sun-glasses, or think of it as a boot camp. You've avoided the straight and narrow all your life and charged happily along the primrose path that leads to the everlasting

bonfire. Purgatory is your chance to go straight.

It will be painful. But then some pain is worth it. It's astonishing, for example, how much trouble people will put themselves to in order to get thin or develop muscles. To detox, botox and

all the other toxes *obbligato*. Is it not worth spending a bit of effort on your spiritual condition? That's the one you'll have to live with forever. And in the spiritual gymnasium too there's no gain without pain.

The BBC wanted an expert opinion on this matter so, after consulting the arch-modernist Peter Stanford who's forever introduced as someone who used to be something on *The Tablet* – that liberal RC heresy sheet which Malcolm Muggeridge used to call *The Pill* – they went to the Catholic World Youth Festival in Kent. Where else? They interrupted the kids' listening to their homogenous modern church musak and jiving with Jesus hymns and asked them what they thought. Well, they thought it a good thing innit.

Incidentally, when the BBC wants to refer to something as particularly nasty, why do they always have recourse to the adjective 'medieval'? The Middle Ages gave us the cathedrals, Thomas Aquinas, Anselm, Dante, Gregorian plainchant, Perotin, Giotto, chivalry, courtly love and a Christian Europe. The wonderfully progressive modern period gave us two world wars, Hitler's holocaust, Stalin's slaughter of 20 million, Mao's killing of 70 million, the hydrogen bomb, abortion as a means of contraception, the destruction of marriage, Tate Modern, Jacques Derrida and the EU.

Purgatory here I come – please.

Dr Peter Mullen is a retired Church of England priest and a writer. His current project is a film script about St Paul.

[back to contents page](#)

ARTS AND BOOKS

Born to Annoy the Left

Robert Crowcroft

Margaret Thatcher, The Authorised Biography. Volume One: Not For Turning, Charles Moore, Allen Lane, 2013, £30.00.

Margaret Thatcher was the most significant British politician since Winston Churchill. She is also the most controversial British figure of the last century. For the most part, those who detested her in life continue to do so in death. But many more revere her. The respect – sometimes grudging – that much of the country developed for Mrs Thatcher was evident in the days following her passing. It seems unthinkable that any contemporary leaders will receive the same treatment. And to the Conservative tribe, she has always been more than just a former leader; she is an icon. A few years ago, a friend of mine suggested to his partner that they might display a photograph of Mrs Thatcher on their bedroom wall. Predictably, his partner demurred. I have never been sure if he was joking, but suspect not. This woman was certainly capable of arousing people.

Charles Moore's official biography has been sixteen years in the making. Like a long-awaited rock album, some will have given up hope of actually living to see it. With the death of the former prime minister earlier this year, the book is finally in print. And this is just the first volume: *Not For Turning* culminates with Mrs Thatcher's finest hour, the victory in the Falklands War. A second volume will deal with the rest.

This is a big, enjoyable book. Moore is a fixture of the centre-right establishment in Britain; he has spent his professional life with *The Daily Telegraph* (including a stint as editor) and *The Spectator*. He is plugged in to the right networks and knows most of the players involved. As Thatcher's chosen biographer Moore was given extensive access to the Iron Lady herself, as well as those around her, in the form of interviews. Outside her circle of intimates, he was also granted interviews by most of the other big beasts of the era. Importantly, the official biography is the first based on Thatcher's large archive of personal papers lodged at Churchill College, Cambridge. This gives it a marked advantage over John Campbell's magisterial two-volume study. Moore was also able to work at the National Archives on the government records of

Thatcher's period in office; though the author was not a state-appointed historian, he was effectively treated as such by Whitehall, inspecting documents still held back under the thirty-year rule and given the full co-operation of the civil service. The result is that this has the feel of being not merely an official biography, but a thick slab of Establishment history. That will recommend it to some – the result is a richly-researched account – and leave others a little wary.

Being such a controversial figure, Thatcher has generated many interesting books. Andrew Gamble, Ewen Green and Shirley Robin Letwin all wrote fascinating accounts which tackle the subject from different angles. Eliza Filby will join their ranks later this year with a book on Thatcher and religion. There is now a sense that the Thatcher period is no longer truly contemporary and can be studied with a degree of detachment. Moore's book is an important contribution to that literature and, in commercial terms, will be easily the most successful. The genre of biography gets a bad rap, but Moore does it very well. Despite being a Conservative, he avoids hagiography. The overall impression is that while the author is sympathetic to Thatcher, he is not uncritical. This greatly assists the credibility of the work. That said, there is relatively little serious questioning of his subject's policies. As the Thatcher government can quite easily be criticised from both left and right, that is a shame. Perhaps more attention will be devoted to addressing these issues in the second and final volume. It would certainly give the biography a more pleasing feel.

The book does not fundamentally revolutionise our understanding of Thatcher, but considering how much ink has been spilled on her, that seems unlikely to occur at the moment. What it does do is to present a convincing and well-rounded portrait of a woman and her political career. Thatcher emerges humanised, not merely a politician but a *person* too. For instance, Moore draws on previously-unused early letters from Thatcher to her sister. These provide new insights into her love life before Denis. The book also details Denis's mental breakdown, when it appeared that divorce might be on the cards. The upshot of Moore's effort to dispel the image of Thatcher's emotional life as essentially empty is that she appears a more vulnerable, sympathetic figure than ever before. And that makes her political style all the more intriguing, her ability to appear as the Iron Lady all the more impressive. Privately, she could be indecisive, was

generally anxious, and needed constant support. At times she drank too much whisky, and it showed to those around her.

Moore's version of Thatcher is of a relentless leader, who – despite her aforementioned insecurities – usually triumphed through a combination of good fortune and willpower. Her perseverance was a powerful tool; where contemporaries saw stubbornness to a fault, Moore depicts someone who just kept going. Time and again this enabled Thatcher to get her way by outlasting her enemies. Stamina was her greatest asset. She needed it, too; always an outsider of one sort or another, perseverance was necessary for her to be able to do anything. A woman in a man's world, Thatcher fought hard to be respected and had no interest in being known as a *female* politician. This was a desire for real equality. But that is not to suggest that she lacked femininity, nor was she simply unconscious of it. Thatcher famously enjoyed a flirt and those around her felt a whiff of sexuality.

There is, at times, a bit too much detail in the book. Some of it could easily have been cut out to make for a sleeker narrative. Another minor quibble must be the subtitle: *Not For Turning*, while obvious, is pretty unimaginative. But these are small points. There are many gripping chapters in the book. Moore is compelling on Thatcher's intellectual journey (though some will be sceptical that she *ever* really developed a clear philosophy rather than being a political magpie) and the formation of her doctrinal agenda. He is even better on Thatcher's war leadership during the Falklands conflict. When reading it, one thinks of Neil Kinnock's desperate jibe that the military had to leave their own guts on Goose Green to prove that Thatcher had some of her own. The bitterness of that remark exemplifies why, in the end, Thatcher was fitted for high office, and Kinnock was not. She was a winner, and Charles Moore has provided a rounded, satisfying account of how she became one.

[back to contents page](#)

A Repentant Sheep? Myles Harris

A British Dream: Successes and Failure of Post-war Immigration, David Goodhart, Atlantic, 2013, £20.

If in 2075 a German or an American family invited a visiting English family they had never met before to supper, they would expect on opening the front door to see black faces. If fertility and migration patterns are correct, by then Britain will be a black majority country. While this is against the wishes of most people, both black and white, who would like to see

Britain remain recognisably European, it has long been a dream of wealthy, autocratic cultural Marxists and their hangers on. *The Observer*, in an enthusiastic article called *The Last Days of a White World*, about blacks becoming the majority in the United States, quoted Yasmin Alibi Brown:

For (her) the decline of whites is a question of redressing the balance after they colonised much of the world. 'The empire strikes back really,' she said, 'There was this extraordinary assumption that white people could go and destroy peoples and it would have no consequence. It astounds me.'

This type of talk worries those on the left who have given the matter more than a few seconds thought. David Goodhart, old Etonian, director of the left wing think tank Demos, founder and ex editor of *Prospect*, a Prince of the Left, was dining at an Oxford high table in the spring of 2011 when the full import of this was brought home to him.

When I said to my neighbour, one of the country's most senior civil servants, that I wanted to write a book about why liberals should be less sceptical about the nation state and more sceptical about large-scale immigration, he frowned and said, 'I disagree. When I was at the Treasury I argued for the most open door possible to immigration ... I think it's my job to maximise global welfare not national welfare.'

Goodhart turned to the diner on his other side 'one of the most powerful television executives in the country', to find he agreed, 'global welfare' the latter declared, 'was paramount and that therefore he had a greater obligation to someone in Burundi than to someone in Birmingham.

It inspired Goodhart to write *A British Dream – Successes and Failures of Post-war Immigration*. In Chapter 5, 'The Second Great Arrival 1997 – Today, Labour's Greatest Legacy', he describes the scale of what has happened.

The settled minority population of Britain, including about 3 million white people from places like Poland and Ireland, is now around 11 million. In 1997 nearly half the minority population was British born; that has now slipped back to about one third.'

How was this done? How could such a huge number of migrants be allowed to enter the country, settle with hardly a murmur of protest from the aboriginal population and begin to take over?

A striking passage written in Goodhart's rather clinical style that belies his protestations of sympathy for the victims of this insane experiment, reminded me of a paragraph from a medical textbook on organ transplantation, particularly the problem of host versus

graft reaction. A graft has to have just the right amount of protective devices to take successfully. Goodhart does not mention the need to suppress the host's defence mechanisms. That has been done by Acts of Parliament. Prison awaits those who speak out.

'The hypothesis,' writes Goodhart, 'which I have borrowed from Trevor Phillips, former head of the Equalities Commission, is that a successful immigrant community needs just the right amount of protection from the host society in order to better integrate into it, too much cultural protection and you remain trapped in an 'internal colony' unable to join mainstream society, too little and you are likely to lose what is of value in your own traditions and thus the ethnic support mechanisms that help to ease the transition into a very different kind of society.'

This is why so may Pakistani communities have failed to integrate; too much protection and it is possible to live in East London and retain the beliefs of the South East Asian paddy field; too little, as in the case of many Afro-Caribbeans, and only the street gang awaits. However, just the right mixture of protection and exposure, as in the case of Hindu and Sikh Indians, and they flourish, as Goodhart observes, like the Jews before them. Here he might have mentioned Eastern Europeans, the most successful transplant of them all, bringing home as they did to English workers the shocking lesson that hard work and good manners mean the difference between being employed or languishing on the dole.

But what, if given too much cultural protection, grafts from cultures that have failed to integrate flourish and overwhelm the host? Goodhart admits things could go wrong but in general he is optimistic. We are not told this in so many words but it seems the aboriginal population can be bought off by pandering to their most besetting sin, sentimentality. They will be able to sigh over citizenship services being conferred on new arrivals, included in which will be a DVD of Danny Boyle's opening ceremony for the 2012 Olympics, there will be more emphasis on British history and pride in the flag, more English teaching in schools, and, rather like our Edwardian forebears, emphasis on sport to prevent the evils of self abuse, lots of racially integrated sport. (Is this why there are so many people out running?)

Goodhart has by no means given up his own dream of a Multicultural Jerusalem, a cosy liberal party fairy tale at which the cultural lions of Islam sit down with the lambs of Hampstead. By 2025 he hopes for a black mayor of London, a black head of the Metropolitan Police, a Sikh head of the General Staff, an Indian head of the BBC, and 'a young Muslim in MI5 uncovering a major Al-Qaeda-type bomb plot on the tenth anniversary of 7/7' as well as a famous

pop star converting to Islam. Finally the two political parties go on to be represented by black ex-public schoolboys, Chuka Ummuna (the black Blair) and Kwasi Kwarteng (the black Boris). He concludes 'Even more remarkable, perhaps, no one seemed particularly bothered when Britain had its first black prime minister.' He is also reassuring about migration from Eastern Europe. Eastern Europeans, white, literate, Christian and hard working, are hated by the left (the BBC is particularly Slavophobic) for being much too much like the British working class of better days. Eastern Europeans, he thinks, will dwindle as their own countries benefit from joining the EU.

One would have thought such a detailed account would have been acclaimed by those who brought it about. Far from it. Goodhart was not invited to discuss his book at the Hay on Wye literary festival, an event in the left wing calendar equivalent to the Pope's Easter Blessing.

His crime was to expose the workings of a cult. Within a few pages you are right inside a systematised delusion and how an entire nation was brought to believe in it. What you cannot see is why. Importing millions of people, often from violent and oppressive societies, is unlikely to change the nature of the countries they come from, quite the reverse. If you steal a nation's middle class, you destroy its chances of becoming a liberal democracy. Bringing one hundred thousand Somalis here will not convert Somalia into a Westminster Democracy. All it does is to bring a fragment of a gangster state here.

Only about 30 per cent of adult Somalis are economically active 39 per cent of Somali households claim income support (easily the highest claim rate for an ethnic minority) and 40 per cent claim child benefit One Labour MP whose constituency has a large Somali population said to me: 'The Somalis who come to see me do often seem to have a disturbingly detailed knowledge of the welfare system.'

The result of this policy has been to disperse many poor working class Britons in our cities into white ghettos far away. Despite the enormous damage it has done to our society, mass immigration remains the Holy Grail of the intellectual left. The reason? Vanity holding hands with shame; a wish to appear to have fashionably correct opinions of a 'clever' variety based on a guilty, but wholly misinformed, reading of history, (British colonialism was hugely beneficial to an unenlightened world, and should in some modified form have continued) coupled with a desire for a constituency among the less fortunate. Perhaps this is the book Goodhart should have written?

[back to contents page](#)

A Tonic for Mr Gove

Merrie Cave

Gwynne's Grammar, The Ultimate introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English, N M Gwynne, Ebury Press 2013, £7.99.

English is a world language because it is a superb vehicle of communication. Its large vocabulary, both classical and Germanic, makes it easy to convey the most subtle of meanings while providing a concise language for business and science. Unfortunately we have not guarded this treasure. Standards of written and spoken English have declined since the forties when Churchill complained about English 'up with which I will not put.' Ghastly jargon is now used as a method of obfuscation as well as making the language ugly, as in education, academic and management speak.

The guilt lies with revolutionaries who abandoned common sense in the sixties. Out went grammar, grammar schools, academic rigour and the tried and tested habits of centuries. In came Rousseau's child-centred theories which were taught in huge, impersonal schools where educational chaos reigned. Nor has the crassness of educational progressives waned. An Oxford Professor recently popped up at the Hay Festival to proclaim there was no need to spell correctly or use grammar and punctuation. Does he want to return to the fifteenth century and undo Caxton's work of standardising English spelling?

Opponents of Grammar say it destroys creativity because as English constantly changes rules cannot be applied to its structure. This is like saying that medical students don't need to have a thorough grasp of anatomy. How can you understand a language unless you have learnt its parts? Moreover English grammar has not changed over the centuries despite the adoption of thousands of new words. Nevertheless, grammatical exercises such as analysis into clauses, much enjoyed by pupils I taught in the state system, were dropped from 'O' Level papers by the end of the sixties. The results are with us, such as the mistakes and clumsy constructions you often see in newspapers; 'between you and I' 'the fact that' or 'he is of the opinion that.' These are errors that contributors to this magazine over the age of sixty rarely make.

Church of England's progressives have contributed to this debasement. A traditional Prayer book Service is hard to find because of progressives' insistence that Cranmer's elegant and simple prose cannot be understood by ordinary people. They are wrong. The other day a Catholic friend in Ireland told me that his

builder had been to a traditional Anglican funeral and had been uplifted by it. The constant introduction of fatuous new services has emptied our churches.

Martin Gwynne, one of our long-standing subscribers, has fought back and his engaging little book has become a best seller. Thanks to the digital revolution, Gwynne, a retired businessman, has found a niche teaching academic subjects, mostly Latin, to pupils aged two to seventy from the comfort of his home in Ireland. His traditional methods oblige him to teach remedial grammar. Few people under sixty have received any formal instruction in it, even in private schools.

Gwynne's book, *The Ultimate introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English*, should appeal to all ages. It is attractively presented, small enough for the pocket, and its material is excellently arranged. The first part deals with the correct use of parts of speech, syntax, and punctuation. Gwynne recommends a careful reading of the following authors: Kipling, Orwell, Belloc and P G Wodehouse. The latter he regards as the best of them all but dangerous to imitate. The second part incorporates Strunk's guide to style, which explains how to construct paragraphs and write compositions. Professor William Strunk, an American wrote it in 1918 for in-house use at his university. In 1957 E B White, author of the children's classic *Charlotte's Web* and an editor of the *New Yorker*, who had studied writing under Strunk in 1919, rediscovered it. He had forgotten the little book that he described as a forty-three-page summary of the case for 'cleanliness, accuracy and brevity in the use of English'. His 1959 edition advises writers to 'have the proper mind-set' and that they aim for 'Robert Louis Stevenson's one moment of felicity'.

Strunk said:

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph, no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.

My younger relatives and friends tell me that there is a great interest in the revival of clear English and Grammar as there has been in phonics. Certainly there has been a small counter-revolution, albeit imperfect, in the reintroduction of grammar in primary schools. SATS textbooks now cover punctuation, paragraphs and sentences, parts of speech and the active and passive voice. I am informed that much needs to be done, for there is far too much multiple choice in the actual exam. I hope that *Gwynne's Grammar* will lead the way and trust that Michael Gove has a copy.

[back to contents page](#)

A Cultivated World

John Jolliffe

In Search of Rex Whistler. His Life and Work, Hugh and Mirabel Cecil, Frances Lincoln, 2012, £40.

Rex Whistler was probably the most talented and inspired English painter-decorator-designer of the 20th century, as well as the most versatile. Landscapes, portraits, illustrations, as well as jackets for books, advertisements, large scale murals, and smaller fantasies and witty pieces of nonsense: his technique and imagination never faltered over a vast range of artistic production.

His heyday was in the fourteen years between his triumphant decoration of the dining-room at the Tate Gallery in 1926, and his military studies in the months before his death in action in Normandy in 1944. One of his pastoral landscapes, worthy of a mediaeval tapestry, contains a startled unicorn fleeing from a party of hunters, which also contains a boy on a bicycle, half turning round to see that the eggs in a basket perched behind his seat are tumbling out into the road., a detail reminiscent of one of the most endearing domestic Dutch masters.

His patrons were discriminating as well as mostly very rich: Lord Anglesey and his family, Maud Russell, Mountbatten, Philip Sassoon, and the Duke of Rutland among others. He was introduced to the King and Queen by Osbert Sitwell. Altogether, his milieu was for the most part a highly cultivated little world which would largely come to an end in 1940. From then on, it was to be a case of 'silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies'. But he was never spoiled by it. However prolific, he never neglected a seriously high professional standard. Kenneth Clark, the revered artistic pundit of the period, Director of the National

Gallery and creator of the television series *Civilisation*, dismissed Whistler's work as 'lightweight' and failed to include him in his campaign to support British artists thrown out of work by the war. 'Light-hearted' would have been a better description. Indeed, some of the successful 'heavyweight' artists of the day must have envied his sheer talent and his enormous appetite for work, which often left him exhausted.

But it was in his last years that he adjusted to the sombre atmosphere of war, and showed that he was much more than the darling of smart cultured society. His barrack room scenes, his searchlights playing over deserted railway lines; a uniformed figure with a Bren gun surveying the improbable background of Sandown Racecourse, now occupied not by horses but by a temporary camp of his own regiment, the Welsh Guards; two meticulous layouts for kit inspection show an inspired gift for detail, and the hilarious pair of studies of an officers' mess 'as it was' and 'as it might have been' confirm his never failing sense of enjoyment. All these show his great versatility over an astonishing range, culminating in a sensuous theatrical design for the ballet, the *Spectre de la Rose*, completed just before his death in action in 1944.

The authors combine an acute commentary on the nature of Whistler's world with a wonderfully harmonious and appropriate style of their own. He inherited from his early mentors, Tonks and Wilson

Steer, a passionate application to his work which never failed him. The production, design and layout of the book are impeccable, and the publishers (now sadly said to be in difficulties) have done a job which is completely worthy of the quality of the material. My only minor criticism is that the handsome dedication, to Max Egremont and his wife Caroline, deserved a page to itself instead of sharing one with copyright material and other details. But the book is a work of art in itself, and cannot be too highly recommended.



Robert Cecil, later Marquess of Salisbury

In Search of Rex Whistler by Hugh and Mirabel Cecil, published by Frances Lincoln, £40 hardback. Photo courtesy of Plas Newydd, Anglesey.

[back to contents page](#)

Eichmann's Teachers

Nigel Jones

Hitler's Philosophers, Yvonne Sherratt, Yale University Press. 2013, £25.

Closing this book, I offered up gratitude to whatever Gods may be that the predominant English philosophical tradition, such as it is, is one of solid pragmatism and common sense, quite immune to the often irrational Idealism that is the mainstay of German thought. Give me, I thought, Hobbes, Locke and Hume any day over Hegel, Nietzsche and – the principal villain of this book – the Nazi philosopher Martin Heidegger.

Even Immanuel Kant, the revered father of the Enlightenment, had his moments, calling the Jews 'a nation of swindlers' who should be expelled from the German body politic, and referring to the 'euthanasia of Judaism' as 'a purely moral act'. So, as Daniel Goldhagen's much derided book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* strongly suggested, there was a passionate strain of virulent anti-Semitism deeply entrenched in the commanding heights of German life and thought long before the tread of Hitler's legions was heard in the streets.

Nazism is often thought of as the anti-intellectual creed par excellence. Indeed, Fascist parties in every country made much of their rejection of over-rarified cerebral thinking, and made a virtue of instinctive 'thinking with the blood'. In fact, as Yvonne Sherratt's eye-opening book emphasises, Fascism in general and Nazism in particular was firmly grounded in the works of several 19th and early 20th century philosophers, and philosophers of a particularly turgid strain at that.

Count Arthur de Gobineau, the French apostle of a hierarchy of the races, in which the Aryans stood at the summit, was one such; while Wagner's son-in-law, the English-born Houston Stewart Chamberlain in his *Foundations of the 19th Century* contributed the idea of a Fuhrer destined to rescue Germany from decadence. Oswald Spengler's once-modish *Decline of the West*, though more pessimistic than Chamberlain, was another multi-volume exposition of the idea that occidental civilisation was on the skids and could only be saved by a man on horseback like, well, like the distinctly non-equestrian Hitler.

The philosopher most revered by the Nazis, however was Friedrich Nietzsche, the woman-hating product of a female household; the God-rejecting son of a Lutheran manse; and the syphilitic eternal bachelor. Nietzsche was the prophet of the health-giving properties of

war and struggle, enormously fashionable across the western world at the dawn of the 20th century, who preached the virtues of an amoral elite of supermen. It is easy, therefore, to see how Nietzsche's ideas, twisted by his proto-Nazi sister, executrix and editor Elisabeth during the last decade of the philosopher's life, spent as a dribbling lunatic, were bowdlerised into making him the (conveniently dead) philosopher of 'the movement', though the real Nietzsche had scornfully rejected anti-Semitism and thought German nationalism impossibly vulgar.

All these thinkers, though referenced by Sherratt, are not the chief concern of her book which is, rather, a study of how those philosophers who were alive and active at the time of the rise of the Nazis reacted to the coming of the Third Reich. Most of these time-serving Professors were obscure in their time and are totally forgotten now. Two, however, whose thought and careers are examined in some detail by Sherratt, are not.

Carl Schmitt was a respectable jurist and academic who gave himself heart and soul to the Nazi movement – but only when it had come to power. (He was one of the so-called 'May flowers', latecomers who joined the party only in May 1933 when it looked certain that Hitler would be in power for the foreseeable future). Up to that moment, Schmitt's academic theorising, along with his court work as a jurist, had been dedicated to a traditionalist stance of upholding the authority of the state – in his case the authoritarian Prussian state – against all comers. But once having joined the Nazis, Schmitt wasted no time in justifying their worst enormities, including the gangster massacre that was the Night of the Long Knives in July 1934, in which the Nazis slaughtered perceived foes on left and right – including several of Schmitt's Catholic conservative colleagues. Schmitt called this gruesome blood-letting 'A higher form of justice'.

Martin Heidegger was at least as nasty a piece of work. As Rector of Freiburg University, the author of *Being and Time* and father of existentialism delivered lectures in Nazi uniform, insisted that his students used the Hitler salute; decorated lecture halls with the swastika, and slavishly subordinated academic freedom and independence to the requirements of the totalitarian state. On a personal level, he meanly removed the name of his teacher Edmund Husserl – the man who had got him his Professorship at Freiburg – as the dedicatee of his masterwork, and refused to visit Husserl's deathbed or attend his funeral because his mentor was a Jew.

The fascinating thing about both Schmitt and Heidegger – both lapsed cradle Catholics – is that it was the far Left who most fervently worshipped at their shrines long after the war, and the revelation of the horrors of the Holocaust. The Communist Jean-Paul

Sartre, who studied Heidegger in Berlin in the 1930s, popularised existentialism; and other French Leftists such as Derrida, Foucault and co. who shared the same unlovely characteristics as their Nazi heroes: to whit inhumanity, worship of violence and a thrilling love of totalitarianism, were instrumental in rescuing Schmitt and Heidegger from ignominy and restoring them to international academic respectability.

In Heidegger's case, the most fervent rescuer of his tarnished reputation was none other than his former student and lover Hannah Arendt. Despite her Jewishness and knowledge of the Holocaust – she famously coined the phrase 'the banality of evil' while covering the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, – Arendt failed to spot the evil in her erstwhile master's eye, rekindled their relationship after the war and was chiefly responsible for boosting Heidegger as the 20th century's pre-eminent philosopher. The Heidegger-Arendt relationship, between a Jew and a Nazi, belongs more to the realms of abnormal psychology than philosophy, and gives new life to the old phrase about the heart having its reasons which reason cannot know, even if the Heideggerian heart in question is a dark one utterly impervious to reason.

[back to contents page](#)

Weird Beings

Celia Haddon

Weird Life, The Search for Life That Is Very, Very Different from Our Own, David Toomey, W W Norton and Co, 2013, £16.99.

'It's life, Jim, but not as we know it,' goes the famous parody of the TV serial *Star Trek*. David Toomey's book starts from this point, ranging from the weird creatures living on planet Earth to the possible life on far wilder shores of the universe. Not the universe as we know it but a multiverse where sub-atomic activity continually creates new universes or copies of existing universes. You don't get much weirder than that.

The weird creatures imagined by medieval writers were large beasts like gryphons and dragons but the real weird life forms sharing our own planet are all very, very small and very, very tough. We didn't know about most of them until relatively recently because nobody bothered to look. The accepted theory was that sunlight and at least some warmth were necessary for life, so the depths of the ocean would be completely sterile.

Thirty-six years ago, however, deep sea researchers discovered life in volcanic hot spots under the ocean. These creatures thriving in the dark could not absorb

energy through sunlight, the process of photosynthesis by which most plants live. So for light they substitute a chemical, hydrogen sulphide, to produce the energy they need.

They live around the so-called black smokers, the hot chimneys of volcanic minerals that erupt from the sea bed to heights of up to three metres. One bacterium can even reproduce at the scalding temperature of 235° Fahrenheit. Other bacteria form the basis of a kind of deep sea garden: giant tubeworms with red plumes swaying in the current, snails with armoured scales made with iron and Pompeii worms that withstand temperatures up to 176° Fahrenheit.

At the other extreme, in the Antarctic there is a single cell alga living among the ice floes. Other bacteria flourish in salt lakes where normal life forms would be destroyed by the salt, or are unharmed by radiation at a level which would kill us. Others live inside rocks, getting their energy from chemicals or radioactive decay, existing completely separate from life on the surface. Still others live in the clouds above us. These are the extremophiles, lovers of the extreme – thermophiles (heat lovers), cryophiles (cold lovers), barophiles (pressure lovers), halophiles (salt lovers) and radiophiles (radiation lovers).

Spores are the way some bacteria, plants, fungi and algae, reproduce. These primitive seeds can live for millions of years. One such bacillus spore, which had been trapped in amber, was resuscitated in a laboratory 25 million years later. Another spore was revived from evaporated seawater where it may have been deposited 250 million years ago.

The idea, therefore, that life was seeded on earth by spores, or from already living microbes in the rock, and delivered to its surface by meteorites, does not seem so mad as it once did. The other possibility, of course, is that there are unrecognised forms of life all around us. Like the beings in the unseen world of faerie, they are there but we don't know about them. What if, and this is where David Toomey's book takes off into speculation, there is life around us made up of different elements, an idea known as the shadow biosphere.

Almost all living DNA is made up of carbon, with hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulphur and phosphorus with a few trace elements. In 2007, the journal *Science* published a paper suggesting that a weird microbe had been found that used arsenic in the place of phosphorus. Other researchers could not duplicate the find. But what if the elements that make up DNA are the usual ones, but just organised in mirror fashion so that a left-handed molecule would always be found on the right? Other scientists thought they'd found a mirror microbe only to discover on further examination that it was an ordinarily structured one.

So could life in the shadow biosphere be made of nano-bacteria, just too small for us to notice? Tiny particles, possibly once living, have been found in sandstone, in a meteorite that originated in Mars, and in something known as 'desert varnish', a glittering coating on desert rocks that might be the product of still-unrecognised bacteria. All these suggestions have been put forward as examples of the shadow biosphere, then rubbished in subsequent debates.

The controversial possibilities of unseen or extreme life forms on earth, however, have intrigued those looking for life elsewhere in our planetary system. The extremophiles that live in earth's rocks or in the ocean black smokers might be able to thrive below the surface of Mars, below the icy oceans of Europa, a moon of the planet Jupiter, or in the hot black smokers, volcanic water jets, in the cold seas of Enceladus, a moon of the planet Saturn.

From here, David Toomey brings us to the next puzzle – how to define a living being. Is it a creature with a vital spirit, just a particular pattern of chemicals, or something that reproduces, develops and evolves with Darwinian natural selection? If the latter, are viruses living beings? Many scientists think not, yet viruses certainly evolve and develop even if they can only reproduce within another creature's cell. Indeed one theory is that cells of most living creatures were originally formed from intruding viruses. There is still no agreement on a definition of life.

If we can't agree on a definition of life, then perhaps the discovery of life on Mars or some other planet might help us do so. Most of the Mars experimental probes so far have been looking for life as we know it on earth, scooping up the planet's earth to test for signs of a being that takes in nutrients and ejects the waste products. The results were disappointing for those in search of Martian life, but now we know that Earth microbes can live in rock and that there is evidence for water and carbon on Mars, the idea of life there seems more probable.

From then on, *Weird Life*, having examined the possibilities of life within our planetary system, goes on to explore our universe and the possible multi-universes that might or might not exist. The first half of *Weird Life* is intriguing and well told: the second half takes off into an alternative book, closer to science fiction than science fact. If speculations about multi-universes are science, it is not science as I know it.

[back to contents page](#)



A Mogul in Chokey

David Twiston-Davies

A Matter of Principle, Conrad Black, Biteback Publishing, 2012, £14.99.

In 1985 *The Daily Telegraph* enjoyed a solid, prosperous readership which for long had seemed impervious to market forces. Then its elderly owners embarked on plans to build new printing presses without adequate funds. To their astonishment the City declined to oblige. So Conrad Black, an unknown Canadian, politely offered a loan. His only proviso was that the Berry family should come to him first if they needed more. Nobody realised that he had a reputation as a tough corporate acquirer in his native land. 'He expects it to drop into his lap', one of his closest friends told me.

An exciting prospect opened up: a young proprietor to breathe new life into a paper which had begun to show signs of age and uncertainty after its circulation had risen precipitately when *The Times* ceased production for a year in 1979, then had started to decline on its rival's return. As the new owner, Black had much to recommend him. He was a right-wing Conservative from Toronto, one of the great centres of the Empire; he had strong opinions and a vast stock of historical knowledge which impressed Margaret Thatcher when they first met. But whereas the paper had thrived on slow but steady change for over fifty years, computerised printing technology promised a new era, and Black's preference for bloody change at the top of any newly purchased business meant readers could expect changes that would go far beyond what they needed or desired. It was also clear when I first met him that he was far more fond of America.

Aided by the final retirement of the print workers from the production process and the journalistic talent imported by his editor Max Hastings, the circulation steadied and profits mounted. This was a period of economic boom after the City's Big Bang, when business leaders were being lionised. An admirer of Napoleon with no love of caution, Black believed he had a right to just rewards. As he embarked on the creation of an international media empire to rival that of Rupert Murdoch, his cavalier style began to cause comment. While *Telegraph* journalists appreciated his genuine interest in their calling, they were alarmed by the continuing cuts which threatened the paper's reputation for reliable coverage. And they were none too pleased on being told there was no money to offer them a rise one year.

The frequent resort to raising the cover price seemed to work until Murdoch began a price war. As Black continued to spend, the paper's board made an unsuccessful effort to prevent the purchase of a private jet for his transatlantic travel. But a photograph of him dressed as a cardinal, with his glamorous wife Barbara in 18th-century court dress, stirred public disapproval; the paper's editorial staff would have been further angered had they realised that her contract specified that she be paid for each column individually by every paper in the Telegraph Group which took her syndicated column.

Black revelled in the social position he enjoyed in England and, after being created a peer in 2001, was looking forward to speaking out in the House of Lords against the European Union. Yet he was also infatuated by the seemingly greater opportunities in the Land of the Free with its moneyed elite.

After paying a generous price to buy back shares from *Telegraph* staff he moved operations to the United States for the tax advantages. But a rumble was growing among the minority New York shareholders about his increased management fees. A special committee of the American directors, burning with the new concern for corporate governance, produced a highly critical report on the payments to Black and his associates. It need never have happened, if only he had stepped back a little, one of his most senior advisers told me. One suspects that Napoleon's marshals had similar feelings after the retreat from Moscow.

Ploughing through the 600 pages of *A Matter of Principle* I found myself struggling in the quagmire of detail, often unsure about what was right and what was wrong. Perhaps if Black had concentrated on producing a shorter account, solely devoted to the business issues, it would have been clearer. But readers would have missed much. Above all, this is the moving tale of a self-consciously great man among people who were irritated by his self-confidence, mystified by his vocabulary and suspicious of being cheated by a foreigner. When he was finally dragged into court in Chicago, the prosecution ruthlessly pounded away until the fairweather party friends turned on him, and even his long-term intimate, Henry Kissinger, succumbed to the torrent of condemnation, though the two later made it up.

Black was forced to resign first as chief executive, then chairman and member of his Hollinger company's board, while confronted by the phenomenal legal costs of fighting his case, which forced him to sell his house in London and flat in New York. But he managed to sell his *Telegraph* shares before his pursuers came up with 12 charges, beginning with racketeering. Most were dismissed, but he was found guilty of

wrongfully receiving payments for not [*sic*] starting new publications to rival those he had sold, and for removing papers from his old office, which he claimed had already been copied for the court.

The extent to which the public appreciated the issues, regularly fed to them by hostile prosecution press conferences, must be doubted. For most Americans it was enough that a multi-millionaire with an automatic litigation button was brought down by the power of American justice. The fact that he refused to admit his guilt and compared himself to the victims in the Soviet show trials of the 1930s, was further held against him. However many Canadians, whom he had mercilessly lambasted for living in a sea of socialism, came to realise that something was wrong with his sentence.

Nevertheless, when Black arrived at the Coleman Federal Correctional Complex in Florida to serve his 72-month sentence, he determined to make the best of an unfamiliar but interesting environment. Having been sent away to school (from which he was expelled for cheating), he settled into prison life remarkably well. On his first night he started a diary in French and, according to friends, was asked by a fellow prisoner if he needed a valet.

The Mafiosi elite assured him that he would not be bothered, adding that they had much in common with him as they, too were industrialists. His cell was shared with two Hispanics. But while there were demeaningly precise rules, Prisoner 18330-424 had unlimited access to emails, newspapers and periodicals; he could write columns for newspapers and, when given the opportunity to teach American history to the other inmates, had his first chance to lecture to a truly captive audience.

As a Roman Catholic convert, Black ponders his conduct, admitting that he had at times been unwise and arrogant – without being guilty of the alleged crimes, of course. 'I regarded my confinement, though not voluntarily assumed, as like St Thomas More's hair shirt,' he explains, 'a bearable reminder of my imperfections.' Among his many complaints about the press, he cites the case of a *Telegraph* journalist who was invited to his wedding breakfast, then turned away. This was disgraceful, he admits, though when he said so to a Canadian reporter and asked him to report him verbatim, nothing was run.

Of course he makes caustic remarks about many other people: the partner who landed him in court by refusing to fight the charges and negotiating a personal plea bargain; his Canadian QC whose concentration wavered in court; and the leader of the directors' investigating committee who was determined from the start to destroy him, and certainly did irreparable damage to Black's businesses by drawing immense

legal fees which reduced them to penury. Today Hollinger has no business, only a litigation trust to seek settlements from law firms, auditors and banks.

He also exposes the very real faults of American justice: the way anyone caught in its clutches finds proof of innocence all but impossible (as many British businessmen have discovered); the pernicious practice of plea bargaining to reduce sentences; and the fact that the US has the largest prison population in the world. When Black finally obtained an appeal hearing his sentence was reduced by almost half, but the judge refused him retrial on the two remaining charges, which means he is still a criminal in American law; naturally, he is determined to change this. Back in Canada now, he regards the United States with a mixture of dislike, resentment and affection for a nation he thought he knew.

If he fails to obtain redress he will be able to draw comfort from his writing and the knowledge that the obituary of Lord Black of Crosssharbour will not just be the story of Fleet Street's third great Canadian press lord. It will be a tale of rise, fall and survival, far more remarkable than any unblemished record of worthy and unwavering success could be.

[back to contents page](#)

Hiding Bad Genes

Jane Kelly

Family Secrets: Living with Shame from the Victorians to the Present Day, Deborah Cohen, Viking, 2013, £20.

We think we know a few things about the Victorians; the people who covered up table legs for the sake of modesty, and hid mad women in the attic. But this moving and sometimes hilarious book explodes several myths about our ancestors, and the idea that progress towards personal freedom was linear. Drawing on years of research in previously sealed records, divorce-courts, adoption agencies and lunatic asylums, Deborah Cohen offers a brilliant account of how ideas about shame have changed back and forth over the last two centuries.

By 1800 there were 20,000 British men in India. Over half the children baptised in St John's Church, Calcutta were illegitimate and mixed race. Cohen points out that in the Colonies there were no secrets, native women lived openly with British men, but back in Blighty it

was a different matter. If you were discovered as a rule-breaker society could be unmerciful. The book abounds with fascinating case studies, such as the 14-year-old grandson of the Earl of Perth, who eloped with a married woman of a lower class, and ended up as a clam-gatherer in Long Island.

We follow the story of Robert Bruce, a captain in the Bengal Artillery, and his half Indian daughter Margaret. In 1786 he brought her back to genteel Edinburgh, introducing her to his family as 'the daughter of a friend'. Her Indian mother was paid a small pension but all transactions with her were removed from family documents. In Scotland his family suspected the truth but kept quiet about it. At one point his sister was in a panic because: 'Margaret is getting a black downiness on her lip.'

She hunted desperately for a cure but the Bruces were rich, discreet and although dusky Margaret was ostracised by her school friends and not invited to dances, the family kept its position in society. Margaret became one of the wealthiest women in Scotland and made a happy marriage in her 40s. Cohen reveals that Anna Leonowens, whose memoir became the basis for *The King and I*, invented her entire childhood to try to shield her mixed race mother from shame.

If secrets were kept no one need suffer, and through most of the 19th century race was not the biologically determined category it would become fifty years later. It was the same for children with obvious defects. No one knew what caused 'Mongolism', epilepsy and cerebral palsy. Desperate parents blamed thumb sucking, masturbation, 'something in the water,' or specific incidents, such as the siege of Lucknow, which one doctor wrote had caused scores of backward children. Cohen shows that many Victorians were prepared to live openly with their handicapped children, and the book contains interesting early photos of children with Down's.

The most impressive part of the book is her investigation into the archives of Normansfield Training Institution, founded for 'the feeble-minded children of the well to do,' opened in 1868 by John Langdon Down, who gave his name to Down's Syndrome. He and his wife Mary, liberal Christians, ran an intensely caring home, where children were regularly visited by their parents, who kept in constant correspondence with Mary. At the time it was believed that, by the Grace of God, children could be if not cured, helped and educated so that they could one day return home and lead useful lives.

A newspaper reported that on the lawn, 'fashionably dressed young ladies, all afflicted with idiocy in varying degrees,' could be seen playing croquet, while in the theatre young children performed in musical

recitals. However, by the time that Langdon Down's son, Reginald took over as director, in 1896, God had been replaced by science, in particularly genetics. By the start of the 20th century, optimism about disabled children had been replaced by fear of a 'blood taint.' Instead of the hope of a cure, they were seen as a useless drain on resources. Reginald himself had terrible secrets. As a youth he had murdered his brother, which was somehow hushed up, and later he fathered a Down's child who was kept hidden.

Among many moving anecdotes, Cohen writes of Henrietta Weldon who was deeply ashamed of her son Percy. She wanted to see him, but did not wish him to be seen. On one of his trips home she had friends to tennis, but hurried him off with a servant. He returned home by a back way, telling his mother, 'I thought your friends would rather not see me.'

In sprawling, crowded working class homes, open to interference from neighbours, church, employer, and charity workers, secrets were hard to keep. The solution was the open secret, everyone knew but no one talked about it, or only by family code. Many working class homosexuals were guarded by this culture.

The middle classes however were stalked by shame; illegitimacy, marital strife, mental illness and pederasty were disasters which had to be hidden from view, even from one's own family. Bastard babies were adopted secretly, and not told about their origins. As families got smaller and what was defined as 'normal' got narrower, the need to hide unwanted children, shameful origins and eccentric relations became more intense.

The second half of the book moves to detailed scrutiny of how we evolved from secrecy into a society of public disclosure and 'purgative confession'. Easier divorce laws, the arrival of the tabloid press, which the historian A J P Taylor says 'at last gave English people a voice,' down to the Wolfenden Report in 1967, which made sex legal between consenting men in private, show how concepts of shame and privacy were changing. As usual, Cohen finds wonderful gossip insights into the lives of the great and the good; apparently Wolfenden's son Jeremy was a flagrant sodomite, upbraided by his father for wearing too much makeup.

The final chapters explore the rise of sex 'experts' and gurus such as R D Laing, the development of 'marriage guidance', and family therapy at the Tavistock Institute in London. As the resolving of childhood problems and exploration of individuality became the most important aspects of personal development, the concept of shame was shelved and with it the 'repressive family.'

We all now live with more information, divulged more openly, with more people. When the 'phone-hacking' scandal broke earlier this year, it was said that

privacy is a thing of the past. Cohen's book shows that privacy is in fact expanding. If her understanding is correct and privacy means the common right to conduct your affairs without social detriment, that what we do in private is no one else's damn business, then we are now post shame, leading lives of independent privacy, with no need to construct barriers of secrets and lies against the world.

[back to contents page](#)

The Messy Truths of War

Mark Baillie

Tales from the Special Forces Club, Sean Rayment, Collins, 2013, £18.99.

This *Sunday Telegraph* journalist, who has covered recent wars, gives an exciting read and even a contribution to history by recording the feats of some remarkable World War II fighters in unconventional operations: it is not history (due to journalistic flourishes, inaccuracies and gaps) but these are historically valuable stories. The facts are not new but the collation of more reminiscences adds to understanding the experience of war as an academic discipline. Some of these people started as exceptional adventurers but it is the normality of many that is so striking, as well as their return to normality after the war.

Equally striking, but only briefly alluded to here, are the women who fought in SOE (three of whom won the George Cross, being ineligible for the Victoria Cross because they were technically civilians), including in combat and not just as undercover co-ordinators (see *inter alia* the recent *The Women Who Lived for Danger*, by Marcus Binney, 2002, and numerous books about the individuals, such as Jerrard Tickell's 1949 *Odetta: The Story of a British Agent* and the memoir *Moondrop to Gascony*, by Anne-Marie Walters, 1946, republished 2009).

Rayment's special contribution is to reflect the speech of his subjects so well, capturing their characters and feelings, with the persistent self-deprecating humour of exceptional people of that generation. He has also made a contribution by getting them to speak in detail at all: there may well be no more secrets any more, as Noreen Riols tells him, but you have to demonstrate knowledge of the subject, with the right kinds of questions, to get such people to talk after decades of being asked the irritating 'what was it like?' or of trying to forget. I once got a very tight-lipped winner of the MC in the Balkans to open up merely by asking how

he had purloined the motorbike he used for travelling between his artillery batteries: his family had never heard the stories he then told.

These stories are gleaned from members of the Special Forces Club, although it was not involved and has not 'decided to reveal its identity at last' nor 'opened its doors' nor 'revealed the identity of its most special heroes', a deceitful marketing claim by the publishers. The reason for its creation is reflected in the title of Peter Kemp's Special Operations Executive memoirs, *No Colours Or Crest* (1958): many in SOE were not members of any armed forces unit and had no organisation or mess to fall back on for social support, nor could they meet their friends in public to discuss top secret old times – indeed, many of them did not even know each other because of the compartmentalised system of secrecy. Members of what are now called Special Forces, the military units, were not allowed in until later.

When the Special Forces Club was founded just after the war, the term was an undefined euphemism for the still very secret Special Operations, that mix of intelligence and weaponry in resistance which is very different from the activities of special military forces, such as the WWII Commandos, Long Range Desert Group and so on.

This distinction is not clear to Rayment: Special Forces only later came to mean special military forces, such as the Special Boat Service and the Special Air Service, who were eventually also allowed to apply for membership (against some opposition), leading to confusion about what the Club's name means. The ethos, however, remains that of Special Operations and 'the Spirit of Resistance,' as Rayment does explain.

For that reason, it is not only 'open to women' (as well as Other Ranks) but it was at the time, as far as research reveals, the only London club with women among the founders: it never has been a 'gentleman's club' as the publishers call it in the blurb.

Six of these stories are about special military forces, one about SOE training and three about one particular aspect of special operations, the Jedburgh Teams. These consisted of one British or American officer, an officer of the relevant country (principally France, with examples of Burma in this collection) and a radio operator, all in uniform, all ideally speaking the language of the country and parachuting in to co-ordinate the operations and supplies of the local resistance with Allied headquarters – frequently jumping into the unknown.

The Jedburghs may be indeed still be little known and have been top secret (like all SOE operations), as Rayment frequently says, but they have not been secret for a long time, at least since 1966 when Professor

M.R.D. Foot, himself a SOE officer, published *SOE in France*, followed by many others. Again, it is the stories rather than the history that are valuable here.

We also get stories from exotic military units, Popski's Private Army, the SAS, the Commandos, the Chindits and the LRDG, raiding behind enemy lines in the desert, the jungle and the mountains, as well as the RAF Special Duties squadrons that flew agents in the stubby Lysander into French fields, navigating by moonlight and landing by torchlight, and parachuted people and supplies from larger aircraft.

Alas, we do not get an index nor a much-needed bibliography and complete footnotes, while we do get inaccuracies, including nomenclature that Rayment, a former Parachute Regiment officer should know well: for example, he says of the King's Royal Rifle Corps that 'the regiment was disbanded' in 1942, when he means one battalion of a regiment that survived until amalgamation in 1966. He makes a false distinction between 'special forces as an alternative to service in the British Army.' He also uses the 'Britain stood alone' cliché, meaning alone except for the Empire and unlimited supplies from the United States (albeit severely hampered by U-boats); worse, he is referring to early 1942, when the USA had just entered the war.

The value of these stories lies not in units, dates or even accuracy (all properly covered in many histories and memoirs) but in the true feelings, behaviour, unpredictability and nastiness of war and its participants, shorn of theory, historical perspective and legal niceties: war against the Japanese or in the Balkans, as seen here, was a war of hatred, racial or political, in which prisoners were shot as a natural extension of fighting for survival and in which different resistance factions hated each other as much as the invader, to the extent of keeping their powder dry for the post-war fight for power. Here we meet murderous savages who were our temporary allies and we hear real people's real reactions to combat and fear. We also see extremes of loyalty and courage. This is the messy truth of war which forces us to confront moral questions and to ask ourselves if we could face such terror with such bravery and make all the hundreds of instant life-or-death decisions, constantly for weeks and months. Bill Smyly tells Rayment he still questions whether he did the right thing in the starving, relentless combat of Burma by despatching a mortally wounded soldier, yet the officer he was with said: 'You are a better man than me.'

That messy truth is particularly important today when policy-makers have no experience of war or even military service. In World War II many of the senior politicians and civil servants had fought or governed in the Great War, including Churchill, who

had managed to participate in most of the conflicts of his early life. By the time of the Korean War and the Malayan Emergency, many had fought in the First World War and governed in the Second.

To put these reminiscences in a historical perspective, it is a great pity that Britain's immense experience of resistance and guerrilla warfare was not brought to bear on our invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, where we have arguably become the Germans (regardless of how well-meaning we might be) and where resistance came as a surprise.

[back to contents page](#)

The Sympathy of Books Penelope Tremayne

The Pleasure of Thinking Theodore Dalrymple, Gibson Square, 2013, £9.99.

The title of this book raised high expectations for an entirely personal reason. During the Second World War I worked for a time for, and with, probably the most intelligent man I have ever known; he was also a most remarkable teacher. Using a Socratic method (not that I recognised it as such, since I knew virtually nothing about Socrates) he brought within my reach nearly all of the very little I have learned since: for he taught me to think. The excitement was tremendous. I lay awake at nights practising thinking, however ineffectively, sleeping seemed such a waste of time by comparison. And so of course I supposed this must be the pleasure that Theodore Dalrymple had in mind. But of course his theme is much more sophisticated: what we are offered are selections from the reminiscences of a highly skilled professional man with much experience and a strong and sardonic sense of humour. These may induce laughter or anger or mild enjoyment or strong interest, all in small neatly compressed doses, in which wit never turns to malice.

Despite the grimness of much of his working life and the horrors of many of the cases he describes, there is nothing macabre about the book and a good deal that is sympathetic or funny or both. Sarcasm is released only where deserved; mere crass stupidities are treated more gently, like the multiple poisoner who after many successes was pronounced insane and committed to Broadmoor, where he killed another man and 'also poisoned the tea of a whole ward. Nevertheless a psychiatrist thought that he had was so far reformed that he could safely be released'. There is something very modern about procedures of that kind, where political correctness overrides both professional

judgement and common sense. To reveal such things can only be for the common good. The task of bringing us to our senses is huge: the more honour to those who tackle it.

What *The Pleasure of Thinking* tells us most about is the pleasure of collecting books: an honourable passion which also has the virtue of being cheaper than collecting Chinese porcelain or Persian carpets. No doubt collecting mistresses is more expensive still. Dalrymple does not go into that, but frankly admits that book-hunting for him has amounted to a life-long obsession. And why not? It has clearly been of great value – one could almost say a life-line – to many small and similarly devoted book-sellers, without doing any harm to anyone or anything. Perhaps here and there he has included rather too many not really very exciting details of particular pursuits or quarries. Perhaps I think so only because I lack the fervour of the natural born collector. And anyway it is only a minor quibble – as is the complaint one has to make about almost all the books published these days; that they are littered with uncorrected printing errors.

His recollections themselves cover a wide range of places and ideas; the impression given over all is of a quiet understanding of and sympathy with humans of all sorts, with now and then unexpected glimpses into historical, psychological and political questions. He is very good at making or as it were inviting random deductions. He throws in, for example, the observation that the French countryside is much more profusely supplied with bookshops than the British, and also that 'the intellectual level of the books sold is incomparably higher'. There is a room for a lot of thought about that. He does not give us his own conclusion, but adds a few more clues, such as that even in small towns in France you can buy not only the French classics but many foreign ones translated into French. That sort of accessibility must surely have something to do with the expected buyers' average level of education. Dalrymple, who is never pedantic, does not point this out, but goes on to say that the book-selling trade in Britain is a good deal to blame because for some time now it has concentrated on very quick sales of a few 'popular' titles, in huge quantities for sale in supermarkets and airports. He even quotes a letter from an editor pressing the need for 'more books about celebrities, for celebrities, written by celebrities', and suggests that the next step will be government by them. But he is not writing about contemporary politics so he does not mention Mr Gove or the unions.

The reflections in *The Pleasure of Thinking* are those of a man well-travelled both in mileage and in mind. And it is a book of the kind that can be put down and picked up again almost anywhere without seriously

losing the thread. I can hardly think of one better suited for any reader to take who is about to start on a long, uncomfortable and tedious journey in trains full of package tourists.

[back to contents page](#)

“Yes, Foreign Minister” Robert Crowcroft

Six Moments of Crisis: Inside British Foreign Policy, Gill Bennett, Oxford University Press, 2013, £20.00.

Gill Bennett spent a decade as Chief Historian at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and has also acted as editor of the series *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, a powerful resource for professional scholars. She worked in Whitehall for thirty years and, according to the dust jacket, provided advice to a dozen Foreign Secretaries. Her most recent work is thus written from a true insider’s perspective. *Six Moments of Crisis* examines decision-making processes in half a dozen major episodes in British foreign policy, ranging from the beginning of the Cold War to the conflict over the Falklands. Bennett’s goal is to illuminate: the way in which decisions are taken; who decides; and the broader domestic and international contexts in which policy is made. The result is good, old ‘maps and chaps’ history. Geopolitics feature heavily in Bennett’s account. And, at the deepest level this is a story about individuals, their interactions, and the challenges they faced. ‘The singularities of personality and circumstance, politics and geography’ are to the fore in the book. Ministers, Bennett reminds us, always have to grapple with more than one thing at once; and understanding the environment in which decisions were taken is crucial. Conceptually that is hardly a novel point, of course, but it is an important one.

Bennett’s analysis of the Attlee government’s decision to commit British forces to the Korean War gets to the heart of the ‘special relationship’ with the United States. London’s involvement in the conflict was primarily ‘political’ and ‘symbolic’, driven by a desire to demonstrate that Washington could ‘count’ on her ally. Close to home, Britain was confronted by a dangerous and unstable geopolitical situation; only the alliance with America safeguarded British security, and thus Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin needed to show that Britain was a useful partner. Bevin brought none of the sentimentality to the Anglo-American relationship that Winston Churchill had. This was a

hard-headed calculation designed to serve the greater national interest. Bevin was, of course, the key player in devising the interlocking Western security apparatus of the Cold War and ranks alongside Lord Salisbury as one of Britain’s greatest Foreign Secretaries. Bennett’s essay is a persuasive exploration of how Britain came to be involved in Korea, in what is often described as the ‘forgotten war’.

The analysis of Britain’s decision to apply to join the European Economic Community in 1961 is similarly interesting. London had long taken a detached and sceptical view of European integration, but in an environment of chastening economic decline politicians suddenly reversed course and seemed to see in ‘Europe’ a new destiny for Britain. And yet while policy makers were anxious about a whole range of things (beside the economy, the special relationship and the Commonwealth played on Harold Macmillan’s mind), it is not entirely clear *why* they fixed on the EEC as a solution. Bennett does not really resolve that. It seems that politicians conceived of Europe as an ‘answer’, without necessarily knowing why. Hard-headed and strategic assessments of the national interest seem to have been less important than emotion – especially fear.

Bennett’s essay on the Wilson government’s decision to withdraw from Britain’s role ‘East of Suez’ provides a depressing reminder of how Whitehall manages the need for reductions in public expenditure: with salami-slicing, gesture politics, and a ‘fair distribution’ of cuts rather than clear thinking about priorities. Much of this story has already been told in Elie Kedourie’s famous essay ‘The Crossman Confessions’, one of the most perceptive and entertaining pieces ever composed on the workings of modern government. Other essays deal with Anthony Eden’s decision to confront President Nasser of Egypt, Britain’s expulsion of Soviet agents in Operation FOOT in 1971, and Mrs Thatcher’s decision to send the taskforce to the Falklands in April 1982. This last piece is particularly interesting given that Cabinet documents on the war have now been released under the thirty-year rule. One of my undergraduate students has recently produced a dissertation using these documents, demonstrating that Thatcher did indeed genuinely search for a peaceful solution that would avoid war; the sailing of the taskforce was a diplomatic bargaining chip intended to convey that Britain would fight if it came to it.

Overall this is an engaging book, which will appeal to general readers. Most of its ideas are not particularly new, and will therefore be of limited use for specialists. But for those in search of an entertaining excursion through high-stakes policy making, it will do the trick.

[back to contents page](#)

Mullahs with Missiles ?

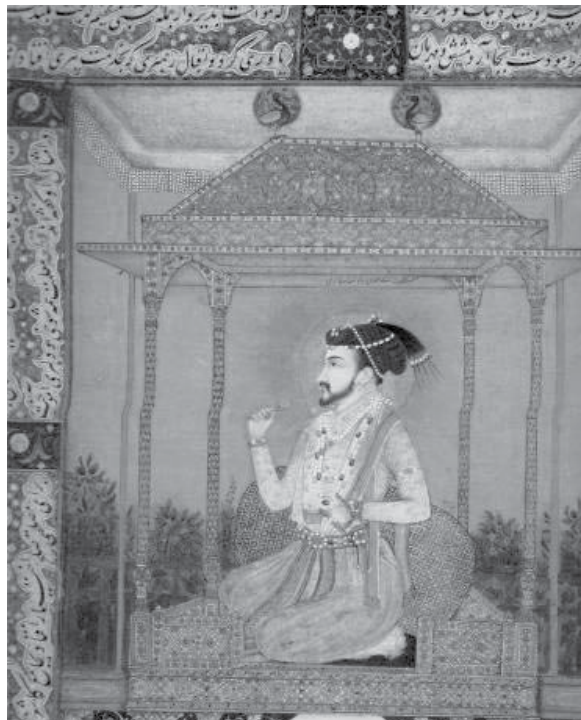
Christine Stone

Why the West is Wrong about Nuclear Iran, Peter Osborne & David Morrison, Elliott & Thompson, 2013, £8.99.

This short volume, more in the form of a pamphlet than a book, sets out to demolish what the authors call the myths and disinformation perpetuated about Iran's nuclear programme. In doing so they have performed a useful public service despite the acres of print already generated on the subject which must have induced a sense of ennui in the public at large. Many will feel scientifically unfit to judge the issue, while at the same time wondering why Iran, like several other large nations, cannot have nuclear weapons – even if it denies that ambition and the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has denounced WMD in a fatwa rarely mentioned in the free world's press. After all, such weapons have been used only once and then by the Islamic Republic's main would-be nemesis: the United States of America.

Osborne and Morrison show how Iran has been a pawn in Washington's geostrategic playbook for many years. Situated in the fault lines between east and west with ample reserves of oil and gas, the Americans were ever fearful that a powerful, unchecked Iran would fall into the clutches of the Soviet Union. More recently, it has been under attack as a power broker in the Middle East supporting Israel's enemies, like Hezbollah in Lebanon. This power play began in 1953 when the democratically elected and secular Mohammed Mossadeq was overthrown after he nationalised the country's oilfields. This CIA-led coup restored the autocratic Shah to power. Unlike many other such coups carried out since, it is openly admitted and chronicled by several mainstream American scholars and journalists.

The general view is that hatred of the Shah and his powerful security apparatus SAVAK led to the rise of Islamic-based political activists (although some such people were already evident in the plot against Mosaddeq) culminating in the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the coming to power of Ayatollah Khomeini. However, some suspect that the CIA itself may have had a hand in these events too. Now it seems unlikely, but soon afterwards, the Americans again empowered Islamic militants, this time to harass and ultimately defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan. And, although the relationship with Iran seemed terminally damaged by the seizure of its hostages in the 1979 embassy siege, the Americans were back four years later, selling arms covertly to Iran and directing the money from such sales to right-wing rebels in Nicaragua, a policy which became known as the Iran-Contra scandal.



This Doppelgänger approach to Iran has also been present in the ongoing nuclear saga. The Americans were negotiating with the Shah's government in the 1970s to deliver nuclear technology. The real animus against a nuclear Iran only became clear later. Yet, even as the issue simmered, Iran was keen to cooperate with the United States, offering its services, as Osborne and Morrison point out, following the 9/11 attacks on New York. I remember talking to an advisor to former President Khatami in 2005 who revealed that the regime in Tehran had offered the US assistance

in its war to overthrow Saddam Hussein. To the Iranians' sadness (and bewilderment) these offers were rejected.

As the nuclear saga has ground on, the US and Europeans continue to impose ever more sanctions, refusing to accept Iran's repeated claims that its purposes are peaceful. At the same time, much effort has been put into influencing the country's internal affairs. Many suspect that terrorist attacks in the form of indiscriminate bombings and targeted assassinations, often associated with the anti-regime terrorist group, the Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK), are condoned if not actually organised by the US. The MEK itself, long

outlawed by the international community, was delisted as a terrorist organisation by the US in September 2012 and applauded as freedom fighters by the European Parliament. As for Iran's domestic agenda, the US has taken more than a passing interest in the country's presidential elections. For, despite being the pariah of the Middle East, Iran is a democracy, albeit with a theocratic overlay. Elections to both the parliament (Majlis) and presidency are held according to a set timetable.

In the 2009 presidential election, the United States supported the candidacy of Mir-Hossein Mousavi against the eventual winner, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, hoping that 'people power' would overturn the results in Mousavi's favour. Ahmadinejad is a secular politician who, despite his alleged desire to abolish Iran's reign of the mullahs, was detested by Washington. This is put down to his hostility to Israel (again, Osborne and Morrison debunk the supposed genocidal threats made by the former president as the result of a malign mistranslation of the Farsi language). Like all Iranian politicians, as well as the ruling Islamic Council, Ahmadinejad believed Iran had a right to peaceful nuclear technology. But, then so does Mousavi, one of the original proponents of the country's nuclear programme. According to a November 2007 International Atomic Agency Authority (IAEA) report 'the decision to acquire centrifuge technology from the A Q Khan network ... was endorsed by then-Prime Minister Mousavi in 1987.' As Khan has been described by the US as a 'serious proliferation risk' it is, perhaps, strange that Mousavi was Washington's favoured candidate for Iran's top job.

It seems that the Iran nuclear issue is a thicket of often conflicting and enigmatic data. So far, the West has been unable to come up with the 'smoking gun' to show that the country is developing nuclear weapons, even after its favoured candidate, Yukiya Amano, was appointed to run the IAEA (which oversees the whole tangled web) in 2009. Attempts to expose the duplicity of Iran's detractors when both India and Israel have nuclear weapons outside the constraints of the non-proliferation treaty are ignored. It is beginning to look as though the US, as the lead hawk, will only be satisfied with a military solution to any Iranian challenge to its geopolitical hegemony in the Middle East.

Such a prospect is deeply unsettling. Iran is not a basket case but a highly sophisticated country with a developed military. Despite rumours of its imminent collapse, in an April 2013 article *Forbes* magazine claimed that the country was 'weathering the economic storm' of sanctions. If anyone thinks that it is a good idea to deliver a 'shot across its bows' to teach it a

lesson this short book might help dissuade them by setting out clearly the facts which support the available evidence: Iran is developing nuclear technologies but exclusively for peaceful purposes. At the same time, the authors are careful to cover their tracks and say they could, of course, be mistaken. In the meantime, the country has a new president, Hassan Rouhani, whose election in June 2013 has been welcomed by the West. Rouhani is regarded as a 'reformer' and it is expected that he will, at least, temper the rhetoric associated with the nuclear issue. However, pointedly, he has not yet indicated that the programme will be terminated. In fact, Israel commentator Ron Ben-Yishai has already spoilt the party by warning that 'Rouhani's reputation as a moderate politician may dazzle Obama while the centrifuges continue to rotate'.

Whether they agree with this book's interim verdict, some readers might think that with threats piling up from Israel, the US and its European allies, wouldn't it be understandable for Iran to arm itself to the teeth? After all, Gaddafi disarmed and was then butchered along with several of his sons by the Western states who, not long beforehand, had praised his statesmanlike behaviour. North Korea has built and tested nuclear weapons and its Kim dynasty passes on rule from father to son with impunity.

<http://www.kings1912.com/blog>

[back to contents page](#)

'Spasibo Able Seaman' Martin Dewhirst

The Coder Special Archive, Tony Cash and Mike Gerrard, Surbiton, Hodgson Press, 2012, £12.99.

Review into the present state of Slavonic and East European Studies in the higher education system of the UK, J A Dunn, York, The Higher Education Academy, 2013, free on request from pressoffice@heacademy.ac.uk

The cover of this book says that its foreword was contributed by Alan Bennett, who should need no introduction to the rather Uncommon Readers of this periodical. But even they may not quite remember who coders were and whether it was they who were special or they who have a special archive. The answers are in the subtitle: 'The untold story of Naval national servicemen learning and using Russian during the Cold War.'

In the 1950s only two per cent of British conscripts went into the Navy, yet the Senior Service trained about one third (1,500) of those who learnt Russian in the armed forces at that time. Moreover, unlike their 3,000 or so colleagues in the Army and Air Force, almost all the budding naval translators (coders special) and interpreters (midshipmen) knew before they were called up that they would spend most of the next two years learning and using Russian. In the Army and RAF there was a large element of chance involved in getting into one of the Joint Services Schools of Linguists. I suspect that many soldiers and airmen thought that their naval counterparts had a very cushy billet, and one of the most striking features of this volume is to show how mistaken that view could be. Most naval national servicemen had to do 'sea time' both before starting their Russian courses and after completing them. Some chapters make it clear that it was usually the linguists in the other two services who had a relatively safe and easy time. They never had to sling a hammock and lash it for inspection or carry a big tray of food up and down vertical ladders in a raging tempest far from land.

This book pays due homage to Geoffrey Elliott's and Harold Shukman's 2002 *Secret Classrooms*, but that pioneering work concentrates on Army and RAF personnel and pays more attention to interpreters than to translators. As a result of the Official Secrets Act, it has little information on what the translators did *after* their linguistic and technical training was over. This book breaks new ground, especially in chapter 9, about signals intelligence newsgathering in the north of West Germany. The technical details may not be fully comprehensible to non-specialists, but it's clear that the work did not involve breaking the Geneva Convention, and of course the 'other' side was doing the same things: '...we know that thousands of Soviet conscripts manned listening posts to intercept Western military radio traffic'. Chapter 12 contains the accounts of two former Soviet soldiers who were listening in to Western signals during their time in the Red Army. Morale was low on both sides, with many eavesdroppers feeling that what they were doing was of little if any value. However, this relates to only one of the two reasons why the West set up these procedures as the authors point out in an important footnote: '...the principal use of a large pool of trained coders was always for sigint [signals intelligence] in a potential future war' We know now that the Kremlin had serious plans for an invasion and occupation of Western Europe, and not only coders were needed to ensure that at least a few thousand people in Britain had a good knowledge of the main language of the USSR.

Whether the Cold War is now finally over or not, the UK could still benefit from a larger number of people

who can read, speak, understand, and write and think in, Russian. Some of the coders (and midshipmen) played an important part in British-Soviet relations in the decades after National Service, for better or for worse, was ended, but the number of non-Russians in Britain with a good knowledge of Russian has been steadily declining, while the number of Russians living in Britain has increased. John Dunn's excellent volume is the latest (and possibly the last) in a series of Reports and Reviews (1947, 1961, 1979, 1989 and 1995) about the state of Russian, Soviet, East European and, in some cases, other Studies in this country. The author quotes James Muckle as writing that in the last century the government 'had repeatedly perceived a crisis in the field, which had been followed by action, followed again by inaction and neglect, leading to further crisis – and so the cycle had continued'. Dunn hopes to close this circle, but this may be even harder than to square it. Like Cash and Gerrard, he confidently asserts that the 'Cold War' is over, but this may be a question of how the term is defined and doesn't help his cause. Indeed, Northern Ireland and Wales are already Russian-free zones for higher education and Scotland might go the same way unless Professorships in Russian/Slavonic Studies are restored at Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrews Universities. Almost 1,500 university students were 'enrolled' on Russian courses last year at the three Scottish and 12 English universities still teaching the subject but no more than about 260 graduated in the subject after a full undergraduate course. Many of the 260 spent a year abroad in a Russian-speaking environment, but most of those who take some Russian at university only become smatterers. One wonders whether graduates in Russian these days are more fluent or less fluent in the language than the coders were in the 1950s, but it would be impossible to quantify how much less stringently 'Finals' are marked in some universities these days. Dunn mentions that only Oxford and Cambridge teach historical and comparative linguistics: 'there are those who would argue that Putin's Russia cannot be understood without some knowledge of pre-Petrine Muscovy'.

Stale clichés about quality and a little knowledge are valid and Dunn uses nautical language to convey the seriousness of the situation: 'not so much a tempest as an iceberg of uncertain dimensions lurking on the horizon'. Not only elderly coders and midshipmen will agree, regardless of whether or not they think that the Cold War has ended for ever.

[back to contents page](#)

A Comprehensive Failure

Alistair Miller

Education, Education, Education, Reforming England's Schools, Andrew Adonis, Biteback Publishing, 2012, £12.99.

In *Education, Education, Education*, Andrew (Lord) Adonis, the architect of academy schools and prime instigator of reform in secondary education over a decade (first as advisor, later as minister), recounts the story of the re-invention of the comprehensive school under New Labour. It was clear when Labour came to power in 1997 that the comprehensive system was failing, with fewer than half of all state comprehensives achieving 'the basic yardstick' of five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and maths for more than one in three of their sixteen year-olds. But there was as yet no credible policy for improving them.

The problem was crystallised for Adonis, recently appointed Blair's education advisor, in the disastrous attempt to re-launch the failing George Orwell comprehensive in Islington under the 'fresh start' initiative. Chronic mismanagement by the local council, who failed even to appoint a project manager, a chaotic re-opening (there wasn't even a timetable) and a near riot, a 20-strong governing body complete with factions and little unity of purpose, and an inadequate LEA-appointed head who was forced to resign after only a few months all combined to produce 'a sorry story'. 'Fresh start' was not the answer. Shortly afterwards Adonis chanced on visiting one of Kenneth Baker's fifteen City Technology Colleges and the contrast was striking. Many visits followed and Adonis noticed that 'governance, independence, leadership, ethos and standards' seemed to be mutually reinforcing. The secret, he concluded, was that the sponsors (unlike government bureaucracies) set ambitious goals, ran their governing bodies in a business-like way and appointed head teachers capable of instilling the right ethos. Why not then relax the private funding requirement, attract more sponsors (local businessmen, successful schools, universities, churches and so forth) and apply the model to all schools? So it was that 'academies' (Adonis coined the name) – independent schools financed by the state – were born. Moreover, unlike the 'secondary modern comprehensives', academies would have sixth forms – Adonis realised these were vital to providing younger pupils with role models and attracting the best teachers; they would be

able to recruit top graduates through the 'Teach First' scheme; and they would have state-of-the-art buildings.

The plan was radical and effective – and therefore calculated to enrage a host of vested interests ranging from Whitehall bureaucrats and local authority chief education officers to ideologically entrenched party politicians and the teaching unions. Adonis had therefore to exercise extreme tact and skill in circumventing obstacles and opponents, and in negotiating an endless series of legal challenges. He also needed extraordinary powers of perseverance against the entrenched opposition of both political parties. That the Conservatives are continuing the academy programme – Cameron and Gove are enthusiastic converts – and extending it with free schools (which Adonis fully supports) is a tribute to Adonis's achievement.

Adonis cuts an attractive figure as a reformer and is refreshingly non-partisan and pragmatic. He is honest about policy mistakes (blind alleys) and learns quickly from them. His account of the difficulties of getting anything done in government is revealing. He observes wryly that the notion that Britain has a 'permanent' and 'expert' civil service is 'largely a misnomer' – with career civil servants changing jobs every year or two, possessing only a superficial knowledge of the subject. Just as an official was getting on top of a project or policy, 'they would suddenly disappear, often at a few weeks' notice'. This, together with six Secretaries of State in ten years, produced a state of 'constant flux' – and this even before 'the Gordon Brown volcano erupted'. On one occasion, a Permanent Secretary expressed concern about honouring reforming head teachers and educational philanthropists, something Adonis had long urged. 'They will have to live with these titles at work and in the pub. How will they cope?' he mused. 'In much the same way as you do' was Adonis's response.

The proof however is in the pudding and central to Adonis's case is the argument that academies have transformed pupils' exam results and life chances. Mossbourne Community Academy, opened in 2004 by Tony Blair on the ruins of Hackney Downs comprehensive (once dubbed 'the worst school in England'), with Michael Wilshaw (now Chief Inspector) as head, still stands as the exemplar. 'Discipline, respect, hard work and politeness' are at the core of the ethos, pupils recite a mantra at the start of every lesson, and there are catch-up sessions out of normal school hours. Underlying it all is Wilshaw's profound belief 'that inner-city all-ability schools could and should achieve as highly as the best schools in the country'. In effect, says Wilshaw, 'Mossbourne is a grammar school with a comprehensive intake'.

The statistics to prove this are more than 80 per cent of students gaining ‘five or more good GCSE passes including English and maths’, a similar pass rate at A-Level, and ‘the most stunning university offers of virtually any state school in the country’ including 70 (almost half) at Russell Group universities.

But is Adonis right to claim that ‘academies combine the best of comprehensive schools *and* grammar schools *and* private schools’ – and that if only successful private schools would join the state sector as academies, everything would be righted?

There is no question that academies are, in many cases, vastly better than what went before. The problem is that as a reformer and visionary, Adonis’s enthusiasm to transform failing schools has developed into a dogmatic faith in all-ability schools, and any evidence to the contrary is either ignored or dismissed as knee-jerk, obscurantist, ‘more means worse’ reaction. And yet the evidence concerning grade inflation and ‘dumbing down’ in the exam system through the modularisation of courses is real and disturbing. Most telling is the research conducted by Durham University’s Centre for Education and Monitoring, which has found that the bar has been significantly lowered for A-levels – which explains why a quarter of students now score A or A*, and why universities across the country have had to institute remedial courses for undergraduates. Adonis makes no mention of this.

One might question the nature of the academic achievement now involved in gaining five GCSEs including English and maths, particularly when so much remedial work and exam preparation (ie teaching to the test) has gone into scraping the required Cs in English and maths, and when independent schools apparently hold GCSEs in such contempt. Tellingly, when the benchmark is changed to five good GCSEs in the ‘hard’ subjects of the English Baccalaureate, Mossbourne’s score drops dramatically from 82 to 29 per cent of pupils (compared to St Paul’s, say, where the drop is from 100 to 96 per cent). It is, of course, an unfair comparison, except that it questions the value of Adonis’s benchmark. Mossbourne’s A-level results also need to be seen in perspective. Sixth form entry is *not* all-ability but selective, with pupils from a number of local schools having to compete on their GCSE grades.

Are all-purpose GCSEs the best means of developing literacy and numeracy needed by employers? Adonis notes that innovation is a prime purpose of free school academies and cites ‘studio schools’ – schools designed to promote ‘practical skills and good qualifications among teenagers who could easily fail in a classic secondary school’. Six are so far open and more planned. But if a significant proportion of teenagers

could so benefit, why insist on all-ability academies to begin with? Isn’t the purpose of technical schools (the schools we should have got after the war) precisely to provide an education tailored to the needs of students not academically inclined? And isn’t this precisely the strength of the German bipartite system of secondary education?

In the end, we must face an unpalatable truth. The independent schools with the highest academic standards (necessarily selective) will never opt to become all-ability academies because their ultimate conception of education is *liberal*, not utilitarian. It involves the pursuit of learning for its own sake. And this education will never be accessible to more than a minority of pupils, regardless of their class or background.

[back to contents page](#)

A Triumph of Self Loathing Boyd D Cathey

War and Democracy, Paul Gottfried, London, Arktos Media Ltd, 2013, £13.

It would be no exaggeration to state that American author Paul E Gottfried is perhaps the most significant and original thinker on what we may call the ‘traditional Right’ today. His indispensable ‘trilogy’ on how Western society, in both Europe and the United States, reached its current state – *After Liberalism* (1999), *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt* (2002), and *The Strange Death of Marxism* (2005) – remains required reading for anyone seriously interested in the fathoming of what has happened to us and our culture in the past half century.

Gottfried’s newest volume, *War and Democracy*, is a carefully selected collection of twenty-five of his essays, spanning almost the entire length of his career, from 1975 until 2012. The topics are diverse, but all seem to have a touching point: that over the past half century and more, the ‘millenarian temptation’ has largely triumphed in the West, staging a ‘long march’ through practically all of our institutions. This millenarianism is characterized by a zealous belief in liberal democracy and universal egalitarianism leading to a future utopian ‘end of history’. Although differing from Eric Voegelin’s view that such utopianism developed from specifically Christian heresies, Gottfried agrees that persistent (and perverted) elements in our history have abetted this process. Despite historic attempts to contain such elements or expunge them from our

heritage, including condemnations by the Church and orthodox Christians, the epigones of such utopian visions have largely succeeded in their efforts.

In Europe, the United States, and other lands indentified with traditional Western culture, an intolerant and unforgiving politically-correct multiculturalism now reigns. It is not just the visible or tangible institutions of our culture, but our very language, our mode of living and thinking, that is being transformed before our eyes. Words are re-defined, speech is circumscribed, our educational institutions inculcate the virtues of 'political correctness', 'anti-racism', and opposition to anything that, to the new guardians, smacks of 'fascism' (which becomes a fluid term, applicable whenever the managerial authority decides on its usefulness). There is thus *pas d'ennemi à gauche*, understood as the ongoing dynamic or 'progressive' liberation of man from the shackles of tradition, oppressive orthodox religion, and inherited morality (which derives its sanction from traditional religious belief).

Gottfried admits that, like many of us, he was initially encouraged by the 'Reagan Revolution' and swept along by the reinvigorated anti-Communist efforts during Reagan's terms. Yet even in the 1970s he had noticed and analyzed the growth, specifically in German academia, of a self-loathing and rejection of anything resembling received tradition ('History or Hysteria', pp 13-19). It was not just the rejection of the 'Nazi past', but a more encompassing dismissal of all of Germany's 'fascist' past, a super-wide net that covered pre-Vatican II Catholics, Wilhelmine conservatives, and 'Prussianists'— never mind that these groups opposed the Nazis, often at the price of their lives.

Such a loathing of past 'injustice' and the need to compensate, to reinterpret or even 're-write' the past when possible, found echoes in American academe as well, as the products of the 'New Left' of the 1960s assumed chairs in major universities and colleges, and occupied leading positions both in the media and in entertainment. Their pervasive influence is felt everywhere today.

The intellectual migration from the ranks of 'Cold War' liberalism in the 1960s and 1970s by those who denominated themselves 'neo-conservatives', to their present home on what is now commonly thought of as the 'right' in American politics, is the subject of several of Gottfried's reviews and essays. There is no more acute observer of neo-conservatism than he. With Professor Claes Ryn ('Wrong Revolution', pp 77-81), he has methodically dissected the intellectual premises and foundations of this now dominant political force. As he details ('Rogue Notions', pp 104-110; 'Invisible

Fist', pp 111-117; etc), neo-conservatism, through its insistence on an *a priori* universally applied liberal democracy and its declared war on anything opposing across the board egalitarianism, partakes of the same wellspring of revolutionary ideology as the neo-Marxist multicultural Left. Ryn calls this a 'new Jacobinism'.

Rather than the post-World War realism of a George Kennan, the neo-conservatives propound a fevered vision that Gottfried cites using the words of Allan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*): 'And when we Americans speak seriously about politics, we mean that our principles of freedom and equality and the rights based on them are rational and everywhere applicable. World War II was really an educational experiment undertaken to force those who do not accept these principles to do so.' (p 110) This is the antithesis of an older conservative view shared by a Russell Kirk or, in England, by a Michael Oakeshott. In actuality it differs only in degree from the vision of same sex marriage, women's liberation, abolition of the traditional family, and foreign policy adventures advocated by supposed opponents of the neo-cons over on the hard Left.

Gottfried offers several fascinating essays on political Zionism and its incestuous relationship with neo-conservatives in the American political landscape ('For Zionists, Time to Choose', pp 72-76; 'Ilana, Israel and the Paleos,' pp 118-121; and 'The Myth of "Judeo-Christian Values",' pp 140-144). Of Jewish descent himself, he offers a multifaceted critique of this relationship and how it has shaped American policies, in particular, in regard to the Middle East. He offers defences of Patrick Buchanan and the late Joe Sobran, both of whom have been close friends.

Of special interest is an essay – a kind of reverential reminiscence – about his father ('A Man in Full', pp 132-139), which also, in a very special way, offers us insight into Paul Gottfried's fascinating early life in Connecticut. Much of this has appeared in his engaging autobiographical volume, *Encounters* (2009), but its publication here may reach and delight new readers.

In *War and Democracy* Paul Gottfried offers a profound understanding of the millenarianism transforming Western society. Let us hope that it will be digested by the beleaguered defenders of our traditional Christian civilization. It will be to their profit.

[back to contents page](#)



The Musak of Bach

Alexander Boot



Reinventing Bach, Paul Elie, Union Books, 2013, £25.

‘Listen, play, love, revere – and keep your mouth shut.’ Elie cites Einstein’s advice on approaching Bach’s music but he doesn’t follow it and he isn’t the only one. Einstein’s advice was as archaic as his physics was revolutionary. Modern people are constitutionally incapable of silence for ours is a verbose age. Hamlet’s ‘words, words, words’ has become the definitive characteristic of everything, from politics to art.

Can you name a music critic from any century preceding the nineteenth? You can’t, because there weren’t any. Comments on music then only ever came within the context of aesthetic philosophy, from Plato’s and Aristotle’s to Hegel’s and Schopenhauer’s. Bach’s or Mozart’s contemporaries were regaled with neither decortications of compositions nor reviews of performances. There was no supply because there was no demand: listeners thought, often with good reason, that they could make up their own minds.

Music was mostly composed and performed for those who could play it – and pay for it. If Bach’s genius was owed to God and his mastery to his own efforts, his enduring fame would have been impossible without aristocratic patrons. These didn’t need a writer to explain the music to them. Whatever questions they had could be answered by Bach himself. The advent of institutional egalitarianism put paid to aristocratic patronage, shifting music into the democratic domain, where it inevitably began to be shaped by mass-market transactions. Rather than being written and performed for few by fewer, music now had to appeal to the common man. It could still be widely loved, but it could no longer be widely appreciated, not without outside help at any rate.

Enter musicologists, talking in recondite terms about music *qua* music, and critics, talking in increasingly demotic terms about compositions and performances. Both were originally supposed to shape public taste, but they ended up pandering to it. The democratic public was now empowered to vote for both music and musicians. The voting procedure was simple: a show of hands, each holding the price of a ticket. The same applied to the critics’ publications – they too depended on mass appeal for their survival. The democratic compact gradually

worked the same way as it does in politics. Soon, competence and talent had to be sacrificed at the altar of wide accessibility and charismatic superficiality. The public communicated at the box office what it wanted to hear; the performers delivered it on the platform; the critics reassured the public that its taste was faultless, while surreptitiously filling a few widening gaps in its education.

Music became more verbalised: even those who didn’t speak the musical language could understand its words, after a fashion, so the critics were bound to acquire inordinate power as a result. They enunciated the paying public’s taste, imposing it on both composers and performers who had to comply on pain of oblivion. The relationship has become symbiotic, with all the groups involved affecting one another. Consequently great music has begun to be played in a facile manner that neither imposes any demands on the listener nor communicates what it is that makes the music great.

This is the soil on which new literary genres have sprouted, from serious to frivolous. The serious end is represented by writers like Schweitzer, Lang, Rosen, Taruskin. Musical biography fills the semi-frivolous slot. And Paul Elie is symptomatically closer to the frivolous rubric. However his book is not without interest, for he is a lucid, imaginative and well-informed writer. Moreover, he loves Bach’s music, is genuinely moved by it, knows it well – and, himself a believer, understands its transcendent provenance. All this makes his book an effortless and enjoyable read.

I might have denied myself some subsequent pleasure by tossing the book aside after reading early on that Gould’s *Goldberg Variations* ‘was a cultural touchstone, like *Lolita* and *Annie Hall*; and the *Goldberg Variations* themselves became touchstones, heard in the films *The Silence of the Lambs* and *The English Patient*, in an episode of *The Sopranos*...’ For me such eclectic, omnivorous consumption spells ineluctable vulgarisation; for Elie it’s the acme of Bach’s success in finally reaching those able to regard *The Sopranos* as a touchstone. This, along with new recording techniques, is what ‘reinventing Bach’ ultimately means to him. I would suggest that turning Bach’s music into Musak reinvents him in the same way in which *Jesus Christ Superstar* reinvented

the Gospels or painting a moustache on Mona Lisa would reinvent Leonardo.

In tribute to Bach, Elie wrote his book as a verbal answer to counterpoint, interweaving several subjects, all meeting at some umbrella statement. This style requires as much discipline and sense of purpose from a writer as from a composer, yet by and large Elie pulls it off – at least until he gets to the post-war period where his worship of his I-Pod takes over. His principal themes are biographic snippets of Bach and five of his interpreters: Schweitzer, Casals, Stokowski, Gould and Yo-Yo Ma. The very selection of the protagonists shows that Elie is no judge of performance. He is as effusive about the sublime Casals and Gould as he is about Yo-Yo Ma, a purely commercial construct endowed with about as much musical depth as his namesake toy.

One encounters many such music lovers, those who know much about their favourite pieces, yet understand little about performance. They go weak-kneed at the sound of their beloved works, regardless of how well they are played. Those with a solid grounding in musical theory are even sometimes happy parsing the scores endlessly without needing to hear the actual music. Chopin described this as a particularly English trait: 'The English love music, but they hate listening to it.' Elie isn't an Englishman, yet his narrative is strewn with ample proof that he doesn't understand performance. He admits that Keith Jarrett's recording of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* is his favourite. That's most unfortunate, especially for someone who professes admiration for Gould. Jarrett is a jazzman who plays like a gifted amateur, proud of his ability to play all the notes in the right order. Jazz pianists in general are more concerned with rhythm than tone, and Jarrett is no exception. His feather-light attack is incapable of producing *cantabile*, something Bach singled out as crucially important in his advice to his eldest son.

Elie undermines his credibility by quoting with approval Jarrett's inane suggestion that 'This music doesn't need my help.' 'Other musicians,' agrees Elie, 'could go ahead and work their personal variations on Bach, but not him. The music was sufficient unto itself.' This opinion isn't just wrong but ignorant, for music cannot be reduced to what is written down, a mere literary document. Music is triune and created by a collaboration between the composer, performer and listener. Some attrition along the way is inevitable: no performer, however accomplished, will convey the entirety of the original intent; no listener, however sensitive, will capture every nuance conveyed by a great musician. Yet the closer they are together, the greater the music. Alas the Jarrett way is the modern way.

Modernity tends to uniformity, which in any artistic context leaves little room for talent, as distinct from mechanical proficiency. Most listeners don't recognise real talent, most musicians don't possess it, and most

commentators don't understand it. As if to prove this, Elie is placidly indulgent about baroque ensembles, that job-creation scheme for mediocrities. To Elie performances on 'original instruments' are 'historically informed'. It would be more accurate to say they are musically inept and intellectually dishonest. The underlying literalist assumption is that by replacing cello with viola da gamba, piano with harpsichord and steel strings with those made of catgut, even giftless musicians somehow get closer to Bach. Bach's music is eternal and immutable, but our understanding of it changes from one generation to the next. In that sense, a Bach revival occurs every few decades, but this isn't how Elie uses the word. For him even turning Bach into ad jingles is a welcome reinvention made possible by advances in recording techniques.

Certainly digitalisation and CD technology served not only the Beatles (who used vulgarised quotations from Bach) but also Gould (who dismissed the Beatles' music as 'a happy, cocky, belligerently resourceless brand of harmonic primitivism'). But Gould's genius, though preserved in the studio, was displayed at the keyboard. Elie, laudably an admirer, warps the balance between the two by constantly enlarging not on talent but on kit. At the same time he is too ready to take musicians' pronouncements at face value. This is an unsafe undertaking, especially with Gould, whose tongue was notoriously planted in his cheek. Gould's prediction that recordings would eventually oust live performances was based on his own horror at ceaseless globetrotting, and also on an uneasy relationship with Elie's colleagues, whose concert reviews routinely accused Gould of distorting the score. To this day, BBC 3 presenters feel obliged to rebuke Gould for being 'idiosyncratic' – as if a real musician could ever be anything but.

In his florid prose Elie also runs headlong into the unsolvable problem of describing music in words borrowed from an extra-musical lexicon. This task has defeated even great musicians like Sviatoslav Richter, whose stubborn attempts to find extraneous metaphors made him sound like the vulgarian he wasn't. Elie is a better wielder of words, and he delivers such Baroque flourishes as 'animal sound all furred and tendoned', 'spelunker, cave crawling the dark' or 'exultant, many-voiced gambolling across the keyboard the sound of new love dispelling sorrow'. Unfortunately the better one does that sort of thing, the worse it sounds.

This book is a monument to our age, with its surfeit of information and a deficit of taste. By extolling Bach's newly found, technology-fuelled mass appeal, Elie unwittingly passes a death sentence on true musicianship. Yet his enthusiasm is contagious, his love of Bach moving, his knowledge broad. Even a serious reader can enjoy *Reinventing Bach* by savouring the good parts of the curate's egg and spitting out the bad.

[back to contents page](#)

Outsider II - Almost Always: Never Quite

Brian Sewell, Quartet, 2012, £25
Andrew Wilton

In my review of volume I of this autobiography I omitted to mention the subtitle the author has appended to both parts: 'Always Almost: Never Quite'. My omission at least spared the reader some effort deciphering these cryptic words. They exemplify Sewell's tendency to wrap his thoughts in oddly impenetrable phraseology or syntax –meandering sentences in which hanging participles and unrelated clauses are jammed together in a sort of telegraphese that doesn't conduce to easy reading. Nonetheless, the two books have been very successful and it must be said that they are consistently interesting and this second volume is at times intensely so, and moving into the bargain.

He continues to worry away at some of his obsessions, notably sex: no doubt an ingredient that has earned him some of his readership. But the serious topics with which he deals he makes of compelling interest. His recitation of the intricacies of some of the more impenetrable cases of forgery and fakery in the art market remained, for me, impenetrable. He recounts the galvanic effect on the market of the sale of the Rothschild mansion Mentmore Towers in 1977, and ponders the clever imitation of a Georges de la Tour painting, *The Fortune-Teller*, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York – a conundrum that has never been wholly solved. He speaks of his friendship with the well-known faker Tom Keating, whose inept imitations of Samuel Palmer fooled a few dealers and curators. He doesn't explain, though, that the deception was largely dependent on a cleverly invented provenance which disarmed closer analysis. (No excuse, of course.) His picture of Keating himself is sympathetic, characteristically more concerned to emphasise his inadequacy and pathos rather than his roguery.

He tells the depressing story of Somerset Maugham's fine collection of theatrical paintings, given to the National Theatre but shuffled from place to place and neglected for years until eventually 'wretchedly housed' – though this is a bit harsh – in two museums in Bath. More significantly, his account of holidays

spent in Cadaques with the ageing Salvador Dalí make for a mesmerizing character-study. It comes as no surprise that the great figure-head of Surrealism turns out to be a closet homosexual and Peeping Tom. There are reflections on the recent Leonardo exhibition at the National Gallery in London: hardly a painting survives Sewell's scrutiny as indubitably by the master. Particularly illuminating is the profound interest he reveals in the cultures of the Middle East, describing the early inspiration of A W Kinglake's *Eothen*, and many adventures of a partly archaeological nature in Turkey and Armenia. He implies that this might have been an entirely satisfactory alternative subject for a career.

As expected, there is a good deal on what he terms 'The Blunt Affair'. He had prepared the ground for this in volume I by stressing his considerable admiration for the renowned head of the Courtauld Institute, under whom he honed his understanding of, in particular, Renaissance Italian drawings. When Blunt stepped down from that post he was not well off, living a circumscribed existence deprived, for instance, of the profits he had expected from the sale of a Poussin he had owned for many years and believed a superb example. On cleaning it was revealed to be in poor condition and Blunt's estimation of his own connoisseurship – a central component of his self-esteem – received a devastating blow. Sewell's account of the very public débâcle that clinched his humiliation is a sad tale. All those interested in Blunt should read it. I take the liberty of transcribing at length Sewell's summary of Blunt's character and motives, which may give readers of this journal pause for thought, though it must be noted that the passage is governed by the word 'perhaps':

'[In his political life] he drifted, uncertain, influenced by friends and lovers until, trapped by affections and unwise private loyalties, he became a Communist spy of sorts. It is difficult to believe that he enjoyed the dangers and absurdities of this as an intellectual game, or that so intelligent a man could not see that, compelled to depend on obviously unreliable friends, he was sowing the seeds of his own destruction. At

heart he had no politics and never voted in any general election; he was touched by Britain's evident poverty in the Thirties, touched by the tragedies of the Spanish Civil War, touched by the inevitability of conflict with Germany, but it is to be doubted whether he had any profound interest in the political reasons or remedies for any of them. How then could so scrupulously scholarly a man, so dry, precise, considered and unemotional in everything he wrote of art and architecture, be such a fool as to put his scholarship at risk for a political philosophy in which he had virtually no belief? And to this the answer is Guy Burgess, with whom he perhaps never went to bed, but who won from him undying loyalty ... The obvious question to ask is why was Guy a Communist? Had he not been, nor would Anthony. Perhaps the conclusion to draw is that had Anthony first discovered the pleasurable disciplines of art history, he would never have enmeshed himself in the doubtful loyalties of Communism.'

The book is written from the perspective of one who has been for many years involved with the media, both as art critic under various editors of the *Evening Standard*, and as a frequent contributor to other papers and television programmes. His diatribe against television is therefore well founded, and shockingly convincing (it certainly coincides with my own view). He accuses television roundly of failing to do what it was eminently qualified, and indeed morally required, to do: to inform, educate and enlighten the public at large, whereas all it has achieved is universal dumbing down.

The tone of all this, together with an account of the slow descent into hopeless senility of his once

charismatic mother, and a recitation of his numerous heart attacks, is certainly pessimistic. The closing chapters are something of a rag-bag of gathered threads, the last an almost prurient meditation on old age and the distinction between dying and death. Here is a facing up to grim reality that Sewell obviously believes he must in all honour perform. But he also gives us something more positive: a kind of 'credo', reprinted from its appearance the *Sunday Review* in 1996, which is in its way as definitive as we could wish – no 'perhaps' here:

'I am a natural Conservative, with the benefits and privilege of education, class and property, resentful of any government that interferes too much ... My Conservatism is rooted in the conviction that all men are *not* equal, and that were we all given an equal chance, we should achieve very different ends and again be unequal in a generation My Conservatism is rooted in philanthropy, in the conviction that none should starve on the streets, live, sleep or die there, that we all have responsibility for those less able than ourselves, and that a compassionate welfare state addressed to the needs and ills of the deprived is the mark of a well-ordered society. My Conservatism is rooted in the passionate belief that it is through education, cultural, Classical and Christian, that men learn ancient virtues and philosophical abstractions – justice, probity, generosity, nobility, gravity, forgiveness, prudence, fortitude, self-sacrifice, honour and the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy – and that these, not the politics of envy, nor the politics of self-advantage, are the tenets that should inform society and government.'

[back to contents page](#)

Shakespeare's Autobiography

Ralph Berry

I have lost my gift. It's as if my quill is broken. As if the organ of the imagination is dried up. As if the proud tower of my imagination has collapsed.' To which the shrink asks shrewdly, 'Tell me, are you lately humbled in the act of love?' (*WILL turns towards him. How did he know that?*) The cod Freud of *Shakespeare in Love* is a splendid Stoppardian joke. For the latest wave of Shakespeare biographers, it is the highway into the inner Shakespeare. They now propose a Shakespeare whose emotional interests, crises, and self-obsessions are read into the plays and back again. Fantasy takes over from documented fact and safe inferences from the known life of Shakespeare.

A great deal of Shakespeare's life is well documented, most notably in Schoenbaum's masterly *Shakespeare:*

A Documentary Life. If, for example, I say that Shakespeare was a claret man, that is not a flight of fancy. We know that Shakespeare on expense account put in 'for one quart of sack and one quart of claret wine'. That was for entertaining a visiting preacher at New Place. (The choice of wine may be buttressed by France's reference in *King Lear* to 'waterish Burgundy'.) Katherine Duncan-Jones, in *Ungentle Shakespeare* (2001), proposed quite fairly the contours of a hard, practical, socially ambitious man. In today's terms we could call him a social climber. We have the record of a man whose gifts as poet, playwright, actor and company man took him to the favour of aristocracy and royalty. His patrons, all of them Catholic, gave him money; he bought a hundred

acres of good land, a fine house in Stratford and later a *pied-a-terre* in Blackfriars, he delayed paying on local taxes, he hoarded grain, he took people to court for non-payment of loans. He sought and paid for the status of gentleman. In the end, Shakespeare was a Midlands businessman.

But that is not the Shakespeare to emerge from the latest school of biographers. The inner man came into view in Anthony Holden's *William Shakespeare* (1999). Holden was convinced of Shakespeare's 'guilt' at his prolonged absences from his wife and family, a view for which there is not the remotest evidence. By Rene Weis's *Shakespeare Revealed* (2007), this had hardened into a near-orthodoxy. It was backed up with further speculation. Weis insisted that 'lame,' 'limp,' disabled,' 'halting' are not merely metaphoric, but apply to Shakespeare's own person. A degree of empathy with the disabled is common to us all.

Why should Shakespeare, with his immense imaginative grasp, have been any different?

It gets worse. 'Iago's latent homosexuality', says Weis, 'may also connect guiltily with Shakespeare', who is 'guilt-ridden' for his serial affair with Jane Davenant. (Holden spends nine pages on this doomed romance.) However, Anne Hathaway-Shakespeare is in no position to reproach her errant husband, since she has cheated on him with his younger brother. This kind of speculation climaxes in a Volumnia – Mary Arden analogy, with Shakespeare at her graveside saying 'O Mother, Mother, what have you done?' This is the higher tosh.

Jonathan Bate roams the same pastures in *Soul of the Age*, modestly subtitled *The Life, Mind and World of William Shakespeare* (2009). The US edition, published by Random House, comes clean with the bravura subtitle *A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare*. That collapses the distinction between biography and autobiography, and readers are let in for intrusive speculations that approach self-parody. *The Winter's Tale* was written sixteen years after 1594: 'Is it a coincidence that it is a play about a man who asks his wife for a second chance after sixteen years of separation?' In just the same way old-fashioned Marxists used to say 'It is no coincidence that...' This 'biography of the mind' is cantilevered over the instincts and hunches of Bate. He is however disarmingly ready to acknowledge some of what he does not know: 'We do not know whether Shakespeare grew cabbages in his garden at New Place.' True, and neither do we know if he ate or even liked the stuff.

For James Shapiro, in *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (2010), the plays are open season for speculators. The blurb, unusually mendacious even for its genre, assures us that this book 'will irrevocably

change the nature of the debate by confronting what is really contested: are the plays and poems of Shakespeare autobiographical?' This debate has been going on for centuries. Shapiro's question answers itself in the current orthodoxy, and the authoritative statement of doctrine comes in David Bevington's book, *Shakespeare and Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

After some preliminary remarks about the need for caution – 'Biographers need to be careful not to cross the line into assuming that what a character says in a play represents what Shakespeare himself may have thought' Bevington advances into the minefield. *Measure for Measure* is all about sex. Could it be Shakespeare's own obsession? Of Angelo, 'Is Shakespeare probing the dimensions of his own carnal desire?' Could the vile Angelo be fronting for Shakespeare's own seething emotions?

Macbeth, Bevington concedes, 'avoids the narrowly autobiographical.' That's because we have no record of Shakespeare murdering a house guest. And Bevington is not concerned with Timon's abuse of his credit rating, the more so as Shakespeare was extremely well off at the time of writing. But sex draws him magnetically to Shakespeare. *Antony and Cleopatra* reveals a 'preoccupation with ageing and its concomitant diminution of sexual potency.' The dramatist was in his early forties at the time of writing. 'How specifically autobiographical this insight may have been cannot easily be determined.' Bevington calls the fact of age an 'insight', and leaves on record a wistful regret that he cannot easily determine the connection. He might have said openly that Shakespeare's proud tower was fallen.

The Tempest is the centre of the new Shakespearean orthodoxy. The play is now held to be above all an exploration of incestuous longings. The evidence? There is none. This points to *repression*, which is an all-purpose explanation of the fact that Prospero goes to great lengths to safeguard his daughter and to steer her towards a most suitable young man. Bevington cites the late A D Nuttall: 'the obvious explanation is that Prospero is fighting his own incestuous desire for his daughter.' If you can't find it, that proves that somebody hid it. Bevington goes along with Nuttall, adding mournfully 'We cannot know the extent to which Shakespeare may have coped with comparable feelings of incestuous longings in himself.' (p 153)

Indeed we cannot know. But Bevington ends on a message of hope. His final sentence is 'Such, and much more, is what we can hope to learn from biographers about the inner life of the man who wrote some of the greatest plays that the world has ever seen.' Biographers' fantasies have become a new branch of knowledge, a new kind of grade inflation.

[back to contents page](#)

IN SHORT

The Secular Terrorist, Peter Mullen, Roper Penberthy, 2012, £9.99

Christians here are not the regular targets of physical violence, but having read Peter Mullen's disturbing account of developments in the religious life of this country over the past half-century, it is clear that the institution certainly is.

The lay officers of churches which wish to retain the Book of Common Prayer when their priest retires, are worn down by endless interregnums and forced to accept a moderniser as the church authorities tell them a priest who will use the BCP cannot be found. There is an echo here of the 'slow bureaucratic grinding down' – the way the Chinese authorities treat churches: but in Britain the Church itself is doing the grinding. Mullen provides the reader with so many examples that it does not seem fanciful to suggest that the Church of England has fallen into the hands of fifth columnists, the Screwtape Tendency, determined to leave an empty shell of a church, devoid of anything of traditional value, in which, particularly in the wake of Common Worship, 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.'

So good a job does Mullen make of portraying this spoilt brat of a church, at once infantile and tyrannical, that he risks undermining his broader purpose. For this is about far more than church politics. Mullen depicts our hedonistic, consumerist society as an example of the turning away from God of which Man has been guilty since Moses. He tries to strike a hopeful note, saying that Man always returns to God, though he thinks this time it might take a battering from Islamic terrorists with nuclear weapons to effect this happy outcome. Unfortunately he fails to convince the reader that there will be a worthwhile Church left to enable this return.

Brian Eastty

Euro Puppets – The European Commission's remaking of civil society, Christopher Snowden, *IEA Discussion Paper No. 45*, 2013

Many organizations that assume the mantle of charities with public approval are in reality funded by the state using taxpayers' money to ensure that those

organizations pursue a political line that benefits it. This knowledge is carefully hidden by the organizations and the public's desire not to know the truth, resulting in a completely new way of looking at 'settled' notions of supposed right and wrong.

We get some useful facts in this pamphlet and in its predecessor published last year. Both papers list organizations that receive money from the government or the EU, which would not exist without that input and which are not accountable to their donors about their activity as charities. Many of them are lobby groups, lobbying for policies that the government or the EU (it is hard to tell the difference) want to push through and which are not particularly popular.

The EU, an unpopular project imposed on various member states by the political elites, has thought for some years that it needs to find some credibility with their populations. As it is not about to become accountable or less centralized (*au contraire*), let alone less devoted to the idea of regulating every aspect of life it can lay its hands on, it has to think of another solution. One presented itself almost immediately, an adapted version of something started in the early Soviet years: civil society. This expression is used increasingly by transnational organizations among which the EU is important as it aims to become a state (not something it hides or is ashamed of.) Such organizations have no accountability and their credibility has to rely on emotionalism rather than political structures, just as the governance they impose is managerial (sometimes openly as happened recently in a few EU member states, sometimes less so, as in normal EU legislation). They announce that certain organizations involved with social activity are the real civil society. However those organizations are either founded or approved by the governing structures and, as *Euro Puppets* demonstrates, are funded by them. A closed and vicious circle is created: the unaccountable and managerial governance 'proves' its credibility by pointing to the support given it by the civil society that consists of organizations it has created and approved and that will never display any kind of independence. Needless to say, we are paying for it and for the legislation for which those organizations campaign.

Helen Szamuely

[back to contents page](#)

Grouphink – Can we trust the BBC on immigration?

Ed West, The New Culture Forum, 2013, £10

Can we trust the BBC on anything, might be a better question, and I suspect the answer most people would give was true long before the recent complaints. The difference now that the variety of news and analysis outlets, both official and less official, such as the blogosphere, makes it easier for the viewers and listeners to realize that Auntie has a very definite political agenda of her own, which it will promote at the expense of objectivity and even truthful reporting.

Ed West's detailed and highly readable analysis of the way the BBC handles an important and rather contentious issue, that of immigration; shows beyond any doubt that it cannot be trusted on the subject. The problem is not that it does not reflect popular opinion – that may or may not be true and is, in any case, irrelevant. The problem is that it does not treat the subject as contentious or worthy of real discussion, even though it has now been opened up to a considerable degree, what with books appearing on the subject by both left-wing and right-wing authors such as David Goodhart and Ed West himself. But as far as the BBC is concerned, there can be only one point of view: immigration is good, the numbers do not matter, integration is unnecessary and racist, and anyone who thinks otherwise is a knuckle-dragging Neanderthal,

usually outnumbered on any programme by the right-thinking (ie left thinking) individuals.

I have a couple of problems with the report. Firstly, I have to disagree with Mr West that immigration is the only issue on which the BBC could produce consistently biased programmes and discussions and get away with it. He has, obviously, never had to be in the studio as the only one on a panel of four who maintains that the EU is not such a wonderful idea. (Though, to be fair, even the BBC has noticed that there might be more than one opinion on that subject.) What of the discussions of American politics, especially when there is a Republican President? Or of the Middle East? Or a number of other subjects.

Secondly, I am not convinced that his suggestions for change, all of which involve the BBC miraculously perceiving its own problems and making an effort to correct them, would ever work. The BBC has created its own world with its own worldview and most of its staff are part of it. They quite literally cannot understand why the rest of the world does not agree with them or see things in the same way. They quite literally (and I speak as someone who has had discussions with people who work for that organization) cannot see that theirs is not the only possible point of view that is fully objective as well as righteous. How can one expect any reforms in those circumstances?

Helen Szamuely

The Salisbury Review

Published quarterly in September, December, March & June, volume commencing with September issue.

Annual subscription rates: £25, Europe/surface rest of world £27.

Airmail rest of world: £30, Single issues £6.

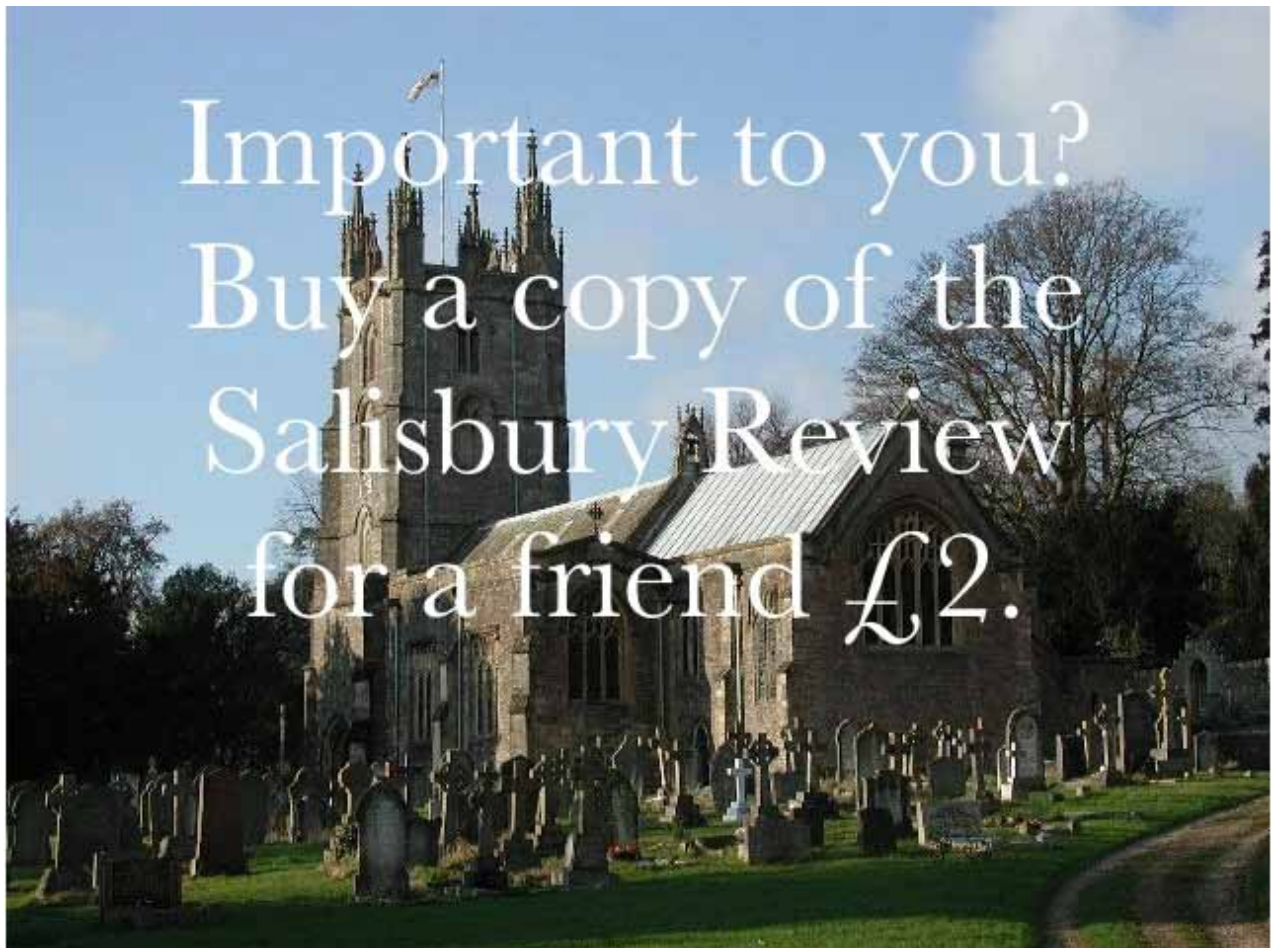
ISSN: 0265-4881. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or other without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright ©The Salisbury Review

Printed in the UK by The Warwick Printing Company Ltd.

Typesetting — DASH

Design — Jessica Chaney



Can you imagine a world in which something as beautiful as this English country church was bulldozed, defaced or put to an entirely alien purpose?

Unimaginable, but this is what has happened to Britain in the last fifty years. We had a single legal system, freedom of speech and the press, religious toleration and Parliament made our laws. It was a country in which you could not be tried twice for the same offence, you could not be arrested and held without charge or denied a lawyer, nor could you be sent to prison for voicing your political opinions or religious dissent. Above all Britain and the British were a recognisable, homogeneous people.

Are these true today? No they are not. The fact that you are a subscriber means you are only too well aware of this and would like to do something about it. By buying a copy of the *Salisbury Review* as a gift for a friend (£2) you will help to both increase our circulation and pay for the increasingly burdensome costs involved in running the magazine. Circulation numbers are vital for our continued existence.

Ordering a gift copy is simple. Telephone our subscription manager on 01908 281 601 or send a cheque for £2 to 5 Turnpike Court, Woburn Sands, MK17 8UA, or e mail her at info@salisburyreview.co.uk and ask to buy a copy for a friend. We also accept credit cards. We will mail the magazine to the recipient free of charge.

Thank you for your generous help in the past and your help in the future

The Editor

Picture. The Parish Church of All Saints Wraxall, Somerset (Wikipedia)

At Risk, the Country Villa of England's Greatest Landscape Painter (Turner's House Trust)



Did you know that J.M.W. Turner, England's greatest landscape painter, declared that if he could have had his life again, he would have been an architect?

One of the few buildings he ever designed was a country villa for his own use, where he sketched, fished in the nearby Thames, and entertained his friends. That house, Sandycombe Lodge, was finished two hundred years ago this year, and still stands, in Twickenham, Middlesex.

Now owned by Turner's House Trust, this remarkable survival is now showing its age and is now on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register. A major appeal for its restoration is being launched in September 2013.

Support has already come from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Andrew Lloyd-Webber Challenge Fund and other generous donors. But there is still a considerable way to go, and this is not a project that can wait indefinitely.

Please help Turner's House Trust fulfill its aim to restore this important work by a great painter, for the nation and for future generations. You can find out more at www.turnerintwickenham.org.uk, where you can donate online or send a cheque to Turner's House Trust's registered office, 11 Montpelier Row, Twickenham TW1 2NQ.

Registered charity no 1111653