The
Salisbury Review
The quarterly magazine of conservative thought

The BBC, dressing to the Left
Scott Grønmark

Obamacare
Matthew Walther

In a Manner of Speaking
Theodore Dalrymple

UKIP Woman
Jane Kelly

Boris the Wizard of Oz
Daryl McCann

Return to the Middle Ages
Barbara Hewson

Winter 2013
Vol 32 No 2

£6.00

Contents

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
0207 226 7791
or
01908 281601

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: http://www.salisburyreview.com

In 221 BC the first Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huangdi, ordered that any literature not in the official archive should be burnt and its authors buried alive. Officials who refused to carry out his orders were sent as convicts to the Great Wall. Qin hoped that as a result, a new, unified China would start afresh, all evil reminiscences of the past expunged. Modern businessmen might call this 'going forward'.

Chinese censorship also included certain words. It was death to utter the name of the Emperor or members of the High Council. Modern Britons are familiar with such taboos. In our present climate of racial hysteria if we say or write the words '……..' '…….' or '……' in reference to race, we can be thrown into jail, and as with any crime if convicted, sent to prison and subsequently denied employment.

Like the Emperor Qui, our government has enacted legislation with which they hope to purge the wicked past of the British press and start anew. An investigator will examine newspaper and magazine articles which complainants allege have unnecessarily invaded their privacy or caused them hurt. The powerful will complain the most, meaning that scandals such as the stealing of public monies by our parliamentarians will never again be found out.

Stories that might highlight the private squalor of peoples' lives in high places, their sordid dealings over money, divorce, neglect of their children, greed and ignorance, sloth and gluttony, will attract heavy fines because such things are now considered normal. The fact they are often associated in public office with wrongdoing is considered archaic.

Journalists who refuse to submit will be spectacularly ruined. Even if they win a case they will still have to pay the costs, often running into tens, even hundreds, of thousands of pounds, of their accuser. Very soon the censor will sit not in an office in Whitehall but in every journalist's head.

As liberty dies, religions often spring up to protect the weak and give meaning to peoples' lives. This is why in this edition of the magazine we have published an article by a devout Muslim on what type of education his fellow believers want for their children in Britain. Reading it one is struck by the parallels between the rise of Christianity in the closing years of the Roman Empire and the rise of Islam in modern Britain. Muslims, like our Christian ancestors 2000 years ago, seek to supplant the rule of a corrupt and licentious civil authority with the rule of God. The difference however is that Christianity, at least in its early stages, was not haunted by those who believed in forcible conversion or jihad. While here only a tiny handful of fanatical Islamists do, in a fundamental Islamic state such as Saudi Arabia, non-Muslims are second class citizens, while apostates are in theory, subject to the death penalty, even if rarely, or ever, carried out.

From the article it appears that British Muslims, while they await the Caliphate, when the world will live under Islam, wish to lead separate lives from the rest of us, taking only those necessities of our science and technology that will allow them to prosper in a capitalist economy. As the writer says, a true Muslim is a citizen of the world, which has become a global small village. 'We are,' he writes,'going to prepare our youth for that objective in the long run'. The devout Muslim, it seems, believes in a Britain which is part of the Ummah, the world-wide rule of their faith, to which all secular governments will be subordinate.

However it would be a great mistake if, like the liberal left, we sentimentalise Islam or think that, like Christianity, it will eventually secularise. Muslims believe that the Quran is God's direct word out of the mouth of the Prophet and therefore anything which contradicts it must be opposed. This rules out all but token democratic government as no man can set himself up against the word of God. The results of this are only too plain in the Middle East in a series of bloody wars of religion. Nor are they set to improve as long as we refuse to employ our greatest defence against Islam, free speech. Isn't this where Lord Leveson came in?

Back to Contents

The BBC, Dressing to the Left

Scott Grønmark

In my 12 years with BBC News, I worked for many of the people who, for the past quarter century, have decided what the BBC broadcasts. Three of them went on to become Director-General. Almost without exception, they were decent, honest and fair, thoroughly convinced of their own political even-handedness. So why have they apparently been incapable of recognising, let alone addressing, the corporation's rampant left-wing bias? Do senior managers genuinely see no merit in the criticism that they're a cabal of arrogant left-liberal social engineers who spend the license fee promoting causes and institutions a sizable minority of its audience rejects?

Twenty years ago, the BBC's social affairs, politics and economics editors were, respectively, Polly Toynbee, John Cole and Peter Jay – three left-wingers. To this day, I'm surprised the Conservative government didn't respond to such outrageous provocation by privatising the BBC. Nothing has changed. When Newsnight libelled Lord McAlpine last year, many on the Right voiced concerns that this grotesque journalistic error might have stemmed from the corporation's innate hatred of the Conservative Party in general, and Margaret Thatcher in particular. When it came to finding a new programme editor, the broadcaster demonstrated utter contempt for its critics by appointing the deputy editor of the *Guardian*. When the corporation's least favourite newspaper recently published an unflattering article about Ed Miliband's Marxist father, the BBC reacted as if it was the most important political story of the year, subjecting its audience to an endless stream of bitter old Labourites settling scores with the *Mail*.

So why does the corporation keep doing things seemingly designed to confirm right-wing conspiracy theories? One answer might be that the organisation is suffering from malfunctioning feedback loops. The economist Friedrich Hayek maintained that one of the reasons state-controlled economies don't work is that they've deliberately foregone the information provided by the market, especially prices (which is why, for instance, Venezuelans now find it almost impossible to buy toilet-paper and why, if Ed Miliband wins the next election, we'll soon run out of electricity). In *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, the philosopher Karl Popper argued that totalitarian governments were all doomed because – by suppressing all internal criticism – they were unable to tell when the people's anger was about to boil over into open revolt (think of the fear on Ceausescu's face when he realised that the mob he was addressing wasn't cheering him, but baying for his blood).

The BBC trusts two key feedback loops – audience figures and the Audience Appreciation Index – because these almost invariably tell the corporation that we're pretty pleased with what we're getting. But when it comes to concerns over bias, none of the available feedback loops are functioning well enough to deliver the information that might finally convince the BBC to mend its ways.

You might expect its right-wing employees to object vigorously to examples of political bias on the BBC news outlets they serve, but you'd be hard-pressed to find any. Of the dozens of news journalists I worked with, I can think of only four who, either openly or secretly, admitted to being conservatives. My instinct at the time was that at least 90 per cent of my colleagues were leftists of one sort or another – possibly 95 per cent. In that sort of overwhelmingly liberal atmosphere, it's no wonder that conservatives keep their politics secret for fear of damaging their careers. I remember sitting in the newsroom one day watching Mrs Thatcher talking sense on television when another producer paused at my desk, and, after listening for a few moments, jeered, 'She sounds just like a parrot. Caw! Caw!' before moving off, evidently pleased with his sparkling display of wit. He is now a prominent Thatcherite cabinet minister. A journalist at the next desk startled

me by muttering, so only I could hear, 'I think she's all right'. I mouthed back, 'So do I', slightly worried it was a trap and that she'd stand up and start stridently denouncing me to the whole newsroom.

When the Tory MP Ian Gow was murdered by the IRA and our screens were showing pictures of his widow, her face frozen in a rictus of shock and grief, a colleague next to me remarked, 'Look, she can't stop grinning. She must have really hated the bastard!' There were tuts of disapproval from other journalists, but this wretch wouldn't have dreamed of making such a disgusting comment had we been watching the widow of a Labour MP in similar circumstances: he'd probably have been frog-marched out of the building by security guards.

I only worked for one openly Tory boss at the corporation. She was soon replaced by a standard-issue lefty, who demonstrated the BBC view of conservatism as a pathological condition by remarking of a potential presenter, 'He's a Tory, poor bloke. Can't help it.' It was the blithe assumption that his listeners were all Labour supporters that was particularly telling – and galling.

'TV licensing offences now account for more than a tenth of all criminal prosecutions in the UK, City AM can reveal. More than 180,000 people – almost 3,500 a week – appeared in front of magistrates during 2012 after being accused of watching TV without paying the £145.50 fee. 21.8.13 City AM'

I decided early on not to bother masking my political leanings – and, to be fair, I never felt that this hampered my career in any way (well, certainly not as much as my incompetence did): I served as the Nine O'clock News politics producer before becoming the editor of a live political talk show at Westminster. Whenever I voiced conservative opinions at editorial meetings, they were met with surprise rather than hostility. When I questioned whether we really needed to produce a package about nurses' pay every time the Royal College of Nursing issued a whining press release based on bogus 'research', nobody seemed to understand what I was talking about – nurses were public sector workers and therefore, by definition, deserved more money. And when, having failed to persuade an editor to drop our mawkish annual Christmas piece on the homeless, I suggested that the script should mention the fact that, rather than invariably being the victims of 'society' or the Tory government, many 'rough sleepers' were responsible for their own plight, the editor (a terribly nice man) burst out laughing: 'Oh, I see – the Victorian concept of the deserving poor!'

I eventually left News for New Media, imagining it would be different – after all, many of the senior staff had been recruited from what was then the Wild West of the private sector. But when, at a leaving do attended by some 20 managers, our department head got us to vote for our preferred political party in a secret ballot, only two of us voted Conservative. One recently arrived boor sneered – as if rat-droppings had been found in the office – 'Tories? You mean we've got Tories?'. Another later described Winston Churchill as a 'fat Nazi'. The BBC is evidently irresistible to left-wing job seekers, even in areas which, unlike news, comedy or drama, afford no opportunity for social engineering.

You might imagine that employees would receive feedback about bias direct from right-wingers they meet in the real world – I certainly heard enough complaints from non-media types when I worked there. But urban leftists tend to socialise almost exclusively with their own dirigiste kind. I suspect most BBC news staff assume – despite the evidence of polls suggesting 45 per cent of the electorate lean to the right – that right-wingers are similarly rare in wider society, and that they resemble the cartoonish figures featured in BBC news stories – the truffle pigs of the banking world, the blazered bluff coves of UKIP, the knuckle-draggers of the EDL etc. You and I know that the vast majority of Tory and UKIP supporters are perfectly nice, kindly, unextreme people – but the average BBC producer probably doesn't. (I began to suspect that the only conservatives most news staff routinely encountered were their own parents, whose views they had rejected as part of the left-winger's protracted adolescent revolt against authority figures.)

This perception of right-wingers as a tiny minority of greedy racists who enjoy seeing the poor suffer is reinforced by the fact that the most important potential source of feedback – Conservative voters – hardly ever complain to the BBC about bias. A paedophile presenter scandal, an insult to the Queen, or cruel on-air phone calls to a much-loved comedy actor will light up the switchboard. No doubt they also get upset about the make-up of *Question Time* panels or the way John Humphrys never lets a Tory minister answer a question without interruption. But as they don't descend on Broadcasting House clasping flaming torches – or even send a complaining email – the BBC assumes Middle England is content.

The Conservative Party itself should be a rich source of useful feedback, and you might expect that it would have learned from the Campbell-Mandelson years how to influence BBC output – especially as the party is the main victim of media bias, and is currently led by a PR man. The Labour Party has traditionally been

effective at monstering the BBC: it even managed to get a director-general sacked. Partly this is because of the regular exchange of employees between the two organisations: in Blair's day the Labour press office was stuffed with former BBC journalists, and one of Tony Hall's first acts on taking up the post of Director-General earlier this year was to hire a former Labour minister, James Purnell, as director of strategy and digital. When Labour squares up to the BBC, it knows where the pressure points are located. When Tories attack, it tends to involve individual ministers throwing a Mr Cranky-Pants tantrum before beating a hasty, humiliating retreat (presumably on the instruction of some publicity wallah). The BBC knows it will all blow over once the Tory toddler has had a soothing nap.

As for criticism from what the BBC invariably calls the right-wing press, well, those papers are all mouthpieces for wicked capitalist robber-barons and – unlike, say, the *Guardian* – are hopelessly biased and can therefore safely be ignored.

Finally, you might imagine the consciences of senior managers – all honourable men, as I said – would cause them sleepless nights. But as they know they aren't part of a sinister conspiracy (there really aren't any secret meetings to plot Labour's return to power), they feel no guilt. Besides, left-wing views confer on the holder a delicious, unshakeable sense of being on the side of the angels. Even if you suspect that providing a constant diet of anti-Israel stories and US political coverage suggesting the centre of the solar system is located in the vicinity of Barack Obama's backside might not represent true balance, you can tell yourself you're helping to create a better, fairer, cuddlier world.

Unless the Right can think of ways of making the BBC's feedback loops work effectively, or the BBC spontaneously recognises its responsibilities to license-fee payers who don't share its equalitarian instincts, Europe's most significant left-liberal broadcaster will continue – shamelessly – to dress to the left.

Scott Grønmark worked for the BBC in the News Department.

Back to Contents

Return to the Middle Ages?

Barbara Hewson

> *Bijan Ebrahimi, a keen gardener – a quiet, disabled man whose only joys in life came from his horticultural interests and his cat – took pictures of local youths as they attacked his plants and intended to hand the photographs to police as evidence. But instead officers were called when he was seen with the camera and he was led away for questioning as residents chanted 'paedo, paedo'. Officers realized their mistake at the police station and he was released, but rumours had already begun circulating that he was a child abuser and two days later he was beaten unconscious, dragged into the street and set on fire.*
> *Daily Telegraph 3.11.13*

The proliferation of historic allegations of sexual abuse following the outbreak of a scandal about the late Jimmy Savile in October 2012 is extraordinary, even by the standard of historic abuse claims. These originated in the USA in the 1980s, and have continued relentlessly ever since in English-speaking countries round the world. The abiding theme of these claims is one of childhood innocence violated, and trust betrayed. The public reaction to the revelation of such abuse is, predictably, one of shock and outrage, coupled with a demand for retribution and reparation.

When American feminist campaigners began to draw attention to the gross minimizing (as they saw it) of the problems of rape and intra-familial sexual abuse in the 1970s and 1980s, they used the technique of personal testimony. In the nineteenth century, this was a popular device deployed both by the antislavery movement, and by Christian revivalist movements, to promote their cause. Such 'speaking out' is characterized by highly emotive and graphic content, designed to shock the listener into horrified acceptance.

This rhetorical technique was not without its critics, sensitive to what nowadays we would call the pornography of misery. In 1855, a reviewer for *The Athenaeum* of John Brown's *Slave Life in Georgia* remarked: 'we scarcely see how the public is to be instructed by repetitious accounts so piteous and so harrowing'.

In 1971, a social worker named Florence Rush electrified the NYRF Rape Conference with her

account of childhood molestation. This was second wave feminism's equivalent to Martin Luther King's 'I have a Dream' speech, though what Rush described was more of a nightmare. She concluded:

> *sexual abuse of children…is an unspoken but prominent factor in socializing and preparing the female to accept a subordinate role: to feel guilty, ashamed, and to tolerate through fear, the power exercised over her by men.*

Rush's speech proved enormously influential on a generation of activists, who portrayed the nuclear family as a toxic arena of male-on-female abuse. The feminist construction of sexual violence also drew on trends in psychiatry, putting victims of rape and incest on a par with Holocaust survivors and victims of torture. They actively promoted the idea of rape as psychic trauma, causing a kind of disintegration of the self, with ensuing lifelong problems. Anti-Vietnam war activists, and the German psychiatrist William Niederland, persuaded the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Committee to introduce the concept of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 1978. Feminist thinkers like the psychiatrist Judith Herman appropriated this concept over the next decade.

The practical problem US feminists faced was how to reconcile their claim that rape and sexual abuse were widespread, with an apparent dearth of traumatised victims. With evangelical zeal, they set about promoting a collective story. 'Speak-outs' on rape and incest resulted in the publication of memoirs like *Kiss Daddy Goodnight* (1978). Feminists urged the therapeutic professions to identify and treat victims, and the wider population to identify victims in need of help, with the aid of television and other media. Researchers claimed that one in three women were sexually abused as children. By the 1980s, Harrington notes, first person survivor testimonies were ubiquitous and stylised – as, indeed, they remain today.

The recovery movement's Bible is a lengthy self-help manual written by two teachers of creative writing, a poet, Ellen Bass, and her student, Laura Davis, in 1988: *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*. Neither of its authors had any background in science or psychology. They developed the book as a result of creative writing classes and self-help workshops that they organized. It is interspersed with seemingly firsthand accounts of abuse, often in lurid and disturbing detail. How much of these accounts is really 'creative writing' is a matter for speculation.

The book starts with a list of examples of abuse, followed by the assurance: 'If you are unable to remember any specific instances likes the ones mentioned above but still have a feeling that something abusive happened to you, it probably did.' A section headed BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY MEMORIES says comfortingly: '…you are not alone. Many women don't have memories, and some never get memories. This doesn't mean they weren't abused.' A chapter headed BELIEVING IT HAPPENED states: 'To heal from child sexual abuse *you must believe that you were a victim, that the abuse really did take place* (italics added).'

This insistence on belief, as the precondition for healing, echoes evangelical Christian tradition. It even accepts the reality of Satanic abuse: 'Society has got to stop denying.'

The process by which multiple memories emerge over time appears from one survivor's account:

> *The more I worked on the abuse, the more I remembered. First I remembered my brother, and then my grand-father. About six months after that I remembered my father. And then about a year later, I remembered my mother. I remembered the 'easiest' first and the 'hardest' last. Even though it was traumatic for me to realize that everyone in my family abused me, there was something reassuring about it…. My life suddenly made sense.*

This book spawned imitations worldwide. It has been roundly criticised as virulently anti-men, for encouraging false memories, and doing more harm than good. The popularized notion of recovered memory led to an outbreak of accusations by adult daughters against their parents, alleging often horrific childhood abuse. This in turn generated a rash of lawsuits, as well as bizarre accusations of Satanic ritual abuse of children at day-care nurseries, some of which resulted in successful prosecutions. To explain the delay that often ensued before accusations surfaced, psychiatrists argued that the trauma of childhood abuse led to amnesia, or dissociative memories, or even the outlandish notion of multiple personality disorder.

A counter-movement emerged, asserting that so-called recovered memories were in fact false memories implanted by ideologically driven therapists in vulnerable and suggestible clients. A variant on this hypothesis was that women sought therapy to confirm their wish to believe in prior abuse.

In 2003 Richard McNally, a Harvard professor of Psychology, conclusively demonstrated that trauma does not result in repressed memory or amnesia. 'What we have here is a set of theories in search of a phenomenon,' he wrote. He also demonstrated how easy it is to create false memories of horrific trauma. As the 'strange saga of satanic ritual abuse' shows, McNally's work remains the gold standard in this area. His colleague, Susan Clancy, was pilloried after she did laboratory research to test the susceptibility

to false-memory creation of those who said they had been sexually abused.

Clancy was then invited to undertake research on the validity of memories in those who believed that they had been abducted by aliens. Her conclusion: 'Do our beliefs have *narrative* truth? Do they provide us with meaning and value? When people believe they were abducted by aliens, does this help them to understand perplexing or upsetting aspects of their lives? If so, the explanation is likely to be persuasive, satisfying, and resistant to argument (italics in original).' A key function of such 'magical beliefs,' she argues, is the way in which they absolve people of responsibility for personal distress.

Later, Clancy wrote *The Trauma Myth*, which sparked further controversy. In it, she reiterates what many commentators had already accepted, that much child sexual abuse does not involve the use of force or violence, making the imposition of a PTSD framework inappropriate. The attraction of the trauma model has more to do with the horrified reactions of those receiving accounts of abuse, than with the experiences of those who have been abused. Instead, listeners project their own feelings of moral and even psychological revulsion onto victims.

It's disturbing to think that in the UK justice system, the trauma model still holds primacy in sexual abuse cases: it is treated as the received wisdom on the subject. This needs to change, and change urgently. The naïve literalism with which claims of historic abuse are received also needs to change. Casting out inner demons is the proper province of the confessional or the consulting room, and not of our criminal courts.

Barbara Hewson is a barrister practising in Lincoln's Inn

A full list of linked references in this article are available on our website at www.salisburyreview.com

Back to Contents

UKIP Woman

Jane Kelly

As the next general election hoves into view, the average voter is still not sure what to make of the UK Independence Party; they get into scrapes, tell silly jokes, the liberal intelligentsia recoil from them while David Cameron appears to be running scared of them, knowing that their views on immigration exactly chime with the public.

At party gatherings, often in pubs, you will probably find a lot of over-weight UKIP men in checked jackets with leather elbow patches, there are damp ill-fitting toupés and a definite whiff of Mr Toad as they make passionate speeches, often without notes.

Among all this unreconstructed masculinity, in west London, you will also see Elizabeth Jones, pressing flesh, weighing people up and taking it all very seriously. She has a successful career as a solicitor in the family courts to attend to, but is also one of the rising stars of this largely woman-free zone. If the party manage to get 27 per cent of the vote in the Euro election next May, she will be elected as an MEP, and it's been a hard trail for her. She fought two bi-elections last year, in Brixton she found herself on a soapbox facing determined heckling, and she will face another battle in a local council election in Vassal Ward, Lambeth, on November 28th. It will be UKIPs first appearance there. They expect a very low turn-out and a meagre vote but she hopes it might 'create a presence for 2014 European elections'.

Elizabeth Jones

Sitting in a pub in Ealing popular with her UKIP colleagues, she sips a coffee, and won't reveal her age. She is middle-aged and still very good-looking but determinedly guarded. 'I never discuss age,' she says flatly. 'Society is sexist and I won't be pigeonholed by a pack of strange blokes.'

The 'blokes' are that part of the online community, the trolls, who now pursue women in public life, in a new kind of blood sport. She's already had her address put on line without her permission.

If she gets elected on May 22nd, as one of twenty UKIP members she will be on the Euro gravy train; a salary of about eighty thousand pounds, generous pension, staffing allowances for offices in London and Brussels, whilst at the same time, she says her job will be to 'spread sceptical views of the EU all over the world, via TV and YouTube videos'. The EU apparently televises everything, and she is a very good performer before an audience, after years of experience getting up in court.

But UKIP is not expected to get a big enough vote so she is unlikely to get that seat, and her political career so far has been a labour of love. She spends her evenings preparing briefs for her court cases, and learning speeches for UKIP. At weekends she is leafleting, canvassing door to door sometimes alone late at night, and attending vitriolic hustings. Facing down usually white, middle class trolls who like to shout 'Fascist' and 'racist' at anyone on the right, she rails back fearlessly, with perhaps her Welsh background kicking in, calling them 'media sock-puppets' and 'gullible fools'.

You sense she likes the campaign trail, and what particularly interests her are encounters with women, who have perhaps never voted. 'Canvassing in Norwood in 2010, I met a lot of professional black women', she says. 'They were furious about benefit cheats and resentful about child benefits for feckless parents. I tried to get them to join us, pointing out that we represent their ideas.'

She works from nine till at least 10pm, most days, driven by her commitment to change our political culture. 'I'd had enough of the old politics', she says in her determined way. She was brought up in the Midlands in a Welsh, Labour-voting family, but started questioning both political parties at school.

'It was obvious that my parents, who went to Grammar School, had a better education than I was getting at my comprehensive', she says. 'I was a bright

girl but it was an uphill struggle to achieve anything academic. You were encouraged to fail.'

She got to Cardiff University, moved to London and became a family lawyer. She remained critical of both leading political parties. 'Tony Blair taking us into Iraq was a turning point', she says, 'I was angry about that, and the Tories seemed to be so weak. I have never felt that Cameron represents me; he was just born lucky, a work-shy fop with a well placed mother-in-law. When he arrived I thought, that is the end of meritocracy within the Tory Party.'

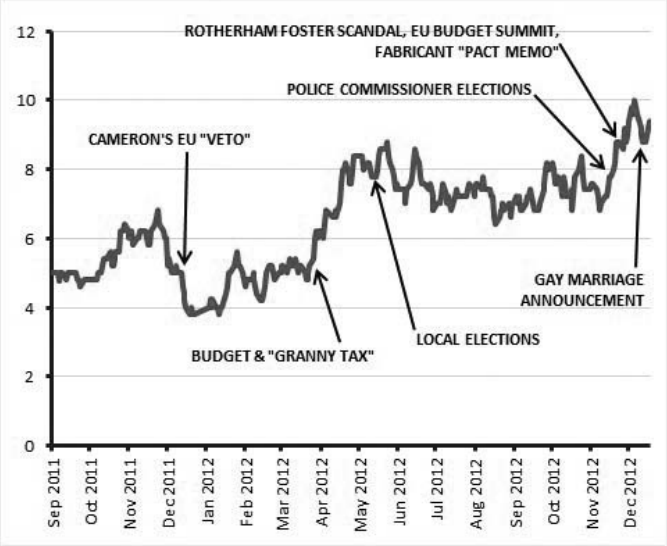
When UKIP appeared in 1993 she made a connection. 'I saw them as plucky underdogs,' she says. She likes their pragmatism, and the issue which really swung her was parking, or lack of it.

'Westminster City Parking scheme was introduced by a Tory group who did not include it in their manifesto', she fulminates, still enraged. 'It was bad for small business, and against women's safety at night. They were like the Greens on steroids, and I see it as creeping Europeanization.'

She sees creeping inclusion into a greater Europe affecting all aspects of our lives, including the courts where she works. Within a short conversation she can reveal horror stories about what the EU is doing to our tried and tested judiciary. She talks angrily about the new concept of 'Lis Pendens', which has become law here. 'Until that came in, we had a forum hearing to discuss where the divorce was going to be held,' she said. 'With this ruling the divorce can be issued anywhere in Europe, regardless of the wife's best interests. Changes were introduced from Europe which have been bad for women and no one noticed until UKIP', she says.

What bothers her more is what she believes is an increasing pressure on free speech. She describes a body called the 'EU Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation', which she says want to impose a 'horizontal enforcement of tolerance': a snitching campaign, neighbour against neighbour.

In October the proposed European Framework National Statute for the Promotion of Tolerance was presented to the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee, the only directly elected body of the European Union. It proposes to set up separate administrative units throughout the EU, to monitor 'tolerance'. Elizabeth keeps a finger on these bizarre machinations and takes a gloomy view of what they mean for our future liberty.



Intending to vote UKIP:
Uk Polling report survey and polling news
YouGuv's Antony Wells

She shares that characteristic with the rest of the Independence Party, but feels they are really up against paper tigers, persiflage and a pathetic enemy. 'I like UKIP because it's not governed by fad-following fools', she says cryptically, 'but by people with recognisable life experience, not Old Etonians who took PPE at Oxbridge. The other two parties only use a tiny section of society. Our leader Nigel Farage left school at eighteen; he is a self-made man, he has conviction, while the other leaders are almost identical, they could belong to any party.'

It all comes down to a numbers game of course; to become a serious contender in the next General Election UKIP has to gain in marginal seats and in doing so may damage the Conservatives badly enough to allow in Labour. Elizabeth is not worried as she doesn't believe that Labour can win at a general election. Not everyone is so sure. But she has that ebullient optimism common to UKIP members, which critics think is based on fantasy. Undaunted by doubt of any kind, she was off home at 10 pm, to record and remember a speech for the following day in Surrey.

'It's non-stop work', she says, 'but someone's got to do it. My hero is Galileo who discovered that the earth revolves around the sun. Despite onslaughts from the Papal court and threats of torture and death and finally being kept under house arrest, he wouldn't budge. He knew the truth and stuck to it. Those courts would have supported the EU but UKIP is the natural home of the heretic.'

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

Back to Contents

Boris the Wizard of Oz

Daryl McCann

The redoubtable Boris had just won over the locals, extolling the merits of Melbourne, as he delivered the keynote speech at the 2013 Melbourne Writers Festival: a city of 'dynamism and openness and generosity' and 'blessed like London with a superb climate, public bicycles, free museums, and a brilliant Oystercard system called the Myki whose complexities I have yet to fathom.' Maybe it was his unbridled enthusiasm that prompted Sally Roycroft, an Australian teacher, to acquaint the Mayor of London with her story. Possessing an Australian passport rather than a EU one, she informed him, had brought an abrupt end to her career as an educator in London.

Johnson, at this point, was at the end of a glorious family holiday in our 'phenomenally beautiful' country that included visits to Cairns and the Kakadu National Park. The Land of Oz, it turned out, also evoked wonderful memories of a year spent in Victoria as a young man, drinking Victoria Bitter 'at 11 am, a skill that has proved invaluable in what passes for my political career'. Moved by Roycroft's tale, Johnson immediately dashed off a missive to the *Daily Telegraph* decrying British authorities for, effectively, telling Roycroft to 'bog off'. 'Outrageous and indefensible', he declared, that 'skilled people like Sally' should be subject to 'an absurd discrimination'. How was it that an Australian could be 'deprived of a freedom that we legally confer on every French person'? He recommended the creation, forthwith, of a 'bilateral Free Labour Mobility Zone' between the UK and Australia to safeguard the 'throbbing intercontinental two-way pipeline' that has traditionally existed between the two countries.

Sally Roycroft's predicament, he asserted, was the 'infamous consequence' of the 'historic and strategic decision' taken by the United Kingdom in 1973: 'We betrayed our relationships with Commonwealth countries such as Australia and New Zealand, and entered into preferential trading arrangements with what was then the European Economic Community.' In the *Daily Telegraph* piece, Johnson implored his compatriots to 'seek a wider destiny for our country' and, what is more, if the EU criticised closer relationships between Australia and the United Kingdom, then the Euroland bureaucrats should be told to 'stuff it'.

As things stand, however, Westminster does not necessarily possess the right to thumb its nose at the 27-nation nation EU. The real hope for a closer connection between Australia and the United Kingdom – not to mention a revitalisation of the Anglosphere in general – would be for the UK to quit the EU. An outcome, we may assume, Prime Minister David Cameron will do his utmost to prevent, the promise of an in-out referendum in 2017 notwithstanding. The most urgent priority for liberty-loving Britons should be recovering the sovereignty lost when their economic partnership with Europe transmutated into a political affiliation, and a power-shift from London to Brussels, host city of the official seats of the European Commission, Council of the European Union, the European Council and, for all intents and purposes, the European Parliament.

... the 'infamous consequence' of the 'historic and strategic decision' taken by the United Kingdom in 1973: 'We betrayed our relationships with Commonwealth countries such as Australia and New Zealand, and entered into preferential trading arrangements with what was then the European Economic Community.'

The EU, according to Daniel Hannan's *Inventing Freedom: How the English-speaking Peoples Made the Modern World* (2013), recognizes in theory the primacy of the rule of law, democratic government and individual liberty, and yet in practice is quite ready to 'subordinate all three to political imperatives'. The voters of France (2005), the Netherlands (2005) and Ireland (2008) unambiguously rejected the European Constitution (The Lisbon Treaty), and yet it was imposed on those three countries regardless. Adding insult to injury, controversial policies such as the eurozone bailouts have been pursued by the EU against the spirit and the letter of a constitution that was never properly legitimised in the first place. The United Kingdom, laments Hannan, finds itself ensnared in an undemocratic, unrepresentative, supra-national system of government that 'sets aside' the rule of law at its own convenience.

Were the UK to extricate itself from the EU and 'seek a wider destiny', on the other hand, it might want to study the partnership between Australia and New Zealand that has evolved in the wake of the

Mother Country 'joining' Europe. The two antipodean lands enjoy a relationship that is probably closer than any other two sovereign nations, and yet each retains complete political independence from the other. The Kiwis declined the offer to join the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 and have never seriously regretted the decision. Membership of the Commonwealth would have provided New Zealand with a dozen seats in the Australian Senate and approximately a seventh of the seats in Australia's House of Representatives, but it would have also condemned the Land of the Long White Cloud to the status of a perennial province.

The Anzac tradition, born out of the heroic failure of the 1915 Gallipoli Campaign and strengthened by the shared success on the Western Front in 1918, has a sacred place in the history of both nations. Anzac Day, April 25, is a national holiday nowhere in the world except Australia and New Zealand. In fact, we have an inordinate amount in common, and even the fierceness of our sporting clashes has all the hallmarks of a sibling rivalry. That said, New Zealand is a sovereign nation and as such controls its own destiny, which includes a ban on American vessels propelled by nuclear power or carrying nuclear weapons entering its domestic waters. Despite playing a role in Afghanistan, Wellington proved far less supportive than Canberra of George W Bush's intervention in Iraq, and has taken a more circuitous route than its Trans-Tasman neighbour on the way to establishing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the USA. One might disagree with any number of New Zealand's foreign policy initiatives, but its right to make those decisions – and enjoy the benefits or sufferer the fall-out from them – is not disputed by its antipodean ally.

It is in the context of this mutual respect for sovereignty that a Free Labour Mobility Zone – Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement, to be exact – already exists between New Zealand and Australia. This arrangement allows Australian and New Zealand citizens to live and work in each other's country without restriction, subject to criminal records and health concerns. At the present, 55,000 Australians (out of a population of 23 million) live and work in New Zealand, while a staggering 650,000 New Zealand citizens (out of a population of only 4.5 million) reside in Australia. The Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement works because it is pragmatic rather than utopian. While a New Zealand working in Australia must pay tax on his earnings, he does not have access to Australian social security payments. Moreover, the scheme provides no fast track to Australian citizenship, since those who make use of it may only do so if they retain their New Zealand citizenship.

New Zealand PM John Key has lobbied successive Australian leaders to modify the original deal and allow New Zealanders here to receive social security payments (as Australian wage-earners do in New Zealand). In response to Key's latest entreaty, Tony Abbott replied: 'I am very happy with the situation right now, which is Kiwis coming here know that they're expected to pay taxes from day one and so many of them do.' John Key's response, a polite acknowledgment of the realities of dealing with another wholly self-governing country, says a lot about the value of national autonomy: 'In the end, we totally respect the sovereign right of the Australian government to make the decision how it will treat people who come and work in Australia.'

The argument that the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement turns New Zealanders into second-class Australian citizens overlooks the fact that the scheme makes it possible for so many Kiwis to live and work here in the first place. There are ways and means for a New Zealander to obtain Australian citizenship, but that is a completely different issue from somebody in New Zealand having the opportunity to live and work in another English-speaking country at their own discretion. Sally Roycroft would no doubt be thrilled if the EU allowed the United Kingdom to put in place an arrangement similar to the one that already exists between New Zealand and Australia.

There are, of course, other benefits to be gained from creating bilateral Free Labour Mobility Zones right across the Anglosphere – New Zealand, Australia, Canada, USA, UK, and whoever else might be included. Sally Roycroft's vocation as an educator goes some of the way to explaining why. The English-speaking world is bound together not only by the obvious linguistic connection but also by an attendant cultural sensibility which is predicated on the long-held English traditions of rule of law and individual liberty, concepts that that the modern-day Left in all our respective countries seek to diminish. Australians do not yearn to return to the era of the Pax Britannica, and yet Stratford-on-Avon, Samuel Johnson's House, Kensington Palace and the Houses of Parliament are no less a part of our story than they were in the past. Sally Roycroft, who once upon a time taught in London, would no doubt concur.

Daryl McCann is a frequent contributor to Quadrant and other Australian magazines. http://darylmccann.blogspot.co.uk

Readers who might like to watch a video of Boris Johnson reciting Homo's *Iliad* should go to our website at www.salisburyreview.com and follow the link on the front page.

Back to Contents

Bear Foot in China

Hugh Moman

The traditional greeting between Chinese translates as 'Have you eaten?' *Ni chi le ma?* This is not just a courtesy but a genuine enquiry. Only recently has it begun to fall out of usage, hunger having been largely banished. The visitor to Beijing will be struck by the astonishing variety of food. Food markets, stalls and restaurants are everywhere, offering everything from street food and home cooking to Palace dishes, a good number 24 hours a day. There are restaurants representing every province of China, as well as many specialist places offering hot pot, whole roast Mongolian lamb (eaten in a yurt), and everything in between. This includes western fast food and representatives of most of the well-known cuisines from beyond China's borders. The bill can range from £1.50 to over £1,000 per head. Expensive restaurants tend to offer the most exotic Palace food, with dishes derived from the Qing court such as 'Bear Foot', which is delicious. There is no splitting of the bill so the host has to be a rich man. Although it might include expensive drink such as Moutai and Huang Jiu, food makes up a considerably greater proportion of the cost than it would in London, where wine is the usual culprit.

When every category of establishment is added up the total comes to over 70,000. While only Beijing and Shanghai are this cosmopolitan, the centrality of food both in and out of the home extends to the smallest village and no other country holds the business of eating and everything surrounding it in such importance, leaving even France behind.

This abundance is new. In relatively recent memory people found themselves obliged to eat children in order to survive. They ate each others' to try to mitigate at least in part the horror of what their circumstances had forced them to do. However, the roots of China's relationship with food lie several millennia in the past and cooking had already reached a high degree of sophistication by the time of Confucius (551-479BC) and the Zhou dynasty. Chopsticks began to be used as early as the third millennium BC, initially to enable the cooking and retrieval of small pieces of meat from the embers of their fires.

Over succeeding centuries Chinese cuisine evolved into today's general overall classification of the eight schools of Chinese cooking. These have many sub-categories ranging in taste from the fieriness of the Chuan of Sichuan Province to the subtlety of the Yue school of Guandong. Chefs at every level vie with each other to create new dishes and new tastes. They do so not just for the kudos. With one really successful new dish, a chef can launch a chain of restaurants and make his fortune. In Beijing, one man made so much money from his restaurant business that he recently built the world's biggest spa, half underground and with pools, lakes and waterfalls, like some James Bond villain's lair. It covers several acres and has 2,000 staff, a restaurant and its own brewery. Just last year, a peasant restaurant over 100 miles outside Beijing created a fish dish so delicious that every night rich men and their friends in chauffeured limousines would drive there just for dinner. Ordering food is considered an art and achieving the right balance of tastes and types of dish is much admired. Intertwined with this is the Chinese belief that 'food is medicine and medicine is food': Chinese people generally know which food affects each organ of the body and for many it guides them in their diet.

Until this year, eating out in expensive restaurants used to be one of the most popular activities for officials, while a separate category of restaurant specialising in birds' nest, shark fin, abalone and sea cucumber had sprung up to meet the demand. To find sea cucumber fishing fleet operators had to send their boats further and further afield, eventually as far as the fishing grounds off South America, and hoover them off the seabed. However, with government excesses now regularly leaked onto the Internet, China's new head of state, Xi Jin Ping, has banned them from doing so and as a result many such establishments have recently closed their doors, with business in some cases having fallen by anything from 50 to 80 per cent.

With the cost of food production in China continually increasing, short cuts have become endemic in the industry, without any consideration for the consequences for the health of those who consume its products. Nevertheless despite the fact that a government inspection regime exists, there is very little that is produced in mainland China that can be bought completely without fear of contamination. Widespread corruption has meant that inspectors are often bought, allowing the process effectively to be bypassed. In one case, the manufacturer of an especially popular sausage was found to have been

giving his pigs large quantities of amphetamines. He did this so as to keep his pigs constantly on the move, exercising away almost all their fat, as his customers preferred. They were being thus kept awake for days at a time, never standing still. This and the resulting contamination had managed to pass through twenty-seven separate inspections without detection. When the factory owner was questioned, he freely admitted having paid officials, adding that he was only doing what everyone else did.

In another scandal, many restaurants in Beijing were found, wittingly or otherwise, to be cooking with refined oil recovered from the city's sewers. Ironically and also unusually in the case of food scandals in China, when tested, it was found in most cases to be entirely clean and free from contaminants. Rising costs, including ever-climbing rents and wages has led to restaurants yielding to this and other temptations.

New scandals seem to emerge by the week. Chicken scandals, pork scandals, fruit scandals and baby milk scandals are all of recent memory. In the case of the baby milk, it appeared that no locally produced formula was entirely safe, including a brand produced by a foreign company well known in this field. The result was that every young mother and her family who could afford it would only buy milk powder from abroad, with many pouring over the border into Hong Kong to get it, resulting in local shortages.

What is new is the level of awareness nationally of these and other sensational revelations. Responsibility for this lies with the Internet and mobile phones. Scandals are recorded, posted on social media, shared and forwarded, largely defeating the government's attempts to suppress their dissemination, despite its many threats, most recently including imprisonment, for spreading alarm.

The most trusted brands are foreign and where there is a comparable imported product, those Chinese who can afford the high prices will choose it over a local one. However, the majority of people cannot and in any case most Chinese foodstuffs are not to be found elsewhere, while fresh vegetables are simply uneconomic to import. Consequently most Chinese just carry on, hoping for the best and trying to avoid whichever product has figured in the latest revelations. For example, a foreign couple invited some Chinese friends to their flat for dinner. One particularly good dish included pork and the couple could not understand why their guests were quietly pushing it to the edge of their plates. Later they discovered that earlier that day a lurid pork additive scandal had been all over the Internet and on Wei Xin and Weibo, two wildly popular social media sites.

In further response to the food industry's failings, some Chinese are beginning to grow organic produce, although high prices currently restrict this to a very small niche market. Others are travelling abroad to learn about foreign products and methods with the aim of bringing this knowledge back to China. One man spent five years in France, learning how to make a variety of French cheeses. On his return, being a perfectionist, he procured a supply of unpasteurised milk from a herd of Holsteins imported by another enterprising Chinese and painstakingly followed exactly the processes he had learnt. Today he produces a superb range, indistinguishable in quality from their French cousins, which he sells to Beijing's international hotels, foreign restaurants and grocers' shops.

In France, once they have made their fortune, men dream of owning a vineyard. In China, it is a restaurant and many have successful people behind them, ranging from businessmen to actors and singers. Fan Li Jun, one of China's most famous contemporary artists whose works fetch up to $4m, owns a number in which he is closely involved.

Despite all the recent alarms and worries connected with food in China, there is no other country where you can eat better or with greater variety. This is a result of both the importance of food in Chinese culture for the past two and a half thousand years or more and the consequent unforgiving standards applied to it by the Chinese people. As China becomes richer and its people have more and more disposable income, one can expect the variety and quality only to increase.

Hugh Moman is a businessman long resident in China.

Tang Dynasty pottery dumplings (Wikimedia)

Back to Contents

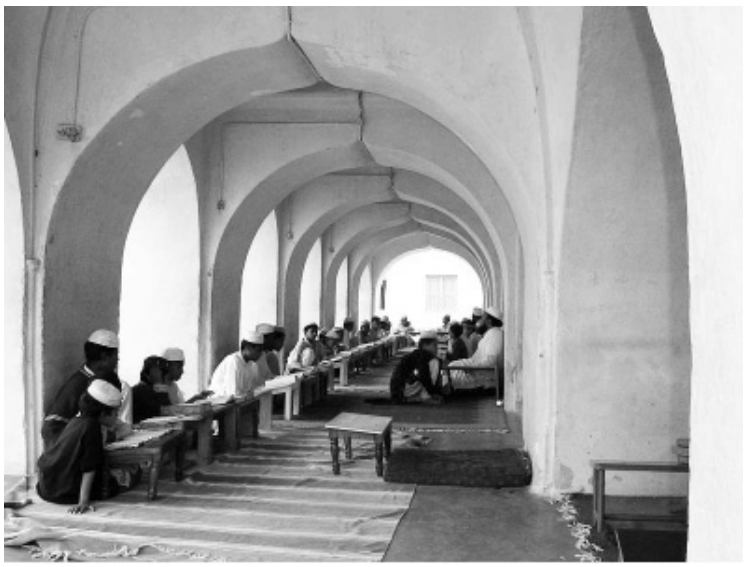
A Future for Muslim Schools?

Iftikhar Ahmad

Almost all children now believe they go to school to pass exams. The idea that they may be there for an education is irrelevant. Leading companies are struggling to recruit teenagers with basic skills because schools have been turned into 'exam factories', business leaders have warned. Many employers had been left 'disheartened and downright frustrated' by poor levels of literacy, numeracy, communication and timekeeping among school leavers and graduates. Overemphasis on sitting exams and hitting targets throughout compulsory education had robbed children of the chance to develop the 'soft' skills needed in the work place. Business leaders believed the emphasis on passing exams at school meant children failed to develop other skills, including the ability to hold a conversation, display good work ethic, turn upon time and apply basic literacy and numeracy.

State, independent and faith schools have become exam factories and are only interested in A to C Grades. They do not educate children. The result is that anti-social behaviour, gun and knife culture, racism, drug addiction. binge drinking, high rate of teenage pregnancies and abortions, high divorce rate are common in society. Exam results do not reflect a candidate's innate ability. Employers have moaned for years that too many employees cannot read or write properly. According to a survey, school-leavers and even graduates lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. More and more companies are having to provide remedial training to new staff, who can't write clear instructions, do simple maths, or solve problems. Both graduates and school-leavers were also criticised for their sloppy time-keeping, ignorance of basic customer service and lack of self-discipline.

Even Muslim schools have also become Exam Factories, only interested in A to C grades just like state schools. There is a positive co-relation between faith, culture and language. Faith needs culture and languages to flourish. According to a research, children who study the language and culture of their parents may achieve more and become more involved citizens. Migrant Muslims speak variety of languages. State schools as well as Muslim schools give lip service to the community languages but majority of Muslim schools completely ignore or discourage community languages. The ex-chairman of the Association of Muslim Schools, Mr Idrees Mears, a native revert, totally rejects the teaching of Urdu and other languages. The same opinion was expressed by the head of state-funded Islamia School as well as by the ex-Chairman of the Nida Trust. They are not in a position to understand the needs and demands of the bilingual children because they are themselves monolinguals. It is a well-known fact that social and emotional education comes with one's own language, literature and poetry. Pakistani children suffer more than other children. They speak different languages at home and when they go to the Masjid they are exposed to Urdu and Arabic. At schools they are exposed to English and at the age of 11 are exposed to European languages. Now European languages are introduced at Primary level, but Urdu is totally



Madarasa of the Jamia Masjid Mosque Srirangapatna India (Wikipedia)

ignored and discouraged by the state as well as by the Muslim schools. English, Arabic and Urdu must be introduced at nursery level so that the children can grow up with three languages. We have already lost three generation and the fourth one is in the process of losing its linguistic and cultural identity by not learning Urdu. The Muslim community is suffering because of social and cultural problems of high rate of divorce, run away young girls, low academic achievements, drug addiction, drinking, teenage pregnancies, disrespect for their parents and elders, forced marriages and honour killings. It is all because our youth are cut off from their cultural roots and languages. I blame state schools because they have never been serious in the teaching of Urdu, Arabic and other community languages.

An American research reveals in 2005 that bilingual learners with no education in their first language take longer to learn English and a bilingual learner with a good education in their own language do best of all. Muslim schools are committing the same mistake by ignoring community languages. Even OFSTED is not serious about the importance of bilingualism and bilingual education. Their priority is the teaching of English language. No body is denying the importance of English as an economic language but equally important is the first languages of the children for social and emotional literacy.

You better teach your children in your own schools and let migrant communities teach their children according to their needs and demands. British Establishment and society should concentrate on the evils of their own society and stop trying to change the way of life of Muslims

The Muslim community has been passing through a phase of fourth Crusades. The battleground is the field of education, where the young generation will be educated properly with the Holy Quran in one hand and Sciences in other hand to serve the British society and the world at large. A true Muslim is a citizen of the world, which has become a small global village. We are going to prepare our youth to achieve that objective in the long run. A true Muslim believes in Prophet Moses and the Prophet Jesus and without them one cannot be a Muslim. My suggestion is that in all state, independent and Christian based school special attention should be given to the teaching of Comparative Religion and Islam should be taught by qualified Muslim Teachers to make the children aware the closeness of Islam to Christianity and Judaism which will help them to think about Islam, as 'A Pragmatic and Modern Way of Life,' during their life time.

British schooling and the British society is the home of institutional racism. The result is that Muslim children are unable to develop self-confidence and self-esteem, therefore, majority of them leave schools with low grades. Racism is deeply rooted in British society therefore no law could change the attitudes of racism towards those who are different. It is not only the common man, even member of the royal family is involved in racism. The father of a Pakistani office cadet who was called a '***' by Prince Harry has profoundly condemned his actions. He had felt proud when he met the Queen and the Prince of Wales at his son's passing out parade at Sandhurst in 2006 but now felt upset after learning about the Prince's comments. Queen Victoria invited an Imam from India to teach her Urdu language. He was highly respected by the Queen but other members of the royal family had no respect for him. He was forced to go back to India. His portrait is still in one of the royal places.

Children should be taught about the contribution Muslims have made to civilisation in order to combat threats of extremism and discrimination. It will help native children to develop positive attitudes towards Muslims. It will bring divided communities closer together, by teaching children about debt west owe to Muslims – coffee and pinhole camera to the three-course dinner and advancement in maths. The teaching will bring together science, history, RE, citizenship and community cohesion – some of the most pressing problems for the minister responsible for the curriculum. One of the major reasons for the alienation of British Muslims is a lack of clear identity. It is crucial for the British society to understand the hugely positive impact that Islamic inventors have had upon the world, and for Muslims to take pride in it. At present there is a widespread mis-conception among many people worldwide that the state of science and technology during the period known as 'The Dark Ages' was that of stagnation and decline. The Muslim civilisation flourished and contributed to thousands of essential inventions that still affect western life style. The open recognition of the contribution of the Muslims should be reflected in the National Curriculum. The mainstream history of scientific ideas has failed to acknowledge numerous Islamic scientists and their great efforts and achievements throughout the centuries.

A report by the Institute for Community Cohesion found that native parents were deserting some schools after finding their children out numbered by pupils from ethnic minorities. Schools in parts of England are becoming increasingly segregated. The study focused on 13 local authorities. Many of the schools

and colleges are segregated and this was generally worsening over recent years. This is RACISM because British society is the home of institutional racism. My statement regarding Muslim schools where there is no place for non-Muslim child or a teacher is based on educational process and not on racism. Muslim children need Muslim teachers during their developmental periods. For higher studies and research, Muslim teacher is not a priority.

I have been campaigning for Muslim schools since early 70s because there is no place for foreign cultures, languages and faiths in state schools. Muslim children are victim of racial abuse and discrimination. Neither Muslim community nor the DFE paid any attention to my proposal. Muslim community kept on setting up Masajid for worshiping and for the education of their children. Masajid help Muslim children to recite the Holy Quran without understanding and teach them how to perform their prayers. DFE introduced Multicultural education for the integration and assimilation of the Muslims.

The Muslim community has been passing through a phase of fourth Crusades. The battleground is the field of education, where the young generation will be educated properly with the Holy Quran in one hand and Sciences in other hand to serve the British society and the world at large. A true Muslim is a citizen of the world, which has become a small global village. We are going to prepare our youth to achieve that objective in the long run

I regard Muslim schools not just Faith schools but more or less bilingual schools. I set up the first Muslim school in Forest Gate London in 1981. Special attention was given to Standard English, Arabic and Urdu languages along with National Curriculum. But due to its closure, it could not become a model school for others to follow. Islamia School, founded by Yusuf Islam became the model school where there is no place for the teaching of Urdu and other community languages and only Arabic is taught.

The sound knowledge of ones owns language would appear to help – not hinder the acquisition of a second language and bilingual children may even have cognitive advantages and that the ability to speak more than one language is going to be increasingly important for the world of the future. Therefore, Muslim children and young Muslims have potentially a major educational advantage, although sadly this is not being developed well at present. British policy makers now recognise bilingualism as an educational asset rather than a problem. Education plays a central role in the transmission of languages from one generation to the next. The teaching of mother tongues is essential in terms of culture and identity. Arabic is a religious language for the Muslims but for Pakistanis, Urdu is also essential for culture and identity. Blind Muslim children in Bradford are learning to read Arabic and Urdu Braille, by a blind teacher who travelled from Pakistan. Now blind Muslim children are not going to miss out on culture, religion, language and the social aspects and integration into their own community and identity.

Majority of Muslim children are from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India They need to learn Arabic and Urdu to keep in touch with their cultural roots and enjoy the beauty of their literature and poetry. Urdu is a lingua frankua of the Muslim communities from the sub-continent. The young generation learn Urdu from Indian/Pakistani films, more than two dozens TV Channels and couple of radio stations broadcasting round the clock in Urdu/Hindi. They can speak and understand but are unable to read and write Urdu literature and poetry. Bilingualism and bilingual education should be part and parcel of each and every Muslim school. The problem is that most of Muslim schools are running by British educated Muslims who are made monolinguals by state schools. They do not feel the charm of bilingualism. They have never been given the chance to learn Arabic and Urdu along with English. An English man is proud of his language, culture and faith or no faith. In the same way a Muslim should be proud of his faith, languages and cultures. In my opinion at least three hours a day must be given for the teaching of English, Arabic, Urdu and other community languages from nursery level. The teaching of Standard English will help them to follow the National Curriculum and go for higher studies and research to serve humanity.

According to a recent report, Muslim schools performed best overall, although they constitute only a fraction of the country's 7000 schools. Muslim schools do well because of their Islamic ethos and a focus on traditional discipline and teaching methods. They teach children what is right and what is wrong, because young children need structured guidance.

Bilingual Muslims children have a right, as much as any other faith group, to be taught their culture, languages and faith alongside a mainstream curriculum. More faith schools will be opened under sweeping reforms of the education system in England. There is a dire need for the growth of state funded Muslim

schools to meet the growing needs and demands of the Muslim parents and children. Now the time has come that parents and community should take over the running of their local schools. Parent-run schools will give the diversity, the choice and the competition that the wealthy have in the private sector. Parents can perform a better job than the Local Authority because parents have a genuine vested interest. The Local Authority simply cannot be trusted.

The British Government is planning to make it easier to schools to 'opt out' from the Local Authorities. Muslim children in state schools feel isolated and confused about who they are. This can cause dissatisfaction and lead them into criminality, and the lack of a true understanding of Islam can ultimately make them more susceptible to the teachings of fundamentalists like Christians during the middle ages and Jews in recent times in Palestine. Fundamentalism is nothing to do with Islam and Muslim; you are either a Muslim or a non-Muslim. Muslim children suffer from identity crises because their parents teach them Islam and their schools teach them something else. There must be a positive co-relation between school and home, otherwise, children will suffer academically, spiritually, socially and emotionally. They are also unable to develop self-confidence and self-esteem.

Racism is deeply rooted in British society therefore no law could change the attitudes of racism towards those who are different.

You better teach your children in your own schools and let migrant communities teach their children according to their needs and demands. British Establishment and society should concentrate on the evils of their own society and stop trying to change the way of life of Muslims. Muslim community does not want to integrate with the British society, indulging in incivility, anti-social behaviour, drug and knife culture, binge drinking, teenage pregnancies and abortion. Prince Charles, while visiting the first grant maintained Muslim school in north London, said that the pupils would be the future ambassadors of Islam. But what about thousands of others, who attend state schools deemed to be 'sink schools'? In education, there should be a choice and at present it is denied to the Muslim community. In the late 80s and early 90s, when I floated the idea of Muslim community schools, I was declared a 'school hijacker' by an editorial in the *Newham Recorder* newspaper in east London. This clearly shows that the British media does not believe in choice and diversity in the field of education and has no respect for those who are different. Muslim schools, in spite of meagre resources, have excelled to a further extent this year, with couple of schools achieving 100% A-C grades for five or more GCSEs. They beat well-resourced state and independent schools in Birmingham and Hackney. Muslim schools are doing better because a majority of the teachers are Muslim. The pupils are not exposed to the pressures of racism, multiculturalism and bullying.

There are hundreds of state primary and secondary schools where Muslim pupils are in majority. In my opinion all such schools may be opted out to become Muslim Academies. This mean the Muslim children will get a decent education. Muslim schools turned out balanced citizens, more tolerant of others and less likely to succumb to criminality or extremism. Muslim schools give young people confidence in who they are and an understanding of Islam's teaching of tolerance and respect which prepares them for a positive and fulfilling role in society. Muslim schools are attractive to Muslim parents because they have better discipline and teaching Islamic values. Children like discipline, structure and boundaries. Bilingual Muslim children need Bilingual Muslim teachers as role models during their developmental periods, who understand their needs and demands.

Iftikhar Ahmad works at London School of Islamics Trust.

Editor's Note.

The following entry is from Wikipedia:

> *There are more than a million Roman Catholics in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia allows Christians to enter the country as foreign workers for temporary work, but does not allow them to practice their faith openly. Because of that Christians generally only worship in secret within private homes.The Saudi Arabian Mutaween or Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (ie the religious police) prohibits the practice of any religion other than Islam. Conversion of a Muslim to another religion is considered apostasy, a crime punishable by death if the accused does not recant. The Government does not permit non-Muslim clergy to enter the country for the purpose of conducting religious services.*

Back to Contents

Marx by Candlelight

S V Aldred

Mine was an unconventional introduction to politics. My father, a self-proclaimed Marxist-Anarchist, began feeding me titbits of Marxism from birth (I am told that my first word was Gramsci) so perhaps it is unsurprising that I grew into the most obnoxious sort of Leftist. At school my opinions went largely unchallenged so it wasn't until I arrived at Oxford that I actually spoke to a conservative. I had been aware hitherto that they existed, but pictured them as top-hatted caricatures and therefore as rather less than human. Once or twice I had defaced a Conservative Party placard during election season by carving a hammer and sickle with my keys, but only after being certain that the homeowners were out. Thus it was an unknown enemy that I railed against. And rail I did.

I naturally fell into Stalinism as the surest path to achieving global revolution. Life was cheap; to die for something glorious was to live eternally. All land and commodities must be seized by the state, all malign influences must be suppressed, all the rich must be eradicated without exception ('The Rich' were defined as the privately educated; and also anyone born and raised in the South. I had never been to London but I suspected that it was a hotbed of Toryism). Inhumane? Evil? Demonstrably unworkable? All criticism could be dismissed as either counter-revolutionary or reactionary propaganda. We were going to build the new Jerusalem, or at the very least the new Leningrad, and the streets of the West Midlands would run red.

It was hard to sustain such opinions as a bright young man living an unexceptional life but I did my best. My righteous fury oscillated but my convictions stood firm, strengthened by the visibility of inequality and a perceived lack of alternatives. It was at Oxford that I was jolted out of my Marxist stupor.

I first realised that I was a class traitor at a champagne reception in my first year. It was less my presence there than the fact I enjoyed it so thoroughly. Was it possible to own a Black Tie and be a Marxist? By my third year I owned a White Tie and I had been to dozens of formal events. I had rowed and drunk bottles of port and captained the ballroom dance team. I had friends who went to Eton. I had been introduced to perhaps the most powerful counter-argument to Marxism – I had been shown how beautiful it can be when the young, the rich and the intelligent mix.

Two further aspects of my time at Oxford left me not merely disengaged with Marxism, but disinterested and distrustful of its principles. The first was that I learnt how to think – this being the primary objective of a university education. The second was that I became an Anglican.

Even during my most formidably Stalinist phase I had prayed to God every night. Why and to whom I was addressing my supplications I was not sure but it became a nightly routine; a chance to reflect on the day that had passed, to collect my thoughts, and to ask that by divine intervention Charlotte Lees might return my unvoiced and unrequited love. A substantial portion of my Father's anti-establishmentism was reserved for the Christian Church so growing up I never admitted to my nightly petitions. Nor was I to find any answers at school, where a visibly bored R E teacher would repeat the tenets of religious pluralism each lesson, resembling nothing so much as a disenchanted vicar who has lost all interest in what he preaches. The seed of faith had been planted in decidedly unfertile soil.

At Oxford I learnt how to phrase the questions that I wanted to ask about God, and began also to find the answers. It is no coincidence that at the same time as my Christian faith began to take form I turned away from Marxism. A growing appreciation of beauty lay at the root of both these developments. For beauty runs through Oxford like an underground river, nourishing the city and causing many beautiful ideas to flower.

It was in the cavernous polychromy of Keble Chapel that I was introduced to Christian worship. Here each week at High Mass my thoughts were lifted above earthly concerns in a cloud of incense, and against the strains of choral music – so new and wonderful to me – I began to *experience* prayer, rather than simply to speak it.

When compared to such beauty the utilitarian, monolithic rationalism of Marxism seemed hopelessly base and degraded. The armoured confidence of the Marxist message – the reductivness that is so attractive to the teenage mind – seemed positively threadbare by the light of church candles.

Aesthetics won me for the Church but the more I experienced of the Christian life the more I believed. I was baptised towards the end of my first year; Keble lacks a font so my tutor's punch-bowl was appropriated for the task. During the service I was seated opposite

the image of the risen Christ – the tomb shattered, Hell harrowed – and for the first time I understood the enormity of the Resurrection. Not as another myth, not as a helpful parable, but as a miracle. I realised then that this was what Marxism could not explain – that there is something much greater than life that lies just out of our reach; almost tangible, almost comprehensible and somehow more visible through the smoke and candlelight.

And yet for all this hinting at the divine I found the particular charm of the Church of England to be its humanity. The C of E knows that it is frail, fallible and fractured and it is this touching honesty which draws me to communion each Sunday, be it High or Low Church, despite tactless preaching or toneless singing. For when I look at the Anglican Communion I see an honest reflection of the complexity of human existence, as we ourselves are a reflection of the beautiful incomprehensibility of our Creator.

Sam Aldred teaches Russian History at Brighton College

Back to Contents

In a Manner of Speaking

Theodore Dalrymple

My parents never spoke but they could still disagree; and one of the things they disagreed about was the nature of the manners they should teach me. My mother took what might be called the classical view, my father the romantic; in the end I sided decisively with my mother.

My father thought that manners should emerge from a warm and benevolent heart: they should be a reflection of one's feelings. My mother thought that manners were a code of conduct, to be obeyed whatever the state of one's feelings. They were a discipline, not a form of self-expression, whose aim was to smooth human intercourse in all circumstances.

My father objected to my mother's view on the grounds that a man might smile, and smile, and be a villain. Indeed, if a man's outward seeming were not a guide to his inner being, villainy as a whole might be encouraged and therefore mistrust actually spread by good manners. That a pleasing way is no invariable guide to a person's moral qualities is a painful lesson that we all have to learn as we grow up, and is evident, for example, from this entry in one of E Spencer Shew's wonderful two books, *A Companion to Murder* and *A Second Companion to Murder*:

> *Thorne, John Norman Holmes, was at various times of his life a devout churchgoer, a Sunday School teacher, a scoutmaster, a temperance worker and a member of the Alliance of Honour, a moral society dedicated to the discouragement of extra-marital relations between the sexes. He was described at his trial as being amiable, courteous, considerate and absolutely unselfish. He was also amoral, vain, crafty and deceitful, and an ingenious and resourceful liar.*

For my father good manners in the absence of a warm heart were a kind of lie, furthermore a lie of perfidious type told to the lower classes by the upper to make them feel inferior, that is to say mere etiquette. He was a communist.

My mother would retort – though not to my father, to whom she never spoke throughout my childhood – that good manners might in some way compensate for an absence of warmth. The romantic view, that manners should be an 'authentic' reflection of one's inner state, was a call to self-indulgence and an excuse for boorishness. She needed point no further than my father. He would pride himself on tactless and offensive comments – provided he made them to others and not others to him – as evidence of a Josiah Bounderby-style straightforwardness, a rough-hewn honesty, a granite charm. But as my mother would point out, not every heart is warm, nor is every warm heart well-disposed at every moment, and yet we still had to get on in society. 'Maintain your rage,' said Gough Whitlam, Prime Minister of Australia, to supporters, when he was dismissed from office by the Governor-General; my mother would have said, 'Control your rage'.

Moreover, she would have said that feelings followed habit; habitually to be polite to people was (eventually) to develop benevolence towards them. Perhaps that is going too far; temperament, though it can be affected by habit, cannot be forged by it.

For my father manners were, or should have been, a form of kindness; but since he was not kind, though he could sometimes be generous, he was not well-mannered and saw no reason to be. Indeed, he had a propensity to home in like a guided missile on

someone's vulnerability – a physical blemish, say, or a tic, or a piece of attire of doubtful taste – and remark upon it in public. If one protested at his gaucherie he would simply reply that he was being honest and straightforward, and that he didn't see what all the fuss was about.

My mother sought to drum manners into me more or less *manu militari*. Occasionally I would rebel and adopt the paternal approach and say or do something wilfully tactless, but generally (I think) she succeeded. For example, I was drilled so well into the notion that no gentleman ever walked on the pavement on the inside of a lady, but only on the kerbside of her, that to this day, more than half a century later, I feel a deep physical discomfort, a profound and nagging unease, anxiety or even guilt, if a lady (a word, incidentally, that it is increasingly difficult to use without giving offence to someone) walks on my outer side on the pavement.

This would be all very well if in the meantime conventions had not changed. When nowadays on crossing the road with a lady I slip behind her to change sides so that, on reaching the other side of the road, I will still be on her outside as we continue to walk, she is apt to wonder what on earth I am doing, why I am bobbing back and forth so dementedly, as if I were suffering from some kind of neurological movement disorder. She begins to worry that she is accompanied by a madman.

Now of course the whole purpose of manners is to smooth and ease social intercourse, to remove friction; it is certainly not to make people wonder whether he or she is about to be attacked with an axe. And this, of course, is where a certain degree of the romantic sensibility is necessary: the well-mannered person must sense what will put others at their ease, which will vary with circumstances, and must adapt his conduct accordingly. Manners are certainly not the means by which he assuages a childhood neurosis, much less a weapon by which he asserts his superiority.

When I observe the manners of the modern British I am struck by how coarse they are by comparison with those of other peoples. It was not always so, quite the reverse. But whatever my mother's victory in my individual case, there is no doubt that my father's view has triumphed in the sociological or demographic sense, at least in Britain. And this triumph was not wrought from the bottom up but from the top down: it was the revolt of the intellectuals against the classical view of manners that effected it.

Theodore Dalrymple latest book is Farewell Fear*, published by New English Review Press.*

Back to Contents

Letter from America

Matthew Walther

Partly because editing a monthly magazine keeps me busy, partly because as a freelance I generally prefer the book review to the opinion column, partly because when I am not polishing up magazine copy or looking for new things to say about Elizabeth Taylor (the communist writer, not the actress) I am trying to work on an encyclopaedia of P G Wodehouse; but mostly because I find the present situation almost too depressing for words, I have said nothing in print about the roll-out of the so-called Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Of course 'roll-out' is not really the word I want here. It suggests tidiness, a breezy municipal statue dedication ceremony or a public dog-grooming contest with everything in apple-pie order, hardly characteristic of the mess that Obamacare has proved so far. The law has not been 'rolled out' so much as it has been detonated. This, anyway, is how millions of Americans whose privately purchased health care schemes no longer exist must feel about it. Their inexpensive plans, which require subscribers to pay out of pocket for stitches and broken legs but keep one covered in the case of sudden serious illness, may not be perfect, but for us young, healthy types convinced of our own immortality, they bridge the gap years between being and having children well enough. Unfortunately such plans do not cover the cost of treatment for such non-diseases as fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome or the provision of antidepressants and morning-after pills—to say nothing of sex change operations, which are now free for illegal immigrants in San Francisco. So naturally they have all been made illegal.

I cannot count the number of times that I have heard or read President Obama or one of his functionaries insisting that what I have just described would never take place. (Google fetches some 218 million results for the query 'keep your own plan'.) Perhaps he has simply been lying to us these three years, but I for one follow the science fiction writer Robert Heinlein in never attributing anything to villainy that may simply

be the result of stupidity. But this is not all. Healthcare.gov, the official website for enrolling those without insurance (and those whose insurance schemes have disappeared) into one of the Obamacare-approved plans simply does not work. Strictly for kicks I spent several hours trying to use the site the day it went online: nothing doing there, though I can report that the Vietnamese version of the homepage seemed to load a bit faster than its opposite number in English.

Anyway, the president's opponents should be thrilled: his signature legislative achievement, which passed both houses of Congress in 2010 on a strictly party line vote, has been the disaster we all predicted it would be. Unfortunately, instead of sitting back and watching Obamacare fail under the national spotlight, conservatives in Congress decided to shift the scene last month, operating under the bizarre assumption that the Democrat-controlled Senate and the president who has given his name to it, albeit unofficially, would ever agree to slash funding for the law. Though I did not believe that the economic consequences of the two-week 'shutdown' of the federal government would be disastrous, as so many *bien-pensant* commentators insisted, I thought it an unnecessarily risky strategy. Were it not for Senator Ted Cruz of Texas and the Tea Party radicals in the House of Representatives, the portion of Obamacare that requires all Americans to purchase health insurance would, as I write this, be subject to a delay of at least one year. Republicans ought simply to have asked for such a delay, without attaching it to the budget. (Prominent Democratic politicians and left-wing journalists have called for as much.) As things stand, Republicans have spent a great deal of political capital, and they have almost nothing to show for it.

All of this has implications beyond Obamacare. If nothing else, it reminds us that the Republican Party is divided not in twain between hardliners and wets but in four parts, between conservatives and moderates on the one hand and between the quixotic and the competent on the other. Amongst those with presidential aspirations in 2016, there is of course Cruz, who insists that his attempt to defund the healthcare law was made in good faith and who has raised millions of dollars in the last month: one is forced to conclude that he is either hideously venal or alarmingly stupid. There is also Chris Christie: even if the governor of New Jersey were not a rude, vulgar, Obama-hugging sentimentalist and a lover of Bruce Springsteen, his banging the drum for war with Iran at the behest of his neoconservative handlers would be enough to sour most of the party's base. Christie is one among a whole host of sophists, economists, and calculators, all of them either governors or senators such as Jeb Bush or Marco Rubio, whose political abilities far outpace their convictions. Meanwhile Paul Ryan, Mitt Romney's number two man in 2012, is both politically astute and, in his way, principled, but Americans have not elected a seated member of the House of Representatives to the presidency since 1880. Personally I wish that Jefferson Beauregard Sessions III, the mild-mannered senator from Alabama who has quietly defeated every mass immigration bill brought before Congress in the last decade, were a viable candidate; but much to his credit, he has never expressed the slightest interest in seeking his party's nomination.

Virtually the only probable candidate who is both politically savvy and at least somewhat high-minded is Senator Rand Paul, who manages to be, depending on how one looks at him, both the most and least likely to exercise any appeal over young or moderate voters: most likely because he is intelligent, articulate, and, for good or ill, at least superficially in touch with the *Zeitgeist*; least likely because his actual views on such issues as the right of employers to hire or fire whomever they choose whenever they choose for any or no reason whatever are radical even by Tea Party standards.

Let me be clear: I should like to see the size and scope of the federal government significantly reduced. The departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Labour, and Transportation; and the offices of Faith-Based and Neighbourhood Management Programs, National AIDS Policy, National Drug Control Policy (though I am opposed to the decriminalisation of cannabis), Science and Technology Policy, the First Lady, the First Children, the Second Lady, and the Second Children must go. I should like to see taxes go down slightly and spending decrease rather more than slightly. Immigration ought be curtailed and a moratorium be placed on the drone strikes to which our president is apparently addicted. We must either extricate medical care from the federal government or (because that is so extraordinarily unlikely) move to a single-payer system. It would be nice also to see capital punishment reintroduced for 'an enormous number of offences', as Evelyn Waugh once put it, and smoking permitted in public places once more.

I suspect that most American conservatives agree with me about all or at least most of the above. But making such things happen will require politicians capable of more than raising funds or performing feats of urinary continence. We need operators, masters of manoeuvre: right-wing Lyndon Johnsons, or, if you like, Harold Wilsons. Whether we will get any is another matter.

Matthew Walther is Assistant Editor at the American Spectator

Back to Contents

A wet Saturday night in 'Arleesdun'

Penelope Fawcett Hulme

I've been off planet London recently staying in Staffordshire, travelling to Wolverhampton by bus. This is a very quiet affair, similar to the experience I used to have as a child, travelling to town with my mother once a week, except in those days respectable women wore hats, gloves and very discreet lipstick and the fare, now £2.50, was a shilling.

Codes of behaviour on public transport, which we didn't even notice, remain hardly changed: people sat on the inside seats if there were any, anyone wanting to push past someone else said excuse me, and small children sat on their mother's knees not on seats if other people were standing. Children stood up for adults. In London all those little laws have gone. The words 'excuse me' are almost entirely extinct, dead as Old Norse. If anyone on the inside seat wants to get off, you on the outside have to anticipate it and if you are not quick enough they will just get up and push. I sometimes deliberately look the other way as the person next to me starts to twitch and get restless. By doing this you do sometimes get them to squeeze out an, 'excuse me', and sometimes a curse.

London buses often mean a close meeting of communities who never normally get near each other, to the grief of Left Wing people who like to imagine we live in some kind of Tower of Babel/Rainbow Nation, where man speaketh unto man. Strangely, most of those people do not travel by bus and miss experiencing the thing they so crave.

On Saturday I set off by bus to Willesden Junction as I thought. As the bus lumbered and rattled its way through the wet streets of Acton it occurred to me that this journey might take an awfully long time. Looking at my notebook I realised I needed Willesden Green which is even further on, somewhere up by Neasden. The bus gradually filled with people, no English that I could see, just citizens of the New Commonwealth. As we passed through Harlesden, known to locals and new arrivals in the UK as 'Arleesdun', it emptied. I was left with one African boy of about eight who sang a refrain, over and over for half an hour and swung his head about listlessly. He sang the snatch of song so often that his voice sounded as if it was giving out. Listening to him I felt like getting out, that feeling you sometimes get on long haul flights, that if you can't get off soon you will ask for a parachute, just jump and what the hell. He could just have been bored by the bus, but I felt he was disturbed and wondered whether to tell his mother to take him to a doctor. Every now and then an African woman's voice would bark out some command at him from the back and his song would falter and be replaced by some stuttering words of anxious parody.

I was in the bar at the party for only an hour before the place closed and I had to set off back again. A tube journey back would have taken about as long, the bus only seems longer, and as it goes almost to my door I decided to take it back again. As I got on some very large, elderly black women got up and moved from their seats on one side of the bus to the other, laughing heartily. I sat down in an inside vacated seat and after a few moments realised that it was soaking wet. It was a shock. I heard the women talking about 'beer', and laughing even more loudly. Fortunately I was able to move to the seat next to me but my clothes down to my skin were very damp. I was glad not to be wearing a coat.

I turned and asked one of the bulging great girls why she hadn't told me about the seat. She didn't reply and stared out of the window. I felt distressed and puzzled that they had done that. Another person came up and wanted to sit in the seat and I automatically told her not to sit there, as you would. Things are obviously done different in Arleesdun and its environs. A man who I had seen at the party got on at the next stop and came over to greet me. I told him what had happened.

'Do you think that would have happened if they had been white women and you had been black?' He asked, loud enough for them to hear. It was late, I was tired and damp and did not feel like engaging in a discussion like that. It also reminded me of an incident when I first came to London, in 1983, when I was living near Brixton. I was knocked down in the street one night by a gang of three black lads who took my bag. I had a black eye and swollen forehead, but the young people, nurses at King's College Hospital, who lived upstairs from me were unsympathetic. One of them suggested

that as they had not been attacked, I must have been guilty of using, 'racist body language'.

Perhaps because of this I answered the man from the party very curtly, saying that I cannot see what 'race', has to do with it, it is surely about how individuals behave. I felt relieved that he seemed to agree and probably only in London could you be drawn into a discussion like that on a bus. He then decided to deliver a kind of Thought For the Day to the whole bus, saying such behaviour, about the seat, was 'very mean', and 'not socially cohesive'.

That might have been a reference to the old women's Caribbean culture, and I did wonder if black women of their age are indeed racist. I met a lot of black racists at school and when I was younger, although I feel that is dying out now. Whatever they were, they were unpleasant but I wasn't sure whether it was their race or their culture that made me reluctant to tackle them further.

'The problem is people in London just no longer talk to each other', the orator went on, directly facing the women. 'People are scared now to say even basic things to other people, so even simple courtesy has gone.'

'They are scared', I said, still adressing the whole bus. 'That makes people unfeeling and unkind. We need to be able to find compassion for the uncompassionate.' That was an interesting point, the hardest thing to achieve. Eventually we moved and sat next to each other. I glanced behind to see an old lady now sitting in the wet patch, but she didn't seem to have noticed. As we reached my stop, I wasn't sure if the bus would stop, and another very large black lady dressed in flowing turquoise robes, shouted to the driver, apparently on my behalf. She carried on speaking to me, in words I couldn't fathom as I got off.

A trip on a London bus is now a journey through English multiculturalism, in some ways a rewarding experience, often exciting, sometimes scary, experienced almost entirely by those who can't afford a cab.

Penelope Fawcett Hulme is a social observer.

Back to Contents

Did the France start The Great War?

Christie Davies

Next year there will be endless commemorations of the war, and slogans which mesmerized the British people: – 'German militarism', 'the reckless Kaiser', Teutonic atrocities 'Gallant, little Belgium' – will be trotted out once again. So too will the clichés that have always been the Foreign Office's substitute for thought – 'Britain always forms an alliance against the strongest Continental power', 'Can't allow the mouth of the Scheldt to fall into the wrong hands'. We still must justify being drawn into a disastrous war that led to the death of well over a million British and Commonwealth soldiers and to debt and decline, rather than seeing 1914 as a tragedy for all the nations involved. Yet already many of our journalists and historians are publishing books and articles condemning Austria-Hungary's attack on Serbia and German complicity, seeing this as the cause of the war rather than what occasioned it.

A more important cause of the war was the French determination to recover the provinces of Alsace and (part of) Lorraine. These had been annexed by Germany after France's rapid and humiliating defeat in the war of 1870-71 at the hands of the armies, not just of Prussia but of all the other German states as well. In 1870 it was France who had declared war on the Germans and not the other way round. In 1870 Napoleon III attacked Germany to avenge a verbal insult, to consolidate his shaky position at home, to revive the glories of his ancestor and if possible to seize the Rhineland-Palatinate, a region he had long coveted. This little Napoleon had, earlier in his career, meddled in Mexico, managed to gain Nice and Savoy by stirring up the Italians against the Austrians and had tried to obtain Luxembourg and possibly a slice of Belgium as well. Our Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, had the Palmerston Forts built along Britain's coasts in case the wild Emperor attacked from the sea.

The 1870 war marked the culmination of centuries of French aggression against German kingdoms and principalities starting from the Thirty Years War through Louis XIV's ambitions to Napoleon's domination of that potential nation. Britain usually

fought on the side of those German states –Waterloo station commemorates a victory that was Prussian as well as British. However, the French were heavily defeated and had to concede Alsace and much of Lorraine. Bismarck's main purpose was to unify Germany through all its constituent states fighting together. Following the overwhelming German victory and the capture of Napoleon III at Sedan, Bismarck had offered the French generous peace terms under which Germany would have gained only a small part of Alsace. This would have given the Germans control of both sides of the Rhine but the leaders of a newly formed French republic refused and their Committee of National Defence declaimed that they would not 'yield a centimetre of French territory, nor a single stone of a fortress'. The French raised new armies, all of which were easily defeated; Paris was besieged and its people starved. Five months later in January 1871 came the inevitable humiliating surrender. Paris was fed with German army rations and the French lost Alsace-Lorraine. One of the French armies, against the explicit orders of the new government, even went on fighting after the surrender. Not surprisingly Bismarck's initial doubts about taking over these provinces, from a German point of view, troublesome, were now overridden.

The Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894 directed against Austria-Hungary and Germany made the outbreak of World War I certain. The French poured aid and investment into Russia to build up Russian economic and military power. The knowledge of French support made the Russians feel strong enough to intervene when Austro-Hungary went to war with Orthodox Serbia

Soon the central aim of French policy was to start a new war, defeat Germany and get back the lost provinces. The Germans had no wish to go to war with France, for they were a satisfied power. They prepared diligently and systematically for such a war but only because they knew the French were bound to unleash it, particularly after the French began forming alliances against them.

In 1887 the French Minister of War, General Boulanger, the apostle of *revanchisme*, whose nickname was *Général Revanche*, tried hard to provoke a war with a Germany that was by then greatly superior in military strength, population and production to France. In 1889 he came close to toppling the French Republic and becoming a military dictator. Enthusiastic Parisians sang *C'est Boulanger qu'il nous faut* (World War I could easily have begun twenty to thirty years earlier, driven by this insane French militarism). Boulanger had, at first, the support of Clémenceau, *le tigre*, the unyielding French war-time Prime Minister from 1917. Later Clémenceau even opposed the French scramble for extra colonies in Africa and Indo-China because he felt it was a distraction from the central aim of French policy – to grab back Alsace and Lorraine. The French were unwilling to accept that their defeat in 1870 had permanently relegated them to the second division. World War I, like France's futile colonial wars in Vietnam and Algeria, was an attempt to deny this harsh fact even to themselves. France's anti-Americanism and ideological commitment to an all-powerful EC that the Germans will pay for and they will dominate are part of this French yearning for vanished glory.

The Dreyfus Affair began as an expression of the abhorrent anti-Semitism that gripped France until Vichy and indeed Le Pen. When Dreyfus was condemned, not only the Paris rabble but the middle classes and the journalists covering his trial shouted '*mort aux juifs*'. Francophiles might think that only the Germans are anti-Semitic but the leaders of the French army who condemned Dreyfus were bigoted nationalists, an aristocratic remnant of former times who were keen anti-Semites. It soon became clear that Dreyfus was completely innocent but the army stubbornly refused to admit it and the politicians felt that they had to back the army, lest an admission of military wrongdoing should damage the image of the generals who would lead the war to recover Alsace-Lorraine. When the German government, like other nations, shocked by the flagrant injustice of Dreyfus' treatment, offered to provide evidence from their own intelligence files showing that Dreyfus was not spying for Germany, the offer was refused. *Revanche* was more important than injustice. Ironically enough Dreyfus had been born in the then French Alsace to Yiddish and German-speaking parents but his parents moved to France rather than become German citizens and he would have shared in the French mania for regaining the lost territories.

French children were taught that the lost provinces would one day be re-conquered while Alsace-Lorraine was coloured black on school maps, rather like the maps in Argentinean schools showing the Falkland Islands as part of their country. I have long treasured a French school textbook of 1902, *Mes Premières Lectures Historiettes Morales* (written by M A Chalamet, *membre du Conseil Supérieur de l'Instruction Publique,* full of tales urging on its little readers various personal and national virtues. Among them is the chapter that begins *Les Alsatiens-Lorraines n'ont pas oublié la France. La France ne doit pas les oublier*. There follows an account of the trial of '*un patriote'* for seditiously flying the flag of the French Republic in his garden in Alsace. With suitable

gestures, shown in the accompanying illustration, the 'patriot' defies the German court and tells how his son, aged 20, has fled Germany and joined the French army. Twelve years later the children for whom this inflammatory book was written would be led to the slaughter by France's inept and out-of-date generals. During their three-year-long period of conscription, young peasants from Brittany, Gascony and Provence were taken to the hills of the Vosges above the town of Colmar in Alsace and told: 'One day you will fight to take it back.' They did and they died.

In 1914, the French army tried to invade Alsace-Lorraine and was repulsed. Between the outbreak of war in August and the end of that year the French had suffered a million casualties and 300,000 French soldiers had been killed, a large number for a country with only 40 million people. The French officers had been trained in the fashionable French military doctrine of 'attack, attack, attack', which given the strength of the German artillery and their machine guns made no sense at all. The French soldiers surged into Alsace not dressed in sober khaki or field-grey but in red kepis, blue frock coats and splendid scarlet pantaloons, which must have delighted the vigilant German riflemen waiting for them. Disastrous tactics and anachronistic costumes reflected the ridiculous mindset of the French generals; by comparison their British counterparts seem models of good sense and modernity.

The Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894 directed against Austria-Hungary and Germany made the outbreak of World War I certain. The French poured aid and investment into Russia to build up Russian economic and military power. The knowledge of French support made the Russians feel strong enough to intervene when Austro-Hungary went to war with Orthodox Serbia. Otherwise it would just have been one more of the many petty Balkan wars arising from the Ottoman Empire's decline. The Serbs resented the Austro-Hungarian takeover of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which have a significant Serbian minority, and those who still jump to Serbia's defence should reflect that the distance between Sarajevo and Srebrenica is less than 50 miles. The Russian response to this was to mobilise their entire army and to call upon the French to mobilise theirs. The Germans were right to feel that they were encircled and seriously under threat. Even the German Social Democrats understood and voted credits for the war. That the Germans were well prepared for a war on two fronts is hardly surprising. When the Russians declared war, the French welcomed the chance to fulfil their side of the treaty with Russia. The 'Russian steamroller' was going to crush Germany and France would get Alsace-Lorraine.

There should have been no secret military deals with the French involving King Edward VII, of which an anti-French British public was quite unaware. Either the Germans should have been told explicitly that, if they did *not* enter Belgium, Britain would remain strictly neutral in any war between France and Germany or else Britain should have openly and formally rescinded any guarantee of Belgium neutrality.

Instead we lost a million men and lost Ireland in our war to 'defend the rights of small nations'. We redefined a Franco-German clash about power and territory as a moral crusade. It became the 'war to end war', which meant that we could not get the French to discuss peace terms before the losses became even higher. Everybody lost. France and Germany were ruined while the Russians got Lenin. Britain had been the world's great creditor and investor but now become an indebted nation hit by a slump in the 1920s, long before the 1929 crash. Thanks to the post-war intrigues of the French, the Serbs got control of Yugoslavia and we all know what became of that. In the 1930s neither we nor the French were willing to confront Hitler because our previous rush to war had cost so many lives. Hitler was determined to conquer and dominate Europe while the German rulers of 1914 had more limited ambitions and indeed legitimate fears. Hitler was an ideologue who sought to destroy the security of life itself. That accusation cannot be made against the conservative Imperial Germany of 1914 in which there were constitutional restraints and active opposition parties.

There should have been no secret military deals with the French involving King Edward VII, of which an anti-French British public was quite unaware. Either the Germans should have been told explicitly that, if they did not enter Belgium, Britain would remain strictly neutral in any war between France and Germany or else Britain should have openly and formally rescinded any guarantee of Belgium neutrality.

This side of the story should be told now, as next year will see garlands placed round the neglected statue of France's Marshal Foch tucked away near Victoria station and there will be racist rantings in the Vansittart tradition about the ever-evil course of German history. Hitler's crimes will be read backwards to involve everyone from Bismarck to the Kaiser and even such German patriots as Gerson von Bleichröder, Fritz Haber and Ernst Lissauer. The balance should be redressed.

Christie Davies is the author of many articles about European politics.

Back to Contents

Conservative Classic — 53

The Moon And Sixpence, Somerset Maugham

Elizabeth Naish

Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* opens in a pre First World War London drawing room. The respectable society hostess Amy Strickland is welcoming a young writer, Maugham casts himself in the role, to her literary set. Amy Strickland's idea of the arts is that, like being well dressed or not using your knife to eat peas, they are merely good manners. Art therefore should please without shocking. Indeed from the spinster ladies surreptitiously eating scones with their gloves on and wiping them on the back of one of Mrs Strickland's chairs, and 'large unbending women with great noses and rapacious eyes', all is respectability. Her guests occupy if not the highest, at least the safest rungs on the literary and artistic ladder, and the party, held in rooms decorated with impeccable taste, is alive with gossip about who is in and who is out. In the background hovers her dull, conventional stockbroker husband, Charles Strickland, with about as much idea of the finer things in life as a coalscuttle in her morning room.

Amy Strickland's carefully constructed world is suddenly shattered by Charles Strickland running off to Paris. It is assumed he has run off with a woman, and there is much talk of horsewhipping, particularly by a recognisably modern figure, Amy's blustering brother in law, Col MacAndrew. MacAndrew talks of thrashing Strickland, but since he is half the size of the former, and a fondness for cigars and long hours at the card table have taken his breath, this is mere talk.

Maugham, writing in the person of the narrator, is asked by Amy Strickland to go to Paris to see if he can persuade her husband to return to his wife. What he finds is surprising. There is no woman; Strickland is living along in a bare room, in the direst of poverty, teaching himself the elements of painting. He has a singular vision of reality, which nothing will stop him putting on canvas. The only person who recognises his genius is Dirk Stroeve, a small and rather silly Dutchman who paints kitsch portraits as banal as Strickland's are inspired. So convinced is Stroeve of Strickland's genius that even when the Englishman seduces his wife merely to satisfy his animal lust then drops her, whereupon she kills herself by drinking caustic, the little Dutchman cannot bring himself to destroy one of his tormentor's canvases when he has the opportunity. To do so, he says, would be to destroy genius.

Strickland eventually moves to Marseilles where he falls foul of criminals who make an attempt on his life, and is forced to takes passage to the South Seas. It is in the Tahitian jungle (this is the thinly disguised story of Paul Gauguin) that he finally realises his visions in paint, goes blind with leprosy and dies leaving instructions to his Tahitian mistress to put his hut, its walls painted with a dazzling rendering of the creation, to the torch. Only a handful of canvases, sold to pay for his food and a doctor before his death, survive.

Strickland for all his genius was a ghastly person, prepared to kill for his art. Did even his last canvas justify the dreadful death of his mistress, Stroeve's wife?

Maugham's stupendous novel is about the price respectability has to pay for idealism. It was set at a time of unprecedened social stability which also witnessed the beginning of many of the most destructive social theories in history. Like Strickland's paintings, they aimed at destroying our perspective, and, like his paintings, underlying them was terrible evil. Conservatives frequently react to such threats to stability and morality by indulging in a comedy of manners.

So it is in *The Moon and Sixpence*. After Strickland's death Maugham returns to London to see reproductions of the artist's surviving canvases lining Amy Strickland's walls. Despite her husband's ill usage of her in order to salvage her respectability she has made a virtue of his genius, and now says she believed in him all the time. The rich and respectable now queue to buy his paintings and as Maugham enters the room he finds an American art critic negotiating for Strickland's letters. Glancing at the reproductions the American murmurs that it is one of his most profound convictions that 'great art is always decorative'. The lie of respectability is being upheld.

Also present are Strickland's son, a fire eating parson on the Western Front, the First World War is in progress, and his daughter, the wife of a Major in the Gunners. They too are willing to take part in their

father's greatness, even Maugham's description of his sordid death from leprosy fails to shake their new found complicity. Everything, Amy Strickland says, beaming at her children approvingly, is perfectly lovely. Maugham, searching for the most apposite banality, recollects the saying of a dead clergyman uncle who 'remembered the day when you could get thirteen Royal Natives for a shilling.'

Elizabeth Naish is a literary critic.

Back to Contents

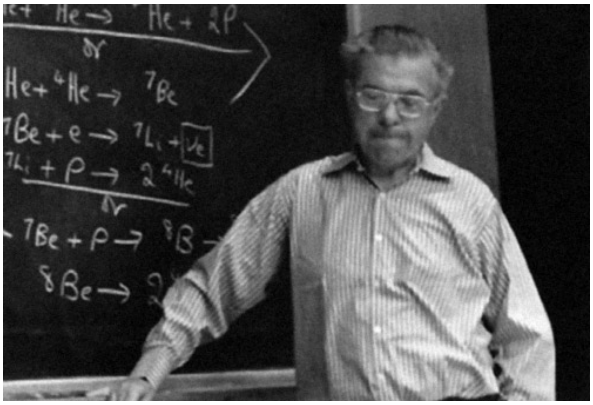
Reputations - 42

Fred Hoyle

Myles Harris

Until the early 20th century philosophers were the intellectual equivalent of villagers in the New Guinea jungle. All that there was to be known, or could be known, was limited to one's immediate clearing in the forest, relieved now and again by the occasional glimpse of a distant, but completely inexplicable mountain range. Various religious interpretations of human behaviour went along with this limited view, most trying to explain the mystery of why humans were on the earth at all, and what would happen to them if they did not behave.

Advances in physics and mathematics at the turn of the 20th century, the equivalent of the arrival of the white man in the jungle clearing in his flying machine, with an interpretation of the world completely different from anything which has gone before, provoked a reaction among professional philosophers similar to that of Australian aborigines on sighting the crew of Captain Cook's *Endeavour* on the beach at Botany Bay. They walked through them as if they did not exist.



Einstein, Bohr, Schrodinger - Dirac, the list is long, were the philosophical equivalent of Cook's crew. Such was Sir Fred Hoyle, the rebellious son of Bradford mill workers. After a difficult childhood marked by truancy and a refusal to study what he considered to be dame school nonsense – he taught himself to navigate by the stars by the age of seven – he won a scholarship to Bingley Grammar School. From there he went on to Cambridge where, thanks to his extraordinary mathematical abilities, he swept the board of academic prizes. He was eventually appointed Plumian Professor of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy, a chair once occupied by George Darwin, the son of Charles.

In the 1950's Hoyle theorised how carbon atoms, the building blocks of life, are manufactured in the cosmos, and suggested a way in which the universe constantly refuels itself with hydrogen, the foundation stone of all the elements. Carbon, he predicted, would be made in certain types of hot star by a nuclear reaction. He also found that such a process can only take place because of the highly unlikely way in which the universe is structured. It was as if, setting out on a rather hopeless search for hats in a jungle, you came across a hat factory buried deep in the forest. Hoyle's discovery was fully confirmed by astronomical observations made by his two colleagues and was the first to create such a direct link between the creation of matter and the origins of life. We are made of stardust and to stardust we will return.

His colleagues, William Alfred Fowler and Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, were awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1983, Hoyle was not. Nobody has seen the minutes of the Royal Society in Stockholm but it is widely believed he was snubbed because he believed that life was widespread in the universe and spread by living particles, possibly viruses, floating in the huge clouds of cosmic debris that drift between the stars. Worse, although he was not the enemy of a modest degree of natural selection in larger animals, he refused to believe that life arose by a chance combination of chemicals. He calculated that the chance of even a simple bacterium developing by accident from a soup of chemicals was no more likely

than successfully rolling double-sixes 50,000 times in a row with unloaded dice. By the time that happened the universe would have been dead and gone billions upon billions of years before.

Neither was his consequent theory of *panspermia*, the arrival of simple life forms on the earth in the rain of cosmic dust which continually falls on all stellar bodies, well received. However while once widely mocked, the recent discovery of *extremophiles*, tiny microorganisms that can withstand extremes of temperature and radiation found in deep space, plus their ability to lie dormant in rocks for millions of years, has brought many scientists round to the same view.

Hoyle was famous for his opposition to the Big Bang Theory, the idea that the entire cosmos sprang from a single dimensionless point in space of no mass in an infinitely small fraction of time. He proposed instead a Steady State Theory, that the universe has always existed and will always exist, replenishing its stock of chemicals in billions of nuclear furnaces in the stars. His work on the creation of carbon in the stars seemed to confirm this. He was wrong. During his lifetime the afterglow of the great flash of heat and light occurring 14 billion years ago at Big Bang, similar to the residual warmth left in an oven after it has been lit and then left to cool overnight, was confirmed by satellite. Nevertheless he died refusing to accept Big Bang.

Hoyle wrote many novels on scientific themes, two of the most striking being. *The Black Cloud* and *A for Andromeda*. The latter was made into a film. *The Black Cloud* examines the idea that mind seeks a suitable vehicle to express itself, and is not necessarily limited to our familiar bone box (skull) and nerves contained within it. We keep our brains in a box to protect them from injury due to gravity. This limits their size. Hoyle asked what a brain would be like that was not constrained by gravity. *The Black Cloud* is such an entity, processing vast amounts of information in a huge gaseous cloud suspended in the relative weightlessness of space.

A for Andromeda points the way, probably the only way, in which we will be able to visit other worlds. It will be by some form of signalling. The Mars Rover is a crude example. We don't have to physically set foot on Mars to see what it looks like, you can sit at home and do that. Far more sophisticated machines, based on being able to 'print' objects from digital instructions, similar in principle to those now being developed commercially, point the way. In *A for Andromeda* a distant civilisation, intercepting signals from the earth that indicate we have computers, sends a digital recipe for one of their kind. Soon after it comes to life and sensing danger, scientists destroy it.

Hoyle remained an atheist all his life, although he was prone to wonder at the extraordinary set of coincidences that have made life possible. That creation may have an explanation so bizarre that most people will not be able to accept it, has long been suspected by scientists. Of the truth of Big Bang Theory the quantum physicist Niels Bohr remarked,

> *We are all agreed that (the) theory is crazy. The question which divides us is whether it is crazy enough to have a chance of being correct. My own feeling is that it is not crazy enough.*

Scientists are pretty certain that Big Bang is the correct interpretation, but is it crazy enough? Maybe the cosmos is of itself timeless and eternal, self-reflective and self designed. Hoyle was right about an awful lot of things. Even after the certainty of discovering the after-glow of Big Bang I have a feeling we have not heard the last of the Bradford mill-worker's son.

Back to Contents

ETERNAL LIFE

'Church tasting' – I have hated the idea ever since I first saw the phrase written down, by C S Lewis, about fifty years ago. And now here I find myself doing just that: sniffing around after moving to a new town to see if I can find a church that will suit. There is something indecent about it, as if one were to turn up at the penny bazaar in the hope of finding a bride. And yet it's understandable for you can put up with anything *once* but a place that will stand a week-in, week-out hammering takes some finding. Or so I'm discovering.

Fussy breeches that I am, what am I looking for? Confession time – no not that sort – I'm a dyed-in-the-chasuble high churchman – what used to be known as a Prayer Book Catholic, but also rather fastidious for liturgical tics: the Gloria at the front and the Kyries rather than the Ten Commandments, the Agnus Dei in English and the Prayer of Oblation directly following the Prayer of Consecration. It helps to have the Prayer for the Church Militant and not the modern made up stuff in which the clergy pray for themselves before the Queen before launching on a grand tour of world trouble spots. I would like an intelligent, doctrinal sermon and, if it's not asking *too* much, hymns to tunes by Dykes, Purcell, Gibbons, Wesley and Vaughan Williams. A thimbleful of Mozart would come in handy.

The first place I tried was an exquisite Anglo-Catholic shrine – tall, 19th century brick with a wide aisle and a noble reredos; but the altar had been brought forward, thus destroying all sense of sacred space. The priest celebrated the Holy Mysteries west-facing, over the table, and I can't stand that. It was the Yoo-hoo liturgy as well with its management-speak non-cadences. 'You alone are the Holy One' just doesn't go into English. Holy One goes with Thou art. You alone are the Holy One. What? 'So go and stand over there in the corner, holy one.' And you can't have a Gloria that says the Lord Jesus is 'seated'. It is filing cabinet or civil service language. Seated where? Over by the water cooler where he usually sits.

What made me laugh was the priest's reading of the Epistle. It was that bit from St Paul where the apostle declares all those horrible things that will be visited on ministers who alter the words. And behold, there we were in the liturgy of St Newfangle-and-all-Change. We had that noisiest part of the service too – the bit they call The Peace. I attempted my usual mode of escape by falling to the floor and pretending to be lost in prayer – but I was wrestled to my feet by my neighbour and wished Good Morning for the second time that Sunday.

Everything I have just written above is a colossal piece of self-indulgence. When I was confirmed back in the 1950s, The Church of England was enjoying boom time. There were three parties in the church: High, Low and Broad. The very High went in for solemn elevation of the Host at Mass, for frilly cottas, gin, chain smoking and throwing stones at the Protestant Truth Society when that lot turned up to heckle the processions at Walsingham. The Low party were addicted to Matins and the only solemn elevation they went in for was that of the collecting plate. The Broad were more or less non-believing, heads dizzy through 'demythologising' the miracles and the Resurrection and preparing to establish themselves in the position of ecclesiastical supremacy which they still enjoy today. The 'liberal' bishops were crafty and simply spent the next forty years promoting one another, so that it's a rare thing to find a senior clergyman these days who isn't one of these secularised social-gospellers.

It was all great fun in those days to squabble only half-seriously among ourselves, but nowadays we cannot afford the luxury of such delicious infighting. Christianity in Europe is under threat of extinction from aggressive secularisation. I am wrong to go around church tasting. I should be glad to see and hear Jesus Christ proclaimed whatever the label on the preacher's chasuble, Geneva gown or lounge suit. If you're a grotty protty, then learn to hold your nose and welcome the smells and bells. If you wouldn't be seen dead in church at your own funeral without your three piece suit and watch-chain, then accept a slice of pizza and a glass of Chianti with good grace from the Alpha crowd. And, if you're a pernickety sacramentalist like me, then pay more attention to what's being *said* about Jesus.

I speak as a Tractarian, ultramontane ritualist musical snob. Say Hallelujah, or three Hail Marys if you like, for the current Evangelical revival: 300 million new Christians in sub-Saharan Africa in the last twenty years alone. In Central and Latin America, men hauled out of drugs and women away from prostitution by the Pentecostal churches. I don't know about swords into ploughshares, but in Britain the Evangelicals are

turning carpet warehouses and bingo halls back into places where the name of Jesus is preached and learnt and many thousands are being touched by his love. We used to send missionaries to Africa and all points south. Now African missionaries are coming over here and teaching us the Christian fundamentals we have forgotten. The natives of Africa were once regarded as barbarians with strange and pagan customs. It is the Europeans now who are inventing for themselves barbaric versions of marriage.

There is an historical precedent. Eighteenth century Britain too was in a doldrums of moral latitudinarianism and scarcely-veiled unbelief. A new seriousness and Christian sensibility was generated first by the Methodist stirring and a religion, never better expressed than in its hymnody, which men and women could feel and warm to; and then by the Evangelical revival in Bible preaching through such as Charles Simeon, the Clapham Sect and the great expansion in missionary outreach. The later Oxford Movement, the catholic revival and the ritual movement could not have happened without those forerunners.

And among us now it is Evangelicals who are reminding church and nation of Jesus and his sacrifice, which procures our salvation.

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

Second Battle of Ypres, Richard Jack, Canadian War Museum
(see Christie Davies' article page 24)

An African David Copperfield

Roy Kerridge

My first Coup d'état. Memories from the Lost Decades of Africa, John Dramani Mahama, Bloomsbury, 2012, £14.99.

John Dramani Mahama's first experiences of a coup d'état took place, according to his autobiography, on February 24th 1966. At that time our hero was a boarding school pupil, aged seven. The picture on the cover must have been taken not long before, and shows an anxious little boy trying hard to be good. This persona pervades the whole book, the world of Africa and politics seen as if through the eyes of a child. President Nkrumah of Ghana went on a visit to North Vietnam to pick up a few tips on Communism and while he was away the army took over. Thereafter, Ghanaian politics followed a stormy path. John Mahama's father, a minister under Nkrumah, went to prison for a year. At the end of the school term the boy had no home to go to, but his kindly teacher drove him around, past military barricades, until the child suddenly remembered his sister Rose, who took him in.

Mahama Senior eventually came out of prison, and quickly established himself as a scientific farmer on a large scale, a 'big man' with a devoted family. Barred by his Christian faith from becoming a polygamist, he took one wife after another, filling the compound with children. Ex-wives and girlfriends remained on good terms with this man, a large benign rumbling West African of kingly descent. Except for his disastrous forays into politics, he reminds me a great deal of my Nigerian Uncle Albert, a man who has achieved near kingship since entering Academe. This book reads like a tribute to the author's father, with poignant school and playground anecdotes as a welcome extra. At the end of the book, the author follows his father's footsteps; he is now Vice President of Ghana. He comes from the North of Ghana, near the Mole National Park, a savannah where lions and elephants still roam. A friend of mine went to Mole as a tourist, and from his account, the park ought to be placed firmly on the holidaymaker's map. John Mahama's boyhood ambition was to be a game warden there.

The childhood chapters, as in David Copperfield, form the best part of the book. When the hero is an adult, the reader cannot sympathise with him quite so closely, another Copperfield parallel. He is ecstatic with Marxism as taught by a popular college lecturer, Mr Wentum. However, Mr Wentum turns out to have, if not feet of clay, at least hand of monkey. Students enjoy dinners at his home until the latter sweetmeat is discovered in the scholars' refrigerator. Discovering what they had been eating makes the students sick in a scene that echoes the story of Sweeney Todd, and from then on Mr Wentum is treated with caution. Mahama mentions a taboo on monkey flesh: my tourist friend found a sacred grove of monkeys. So I wonder if the recent craze for ape and monkey 'bushmeat' in West and Central Africa is the result of a taboo being abandoned.

Marxism is not abandoned by our hero, but comes under question at the end of the book, as the re-emergence of trade accompanies a welcome stability in Ghana. John Mahani assumes, like many West Africans, that Nkrumah 'fought' for independence, instead of having it handed to him on a golden plate by the abdicating imperialists. He rightly points out that arbitrary colonial boundaries between British and French territory cut right across ancient tribal homelands. However, this comes in handy when the family have to smuggle Mahama Senior over the border, where his French relatives offer sanctuary.

Many of the later chapters in the book describe nightmare journeys across Ghana, some a matter of life and death, others a matter of life and getting to a college interview in time. From taxi to lorry and bus, these fevered journeys remind me a little too much of my actual nightmares. A calmer journey takes place when John Mahama goes to Moscow as a student. Bowled over at first by the luxury and sophistication of Gorbachev's Russia, Mahama is disappointed in his philosophy course. The former Stalinist curriculum has collapsed, and Communism is taught as a theory, not a definite fact. Since Marxism as applied in Ghana led to voucher holders queuing outside warehouses for the necessities of life, you might have supposed Mahama's faith to have wavered long before. He *is* surprised to see long queues everywhere in Moscow.

John Mahama regards himself as an historian, and I hope that one day he will emulate de Tocqueville and write about Ghana's *ancien régime.* In the meantime the childhood stories, and the tales of his own father's adventures long before, make this a fascinating tale. From the chapter headings alone, Romance is

everywhere: 'The District Commissioners's Hat', 'Wild Lions and Little Boys with Catapults' and 'Full Moon Dance'. Back to Contents

Basildon Bondage

John Jolliffe

Building. Letters 1960-1975, Isaiah Berlin, Chatto & Windus, 2013, £40.

This new volume is further evidence of Isaiah Berlin's unique gifts as a letter writer, sometimes on routine matters, but often to equally famous people including Stravinsky, the composer Nikolas Nabokov, Arthur Schlesinger, Isaac Wolfson, and MacGeorge Bundy, then head of the Ford Foundation. With some of these he was on terms of warm and lively friendship, to others whom he knew hardly if at all he showed the most perfect manners, even when he disagreed strongly with what they had been saying. His good nature and friendliness even to obscure applicants for his attention, was remarkable. From personal experience I also know that he had the wonderful gift of making people feel more intelligent than they really were, unlike those dons who have precisely the opposite effect. With immense diplomatic skill, he had persuaded the last two of the above mentioned to put up £3 million for the creation of Wolfson College, his crowning achievement. Much richer than St. Anthony's, and not set in traditions of past centuries like All Souls, its purpose was to provide for graduate research, especially in the sciences, and to bring things in this respect up to the level of Cambridge. Most unusually, this scheme had the universal backing of the Oxford hierarchy.

Some of the letters are pages and pages long, and demonstrate Berlin's extraordinary vitality and stamina, as well as his wonderfully lucid style. There are times when they read more like an exuberant diary, recording and analysing, in unique style, details of innumerable activities and calls on his time, for the great benefit and enjoyment of his friends and colleagues. Such is their champagne-like quality that there may be a limit to the intake that the reader may be able to carry. In order to avoid indigestion, or worse, moderation is recommended. He is very often indulgent, sometimes to people who may not have been as deserving as he thought; like Bernard Berenson: 'The ratio of thought to words was uncommonly high' (a comment which could with even more justice be applied to himself.) A typical arresting detail is that when Stravinsky was asked if he approved of Wagner being banned in Israel, he replied 'By not playing Wagner you are avoiding many disagreeable sounds. *Parsifal* is the most terrible bore.' It is true that he often saw the pros and cons of a situation too clearly to come down on one side or the other, and he freely admitted to the occasional charge of vacillation: for example, at the first stirring of what was to become a triumphant success, he candidly admitted to Isaac Wolfson 'I am buoyed up with all kinds of hopes and assailed by all kinds of fears … and am about to launch on unexplored seas. Or perhaps not.'

A more detailed example comes in a letter to Jacob Huizinga on his recent comments on Rousseau:

> *I have always found him unsympathetic ... people never fail to react to him either with admiration and even a degree of self-identification, or repulsion or even revulsion. Your indictment of a paranoiac, egocentric, violently unbalanced victim of all kinds of fantasies precisely coincides with my own prejudices ... this ghastly man whose hysterical appeals for pity and understanding are to me as unmoving as his monstrous behaviour is unattractive. (YET) he obviously said things in a fashion which for the first time touched chords and brought out into the open feelings and self-images which no one had articulated so vividly and so passionately ... even if what he says about himself is often perverted, false, vain to the point of insanity.*

You can't say fairer than that.

Although Wolfson College was, and continues to be, a great success, Berlin was far from thrilled by the final choice of architect, which he points out had to go through no less than seven committees. His comment was that 'if taste, imagination, courage could be made to prevail over the great craving for mediocrity and philistinism by which this country is consumed, things might have been otherwise'.

But though he sometimes had difficulty in making up his mind, he didn't shrink from forthright opinions on controversial subjects. He described Anthony Crosland, the well meaning but disastrous Minister of Education who was determined to destroy the grammar schools, as being 'no doubt committed to an egalitarian line, *fatal though this is to all intellectual enterprises.'*

To turn to the public issues of the day, on Harold Wilson's government in 1964 he said 'Its advisers do not know what buttons to press, which people at the Treasury do what, who to go to at the Bank of England; whereas the Conservatives, with all their faults, like drunken but experienced old skippers, bring the boat into some kind of port, perhaps not the right one. The Labour team, while knowing what they want, are much more liable to reefs, squalls and the ramming of other

ships.' With the generosity there is a glorious lack of pomposity, which never descends into frivolity. In 1966, when the very high-powered Franks Report on Oxford University appeared, he wrote: 'Am I mistaken in the impious, cynical suggestion that they all take themselves a little too seriously? Perish the thought!'

His critics, often greatly inferior to him in various ways, used to complain that he had accomplished no full length academic tome. They disapproved, puritanically, of the way in which he had built up a reputation based only on short and interesting books or book-length essays. It is true that he was given to procrastination and to being sidetracked by distractions that he found intellectually irresistible. He was surely right to do so. He had become understandably bored by the wearisome logic-chopping and insistence on linguistic analysis of the most jejune kind to which Oxford philosophers had so largely descended, and when asked why he had abandoned the then current philosophers, he replied with a sharp dig at them: 'Because I am not intelligent enough.' Instead, he preferred to explore the European thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, who fascinated him, but there was nobody in Oxford to talk to about them: Vico, Herder, Hamann, and Fichte are examples; and for those seriously interested there are various signposts provided among the letters; their task will be made infinitely easier by the faultless nature of the notes provided by the editors, Henry Hardy and Mark Pottle, for whom no praise can be too high. Thanks to them, and to the superb index, this volume is a 'road map' to the thinkers who Berlin considered of great importance, and who have in the past been almost unknown in England.

Of course, innumerable more familiar names crop up all the time: Isaac Deutscher, of whom Berlin deeply disapproved; Solly Zuckermann, who was at first hostile to so much money being spent on Oxford, when he considered the need was much greater elsewhere (though he later became a supporter); 'the horrible' C P Snow; his neighbour in Headington Robert Maxwell, whom he barely met; A L Rowse, whose self-importance and jealousy he found intolerable, though he does not actually say so. On the credit side are his old Oxford cronies, John Sparrow, Maurice Bowra, Stuart Hampshire, Bill Deakin and too many others to mention. But it should always be borne in mind that his lively comments were often thrown out on the spur of the moment; his considered opinion of some of these people would certainly have been carefully revised and qualified. But then half the fun is the spontaneous sparkle and wit which are the hallmark of this life-enhancing volume.

Back to Contents

Domestic Felicity?

Celia Haddon

Cat Sense. The Feline Enigma Revealed, John Bradshaw, Allen Lane, Hdback, 2013, £20.00.

Modern life is stressful for cats. Once they were pest controllers, lucky if they were allowed in the kitchen rather than just the barn, and lucky to get kitchen scraps or cheap foods like milk and fish. Now felines lounge in the living room and sleep on the double bed. Many of them never leave the house all their lives and can only gaze through the window at, rather than pounce upon, a tasty mouse.

Pampered? Yes. Happy? Not always. Domestic cats that live in the wild, if there is enough food and shelter, will form cosy family groups of related females with visiting tom cats or occasionally a single resident male. Sisters and aunties share kitten raising duties and chase off unrelated cats. Each cat hunts alone and does not share its prey with the group. They eat alone too. The only exception is when they bring home food for kittens.

Yet many of us humans keep two or three (or even more!) unrelated cats in a small house, just expecting them to get on with each other. We feed them side by side, or expect them to share the food bowl and the water bowl. Even if our cats are allowed outside, many of them live in areas that are swarming with other pet cats. They struggle to defend their territory against neighbouring cats that intrude into their garden and may enter their cat flap to burgle their Whiskas.

This way of life is upsetting for them, according to *Cat Sense* by John Bradshaw, the scientist who has probably done most in Britain to shed light on the behaviour of the cats and dogs which live with us. According to him, cats that cannot establish their own territory may refuse to use the cat flap, need body-guarding by their owners in the garden, pee in the house, or even start pulling their hair out because of stress.

Those of us who dote on cats often misinterpret them. We think they purr because they are happy, but cats will often purr when being handled in the inevitably frightening veterinary surgery or even purr when they are dying. Some purr with a meow within the purr itself to give urgency to a request for food. And when they lick us are they licking the salt on our skins? Is it an apology? Or just a sign of love? Bradshaw points out that we do not know.

It seems that if cats could speak, they might complain,

'My owner doesn't understand me.' No wonder then that they will sometimes two-time us by walking down the street for an extra meal or rehome themselves as a single pet with a new owner.

Dogs take abuse from their owners and come back for more. Cats usually just leave home altogether, if they can, and may set up as a stray in a place with overflowing dustbins but no punishing owner. *Felis silvestris catus*, argues John Bradshaw, is not fully domesticated and can pad back into the wild any time it chooses.

Which brings us to the vexed question of wildlife. There is a growing body of conservationists who campaign for the extermination of all wild and stray cats, the licensing of all pet cats, and even laws that would make it an offence to let a cat outside your own house and garden. This is becoming an irresistible temptation to all those officials who want to regulate, control and generally poke their noses into other people's private lives.

In Australia, where there are some rare small marsupial mammals who need protection, several town councils have gone down this route, setting up zones where all cats must be belled, prohibiting cats in new suburbs, and impounding all cats found on the street. It doesn't always work. In one case, when cat-free zones, set up to save the mardo, a kind of marsupial mouse, were compared with ordinary cat rich areas, it didn't seem to make any difference to mardo numbers. What did make the difference was whether the areas had enough of the right kind of vegetation for this endangered tiny creature to eat.

Even when owned cats are neutered and controlled, there is always a population of cats that are permanently or temporarily unowned. They may live off the rats and mice found in farm buildings or off overflowing dustbins in towns. Some are fed by devoted old ladies and may be said to be semi-owned. Here in the UK a growing number are the subject of TNR efforts – Trapped, Neutered then either Rehomed or Returned to the site. Big charities like Cats Protection and small charities like my local Sunshine Cat Rescue devote hours of effort to this.

TNR schemes infuriate conservations who feel that neutering and putting back cats, instead of killing them, is injurious to wildlife. Actually, as John Bradshaw points out, getting rid of un-owned cats doesn't always make much difference. If an area's feral cats are trapped and killed, missing just one pregnant female can mean the zone is repopulated by her kittens and their kittens within months, while stray cats will flood in from the nearby areas.

This row is a variation on the badger culling controversy now in full flood. Cat lovers loathe and abuse those conservationists who speak out against cats. And, as the argument heats up, conservationists seem to be infected by the feelings of their more emotional opponents. Chris Packham, a TV wildlife presenter, has called cats 'sly, greedy, insidious murderers', because cats do what nature has designed them to do – hunt small mammals and birds. To this heated debate John Bradshaw brings a cool discussion in a book that should be welcomed by all cat lovers who want to understand their cat or cats better.

By blaming cats, conservationists can grab headlines while ignoring the depredations of other creatures like foxes, ferrets and stoats or the birds of prey like red kites that have been lovingly reintroduced into the south of England. Most of all, the cat blamers can ignore the role of the biggest wildlife destroyer of them all – mankind. If conservation loving cats were given a chance, they would probably set up a trap, neuter and return scheme for humans.

Back to Contents

Through the Iron Gates
Penelope Tremayne

The Broken Road, Patrick Leigh Fermor, John Murray, 2013, £25.

We have been waiting for this book since 1986, so we must congratulate Artemis Cooper and Colin Thubron for finally putting the material for the last third of Paddy's journey to Constantinople into order so well. I doubt whether Paddy could have done it better himself. I refer to him as Paddy, not to emphasize familiarity but because I never called him anything else from our first meeting in the House of Commons, not exactly his natural habitat or mine. Nigel Nicholson invited us both to lunch because I was going to Greece and also because he thought we were the two last real romantics left in England.

Paddy's writing has always been distinguished by a quality of natural simplicity which matches the way he travelled and saw life in general, the things he did, their reasons and their effects. He never praises himself for successes nor blames others for awkward consequences, even if they are blameable. He has a tireless appetite for experiences of all kinds whether miserable or exalting, starvation or caviar and champagne. His unquenchable quest for knowledge seems to be more in the spirit of the late seventeenth century than the twentieth. If only text books could be written with the zest and lightness of touch which

infuse his books, students would be much better educated.

Paddy reached Constantinople taking almost a year on the way and seems to have stayed there for about ten days, but he tells us almost nothing about it. Perhaps he found too wide a difference in customs and outlook to feel at ease there. The Turkish temperament is not mercurial.

Throughout the book, his accounts of day to day progress through the Balkans are lit up not only with landscapes but with thumb-nail descriptions of people, like flash-light photographs: 'Pasha a splendid bristling moustached chap, very English country gent – spoke good French (looked as if he might have massacred a good few Armenians in his day).' Or 'A panther-like cat peered into a tin and plunged his head in to lick the bottom as though he was trying on a tilting helmet'. Paddy himself was very hungry when he wrote that. In the chapter 'Dancing by the Black Sea', he gives a dramatic picture of a sea-cave shared by Greek fishermen and Bulgarian goatherds. There is also a fascinating description of the type of dancing to stringed-instrument music which in Greece is called *mangas*. Something of the same kind filtered through much of Europe after the end of World War II: a fury-driven acknowledgement of defeat, with a sub-text of no surrender. It was bred from an uncomprehended sense that an heroic and glorious victory had also destroyed the life it had been fought for; that the fall of Christian Byzantium had been matched by the fall of Christian Europe.

Among many conversations is one with an old Ashkenazi Jewish grocer who argued that men cannot follow the Christian faith and at the same time lead a normal life. This, he said, necessarily made them all miserable, whereas Jews, however faithful, can remain happy. The book is full of similar portraits: of passers-by, temporary companions or close friends. One of them is of Count Josias von Rantzau, first counsellor at the German embassy in Bucharest. He was a wonderful, self-appointed host some fifteen years older than his guest, who might well have become a life-long friend. There were signs that he was not happy with conditions in the new Germany, although they never discussed politics. One day Josias asked him if he believed in the English phrase: 'My country right or wrong'. Eleven years later, the war just over, Paddy was commanding a team of the Special Airborne Recce Force outside the ruins of Hamburg and saw a sign post to Schloss Rantzau. He went there, but there was no sign of Josias. He had been last heard of on the Eastern front. There are accounts too of Gatcho, Paddy's Bulgarian communist student comrade, and of Tania, the delightful madam of a Romanian brothel and her girls.

Most of *The Broken Road* is as light-hearted, captivating and full of interesting history as the other two books of the trilogy. I am sure it will give as much pleasure as they did.

Back to Contents

A Deadly Cargo

Anthony Daniels

Ship of Death: A Voyage that Changed the Atlantic World, Billy G Smith, Yale, 2013, £20.

We live in nation-building times, when the leaders of powerful nations, no doubt with images of Lego in their capacious minds, believe that they can construct democracies by overthrowing dictators and replacing them with local leaders who speak to them in the honeyed tones that they want to hear but who in private regard them as the fools that they undoubtedly are.

It is difficult to believe that this book, an historical account of an attempt at the end of the Eighteenth Century to found a West Africa colony based upon the most liberal principles of the time, including complete equality, was not written as an implicit warning to leaders who delude themselves in a similar way. It is well-written, though its sensibility is that of academic political correctness, and tells a fascinating story that was once well-known but has been forgotten.

A group of philanthropic British investors, justly horrified by the cruelties of the Atlantic slave trade, decided to try to prove to the world that Africans could be incorporated into the emerging global economy by the enticements of free trade and voluntary labour for wages, and therefore did not have to be enslaved in order to work. Hence they, the investors, conceived of a colony on an island, Bulama, in what is now Guinea Bissau, to be peopled both by Britons and free coloured colonists living in conditions of complete legal equality, that would trade amicably with the surrounding Africans to everyone's mutual advantage. They would thereby prove that Africans were fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as Christians.

Unfortunately, the whole scheme was planned with an ineptitude and insouciance that would have been comic if it had not been tragic and led to the pointless and painful deaths of so many people. The leaders of the expedition to establish the colony on Bulama did not even know exactly where it was or how to get there;

they hired a ship's captain, because he was cheap, of little experience and monumental incompetence, who could hardly see a sand-bar without running aground on it; they knew absolutely nothing of the area's climatic, geographical, historical or social conditions. They set out in 1792 without knowing whether the current owners of the island, a group of people called the Bijogos (though they didn't know that at the time), would be willing to sell or lease it to them. It never occurred to them that they might not be welcome given the history, then of some centuries' duration, of slave trading in the region, or that their own peaceful and philanthropic intentions might not have been immediately clear to people who had no means of communicating with them.

Although egalitarian in theory, the colonists in fact had their own hierarchy, very much dependent upon the social hierarchy that they had known in Britain. The leader of the expedition was a naval man, Philip Beaver, of the most advanced opinions, who subsequently wrote a best-selling narrative of the whole scheme (being one of the very few of the original 259 who survived) in which he skated over his own responsibility for the disaster. When things began to go wrong, which they did immediately, the Bijogos killing some of the first people to land on Bulama and tropical diseases killing many others, Beaver became a virtual dictator, imposing naval discipline upon his bedraggled, emaciated and dispirited followers, most of whom deserted and went home as soon as they were able (apart from eight, the rest died). It was only very reluctantly that Beaver acknowledged defeat and sailed away, to resume a successful career in the Royal Navy. Interestingly, the *Dictionary of National Biography* deals with the Bulama episode as if it were a minor one in Beaver's life, let alone in world history.

One of the three ships in which the colonists arrived in Bulama, the *Hankey*, sailed from Bulama to the West Indies and to the eastern coast of the United States, setting off a pandemic of yellow fever, including the notorious Philadelphia epidemic of 1793. This pandemic of yellow fever was to a great extent responsible for the failure of the French to reconquer Saint-Domingue, later Haiti, from the revolutionary slaves, whereupon Napoleon decided that the 800,000 square miles of French-owned territory in North America (Louisiana) were surplus to requirements and sold them to the United States for a song in 1803. It is this chain of events that justifies the sub-title of the book.

The story is well told and interesting on many levels, from the personal to the world historical. The author is reluctant to explore the responsibility of Africans in the Atlantic slave trade, which obviously existed because the white traders could not travel very far beyond the shore. He criticises people like Beaver for not recognising the moral capacity of Africans (while praising Beaver for his lack of the most vulgar kind of racial prejudice, and for believing that they were properly the object of a *mission civilisatrice*). But by failing altogether to mention their responsibility for the horror of the slave trade, he is guilty of a similar error.

There are a few other quibbles: to describe William Cobbett merely as a leading printer who criticised Benjamin Rush, the most prominent doctor in North America, for his murderous treatment of yellow fever, is not adequate; but nevertheless the book is both an engrossing and a salutary read. In politics, the best of intentions do not lead to the best of results unless they are accompanied by a realistic appraisal of the situation, including an awareness that human beings, even the most seemingly powerless, are agents with a capacity to react in unexpected ways. It is far easier to influence people than to win friends, but the influence is rarely in the direction that the influencing person desires. And really this is just as well, for otherwise we should be, at least potentially, but putty in the hands of others.

Back to Contents

Burmese Days

Jan Davies

Golden Parasol: A Daughter's Memoir of Burma, Wendy Law-Yone, London, Chatto and Windus, 2013, £17.99.

'This is the life story of an ordinary Burman... for a family that has known flood, fire, war, and much anxiety.' So begins the preface to the memoirs of Edward Law-Yone. He gave the manuscript to his daughter Wendy in 1976 and asked her to edit it with a view to publication. This introduction to the preface is the only direct quotation, so we are left wondering what the manuscript contains and to what extent his daughter has drawn on its contents when writing her book. For many years she felt unable even to read his memoirs.

Edward Law-Yone was not a typical Burman. His father was from China and moved to Burma where he married a Burmese woman. (Wendy Law-Yone refers to Burma by its old name throughout) When Edward's father died, it was found that he had lost most of his money to a fraudster so Edward had to find employment rather than going to Cambridge to study law and entered government service as a low-grade clerk.

Edward married the daughter of an English army officer and a Burmese woman and they went to live in a frontier post overlooking the Kambaiti Pass to China, where their first son was born. Further children were born after they moved back to Mandalay. When war broke out, he volunteered as an air-raid warden in Rangoon, and after Rangoon fell to the Japanese enlisted as a second lieutenant in the British army, parking his family in Myitkyina in the north. Later he was incarcerated in the infamous Red Fort in Delhi, suspected of collaboration with the Japanese, while his family lived in a refugee camp in Calcutta.

When the war began, many Burmans supported the Japanese, who agreed to a provisional Burmese government under their occupation with the promise of full independence. Gradually it became clear to the Burmese military leader, Aung San (the father of Aung San Suu Kyi) and his comrades that not only was the promise of independence by the Japanese an illusion but that a Japanese victory was far from certain. So they switched their allegiance and fought with the British. The way the Japanese behaved as occupiers had made it clear that they viewed the Burmese with contempt.

Wendy was born in 1947. Her memories of her father mostly revolve round his work at *The Nation,* an independent newspaper which he started with money from the sale of his wife's jewellery, using a hurricane lantern (there was no electricity in the city) and an old typewriter with a missing 'e'. It was a dangerous time for journalists: there were insurgents and dacoits and the country was flooded with guns. *The Nation* was part of her life. She recalls visits in the evenings with her father, allowed to curl up on a sofa while the office hummed with activity, and being wrapped up and taken home while asleep.

Then came the military coup. In 1958 the Prime Minister Nu managed with difficulty to survive a no confidence vote, but his perceived conciliation of the Communists precipitated the army takeover – at least this appears to be the implication of Wendy Law-Yone's account. The government was taken over by General Ne Win. At first he was praised as the 'constitutional soldier' by *The New Statesman* for his restraint. The army mobilised people to clean the streets, wash pavements, unclog latrines and drains, and remove 'beggars, vagrants, lepers and other indigents'. They did not have to answer to any political party so it was possible to get things done. Edward Law-Yone was friendly with Ne Win and was hopeful that his newspaper could survive. In early 1960 Ne Win returned the country to civilian rule and the previous Prime Minister, Nu, won by a landslide.

Nu, says Wendy Law-Yone, started with good intentions, but Ne Win was resentful and ominously began to complain about her father's relationship with Prime Minister Nu. In March 1962 the telephone rang in the Law-Yone house at 4 am. A veteran reporter of *The Nation* was ringing to say that the government had been overthrown; the army had seized the president, the prime minister and every member of the cabinet. Then in early July there was a student protest. The army opened fire and killed over 100 people. The next day the student building was razed to the ground in a bomb blast.

The Nation called for an investigation, which her father believed was the 'nail in the coffin' of the newspaper. The paper's bank account was seized and three weeks later Edward Law-Yone was arrested. Eight months went by before his family was told that he was being held in 'protective custody'. When he left prison after five years, he was carrying a bag containing six exercise books, each numbered and entitled 'My Life'. Wendy found that far from disintegrating in prison he had been revitalised and determined not to be inactive.

Eventually, the whole family moved overseas, separately and with difficulty, and Edward set about setting up a government in exile with Nu based in Bangkok, visiting various countries to rally support and trying to acquire funds. When they visited Cambodia, they were greeted by Prince Sihanouk who said he was friendly with General Ne Win but did not approve of his having taken over the government. 'We have one here, as you may have realized.' A few months later Cambodia suffered the coup that brought in the Khmer Republic.

There were disputes within the government in exile, and Edward became aware that he alone seemed to be taking the prospect of war seriously. The exiles were gun-running to camps in the north of Burma but failing to take any concerted action. He decided to leave Thailand and to join his wife and other family members in America. Wendy describes his difficulties in adapting to life in the west, a description all the more poignant for being understated.

In 1989 Wendy decided to visit Burma. The death toll in Rangoon in the 1988 rising was around 3,000; country-wide 10,000. She managed to contact dissidents who had taken refuge with ethnic minorities, and after she found the place where her grandfather had lived in China she decided to open the manuscript her father had given her, a task she had been putting off for years. Many people reading her book will wonder what it contained and what she has done with the manuscript itself.

Edward Law-Yone died in 1980. The *New York Times* summed up his singular achievement: 'He was the first independent newspaper editor of free, post-

war Burma, and also, to date, the last.' His daughter's book is timely: Burma, or Myanmar as we must now call it, is opening up to the outside world. On a recent visit I found that tourists are kept well away from the areas of trouble where the Burmese are in conflict with ethnic tribal minorities seeking autonomy or independence. Busloads of earnest Germans clutching guide books, or worthy Scandinavians, mostly elderly because going to Burma is not cheap, can be found in Mandalay and Bagan. The *Myanmar Times* is said to enjoy some editorial freedom and can easily be read on the Internet. Everywhere Aung San Suu Kyi's picture is on T-shirts, tea towels and postcards. Local people are anxious to talk to foreigners and say openly 'Now we are having democracy', although as yet the democracy is limited. Those of us who travelled within Eastern Europe at the time of the Soviet domination remember how ordinary people were too nervous to express opinions. In Burma today no one seems shy or nervous, but what the future holds is difficult to predict. There are economic problems and ethnic tensions, but the people continue to hope.

If you are looking for a detailed analysis of Burma's problems since the Second World War, this is not that book. If you are content to trace the country's development through episodes in the life of a remarkable man and his daughter's reminiscences of her childhood then you will find this book a window on a world that we need to understand as it seeks stability.

Back to Contents

A Ferocious Critic

Andrew Wilton

Memoirs of a Leavisite: The Decline and Fall of Cambridge English, David Ellis, Liverpool University Press, 2013, £25.

It's a rare degree of modesty that subordinates the subject of an autobiography to the author's hero. David Ellis's book has a rather good photograph on its dust-jacket, not of Ellis but of F R Leavis, and the memoirs themselves are as much a discussion of Leavis's life, criticism and reputation as a survey of Ellis's own career. He went up to Downing College, Cambridge, where Leavis was the resident Reader in English Literature, and became absorbed into the circle of his students.

During his time at Cambridge Ellis took leave to study in Paris and French literature became an area of special concern. He taught for a short time in Australia, where he joined other Leavisites (he speaks of a 'Leavisite diaspora', pointing out that Leavis's ideas became influential all over the world, in South Africa, India, Australasia and America), but soon returned to England and joined the staff of the University of Kent, where he has remained for the whole of his career.

It's odd that after such a professional engagement with books he doesn't seem to have learned how to spell either Beatrix Potter or P G Wodehouse: authors hardly important in a Leavisian scheme of things – but authors nonetheless. However, that is a very minor quibble.

Leavis had been a powerful force in literary criticism in the 1930s, having published a ground-breaking series of works of literary criticism and championed T S Eliot when most people had no idea what Eliot was trying to say. After the war he still commanded much respect, but divided opinion violently and never won the affection of his fellow English dons. He had, from the first, been unstinting of his contempt for what he saw as the degenerate values of those practising both literary criticism and the actual writing of English as literature, whether as 'modern' prose and poetry or as journalism. For Leavis, literature was a supreme art-form, and its serious analysis involved moral ideas of the ultimate importance. In establishing the critical magazine *Scrutiny*, which lasted from 1932 to 1953, he felt that he had put in place yardsticks for the whole of civilised modern thought.

His intransigence on principle earned him the loathing of the literary establishment; and his gift for the acid put-down did not endear him either: he memorably described the Sitwells as important for the history not of literature but of advertising. It was the glib modern culture of advertising clichés and lies that he saw as leading to the death of civilisation, and he tried to formulate a definition of the university as a place where that imminent demise might be staved off, where values could be asserted that militated against that threat. He was in truth a passionate conservative, in a sense (hardly political) that ought to recommend him to readers of this Review. He treasured the 'organic community', expressed in the vernacular of country people, holding up as models Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and George Sturt's *The Wheelwright's Shop*. It was his concern for the language as the one true channel through which authentic English culture could be directed for future generations that led him to the serious study of literature. 'Serious' became a key word for him, and this led many people to think of him as austere and Puritanical, a view that Ellis is anxious to dispel. That is presumably why he is so systematically abhorred today, when seriousness is frowned on as

lacking demographic appeal.

When I was at school I was warned off Leavis as a pernicious influence; it was only when I arrived in Cambridge and started going to his lectures that I realised the stories were wrong. They have led to fatuous dismissals that echo today, in remarks like Stephen Fry's gratuitous slander calling Leavis a 'sanctimonious prick of only parochial significance'. Ellis deals brusquely with this nonsense: Fry, perched on his midden of simpering media approval, was merely reiterating what he had been taught to think by resentful dons. When I was tipped off by a friend to attend Leavis's lectures, I was immediately won over: he was talking about the opening chapter of *Dombey and Son*, with such subtlety of insight that it was clear that what he was saying was worth attending to. His notion of 'close reading' was logically the only way to approach serious literature.

What he had to say in that lecture was incorporated into *Dickens the Novelist* which he wrote with his wife Queenie (Q D Leavis). Another of my few quibbles with Ellis is that he doesn't give Queenie her due as a superb critic in her own right: while very young she wrote a highly original work of social commentary, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, which Frank himself found inspiring. Formidable she may have been (I never met her), but her essays on *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations* are among the best in their book; elsewhere she wrote on *Wuthering Heights*, *Silas Marner* and many other novels quite brilliantly. Frank's problem with Dickens was that he had memorably dismissed him as a 'great entertainer' in his book on *The Great Tradition* of the English novel. There he enumerated Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad, but didn't treat Austen at all (Queenie had done so elsewhere), though he gave Dickens a brief commendation for having written *Hard Times*. That work appealed to him, as Ellis says, because he was viscerally opposed to what he rather clumsily called 'technologico-Benthamism': *Hard Times* is a wonderful attack on Bentham's life-denying philosophy of Utilitarianism.

Leavis's problem was that he could never bring himself to admit in print that he had been wrong about Dickens. The result is that his chapters of the book (on *Dombey*, *Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit*) are oddly contorted and evasive, as though he were dodging what he knew he ought to do. This morally dubious posture was alien to him: he stood for the upright and the unflinching, and his failure to come to grips with his own change of view, in my opinion, vitiates the book. And he was developing, in the last decades of his life, a strangely involved style of writing that approaches at times the prose of Henry James. Yet it is a measure of Leavis's integrity that, although he admired James and placed him in his canon of supremely great novelists, he made no bones about the late novels being virtually unreadable.

Ellis gives a chapter to the famous Richmond Lecture, delivered in Cambridge in 1962, in which Leavis notoriously rejected C P Snow's assertion, in his own lecture on The Two Cultures, that the sciences were neglected and deserved equal status with the arts. Snow went on to advocate much broader scientific training than was currently available. Believing passionately, as he did, that properly disciplined criticism was the secret of training the mind for application to the higher tasks of civilisation, Leavis wasn't standing for any such equivocation. Besides, Snow did not figure in his canon of great novelists. Leavis's 'canon' has been the source of much misunderstanding. Because he affirmed certain works of literature as important, as 'touchstones' in Matthew Arnold's sense, and could be scathing about some writers, it is imagined that his tastes were narrow and his criteria limiting. In fact he was enormously widely read, and could come out with a breathtakingly fine 'close reading' of a poem by Hardy (*After a Journey*), whom in general he classed as second rate. He was known as an admirer of D H Lawrence, about whom he wrote a critical assessment, *D H Lawrence, Novelist*; but was quite capable of setting a passage from Lawrence's *Kangaroo* for comparison in an exam with paragraphs from a minor work, T F Powys's *Mr Weston's Good Wine*, which was a trick to catch out his unthinking acolytes: his own view was that the Powys was finer than the Lawrence. He insisted on fresh unprejudiced reading and vigorous analysis of what is there on the page.

Leavis's whole message was not that certain individual writers are great and to be exclusively admired – though some will assuredly establish norms and benchmarks for our judgement – but that the process of reading and thinking about literature is a discipline worth acquiring because it can protect us against the assaults of cheap journalism, advertising and all the other attempts of modern culture to get under our defences. In *The Idea of a University* he argued that the university, as properly conceived, is the place in which this battle can most effectively be waged; not by any majority, but by an educated elite who will maintain standards on behalf of the whole of society. It's easy enough to see how this kind of thinking went down with the progressives of the post-war world. I am extremely pleased to see his character as a critic – and his position in the history of criticism – judiciously vindicated in this timely book.

Back to Contents

Amazeballs

John Jolliffe

Sorry! The English and their Manners, Henry Hitchings, John Murray, 2013, £19.99.

Henry Hitchings examines, with his usual imagination and good sense, the question of how manners have changed and developed within the context of our notions of Englishness and national identity, now constantly threatened and attacked by European legislation often quite inappropriate to conditions in England. He observes that good manners, so far from costing nothing as so often claimed, do involve some delay (as in 'after you!'), inconvenience, (standing up in buses and trains) and a general interruption of self-interest. Manners largely consist of consideration for others. As Burke put it, 'they vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarise or refine us.'

The ways and means and verbal forms of manners obviously change over the years, with 'Ta' and the misplaced 'Cheers!' replacing more formal 'thank you's. (I am rather taken with 'Amazeballs!' as a general complimentary comment.) But it is the spirit rather than the form which matters. Some things get better, some worse. Failing to answer letters is apparently no longer bad manners, even when there is considerable advantage to the recipient. The degraded jargon of e-mailese is a major enemy of good manners. A more serious disaster area is the appalling treatment of hospital patients, even when in great pain, by nurses and other staff, about which new horror stories come to light every day, and many more are no doubt unrecorded.

On the other hand, travelling rather unsteadily on public transport after a recent operation, I have been constantly cheered by spontaneous offers of seats, and help with luggage, often when least expected. Have these kind people been strictly brought up, or is it a perfectly natural impulse to help those with minor difficulties? Anyway, it is wonderful to find such kindness in contrast to the gang violence so often in the news.

Burke had a clear understanding of the matter. 'Manners', he said, 'are of more importance than laws. Upon them, in great measure, the laws depend. The law touches us but here and there, and now and then,' whereas manners are what makes life in a community more harmonious than it would be without them. Yet manners, unlike laws, cannot be enforced, or offences against them statutorily punished. Burke also noticed that what passes for egalitarianism is in fact 'a brutal stripping away of the architecture of civility,' leading to what Hitchings calls 'the homogeneous banality of much modern living'. Hitchings also reminds us that Britain is a large island separated from its neighbours by a sometimes cruel sea, but for many centuries the Church connected England with Europe in a way which was terminated by Henry the Eighth when in a fit of self-important pique he brutally 'distanced England from the rest of Christendom'. After his death the threat of invasion from Spain, and later from France, concentrated the spirit of defensive nationalism and strengthened the rejection of nasty foreign manners.

Hitchings gives a wonderfully wide range of examples: the sulky, insolent defiance shown by McEnroe in his heyday ('as charming as a dead mouse in a loaf of bread'), in contrast with the wooden restraint of Borg. The crude bluntness of Prince Philip, in commenting on the national dress of the visiting President of Nigeria, 'You look as if you were ready for bed.' And he goes on to observe how in true English style manners can be so often understated: 'It's only a small matter, but …' really means 'I absolutely hate it when you … so please don't'. And the word fair, as in the general idea of fair play, has no equivalent in other languages, which are more concerned with justice and sometimes questionable human rights.

Then there are the children. In the 1690s John Locke argued that children should not be treated as little adults, whether kindly or unkindly. They should be 'tenderly used, and not be hindered from being children or from playing … manners should rather be learned by example than by rules'. The old formula that they should be seen but not heard seems to have disappeared, but parents desperately priding themselves on liberalism and flexibility often come to regret the 'cossetted, bratty egomania' that has resulted from their good intentions.

Altogether this is a fascinating survey, and although it contains some irrefutable propositions, there are often exceptions to them. The author finally sums up by proclaiming that 'if we do not control our desires, they control us'. Who can disagree?

Back to Contents

The Natives are Restless
Christie Davies

Ethnic Conflicts, their Biological Roots in Ethnic Nepotism, Tatu Vanhanen, Ulster Institute for Social Research, 2012, £18.

Ethnic conflicts are ubiquitous, often troublesome and sometimes extremely violent. They pose a major social and political problem. Vanhanen's thorough study covering most of the world's countries is a valuable contribution to our understanding of them and to their amelioration. They cannot be eliminated but Vanhanen indicates ways in which they might be lessened, better managed and rendered less destructive. His basic method has been to obtain an index of the intensity of ethnic conflict in a very large number of countries and to plot it against ethnic heterogeneity. They correlate very well. Happy is the homogeneous country without significant economic minorities, for it is more likely to enjoy peace. This generalisation holds true in democratic as well as authoritarian societies, and economic development does not seem to make much difference either. Someone should have told Mr Blair, who increased Britain's ethnic heterogeneity through immigration and worse still prevented the peaceful resolution of the resulting conflicts through assimilation by his pernicious policy of multiculturalism.

Vanhanen's analysis begins with a discussion of the two contrasting explanations of ethnic conflict, the culturalist and the inate. The culturalist version asserts that ethnic conflicts are not really ethnic but simply political, economic and social conflicts arbitrarily labelled ethnic, but is quite unable to explain why those taking part choose to define the conflict in ethnic terms rather than in terms of other social divisions. Also I suspect that those who hold the culturalist view are guilty of bad faith. They think that everything can and should be explained in terms of class, class conflicts and economic inequalities, and want to dismiss ethnicity as 'false consciousness' even though the facts say otherwise. At one time they predicted that ethnic conflict would fade away and class conflict predominate. It didn't happen. Equally they do not like to be reminded that one large source of employment, particularly in socialist societies, is jobs working for the government and this creates an immediate ethnic conflict over what is to be the language of administration in which a job seeker is expected to be competent. The market-place can decide this rationally but government policy is shaped by ethnic pressures rooted in self-interest. That is why Welsh civil servants have to use Welsh, even though everyone in Wales over five and under ninety is a native speaker of English. Jobs for the *bechgyn*.

The culturalist view is then merely an ideological prejudice held by those with a utopian egalitarian view of the world in which all discussion of *natural* and innate differences between individuals, between men and women, between gay and straight and, of course, between ethnic groups is forbidden. For the authoritarian egalitarian all notions of *natural* loyalties to family, to kith and kin, to one's own are abhorrent. It is a silly, closed-minded and dangerously obtuse creed.

Vanhanen favours the opposite view, held by van den Berghe, that ethnic sentiments are innate and 'have evolved as an extension of nepotism, from the propensity to favour kin over non-kin'. Ethnicity becomes a matter of ancestry. It certainly has the merit of explaining the universality of ethnocentrism. However, in order fully to make it work Vanhanen has to make some very odd assumptions when it comes to conflicts between religious groups that are obviously mainly about religion. He speaks of old (as distinct from recently arising) religious divisions as being shaped by marriages taking place only within the religion and never with the members of a rival religious group, so that the two groups have become two separate sets of kin and thus genetically distinct. I am deeply sceptical as to whether these 'biological roots' have much relevance in explaining the bitter and deadly conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in India or between Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims in Iraq. These conflicts are about religious bigotry, about the wish to subjugate or destroy those whose religious beliefs differ from our own. The genetic distance between the two sets of murderous Arabs in Iraq or Syria is negligible. We have here a war between two versions of Islam, itself a religion of war. It may well be that generations of living in separate communities and not inter-marrying has exacerbated the situation but it was already one of hatred right from the start. The same objection may be made regarding the Hindu versus Muslim conflict in India. In Uttar Pradesh, the Muslims are the descendants of Hindus who were forcibly converted to Islam at the time of the Muslim invasions or during the Mughal Empire; these Muslims still retain their original Hindu castes and only marry within their own *jati* (caste). The caste system is much older than the Islamic invasions so that Muslims and Hindus belonging to an equivalent caste are genetically more closely related than they are to those of their co-

religionists who belong to different castes. Yet in this case the conflicts of religion are far more intense than those between castes. Only at the bottom of the system do the Hindu and Muslim untouchables, the outcastes, the *dalits*, take no interest in religious disputes for their oppressed caste status dominates their entire lives. It is an identity that transcends religion. For the other castes religious conflict between the genetically similar members of the same caste is common. Where is the kin-nepotism here?

Sunni Muslims will often speak of their co-religionists as 'brothers' and 'sisters' and they will happily attack the enemies of their 'brothers' and 'sisters' even when the genetic link is remote, as when Muslim Pakistanis attack a synagogue to show support for Palestinian terrorists or Muslim Nigerians behead a British solder in Woolwich in revenge for a war in Afghanistan. But 'brothers' and 'sisters' here are metaphors, much as they are for Roman Catholic religious orders – such as the Christian Brothers – or for British Trades Unionists who prefer it to 'comrade' as a form of address. The use of this powerful metaphor supports a weaker version of Vanhanen's thesis but not the strong one he propounds in his book. We nearly all grow up in families and from them we gain a sense of 'us' and 'them', of those to whom we are loyal and those to whom we are relatively indifferent. This experience shapes our tendency to see the world as people like us and people not like us. But that is all it does even for kin. Kinship systems are complex and highly varied and the relatives to whom we are expected to owe allegiance are not necessarily the closest genetically. Beyond that our capacity for loyalty is often diverted by experience so that Cameron is tempted to give jobs to old Etonians and not to his cousins. Religious converts are often alienated from their families of origin and Communists have happily betrayed their own country to serve the interests of the Soviet Union. Ruthless ideologies and crusading religions need and acquire converts but in doing so they successfully cut across the biological aspects of ethnicity stressed by Vanhanen. It is difficult to see how Orthodox Serbs, Roman Catholic Croatians and Bosnian Muslims with their common ancestry and language can be seen as genetically very distant from each other. They hate one another for reasons rooted not in biological nepotism but in religion.

Vanhanen is right to have drawn our attention to a neglected aspect of ethnic conflict and to stress its importance, but it is difficult to see how his findings can be used to explain more about any one particular ethnic conflict than we could have done sociologically. Ethnicity is a difficult, complex and ambiguous concept.

Back to Contents

When California was Russian

Martin Dewhirst

Glorious Misadventures: Nikolai Rezanov and the Dream of a Russian America, Owen Matthews, Bloomsbury, 2013, £20.00.

Many Europeans probably know little about Russia's former colonies in North America: in 1784 Shelekov founded a settlement in Alaska at Three Saints Bay. By 1818 Russia had settlements in Sonoma County, California and some islands of Hawaii. They were finally sold off, with some difficulty, to the USA in 1867-68 for a mere 7.2 million dollars (about two cents an acre). Eight years earlier the Tsar offered to sell them to Britain, but Lord Palmerston declined to buy. Matthews tries to explain the offer: 'Tsar Alexander II decided that Russian America would inevitably be lost in the event of a future war with Britain' and that in 'the aftermath of the Crimean War it became clear that Russia's navy could no longer defend her American possessions' or even its own side of the Pacific ocean. The author explains the British refusal to buy, even at bargain basement rates because Palmerston 'decided that the fledgling provinces of Canada already had plenty of uncharted wilderness to deal with'.

Matthews's well-written and researched monograph, concentrates on the Russian American Company (RAC), formed to monopolize the fur trade, which lasted from 1799 until 1867, and provides a convincing explanation for Russia's rather untypical behaviour in selling off a large overseas territory for a few million dollars. The RAC, modelled to some extent on the East India Company, wasn't much of a commercial or political success. As the author puts it, 'Russia never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity in the New World. Company revenues declined, and corruption and the dead hand of state control took their toll'. The colourful architect of the company, Nikolai Rezanov (1763-1807) always wanted to settle America for Russians and perhaps if he had lived longer he would have made more of a success of this venture. However, his own character failings and the lack of strategic vision in St. Petersburg's official circles, as well as little real commitment by successive Tsars to a long-term project which needed dedicated, far-sighted men, meant that Russia's colonies in America would fail sooner or later. As Matthews puts it, 'The Company's activities were proving almost as devastating to the region's human inhabitants as to its wildlife'.

In his readable narrative the writer provides his readers with far more than the title might suggest. He gives insights into the Russian court in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Russia's contacts at that time with China and, especially, Japan, and a three-year round-the-world voyage of exploration with both Rezanov and Krusenstern simultaneously designated as its sole leader. There are visits to Brazil and Hawaii, sketches of other Russian colonists (notably Shelikhov and Baranov), relationships with the Aleuts, Tlingits, Koniags and other native Americans. He describes the widower Rezanov's love of Conchita, one of the daughters of a representative of the Spanish colonies south of Russia's possessions – all this provides a fresh perspective on a country, its people and its *moeurs* that makes for a fascinating read.

Had Rezanov lived longer and married Conchita, had Russian America extended a little further south from Fort Ross to San Francisco, where they met, and had Russia not sold out in the 1860s, the current governor of California and mayor of San Francisco might have been selected by President Putin from among his trusty KGB colleagues. Rezanov's dream just could have become an American nightmare. Although Russia sometimes makes the same mistake twice, one can well understand why the Kremlin is very unlikely to sell off the Russian side of the Pacific Ocean to its friendly partners in Beijing.

I have often failed to convince Russians that Great Britain, a very small country, has found many other ways of being great and that Russia would be a much better place to live in if its size became at least somewhat less gargantuan (or dinosaurian) by giving up its constant imperial ambitions. The 2008 rather popular reincorporation – in fact, if not in law – of two little bits of the former USSR, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, shows that many Russians would still rather take in more non-Slavs than turn from an empire into a nation state. The mood is changing, but more slowly than it has changed in several former empires, perhaps partly because most of the Russian Empire was contiguous, rather than separated from its centre by water.

Back to Contents

A True Faith

James Bryson

The Common Mind, Politics, Society and Christian Humanism from Thomas More to Russell Kirk, Andre Gushurst-Moore, Angelico Press, 2013, £10.95.

Humanism is a label bandied about in popular argument and usually has secular or outright atheist associations. While the new atheism of a Hitchens or a Dawkins might pay lip service to the origins of humanism in the ancient world – mistakenly viewing it as secular – the more immediate tradition of Renaissance humanism is usually forgotten or romanticized beyond recognition à la Nietzsche. This only goes to show how short the postmodern memory is, if it exists at all.

In a finely written collection of essays, Gushurst-Moore revives the humanist tradition that grew out of Renaissance Italy, paying special attention to its English-speaking adherents from Thomas More to Russell Kirk via a number of other philosophers, politicians, poets and theologians, including Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, C S Lewis and Edmund Burke. Although none of the essays is explicitly concerned with the roots of this tradition, the cover of the book shows a detail of Gozzoli's fresco in the chapel of the Medici palace in Florence and features the Byzantine philosopher Georgius Gemistus Plethon who took his surname as a homage to the founder of the academy. The recovery of Plato in the Latin west, owing to the stewardship of eastern Christians like Plethon, captures perfectly the spirit of the age which was to subsequently shape European culture – the age of the Christian humanist. Plato took his place alongside Aristotle as an authority for Christian philosophers and theologians – one visit to the Raphael rooms in the Vatican reminds us of this – and provided the metaphysical groundwork which reinvigorated the medieval synthesis of religion, philosophy, history and literature.

It is this culture of medieval Christendom that Gushurst-Moore believes the subjects of his essays set out to preserve. The modern Christian begins with a sense of loss and mourning for this bygone age, and he yet sees its message as a bulwark against the ever-changing fancies of modern politics. Hence a Christian humanist of the modern world is essentially conservative. He draws his strength from his common sense which is as much rooted in the human soul as it is in the wisdom of the ages. Together the rational tools of the soul and the common memory preserved

by tradition form a common mind in which all of humanity has the potential to share. For the Christian humanist, men cannot flourish without religion; or put another way, we cannot have culture without the cult.

And while the Christian religion is best suited to accommodating human culture – since it places man alongside God at its heart – it does not exclude the insights of other rites that acknowledge the transcendent, most notably Judaism and its Abrahamic cousin, Islam.

The Christian humanist is reluctant about partisan politics since he does not see how the common good can come about by means of a calculation, ideology or the revolution required to impose these. More's *Utopia* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* respond to the follies of social engineering in the Reformation and Enlightenment respectively. Tories like Samuel Johnson are a far cry from what counts as conservative party politics today. Gushurst-Moore explains that Johnson's Toryism rested on the inherited constitution of Church and State – a loyalty to persons ahead of ideas. Johnson saw the logic of the Whig play itself out in the American Revolution, angrily pointing out the hypocrisy of a people that crowed for liberty while its economy was subsidized by the cheap labour of the slave.

Men of the common mind were naturally men of wide expertise and interests. They were Renaissance men who believed knowledge could be born through the imagination, a vision which complemented their conservative convictions. A recurring interest for the Christian humanist is the power of art to act as an instrument of catharsis in the face of chaos as it appears in the natural order. Burke's fascination with the sublime is not unrelated to his horror at the unfolding of the French Revolution. While both have the power to inspire awe, the sublime work of art consoles where the violent actions of men terrify.

Well ahead of the modern psychiatrist or neuroscientist, poet-philosophers like Coleridge knew that a lack of imagination corresponds to a lack of empathy. Drawing on the perennial wisdom of the Christian humanist tradition, Coleridge helped to free the mind of England 'from the stale rationalism of eighteenth century thought.' He believed that the imagination opens the mind to the perception of reality as a whole, whereas enlightenment rationalism chops up that whole into digestible parts, losing sight of any higher purpose. This kind of vision, or lack of it, spills over into the political arena. Gushurst-Moore suggests that conservative politicians like Benjamin Disraeli were men of genius, because they had a coherent vision of society as a whole, in contrast to the liberal who relies on the efficiency of his talent.

The horrors of the 20th century provided a new context for the Christian humanist to renew his convictions about the necessity of holding a coherent vision of the cosmos even as the world lived either through, or under the threat of, war. In different ways, Eliot, Lewis and Kirk invite their readers to see the whole of the cosmos from a human perspective by making it their own. Man himself should be seen as a microcosmos, an image of the created (world) and uncreated (God) order. Like his creator, man has the capacity to both live in the world and stand outside of it through his creativity. Kirk thought that this optimistic anthropology offered a response to the message of despair delivered by secular prophets like Orwell.

Gushurst-Moore concludes by calling for a politics of conscience in place of ideology. In our fragmented postmodern age, it is difficult to reach the consensus once engendered by the common mind. This will become more difficult, he predicts, as religion is pushed further and further to the margins of public discourse. As ever, the antidote to a culture in a hurry is the patience of recollection.

Back to Contents

Ancient Works

Richard Packer

Men From The Ministry: How Britain Saved its Heritage, Simon Thurley, Yale University Press, £18.99, 2013.

The main title of this book is neither a lampoon like the radio programme of 40 years ago nor even a discussion of the merits of the civil service. Rather it chronicles the rise of the heritage industry, concentrating on that part of it concerned with buildings and sites. The first such to be protected were Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval, then, as sensitivities developed, more recent Georgian, Victorian and last of all industrial. For about a century from, say, 1870 this is largely a chronicle of the activities of a section, the Ancient Monuments Department, within the Office of Works, later the Ministry of Works. The successor body on heritage matters in England is English Heritage of which Thurley is Chief Executive, so the book is in part an act of filial piety.

The force behind the whole heritage phenomenon, which we now take for granted, was the growing public appreciation of history and its legacy, which started in the early modern period, that is from about 1600, among a few antiquaries and grew to encompass people of all classes. Thurley claims that the novels of Sir

Walter Scott (1820-35) were significant in increasing public sensitivity to the past. I would put it a little differently; the same consciousness which encouraged Scott to write his historical novels led others to take an interest in the past both in his novels and in the buildings and places in which the events described had occurred.

The public was certainly interested in buildings already in public ownership. The Tower of London and Hampton Court were good examples. How best to accommodate the public and to protect the building(s) became a major factor even before 1800. As early as the 1840s the Great Hall at Hampton Court was transformed to reflect what it was believed to have looked like centuries previously, essentially to meet visitors' wishes. Later more changes were made to such major public buildings as the interest of visitors gradually became the dominant and other uses diminished in importance.

But most interesting buildings were in private hands. By the late nineteenth century it had become clear that despite a reluctance to interfere with private property more comprehensive action was needed if they were to have a long-term future. Ancient and medieval buildings were often in a decayed state and were decaying ever faster, partly because of the effects of time, but also because of the relentless, destructive effects of humans, something we now understand much better. The growing affluence and leisure of the general public became an important problem. Thurley quotes a letter published in *The Times* in 1881 following a visit the writer had made to Furness Abbey.

> *...the place was filled with a rough and noisy crowd of excursionists, and large numbers of children, apparently under no control, were climbing in and out of the beautiful sedilia and over the sculptured capitals of the fallen pillars...to the extreme danger and, I fear, destruction, of most exquisitely carved work.*

By 1881 excursions to castles, abbeys and other historical sites were an established part of the social landscape and Furness was by no means unusual in having such problems.

It became clear that 'something must be done' if these historic places were not to be destroyed. This being Britain there was no comprehensive, far-sighted government measure which set the scene for decades. Rather there was a crab-like progression towards what was needed. It started with a minimal Act in 1882 relying on voluntary action, which was extended in scope several times over the coming decades. I would agree also that the result was, in the long run, effective in protecting most of the sites at risk while upsetting people, particularly the owners of the sites, as little as possible. It was a muddle but the outcome was surprisingly positive. Thurley chronicles this well, with due attention to the numerous pieces of legislation enacted to achieve that aim.

At first the main method was to take buildings into 'guardianship', ie ownership. Sites were covered as well as buildings because the former, like Stonehenge or Hadrian's Wall, also deteriorate and can be just as easily destroyed by public activity. Then the various buildings and sites were strengthened and decisions taken on what else needed doing. Many medieval abbeys had the vast amounts of subsequent building and earth they had accumulated over centuries stripped away. There is room for argument about how far to go in returning a site to its original state, but Thurley claims convincingly that the Department's firm policy, mostly to get back as close as possible to the original appearance and demolish all later additions, was correct.

We meet a lot of interesting people in these pages. Thurley starts by quoting a commendation of the mainly invisible civil servants in the Ancient Monuments Department. This is justified. But, from the beginning of state involvement, from 1880 to about 1930, The Department had as Ministers and Permanent Secretaries men from 'a narrow circle of aristocratic families known to the Royal family'. These men, and many similar people in archeological and preservation societies with whom they collaborated, were highly cultured and showed a firm regard for the public interest as they tried to protect buildings and sites often owned by their relatives and friends. So did others: for Labour George Lansbury when Minister features favourably in this account – he even managed to use unemployed miners to clear detritus from historic sites – as does Richard Crossman; the same is true of Lord Curzon and Duncan Sandys for the Tories. Protecting England's historic past overrode strong party differences.

Thurley sets all this out well. He explains the relationship with the National Trust, often collaborative but sometimes competitive. He also shows how heritage expenditure has been used for nation building by the devolved governments. In Scotland such expenditure now comes to some £10 per head, in Wales to £5.50 but in England to merely £2. He also does well to point out the absurdity of raising tens of millions of pounds to keep (in the UK) paintings by foreigners of foreign parts and people when the same sum could achieve vastly more in terms of protecting our genuine heritage.

Thurley should have paid more attention to proof reading. Baldwin cannot have been Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister at the same time (p94); the opposite of stable is unstable (p95); Lord Peel

cannot have died in 1912 and be meeting people in 1928 (p106).

But overall this is an interesting, even uplifting, story well told.

Back to Contents

Utterly Evil

Nigel Jones

The Butcher of Poland: Hitler's Lawyer Hans Frank, Garry O'Connor, History Press/Spellmount, 2013, £18.99.

This is a curious biography. Its author, Garry O'Connor, is best known for his previous lives of theatrical knights and luvvies, including Larry Olivier, Ralph Richardson, Alec Guinness and Derek Jacobi, Here, for the first time, he goes right off piste and turns his attention to a notorious Nazi, and his inexperience in that field shows in a series of schoolboy howlers.

O'Connor also keeps dragging in irrelevant mentions of his own Catholicism. He reminds us repeatedly that Josef Ratzinger, (Pope Benedict XVI), another of his biographees, came from the same Bavarian area as Hans Frank, and went to the same Munich school, albeit several years later, even though Ratzinger's life and career have no bearing on Hans Frank's story.

Nevertheless, Frank's life story is undoubtedly an interesting one, and he deserves a biography in English, being the only major Nazi leader to have previously lacked one. I doubt, however, whether O'Connor is the right person to have written it. Thanks to his theatrical background he perpetually sees Frank as a symbolic figure – Faust, with Adolf Hitler as his Mephistopheles, luring a clever but weak man to his doom. Frank was of the generation of youthful Nazi leaders born around 1900 including Speer, Himmler and Heydrich, too young to have fought in World War One. A Bavarian, he was the son of a crooked lawyer. While still a child, his mother eloped with her lover to Prague with Frank's two elder siblings, leaving him alone with his weak and crooked father in a Munich flat where they kept chickens to make ends meet. O'Connor plausibly suggests that this desertion had a major adverse impact on Frank's psychology, leaving him looking for maternal love and a father figure.

Despite his father being disbarred from practising his profession, Frank had a good education and also became a lawyer. Caught up in Munich's post-war political turbulence, he was an early Nazi party member and took part in Hitler's 1923 Beerhall putsch. He became Hitler's advisor on legal affairs and, though never part of the Fuhrer's inner circle, rose within the party to become its top lawyer. A sensual man, after a couple of love affairs Frank married a slightly older woman, Brigitte, and had five children.

When the Nazis achieved power, Frank showed some signs of wanting to restrain the regime's descent into outright criminality: in particular insisting that the SA Brownshirts arrested in the 'Night of Long Knives' purge of July 1934 be given a legal trial before execution. Overruled by a furious Fuhrer (who insisted they be shot immediately), Frank gave way, and never dared protest again.

Frank was also entrusted with a secret investigation into the Fuhrer's Austrian ancestry after rumours circulated that Hitler had Jewish blood. In his memoirs, written while he was on trial at Nuremberg, Frank claimed that he discovered that Hitler had one Jewish grandparent – though most Hitler scholars reject the claim.

In the 1930s Frank twisted German law to make it conform to the Nazis' anti-Jewish racial theories, and as Minister of Justice enacted the Nazi's anti-Semitic 'Nuremberg laws'. After the invasion of Poland which began World War II, Frank was unexpectedly made Governor-General of the occupied country, in effect Viceroy, with his seat of Government in Krakow's magnificent castle. This was the central event of Frank's career, during which he presided over the worst Nazi excesses, and condoned the Holocaust going on under his nose.

As well as demanding the mass murder of Jews and Poles, Frank became ever more corrupt, rivalling Goering in looting works of art and other treasures from the stricken country. O'Connor makes clear that Frank (and Brigitte, who called herself the 'Queen of Poland') – revelled in his power and his luxury lifestyle, at the same time carrying on affairs with many different women. But it all began to fall apart for the Franks when a former friend, Lasch, who had become Brigitte's lover, was accused of corruption and was either shot or committed suicide. The Franks themselves fell under suspicion.

Before Frank himself could be sacked or arrested, the approach of the Red Army forced the Franks to flee back to Germany and he was detained instead at the end of the war by the US Army. Surviving a beating by GIs and two half-hearted suicide attempts, Frank stood trial at Nuremberg alongside surviving fellow Nazi leaders including Goring, Hess, Speer, Ribbentrop, Rosenberg, and Streicher. With Speer, he was the only defendant to express remorse for his crimes, accepting responsibility (but ultimately blaming Hitler), and returning to the Catholic Church he had scornfully rejected while in power.

Frank's contrition culminated in his stating in court: '1,000 years will pass and still the guilt of Germany will not have passed away'. Typically duplicitously, he later recanted, saying that any such guilt had been erased by the crimes committed by the Allies against the Germans after the war. Sentenced to death, Frank went to the gallows with a smile on his face, asking for God's mercy.

O'Connor's book is studded with embarrassing elementary errors which even a quick glance at Wikipedia could have rectified: he misdates the Treaty of Versailles by more than a year; he misspells and places the city of Karlsruhe in Bavaria (it is in Baden); says Thomas Mann was Bavarian (he was born in Lubeck on the northern coast); says Heydrich was Austrian and homosexual (he came from Halle in Saxony and was a notorious womaniser); and most ludicrously of all says that Winifred Wagner in 1946 was the composer's widow (she was his daughter-in-law). However he has some interesting things to say about Frank's psychology, and since his book is the only biography of Frank in English we should be grateful to have it.

O'Connor relies too much on the warped views of Frank's only surviving son Niklas Frank, whose own notorious book about his father created a storm in Germany because of the vitriolic vindictiveness of his hatred against the parent who had disappeared into jail when Frank junior was a child. Niklas has helped O'Connor's book (though he has clearly not proof-read the results); and his own opinions of his admittedly horrible father clearly have more to do with a child being abandoned at the age of 7 than they do with objective history.

Back to Contents

Crash

Charles Cecil

Making It Happen—Fred Goodwin, RBS and the Men Who Blew up the British Economy, Iain Martin, Simon & Schuster, 2013, £20.

Iain Martin's account of the headlong, break-neck expansion of the formerly sleepy and fading Royal Bank of Scotland and its spectacular bankruptcy is a rattling good read. Martin has a number of advantages for writing this book. He is a Scot, from Paisley like Fred Goodwin, and was editor of *The Scotsman*; Scottish national pride has an important role in the story. He is a well-known, well-connected political journalist and understands the political background to the extraordinary ten years whom Goodwin was Chief Executive of RBS. He has with thoroughness interviewed many of the players, both at the top and less senior ranks.

Very few people come out well from the RBS saga. The regulators, in part thanks to Gordon Brown's 'reforms', were uncoordinated, ineffective, and apparently unwilling to put a spoke in the wheel of the booming financial sector. (They were not alone in this; the US regulators allowed similar looseness and of course the launch-pad for the excesses in the UK was the change starting with the Big Bang under previous Conservative governments.) The boards of RBS and other banks which became casualties of the crash were complacent and unwilling to intervene, although they did not understand much of what was happening in their name. The senior executives were consumed with ambition and seduced by huge incomes; if they realised what trouble was building up, they did nothing to oppose it. Resignations were very rare; the reader can hardly believe it when one occurs and can 'scarce forbear to cheer'.

Martin analyses clearly RBS's problems. It grew too fast both organically and by acquisition, it did not concentrate on what it was good at, its internal controls were poor and increasingly depended on fickle wholesale funding from the markets to fuel the growth. As an experienced retired senior City figure commented to me a year ago: 'too big to fail' means also 'too big to manage'.

RBS is a shocking example of the danger of management by fear. Goodwin practiced this technique. It resulted in his senior team not speaking out when they should have, hiding the truth, agreeing to courses of action which made the crisis worse and, on the way, being handsomely rewarded. Fred Goodwin was filled with *bonhomie* at the drinking sessions that ended the brutal senior team conferences and thought this enough to counteract the effect of his bullying. I have seen this happen on a smaller scale in a number of companies and it always brings major problems; either important staff leave or they are too cowed or anaesthetised to speak out.

It seems strange in retrospect that from 1989 till the 2008 crash, senior people in RBS had little or no banking experience when they joined. Some of them successfully transformed RBS – like George Mathewson under the sponsorship of Lord Younger. However sound banking experience with innovative thinking works best and this combination was absent in the Fred Goodwin era. He was a highly talented integrator and implementer of major projects. He showed this both at Clydesdale Bank before he joined RBS and in the brilliant integration of Nat West. As a strategist he was deficient and impossible to control,

although the boom at RBS discouraged scepticism. Martin is particularly entertaining when listing the minutiae of Goodwin's petty obsessions – hardly the duties of a Chief Executive. These included the colour of the bank's car fleet and a fixation with tidiness which led him to order round-topped filing cabinets so staff could not leave papers on them.

Stephen Hester, Fred Goodwin's post-crash successor as CEO, told Martin that the main source of RBS's fatal problems was bad basic banking. No-one really understood the risks from the glamorous worlds of investment banking, trading, derivatives and increasingly exotic products. This impression is reinforced by accounts of the mouth-watering rewards and glitzy life-styles of the practitioners. They were certainly responsible for big losses because the basic banking structure was rotten.

Iain Martin points out that there has been no full investigation or official report on the collapse of RBS, only reviews of certain aspects of the disaster. Very few of those responsible have suffered what the rest of us would regard as proportionate penalties.

RBS is an object lesson in the importance of cash and confidence if a bank is to survive. Both disappeared simultaneously, as they always do, and ensured that RBS will be controlled by the public sector for many years. It is interesting that the Chancellor seems now to have accepted that RBS should not be broken up but rather split internally between a 'good' bank and a 'bad' bank.

Anyone who wants a vivid history of the crash and destruction of what, for an instant, became the largest bank in the world should read this book.

Back to Contents

Eradicating Marriage

Patricia Morgan

The Meaning of Matrimony: Debating Same-Sex Marriage, Ed Anastasia de Waal, Civitas, 2013, £10.

This booklet recounts the arguments for and against same sex marriage, and emphasises the ruthless speed with which it was imposed. If major social legislation is likely to change dozens of existing laws, there should have first been a Green paper to frame the debate, followed by a White Paper and eventually a draft Bill. Instead, despite the largest petition ever and a majority of the sponsoring party's MPs being opposed, a millennia-old institution suddenly became 'discriminatory' and same sex marriage (SSM) became a *fait accompli* that brooked no question.

Unleashing huge upheavals upon an unsuspecting public seems normal for our recent governments. One strips marriage of its age-old nature as a complementary, generative relationship in favour of gender-neutral coupledom irrelevant to social continuity and cohesion. Its predecessor quintupled immigration to change the nation's population. Both policies were decided behind closed doors and imposed without any democratic warrant; nor were they mentioned in manifestos. Never in peacetime has discussion of such controversial issues been so suppressed, as no opposition was allowed. We should not forget that marriage is an important part of Edmund Burke's alliance between the unborn, the living and the dead.

As Brendon O'Neill observes, being in favour of gay marriage is way to parade yourself as daring and caring as well as distinguishing you from moral inferiors such as embarrassing members of your party who express their dismay. It also lends credibility to the idea of 'detoxification'. Critics are intolerant 'homophobes' or 'screeching extremists' capable only of 'hate-speech' because of some evil mental defect or, according to Ben Summerskill, a sickness marked by 'irrational fear of gay people'.

Along with throwing the 'bigot' jibe, as well as banging the drum of equality and love, gay marriage supporters in *The Meaning of Matrimony* enlist the help of 'science' on how 'nature works', translating the same sex fumbling of bonobos into precedents for homosexual marriage. Might this also suggest the institutionalisation of the proclivities of cannibalistic species, or furniture fetishism if dogs hump table legs? Professor of Anthropology Roger Lancaster reads same sex marriage into any sexually exclusive association: 'orders of monastic nuns, certain priesthoods, any number of warrior castes and… groups of women who lived collectively on the Chinese Kwantung delta in the nineteenth century.' These and early Christian brotherhood ceremonies make same-sex relationships 'very models' for heterosexual marriage. Accompanying claims have it that reproduction is 'always a *social* understanding' with 'little that is 'natural' or 'self-evident about it'. In the beginning, rather than Adam being given Eve, Gilgamesh was provided with a male friend, while Aristotle believed reproduction involved transferring a homunculus.

Once marriage is not necessarily between a man and a woman, it is no longer about sex. Same sex coupledom requires no consummation or fidelity and being neither monogamous nor exclusive cannot be ended by adultery. Trying to reconcile the irreconcilable or allow equality to absorb an anomaly is self-defeating. The introduction of such incoherence foreshadows endless legal wrangling, for the law has not hitherto dealt with

friendship nor has love involved the state. Otherwise, is it not discriminatory to limit marriage to two, three or more, or support one kind of non-conjugal union and no other loves? This is the logic of Lancaster's equation of any association involving people of one sex with marriage, from gents' clubs to armies.

With sexual differences removed, so is procreation. 'Fathers' and 'mothers' are replaced with gender-neutral alternatives, severing individuals' links between themselves, their forebears and successors. The government's paper did not mention raising children, family ties or communities, except the needs and aspirations of the 'transgender community'. Conservative SSM supporters only refer to 'couple relationships'. Their partnership model is the fruit of a deracinated culture where children are not significant in any identity – national, cultural or familial.

For the state to be involved, like any private contract, marriage needs a purpose. Otherwise, why have it at all? What contributors to *The Meaning of Matrimony* make crystal clear is that we are dealing with profound, not incremental, change and it is naïve to imagine that the original purpose of marriage will persist. Instead, its advantages will retreat further from the public mind and it will be even harder for children to be raised in stable, committed unions. Maria Miller promises that marriage will be revitalised by enthroning a radically new version, when the reality is that it will go into freefall.

Is it all justified because, for Conor Marron, equality is civilisation's only 'true test' or for others, a symbolic victory enhancing the status of homosexuality? Equal coupledom only moved forward with marriage at its lowest ebb after decades of assault. People like Nick Clegg, whose image of oppression is a man supporting his family, are fervent supporters. *The Meaning of Matrimony*'s gay exponents like Lancaster, Tatchell and Nicola Barker castigate heteropatriarchal (*sic*) nuclear families shored up by monogamous marriage. Marriage only exists because the state reneged on its responsibility to care for everybody. These homosexual activists deride the 'overwrought fantasies' entertained by the likes of Cameron and Miller about marriage bringing benefits to homosexuals and increasing marriage via gay marriage.

Instead, they support SSM because it will be the gateway to 'all variation' – delivering the *coup de grace* to the 'drab, conformist conjugal family'. Leading abolitionists like Tatchell once wanted nothing to do with marriage except to eradicate it; now marriage itself delivers eradication. Here both sides agree. The difference is that where one sees a bereft and menacing wilderness in the wake of further dissolution, another applauds the birth pangs of a glorious liberated era.

Back to Contents

"Take that thing off so that I can see your face properly."

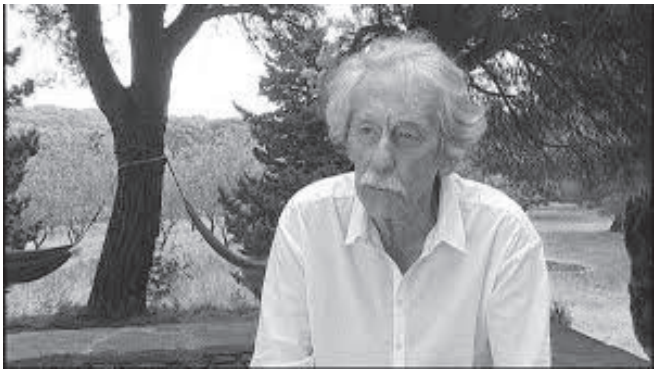
The Artist and the Model

Director Fernando Trueba, co-scripted by Jean-Claude Carriere

Merrie Cave

This is the most memorable film I have seen this year for it has a spiritual quality you do not find in Anglo-American films. 'Spirituelle' does not readily translate into English but the film encapsulates this French feeling in its slowness, silence and dissection of emotions. You are transported into a remote corner of France and remain totally involved with the characters. It is also an example of how ordinary life can carry on in spite of a terrible war raging in the rest of the world.

The film is set in 1943 and shot in Ceret, a sleepy town near the Spanish border in Pyrénées-Orientales, a location of great beauty which enhances the pleasure of watching the story. The artist is Marc Cros, a famous 80-year-old sculptor – the character was inspired by Trueba's late brother Maximo who was a renowned sculptor; Jean Rochefort is completely suited to the part and gives a magnificent performance. The film opens with Rochefort walking in the country contemplating the detailed beauties of nature. One day his wife (Claudia Cardinale) and her comic Spanish housekeeper (Chus Lampreaves) see a beautiful girl, Merce (Aida Folch), sleeping rough. They invite her back to the house and give her a much needed meal. It's not quite clear why she has fled from Franco's Spain – the civil war has been over for four years. However it transpires later that she has been a guide leading fugitives from occupied Europe over the mountains into Spain. Lea (Cardinale) offers her a bed in the artist's studio and an opportunity to be his model. She thinks that her beauty will inspire her husband to work again, and remarks that she is the sort of model he liked. At first Merce is shocked by the idea of modelling in the nude but is encouraged by Cardinale's admission that she too was one of his models.



The unfolding relationship between artist and model is handled with delicacy and taste. At first the unsophisticated country girl Merce understands nothing about art and what is required of a model, so the sculptor gets impatient. His work has always concentrated on the nude and eventually they both reach an understanding, even a love. Daniel Vilar's beautiful black and white images emphasize the artist's preoccupations with the beauty of the nude. The best moment in the film for me was when he showed her Rembrandt's sketch of a child learning to walk. He described how Rembrandt worked and how the surrounding figures he sketched were a supreme example of how the work of a great artist develops.

The outside world rarely intrudes; we just hear about Stalingrad on the wireless while the days pass peacefully with the routine of building the sculpture and the effort of finding the materials to finish it. This tranquil idyll is broken, however, when Merce sees flares going up in a nearby field and a Lysander landing. Later there is a series of shots so obviously it was a disaster. A few days later she notices the wounded French resister (maquisard) trying to bury the dead (American) airman; she offers to look after him until his wound is healed and fortunately Cros is comfortable with the plan; later he even gives him money to escape into Spain. One afternoon the pair are horrified to see a German jeep drive up and shocked to see the officer (Gotz Otto) embrace Rochefort warmly. But he turns out to be an art lover who is writing a book about the sculptor, who introduces the maquisard as his assistant who has injured his shoulder lugging marble around.

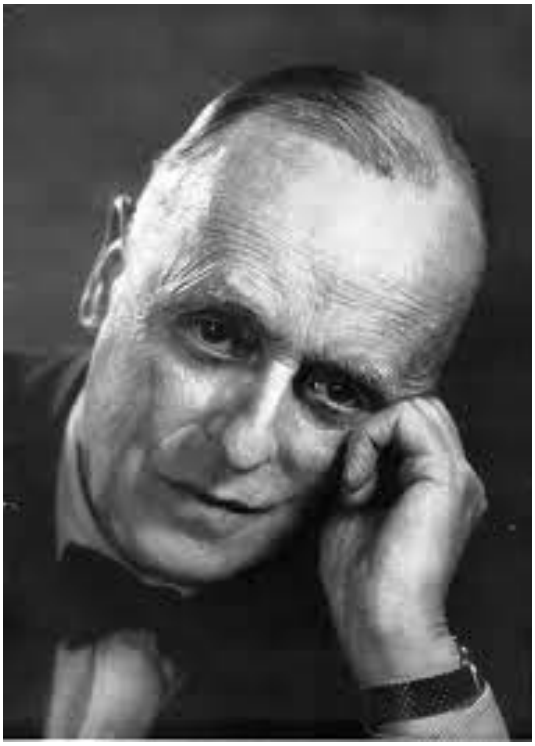
After leading the French boy across the mountains safely, the sculpture is finished and Merce has to move on. Rochefort gives her an introduction to Matisse in Marseilles and a bicycle to travel there. We last see her cycling in the countryside and hoping she does not encounter any road blocks.

Back to Contents

Eric Coates: making light of things

Nigel Jarrett

Composers regarded as historically important are usually designated major or minor in an unintentionally witty play on words. The division leaves composers of so-called 'light' music in a category of their own, which itself nonetheless entails a hierarchy of sorts and to which any attention given might be no less serious. By common consent in this country, Eric Coates views his particular landscape from the top of the tree.



Light music is difficult to define, even for listeners who have an intuitive feel for its connection to weightier musical matter, but its main characteristics are an absence of emotional turmoil and a lack of structural complexity. A suite is about as far as its composers travel in the pursuit of extension in time. There may be fugal passages but there are no fugues. The journey is linear and *al fresco* rather than convoluted and soul-searching, though the best of them have strong, if sometimes rose-tinted, powers of evocation.

There's certainly no point in raising the light-music composer's stature by unwarranted comparison. Elgar, who could himself write light music, admired the work of Coates and claimed to have worn out a recording of his Summer Days suite of 1919. By his own account, Coates claimed that Elgar had agreed to have each of the composer's recordings sent to him as it appeared. If nothing else, Elgar's admiration proved that light music was not an irrelevance.

The Elgar connection is also interesting in terms of recorded legacies. Many composers matured with the development of gramophone recording, and Coates was one who was served well as a conductor of his own work, probably because of its wider and immediate popularity. Conducting his own scores faster than their tempo markings was one of his eccentricities on disc, and the relatively miniature status of many of his compositions meant that getting them to fit the records involved cuts and/or re-orchestration. In non-recorded public appearances, he could conduct at the conventional speed. Critics rated him highly as the man with the baton authoritatively in charge of what he'd written – not something one could always expect of, for example, Igor Stravinsky.

The release by Nimbus of all Coates's commercial recordings from 1923 to 1957* offers seven discs and almost nine hours of music, including recordings of Coates's work by other conductors, in case we wanted to make the kind of detailed comparison that much of this output would appear not to demand. By most standards it's a glut that's not even mitigated by a wide variation in quality. To talk of a definitive version of *By The Sleepy Lagoon*, the *valse serenade* used as the signature tune of the BBC radio programme *Desert Island Discs*, seems absurd, the sound quality on early discs (here all skilfully restored and remastered by Alan Bunting) notwithstanding.

Coates was patriotically engaged, the best-known example of his home thoughts being the *Dam Busters* march. He conducts it here with a band called 'Concert Orchestra' which may be a generic description with capital letters or a specific studio group of musicians without a predicated name. There are no details. It also gets an appropriate outing from the Central Band of the

Royal Air Force piloted by Wing Commander A E Sims in the famous recording from 1955. Other wartime pieces include *Salute the Soldier* (1944), the *Eighth Army March* and *Calling All Workers* (1940). On the wavelengths to which millions tuned in, these probably did more to raise spirits, or keep troubled thoughts at bay, than emotional and structured propaganda pieces.

Inevitably in a collection of this sort, there are multiplications and early acoustic items that even Bunting thinks would not repay a second hearing. One assumes that the reappearance of some works indicates the height of regard in which they were held by Coates himself. The ever-burgeoning *London Suite*, with its indelible portraits of the capital distinguished in different musical forms or moods – Covent Garden (tarantelle), Westminster (meditation), Knightsbridge (march), Langham Place (elegy), Mayfair (waltz) – is both timeless and of its time, and if that sounds odd, then it only indicates how music is able to perform multiple and simultaneous descriptive functions. However, one cannot but wonder what a younger generation makes of the images it conjures here.

Coates, born to a middle-class and musical family in 1886, succumbed to the light-music composer's easy invocation of a 'Merrie' England, knowing – or ignoring – that for millions it was anything but. Nevertheless, his more important compositions tentatively reach outwards in their scope. He could have portrayed an idealised rustic in the *Three Men suite* (1935) but the *Man from the Country* consorts on equal terms with *The Man about Town* and *The Man from the Sea*. His respect for monarchy, however, sometimes resulted in drearily sycophantic tributes.

For a musician who switched from violin to viola and played in a Thomas Beecham orchestra and Henry Wood's Queen's Hall orchestra under Elgar and Richard Strauss, among others, the compositional use to which he put what he had learned in the rank-and-file is worth an estimate. Perhaps this is one of the collection's greatest attractions for musicologist and general listener alike. As a melodist he was supreme among his kind and as an orchestrator always wise in not detracting from his fine tunes. If he conducted quickly, he never blurred detail.

Coates stands in relation to 'heavier' composers much as Brahms did to 'waltz king' Johann Strauss, whose way with a melody he envied. The envy was doubtless circumscribed. Although it's not necessarily to his discredit, when Coates wrote the featherweight *valsette, Wood Nymphs*, men were being slaughtered in their thousands in Flanders. Yet anyone capable of writing the elegy central to Langham Place in the London Again suite of 1936 must have been able to dig deeper, if not for long. Perhaps light music is defined by its aversion to the over-ponderous, for that elegiac mood soon gives way to the upbeat *valse* of Mayfair. In Mayfair, one supposes, nothing perplexing need obtrude.

* The Definitive Eric Coates: Coates conducts Coates (Nimbus Alliance NI 6231).

Nigel Jarrett is a freelance writer and music critic.

Back to Contents

In Memoriam

World War I

A German soldier on the Western Front

At one o'clock, lunch is brought up from the kitchens, which are in a basement in Monchy, in large containes that were once milk churns and jam boilers. The food is of martial monotonousness, but plentiful enough, provided the ration parties don't 'evaporate' it on the way, and leave half of it on the ground. After lunch, we nap or read. Gradually the two hours approach that are set aside for the trench duty by day. They pass more quickly than their nocturnal counterparts. We observe the front line opposite through binoculars or periscopes, and often manage to get in a head shot or two through a sniper's rifle. But careful because the British also have sharp eyes and useful binoculars.

A sentry collapses, streaming blood. Shot in the head. His comrades rip the bandage roll out of his tunic and get him bandaged up. 'There's no point, Bill.' 'Come on, he's still breathing, isn't he?' then the stretcher-bearers come along, to carry him to the dressing-station. The stretcher poles collide with the corners of the fire-bays. No sooner has the man disappeared than everything is back to the way it was before. Someone spreads a few shovelfuls of earth over the red puddle, and everyone goes back to whatever he was doing before.

Storm of Steel, Ernst Juenger

IN SHORT

John A Macdonald: Canada's First Prime Minister, Ged Martin, Dundurn, 2013, $19.99, £12.99.

This book forms part of a series, Quest Biographies, aimed at popular and student audiences. Ged Martin and I met as fellow pupils of the Royal Liberty School, a grammar school in Essex. Martin later became Professor of Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Hindsight casts a rosy glow over the past, suggesting that events could not have turned out otherwise. This book, describing the life of John A and the move to Dominion status in 1867, shows how the remaining British territories in North America could so easily have been absorbed by the USA. Lord Carnarvon, the Colonial Secretary, said that: 'Macdonald was the ablest politician in Upper Canada'. Losing Macdonald 'would absolutely destroy Confederation'; without Confederation, Canada would have eventually joined the United States.'

John A, born in Glasgow in 1815, emigrated to Canada in 1820, and became an apprentice law clerk in 1830. Upper (Ontario) and Lower (Quebec) Canada were united in 1841 and became the focus of his early political career, leading to his becoming premier in 1857. A major problem was holding together British and French, Protestants and Catholics, and Conservatives and Liberals. His leading opponent throughout his career was George Brown, owner of the Toronto *Globe*, who bullied anyone who disagreed with him.

Dominion status was achieved in 1867, with John A as Prime Minister, a position he held until his death in 1891, with just one interruption. In 1873 he was forced from office over allegations that he sold the contract for the Canadian Pacific Railway for election funds. Unlike the United Kingdom at that time, where election funds were raised at arms' length from the party leaders, in Canada the party leader was his own bagman. Nevertheless, he became Prime Minister again in 1878 after the Conservative election victory in that year.

He had a drink problem that he largely kept under control, occasionally turning to the bottle in times of stress. But, as Martin comments: 'Macdonald was a remarkably effective politician: as he said himself, Canadians preferred John A drunk to George Brown sober.'

J Alan Smith

Extra Virginity: The Sublime and Scandalous World of Olive Oil, Tom Mueller, Atlantic Books, 2012, hb £19.99, pb £8.99.

You might suppose that olive oil could not be more or less virgin, any more than someone could be only a little bit pregnant. However, virgin oil is simply oil which has been extracted from the fruit by crushing and pressure only. Extra virgin oil has passed chemical tests for low free fatty acid etc, and has passed a tasting panel test for olive fruit flavour, with no unacceptable flavours. EU regulations define extra virgin oil as having appropriate levels of fruity, pungent (or peppery) and bitter flavours. Non-virgin oils may have been extracted using heat or solvents, and refined using chemical additives.

Olive oil was an important product in classical Greece and Rome, and was traded extensively. The best oil is expensive to produce, so it is often fraudulently imitated using non-virgin oils, or adulterated with seed oils such as sunflower or rapeseed. Mueller believes that Italian politicians and bureaucrats are often involved in these frauds. In Italy, fraudulent traders have used the libel court to suppress complaints. Though the case did not succeed, the costs of such a case are likely to prevent further exposure.

Northern European countries traditionally used butter or lard for cooking, with butter often substituted since the 19th century by margarine, initially made with beef fat, but more recently with vegetable oils and fats. Mediterranean countries traditionally used olive oil, which is now often substituted by cheaper oils such as rapeseed, peanut or cottonseed. The 'Mediterranean diet', with olive oil, fruit, vegetables, fish, and moderate amounts of meat, though originally a poor peasant's diet, has been found to reduce conditions such as coronary heart disease. This has much increased the demand for good quality olive oil in Britain and other northern countries, while consumers, and even supermarket buyers, cannot be certain what they are buying.

At the same time, the EU Common Agricultural Policy offers subsidies and price guarantees which encourage fraud, sometimes paying for olive trees which do not exist, or oil which is not any sort of olive oil. In May 2013 the EU, to combat fraud, agreed to a demand from some EU oil producers that restaurants should not be allowed to serve olive oil in open jugs or bowls, but only in special tamper-proof, non-refillable bottles. Nine days later, after an outcry, the regulation was withdrawn.

Robin Cave

Quack Policy, Jamie Whyte, IEA, 2013, £10

Evidence-based policy is used in medicine and many other fields. A new drug is compared with an existing drug or with no treatment at all, to see which cures a condition more quickly, or prolongs life for longer. Evidence-based arguments can be misused, particularly by those wanting more state interference in our lives.

Jamie Whyte looks at four examples: alcohol pricing, passive smoking, global warming, and happiness. Researchers looking at alcohol pricing found that a minimum price of 50p (around 75p for a glass of wine) would reduce alcohol consumption, and should reduce the harm caused (by ill-health, crime, unemployment absenteeism) by 12 per cent over ten years. Such calculations ignored the value of the well-being the consumers felt, which they must have valued above the cost of their drink.

Passive smoking is said to cause an increase in lung cancer among non-smokers. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) analysed thirty studies of passive smoking, and, by eliminating nineteen studies it did not like, and reducing the confidence level from 95 per cent to 90 per cent, concluded that there was a 19 per cent increased chance of cancer in non-smokers. Since about 0.3 per cent of non-smokers get lung-cancer in their life-time, passive smoking would raise the rate to 0.36 per cent. The EPA did not believe that passive smoking could not be harmful, so it juggled with the statistics to obtain the 'right' answer because it 'knew' it would be the best way to avoid confusing the public.

Climate change has a long history, with another ice age predicted in the 1970s, and now global warming, said to be caused, or by increased man-made greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane etc.) in the atmosphere. Climate scientists have used the laws of physics about the absorption and propagation of heat (from the sun) to predict changes in atmospheric temperature from increased CO_2. They have then used assumptions about heat transfer to land, or the oceans, and the effect of the heat energy on winds, ocean currents, cloud formation etc. They have developed many different climate models, and used them, on powerful computers, to predict effects in fifty or a hundred years. The laws of physics are certain, but the further assumptions are not, and will not be until predictions made now, or recently, are checked in fifty years time. Nevertheless, green taxes are being used now to increase our energy bills.

In 1972 the then King of Bhutan announced that 'gross national happiness' would be the most important factor in planning the development of Bhutan, and complicated methods of measuring it were developed. In 2011 David Cameron followed this example and asked the Office for National Statistics to develop such a measurement. They asked a British sample to rate their satisfaction with life, happiness, anxiety, and worthwhileness of their activities, each on a scale of 0 to 10 (the average result was 7.3 out of 10). There is no way of knowing what each person means by complete happiness, or by zero happiness, so these ONS results are meaningless.

Whyte has looked carefully at four ways in which science can be abused in studying policy options. The suspicion is that it is often used to give the answer the authorities want.

Robin Cave

Back to Contents

The Salisbury Review

Published quarterly in September, December, March & June, volume commencing with September issue.
Annual subscription rates: UK £25
Europe/surface mail rest of world £27.
Airmail rest of world: £30, Single issues £6.
ISSN: 0265-4881.
Printed in the UK by The Warwick Printing Company Ltd.
Typesetting — DASH
Design — Jessica Chaney

Web site: http://www.salisburyreview.com

Beauty

Lincoln Cathedral

&

The Beast

St George's Wharf Battersea, London