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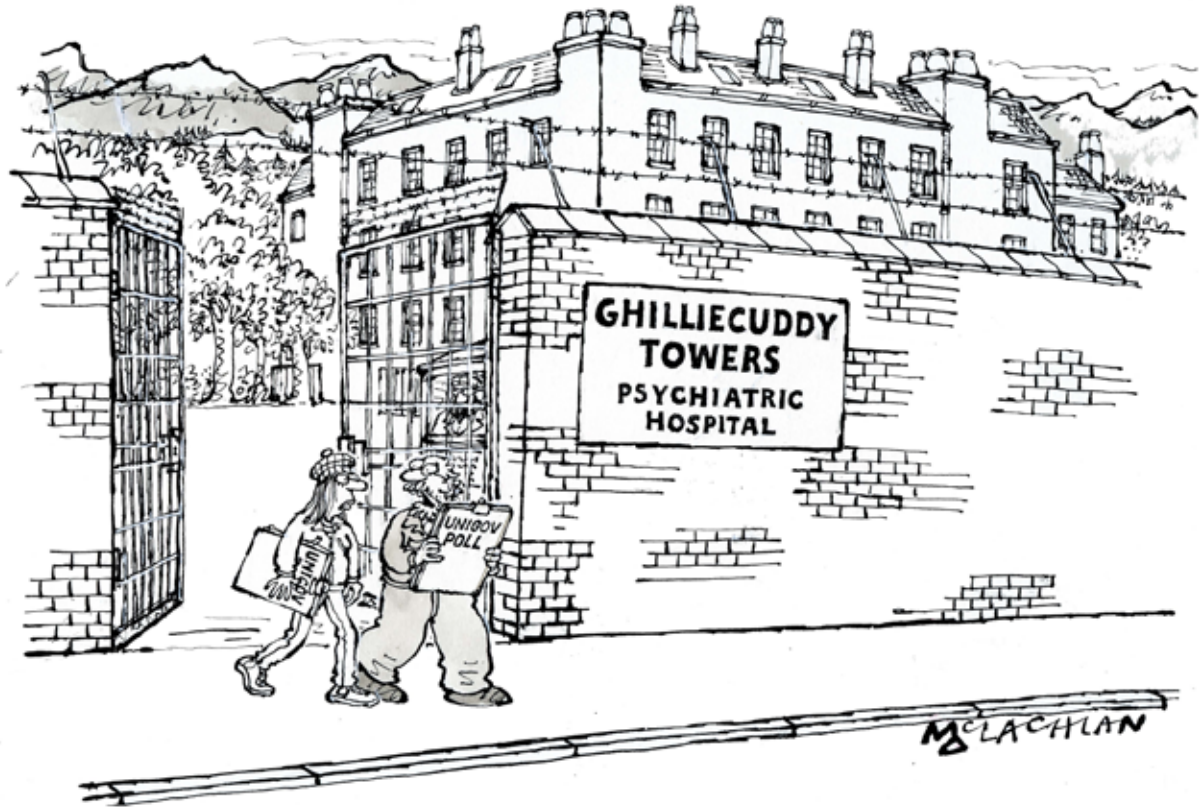
The quarterly magazine of conservative thought



"It's amazing—90% of the patients would vote for Scots independence."

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Eighty million passengers pass through Heathrow each year. Planes take off and land on average every 91 seconds, 18 hours a day. They get bigger and faster. A super jumbo can now transport the population of a medieval town half way around the globe in 24 hours. In 25 years if you want speed and have the money a hypersonic jet (well advanced on the drawing boards of Boeing and Sud) will fly you and 199 other passengers to Australia in 4 hours. The only thing to have outstripped the growth of air travel is the Internet. Soon it will be possible to text 'New York – Friday Cheapest' on your mobile phone and have a seat booked and paid for in 45 seconds. Not so far off it might be only necessary to think your order and whisper a confirmatory number and the wireless chip in your contact lenses will book it.

With the exception of North Korea, and Japan, which relies on active racialism to stop immigration, jet travel and the internet have killed the nation state. All that remains are antiquated border controls at airports. Officials still go through the rituals of banging stamps on passports, asking people where they come from and how long they intend to stay, but it is a sham. The technology we invented by virtue of free scientific enquiry, often denied by the cultures now rushing to live here, has stoked that failure. The laws we created to define who could live here, mainly those with centuries of settlement, have been turned against us. The majority of the 80 million who come and go at Heathrow are aboriginal British, but a large number are legal migrants or their descendants, many of whom are now in the majority in our cities.

The same is true of wealth. Economic growth has trumped any notion of nationhood. In the past, money, like people, had to live here or bear some firm relationship to Britain to be counted as British. Once represented by specie or cash held in government vaults, it now surges in invisible electronic tides about the world at the speed of light, its ownership often changing at the flash of an electronic chip. Chancellors no longer await the shipment of gold or bank notes to back a decision, all they have to do (on the advice of a banker sweetened by a suitably large helping of your savings) is to press a sequence of computer keys. The market then moves as if by magic to their command.

It is an illusion. Open borders and the free movement of capital are incompatible with the provision of adequate shelter and health for all residents, aboriginal and recent. The NHS, designed for a stable population of 45 million, now reels under the demands of 65 million, a number growing by 212,000 a year. The housing market, glutted with foreign capital, is beginning to show signs of what it might be like in the future if people with a perfect right to come here – the more that settle the more of their relatives get that right – continue to pour in. To solve the housing crisis we need to build 250,000 homes a year entirely for perfectly legal newcomers. The aboriginal birth rate stopped rising years back.

Blind to this and in thrall to the 1948 national delusion of a free health service, governments have declared the NHS even more 'free' than ever. More doctors working more hours will meet the demand, even though it will fuel endless demand. Meanwhile Labour's plans for a rent act and a tax on properties belonging to the rich betrays the party's squatter mentality. Miliband, the child of a radical Marxist who despised the nation state, believes that state-directed seizure and redistribution of property is the key to the housing shortage.

It isn't. The housing shortage and the crisis in the NHS will not be solved until we close our borders. This cannot be done physically, the Jumbo Jet will always get through. We need a new definition of what it is to be British. We should give the right to settle to anybody who is here now but that has to be the end of it. Visitors yes, temporary workers yes, but absolutely no more settlement; not family or friends, not sons or daughters of empire, not refugees, not those with deep pockets, and none for a hundred years.

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Taking the Brighton Line

S V Aldred

Is the most toe-curlingly politically correct town in the country the future?

Last August it was widely reported that Brighton had been named 'the UK's worst seaside resort' by a reputable travel website. Three things about this sentence should cause the discerning reader to raise an eyebrow. Firstly, this is a classic Silly Season story, the interest of which derives largely from picturing the desperation of the editors who printed it. Secondly, is there such a thing as a reputable travel website? Thirdly, anyone who has visited Great Yarmouth or Skegness will find the result of this poll a little hard to swallow. The paint-chipped piers and windswept promenades of Britain's many coastal ghost towns bear sorry witness to the introduction of cheap package holidays in the 1960s, which let the working man spend a week or two in the Med rather than Margate. Perennially busy Brighton, by contrast, is one of the UKs top tourist destinations. How could this be classed as Britain's worst seaside resort?

This too was my opinion until I relocated to Brighton in the New Year. Today I not only find myself in full agreement with that reputable travel website but would go even further; I am convinced that Brighton is the most toe-curlingly irritating town in Britain. The source of Brighton's power to irritate is its utterly unfounded reputation for radicalism. Once, it is true, Brighton earned its status as a hotbed of counter-culturalism by welcoming those individuals who were shunned from decent society, particularly the gay community. However, as homosexuality has lost its stigma – to the extent that it appears to be practically compulsory now in certain professions – so Brighton's identity as a gay sanctuary has dwindled. Nor is Brighton defined any longer by the flower-children and communists who colonised the city in the '60s and '70s. Like their gay counterparts, now more inclined to sport Waitrose bags than rainbow-flags, Brighton's hippies and reds have largely been subsumed into the establishment they once protested against. In place of these proud subcultures Brighton today is populated overwhelmingly by the young, white, tediously conventional middle class; Sodom-on-Sea has become Shoreditch-on-Sea.

This process of gentrification is hardly unique to Brighton. Neighbourhoods across Britain that were once bastions of radicalism have grown respectable on the profits of sustained economic growth. What makes Brighton different is that its inhabitants still believe themselves to be the vanguard of radicalism, despite the groaning weight of evidence to the contrary. Like a former beauty queen who will not accept that her looks have faded, Brightonians still cling to a long-extinguished reputation for anti-establishmentism whilst enjoying all the trappings of modern consumer capitalism.

Ultimately this hollowing-out of Brighton's reputation for radicalism illuminates the extent to which the liberal left has succeeded in shaping the identity of modern Britain, particularly in having normalised formerly subversive opinions. The old certainties on which British society was constructed have been undermined progressively over the past 50 years, leaving one to question what it takes to be truly radical in twenty-first century Britain. When policemen and schoolteachers sport arms covered in tattoos one must conclude that such outward signs of rebellion have become unthreatening. Likewise with world leaders clamouring to legalise drugs, and sex and rock and roll being positively *jejune*, living a lifestyle that modern society deems genuinely shocking requires a degree of creativity. Rather, in an inversion worthy of Alice in Wonderland, it is conservatives who find that they now bear the radical mantle, as they champion values and institutions that it has become conventional to scorn.

We all know that the liberal left are aggressively self-righteous and therefore gloriously easy to provoke. It is possible in Brighton to use one's status as a radical-conservative to great effect when seeking amusement. Perhaps the most radical thing one can do in Brighton is to take a sausage-roll into one of the city's many overpriced vegan restaurants. If the clientele would only look up from their iPhones long enough to notice then the indignation this would provoke would be terrific. Or perhaps even better would be pointing out to Brighton City Council that the Gender Neutral Toilets of which they are so proud have actually been around for decades, designated rather more prosaically as unisex loos. Additionally it is always amusing to tease those who think that the campaign to ban gendered titles (waiter/waitress, actor/actress) is as important to the civil rights movement as the racial desegregation

of America.

It is not all fun and games being the voice of radicalism/conservatism in an institutionally anti-institutional town, however. When colleagues enquire about my weekend plans and I mention that I will be attending church on Sunday I am made to feel every bit as perverted as an out-gay in the 1960s. More than once when the subject of religion has been raised I have been accused of supporting crusades against gays, Jews, socialists and the other minorities who make up the rich tapestry of modern liberal society. When I have suggested that perhaps such views are more characteristic of Islam than the C-of-E (which would collapse if purged of its gays and Marxists) then I have been accused of racism and islamophobia on top of my other intolerances. It is important to stress that this anti-Christian bias is less the product of any independent thought-process than it is slavishly repeating the official opinion of Brighton's Green Party-dominated council. In December Brighton City Council paid for several large posters in the city centre wishing people a 'Happy Chanukah'. Presumably the council thought it intolerant to balance this out by acknowledging the birth of Christ as proclaimed by the established church of Britain, which happens to fall about the same time as this Hebrew festival. With such institutional anti-Christian bias it is perhaps unsurprising that a local resident who dared to express her opposition to gay marriage on the BBC's *Question Time* was heckled into submission when the show was filmed in Brighton this March. She had dared to express an opinion that differed from the official Brighton line. Even worse than the booing was the laughter when this lady suggested that the primary function of marriage was to provide an environment where children could flourish, and not simply a declaration of love. This public humiliation of a principled Christian demonstrated the smug, intolerant liberalism which makes Brighton so unbearable for those of a conservative disposition.

We all know that the liberal left are aggressively self-righteous and therefore gloriously easy to provoke. It is possible in Brighton to use one's status as a radical-conservative to great effect when seeking amusement.

In this way Brighton serves as an intensified analogy of western society as a whole. Although there is nowhere quite as 'right-on' as Brighton there are many opinions which it is now deeply unwise to express in public. In the USA this April, the CEO of internet search-engine Mozilla lost his job when it emerged that he had supported campaigns against gay marriage. The company feared that this gave them the wrong image. Although I am relieved to be leaving Brighton in the autumn my brief stint here has at least filled me with new resolve. With liberalism becoming illiberal and anti-establishmentism firmly established it is conservatives who now have the rhetorical and moral force of radicalism on their side. Tories of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your jobs!

Sam Aldred teaches Russian History at Brighton College.

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Dorking, the Downs and the Somme

Rupert Barnes

How Surrey might have been the setting for the trenches

I have always liked Dorking – it seems an odd place for the Great War to begin, but the Battle of Dorking in 1871 was the most important battle never to be fought.

I was brought up in Surrey, and one of our favourite expeditions was to Box Hill, beside the gap where the River Mole cuts through the North Downs south of Dorking. East of the glistening river a great chalk shoulder rises up, with a broad greensward leading up invitingly between the plunging scarp and the gentler woods wandering off to the north. We used to scramble up a chalk face and head for the summit.

At the top of Box Hill, the escarpment plunges down to the south with a wide vista over the rest of Surrey towards the Weald, but behind the National Trust café, hidden under bushes and young trees, we found something intriguing; a concrete fort, broken and empty, long abandoned for nature to reclaim, and we never knew the story behind it.

"I'm interested in hiring some lions and a couple of donkeys for a First World War commemoration parade."

In the Autumn of 1852, the Duke of Wellington died, and in France Louis Napoleon restored his uncle's fallen throne. The reaction in Britain was panic; men bought guns and formed volunteer rifle companies up and down the land and the Government when bestirred built forts in the Channel, until the new Napoleon turned out to be benign (well, towards us anyway). Then in 1871 the Prussian Army crashed through France and occupied Paris: a new world power was born and a new fear.

The year Paris fell, George Tomkyns Chesney wrote a story, The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer, an account looking back at a German conquest of Britain. In his story, the enemy cripple the fleet with torpedoes, cross the Channel and march north. Box Hill and this gap in the Downs, lovingly described, are the scene of the crushing Battle of Dorking, which opens the road to London and the end of British power.

While not a well-written work, Chesney's book was snapped up keenly and sparked a change in the national outlook. It created a trend for 'invasion literature' that went on until the eve of the conflagration, and it drew attention to the Mole Gap. The ranks of the volunteer rifle companies swelled (my great-grandfather joined the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment) and the focus now became the threat from Germany. By the 1890s, forts were being built along the line of the North Downs, and the fort on Box Hill was one of these. Lord Salisbury, Prime Minister at the time, might have been cynical about the military ('they would insist on the importance of garrisoning the moon in order to protect us from Mars') but national defence was not to be ignored. The highest point of top Kent county (also in the North Downs) is ringed by the earthworks of a Victorian hill fort, and all these formed a system known as the London Defence Positions. The same plans were revisited in the Second World War, and 'GHQ Line B' pillboxes sprang up along the Downs.

There is a direct line from Dorking to the Somme. Distrust of Imperial Germany was no fantasy, for it was an ambitious, aggressive power eager to catch up for its wasted centuries. Germany's shipyards built Dreadnoughts to match those of the Royal Navy and its factories guns for the largest army in Europe.

The invasion literature continued though the naval arms race had been won; even Saki wrote a book, *When William Came*, and he died in the trenches going, as he put it, 'at least halfway to meeting him'. Arthur Conan-Doyle portrayed a retired Sherlock Holmes defeating a German spymaster and warning of 'a chill wind from the east'. The best known of the invasion literature was not a bombastic action thriller, but a gentle sailing book, *The Riddle of the Sands*, by the oddly contradictory character, Erskine Childers. He turned attention from armies and the southern counties to the sea and the threat to Lincolnshire, a gateway to the industrial Midlands. This book too changed strategies, in the decade before war finally came. By then it must have seemed inevitable, and perhaps it was.

I do not like to think of the South Downs and Weald of my youth as sullied by bloody war and horror, and of course they have not been outside the pages of literature, but the timeless peace of these places is not as timeless as we might wish – at Coldharbour on the slopes of Leith Hill, Surrey's county top, is an Iron Age hill fort, telling of unquiet times. A Roman military road slices through the landscape beneath it. On that road, beneath the fort at the village of Ockley, a great slaughter of the Danes took place according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Nothing of this remains though and Ockley drowses on amongst its fields.

The hills of Surrey are very forgiving and absorb the past into themselves, far older as they are than man who scratches about their slopes. The Great War was of a different order though. On the first day of the Somme, a whole hill disappeared in an explosion that was heard on Hampstead Heath in Middlesex. Today in a long, broad line from Alsace to the Channel there are no houses older than 1920, and the farmers even now reap from their fields a grim harvest each year of old, live shells.

Our land did suffer in the Great War – the Zeppelin raids, the cruel bombardment of Scarborough, Whitby and Great Yarmouth, and the silent towns that lost all their young men. After the war the true toll on the population was felt and society had changed forever. However all this was nothing compared to what befell France and Belgium in those years.

I know no delight like that of a summer's day spent walking in the hills of Sussex or of Surrey. The ageless, rounded chalk hills, green and white with grass and fleece, rise above the little villages sitting in the folds in the hills, with clear streams twinkling through them beside the quiet pubs. This is a work of greater artistry than the fallible hand of man could ever muster.

The white arc of the North Downs culminates at Dover, but the chalk continues across in French Flanders, and there the fallible hand of man has been more prominent. We can be thankful that for all the bloodshed of the Great War, it took place in foreign fields. No sapper battalion dug a cave to blow 24 tons of charge beneath the Downs to dissolve a Surrey hill. The timeless villages stand yet in their valleys; they have not been wiped from the map. The pretty zig-zag road up Box Hill is far preferable to the zig-zag trench lines scarring Flanders and France. The fight was taken to the enemy in a determined manner which in time brought victory – there was no Battle of Dorking, though there might well have been had preparation not been made, and then, how differently would we see the quiet downs?

Rupert Barnes is a contributor to The Counties *Journal of the Association of British Counties.*

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Women Take All

Jan Ball

Feminism has reduced men to the level of Victorian serving maids

Have you ever been to a wedding where the bride is complemented on her ravishing beauty and angelic personality, whereupon the man is ridiculed for being ugly, balding, stupid or fat or having pictures shown of him on a huge screen as a two year old in nappies. Of course you have. Because that's what happens at most weddings. Nor is this phenomenon limited to marriage ceremonies. In public and private life, men, it seems, are fair game, while women are not to be laughed at, shouted at, criticized, or, especially, physically assaulted. On the other hand, when a woman cuts off a man's penis as revenge for an act of infidelity, as happened to Wayne Bobbit in the US all those years ago, then that's fine. How we rocked with laughter, myself included. He probably deserved it, the rat. Rough justice. Serves him right. When, in more recent times, Charles Saatchi is photographed grabbing Nigella Lawson by the throat, that act of physical aggression trumps all other factors in the public mind. The prime minister, no less, desperate to appeal to the female voter, implies support for Nigella, no matter what the inner details of their ten-year marriage.

I hesitated at writing an article that was broadly pro-men and anti-women. There is something that makes me, and probably you, wince at the idea of attacking women, or rather what I believe is becoming a gynocracy. There is something within me that feels it is simultaneously cowardly and reckless. But why? Open any newspaper and you will see endless hand-wringing articles that excoriate men and pontificate over

women's ill treatment. In all forms of communication, whether word of mouth, social media, viral advertising, billboards – people will not shut up on the issue, because if there is one thing women certainly are good at – it's whingeing. I recently saw on some novelty merchandise the following witticism – 'Men are like toilets. They're either engaged, out of order, or full of shit.' If this kind of semi-hate is socially acceptable, which it is, and if I feel uncomfortable writing this, and you, man or woman, feel uncomfortable reading it, then that's entirely my point.

Many women (and men) are not backward about coming forward when it comes to female superiority. Women are better at languages, better at school and university, safer drivers, less foolhardy, more caring. Men are much more likely to commit a violent crime, dirtier, more untidy, less responsible. Actually, I don't particularly disagree with any of the above. I'd go as far as to say they are factual statements, empirically observable, even obvious. The trouble is that nobody ever utters any counter facts. Men tend to be better at sport, science and technology; when one talks of excellence in any field, men are often represented disproportionately well, even in areas traditionally thought of as female: cooking, fashion design and gardening. Conversely, women are less brave, less funny and comparatively bad at maths. I hope I don't need to mention that I am talking of averages here. There will be some fantastic female mathematicians out there (the best people in my family at maths were my mother and grandmother), but this is about the big picture. Men and women may be equal in a vague generic kind of way, but they typically have different aptitudes and affinities. This much we can all agree on. But when anybody tries to put meat on the bone of what those aptitudes and affinities might be, only those favouring women are allowed.

But to suggest that, for example, there are more men in politics than women solely because of unfair treatment, and that this is not at all down to female choice, is disingenuous at best, idiotic at worst.

When anybody is thought have made a slighting remark about women, the daggers come out. Stephen Fry declared in an *Attitude Magazine* interview that men have stronger sexual desires than women.

'If women liked sex as much as men, there would be straight cruising areas in the way there are gay cruising areas. The only reason women will have sex with [straight men] is that sex is the price they are willing to pay for a relationship with a man, which is what they want. They want a boyfriend and then they want commitment. 'Of course a lot of women will deny this and say, "Oh, no, but I love sex, I love it!" But do they go around having it the way that gay men do?'

This is a biological point, a result of sexual dimorphism, not a cultural judgement. As demonstrated by Simon Andrae's excellent book *The secrets of love and lust*, in all species it is the sex which has more to win or lose by impregnation that is more picky when it comes to choosing a mate. In humans, the woman has to endure nine months of pregnancy, a life-threatening delivery, and the deep attachment that comes with it. It therefore is understandable if women are not only more careful when it comes to who they have intercourse with, but also when and how often. In species where males spend more time nurturing their young, such as the Jacana bird, the reverse happens. Moving away from evolutionary theory, a multi-billion pound sex industry exists the world over, in case you hadn't noticed, overwhelmingly aimed at heterosexual men. For those men who have no need for such humble fare, it is not too hard in the upper echelons of the world to come across men who are reported to have had upwards of 1000 sexual partners, such as Charlie Sheen (5000) and Fidel Castro (35,000 according to a biopic on him). Do women have recreational sex on anything like this scale, or would they want to? Altogether now: No.

One might expect women, more likely to have had a better university education than men, to embrace such hard evidence. After all, the oft-repeated phrase that 'men are only after one thing' is seldom uttered by men themselves. Instead, though, there was a backlash against Fry, enough for him to leave twitter. When trying to 'row back' his later comments varied between quasi-denial – ' it was a comic silliness aimed at a gay readership' and surrender – 'If women also say (and I'm in no position to agree or disagree with them) that they have equally insistent and urgent libidos as men then I have no doubt that must be true also.' It seems that such a conversation was offensive, ignorant, arrogant … god knows what else. Ill-judged it most certainly was.

This little incident illustrates perfectly just how scary the situation has become. On the face of it, men still wield most of the power, because women are under-represented politically and in many of the best-paid jobs. Of course, the average man will never understand the genuine disadvantages and injustices that women have to put up with day in day out. We'd all benefit from a week in a woman's shoes (if she can spare any). But to suggest that, for example, there are more men in politics than women solely because of unfair treatment, and that this is not at all down to female choice, is disingenuous at best, idiotic at worst. Such

a simplistic analysis is akin to claiming that men do not become primary school teachers is a big female conspiracy. As Dominic Raab MP has written,

> *If you buy into the whole Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus theory of gender difference – with all its pseudo science – you can't then complain about inequalities of outcome that flow both ways from those essentially sexist distinctions.*

Katy Hopkins, of *The Apprentice* concurs

Women don't want equal treatment; they couldn't handle it if they got it, quite a number of them. What a lot of women are actually asking for, and you can look aghast at this, is special treatment. If you look at all female short-lists... Is that equal treatment, or special treatment?

More women undertakers anyone?

Women are beginning to dominate the western world because they create circles of power through consensus, and any man or woman who steps outside that consensus is liable to get their wings clipped. These circles of power are dominant in the consumer world, where executives at Wal-Mart, Tesco and Procter and Gamble talk about customers as 'she'. This is because roughly 80 per cent of purchases are controlled by women, and because they are so much more discriminating in their spending, tending to depend more on word of mouth and social media, not advertising, like men. This trend is being mirrored in politics, where all major political players know that they are one gaffe away from death by twitter. In the medical world, female cancers like breast and cervical cancer get a disproportionate amount of public exposure, more so than lung and bowel cancer, which both kill more.

Men, on the other hand, so much less tribal, without the same safety in numbers, are diminished. They don't get offended; they don't get organised; they don't go to the doctor; they don't ask for help. Flagrant injustices, like the fact that statutory retirement for a man is five years later, despite dying earlier, go unnoticed. When women offer outspoken opinions: 'All soldiers rape' (Germain Greer), 'Men are scared of a powerful vagina' (Megan Fox), 'If only it had been Lehmann Sisters' (Harriet Harman), they serve only to raise the profile of the opinion-giver, never harming them or leading to resignation. Men just don't react. Any who do are told to man up. 'Get real and stop being so self-pitying', said Nia Griffith MP about Dominic Raab's article. Just a case of man flu perhaps? In the past fewer women behaved aggressively because they did not have control over their fertility and were physically dependent on males. With cheap, accessible food, the invention of the pill, and low-risk births obviating the need to be pregnant all the time, some women are now engaged in all-out blitzkrieg.

So what now for men? Not only do women have certain God-given natural advantages, they have new ones bestowed upon them by such inventions of men as contraception and a revolution in family law. Where once, following divorce, the paterfamilias took both children and property, and the wife was tossed onto the street, the situation is now reversed.

Should men take a leaf out of Emily Pankhurst's book and fight, by challenging female special treatment and supporting campaign groups like Fathers for Justice? Or should they just keep their heads down and hope for the best, allow women to both earn more and at the same time be the primary parent, while they gratefully accept any crumbs of comfort in the bedroom? Prostitutes? Extra-marital affairs? Accumulation of wealth? Golf? Perpetual bachelorhood? Lower expectations? All ways are fraught with difficulty, and such choices can only be left up to individuals to make, but recognition of this state of affairs is the first vital step. Men have a problem, even if they're too stupid to know it.

But before we all go and throw ourselves off a bridge (did I not mention that option?), let's bear in mind a few enduring truths. This is currently the best time there has ever been to be alive, with technology and wealth beyond our ancestors' wildest dreams. The comparatively insignificant gripings of the modern man need to be set against the plight of the Victorian woman a hundred and fifty years ago, when she was a mere property, and treated as such, and as a sexual chattel at risk of dying from giving birth to a child forced on her by her husband's sexual demands.

Furthermore, is the rise of women at the same time as the decline in war completely unrelated? And finally, isn't it time that sensible men started reassessing their own criteria when choosing a mate? I'd trade in a little less beauty for a little more tenderness quite happily. The same advice that a woman might have done well to follow in days gone by might equally be proffered to men now: choose carefully, and choose wisely.

Jan Ball is a new contributor.

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Letter From America

Matthew Walther

Allergic to everything

These days I am looking for a new spot to grab an occasional cheap lunch. At the chain restaurant near my office where I like to get a salad every other week or so, customers have been advised that almonds will no longer be served except by explicit request – and even then only in pre-sealed plastic containers.

I don't particularly mind about the almonds, though they do go nicely with cold chicken, edamame, pickled broccoli, and carrots. It is more the principle of the thing. Let me explain: the management is concerned about customers who might be allergic to peanuts and things in that line. If, I am told, a sliver from one unaccounted-for almond touched a stem left over from a hacked-up piece of romaine lettuce and one of the employees threw that stem in the trash and failed afterward to wash his hands in industrial soap and change his plastic gloves, a trace amount of the nutty substance could make its way into the salad of another customer. The customer, in turn, could bring fork to mouth with the microscopic bit of almond still in place and suddenly break out in hives, fits of wheezing, or even full-on anaphylaxis, as if stung by a lethal insect. Such is the potential risk to those who are severely allergic.

Naturally I find this all rather ridiculous, not least because, as any botanist will tell you, the almond fruit is not a nut at all but rather a drupe. (It is a sort of second cousin of the peach.) I gather from the medical literature that almond allergies do exist, but they seem to be somewhat rare. Then again I am not, as I often remind readers of this column, a physician, and perhaps I am looking through the wrong sorts of journals.

Really, though, I suspect that there are other reasons, none of them having much to do with immunology, for the restaurant's decision to take almonds off the menu. My understanding is that food-related allergies are far more common in children than in adults. Certainly this was the case ten or fifteen years ago. In elementary school a friend of mine was said to be highly allergic to peanuts. Yet in those halcyon days I ate them by the dozen while sitting next to him in the school cafeteria. Blame it on our youth and folly, but neither of us thought that he was in any danger. (This reminds me that I have not mentioned yet how relieved I am that America will not be launching one of its now-customary wars of moral indignation in Russia: our enemies would only have to surround their bases with a peanut butter perimeter in order to keep our boys – and girls – at bay.) My sister, two years my junior, was allergic to eggs for much of our childhood, but her condition did not prevent me, my brothers, or my parents from eating omelettes with her at the breakfast table.

Perhaps my old friend, my kind and lovely sister, and the countless other people whose lives some would say I have endangered with my reckless enjoyment of oological and indehiscent protein are cases of extreme sangfroid, profiles in courage and then some, but somehow I doubt it. The same sort of person who, at twenty-five or thirty, prattles on about his supposed peanut allergy is always reminding you that he cannot eat 'gluten' either. Like attention deficit disorder and the rape epidemic (one in three female undergraduates are said to be victims) on America's university campuses, the ubiquity of 'gluten sensitivity' is one of those things one reads about all the time in newspapers but in whose existence no one, least of all bored reporters and columnists, believes. (Unless you are much better at concealing smiles of amused contempt than this columnist, never ask someone who says that he is sensitive to gluten to explain what, in fact, gluten is; he will tell you that it is an ingredient in bread, akin to yeast perhaps, and that it makes you fat.)

Of course, not even the most terror-stricken gluten phoebe will ever claim that sitting next to you on the train while you're munching on half of a bagel puts him in harm's way. That, he knows, would be pushing it. The problem is with his stomach, after all, and it's not as if you're shoving dough and sesame seeds down his throat. Besides, he's not actually worried about his health. He just likes talking about it.

Fussiness, of the sort that involves forcing other people to go out of their way to acknowledge our real or perceived needs, is now the authentic religion of the West, at least if religion is defined as the pursuit of what Freud called the 'oceanic feeling'. For some of us, there is nothing more intoxicating than the sensation of disability, or even helplessness, save, of course, the nasty sort of pleasure that comes with asserting one's authority. This takes many forms: demands from the obese for larger seats on buses, outrage when

the emotionally distressed non-blind are not allowed to bring their so-called 'service dogs' with them on aeroplanes, alerts to the nearest security guard that harmless water vapour is pouring out of someone's e-cigarette.

Playing at the idea that being near these things – boiled eggs, pumpkin pie, cigarette smoke – always means either a close brush with mortality or a psychiatric close-call is simply a good, if ill-gotten, wheeze.

Matthew Walther is Assistant Editor at the American Spectator.

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Ukrainology

Theodore Dalrymple

The West's distrust of its own moral case weakens its ability to combat evil

One of the first moral principles that I ever used in an argument as a child was that two wrongs don't make a right. This argument, when used by one of the parties to a dispute, almost always has a psychological penumbra of guilty conscience or bad faith about it, however true it might be in the abstract: namely that of minimising, forgiving or forgetting one's own misdemeanours while pointing up those of the opponent in the dispute.

A related, but different, argument is that of *tu quoque*: you, too, have done what I am doing. This is an argument in even worse faith than the argument that two wrongs don't make a right: for of course it is an implicit acknowledgement that one's own current action is wrong.

Recently, for example, the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, used such an argument in defence of Russian conduct in the Ukraine, which he likened to NATO's action in Kosovo. Now as it happens I thought at the time that that action was unjustified and even wicked; it was undertaken on a trumped-up pretext, it involved the support of an exceptionally nasty criminal organisation, the KLA, it predictably promoted ethnic cleansing, it was a military catastrophe and, above all, it was political mistake that let the genie of boundary revision in Europe in the name of ethnic solidarity out of the bottle. It humiliated Russia by its disregard of its opinion as being of no account; and it seems to me unlikely that the Chinese have altogether forgotten the bombing of their embassy in Belgrade. No doubt the humiliation of other countries is an inevitable part of international politics; but in humiliating others, however reprehensible they might be, it is best to be sure that the boot will never be on the other foot, and that one is as strong as one pretends to be.

As far as I am aware, the Russian objection to NATO's actions in Kosovo has never changed in substance. The Russians have never changed their opinion: but this being the case, they can hardly point to Kosovo as a justification for their own actions. It is no defence against an accusation of theft that the accuser is himself a thief. Indeed, it is an admission of guilt.

Now it might be argued by the hyperrealists of political philosophy that political conflicts are never *really* moral conflicts but only conflicts of interest, for the disguise of which moral arguments serve but as a fig-leaf. The west cares nothing about the fate of the Ukraine and Ukrainians which is almost certainly dreadful whatever happens there, that is to say whoever wins the elections and whatever the provisions of the constitution may say; the west is concerned only with its power, influence and self-importance. In like fashion the Russians were not opposed to NATO's action in Kosovo because it was wrong, but because Russia was humiliated by it.

This, I think, would be too crude a way to put it. Political conflicts are not *only* about moral disagreements, but neither can such disagreements be disregarded entirely. Western Europe is now (belatedly) worried about its dependence on Russia for its energy, but in large part because of the kind of country and state Russia is and is likely to remain. Dependence on Norway, say, would not arouse the same anxiety as dependence on Russia; though a belated concern about dependence on Russia is not the same thing as having a unified will to do anything about it.

Even if a third party, without any axe of interest to grind in a dispute, were to say that the two parties involved in it were in the same moral case, it would have no bearing on the rightness or wrongness of the parties' actions: because two wrongs don't make a right. But *tu quoque* always fails – except psychologically, where it has its effect.

Especially in countries where comment is free, the

suspicion that one's own government is hypocritical in its support or denial of some principle or other – national self-determination, shall we say - weakens support for anything it may propose to do, especially if it involves a sacrifice of any kind. Here the *tu quoque* argument, though clearly self-serving on the part of the disputant who uses it, is effective: it weakens the assurance of the other side in its own cause. This is all the more so in a culture in which intellectuals are almost as a reflex inclined to suppose that right must be on the side of those who oppose their own government's view in foreign affairs. If, in addition, past governments have been grossly deceitful in such matters, public support for a tough policy may be altogether lacking. Mr Lavrov's *tu quoque* was aimed at people already more than half-inclined to cynicism about the motives of their government.

The west cares nothing about the fate of the Ukraine and Ukrainians ... the west is concerned only with its power, influence and self-importance.

In logic *tu quoque* should never be used as an argument since it is an admission of guilt, yet I doubt that it will ever be eliminated from the armamentarium of human disputation. Who has never used it? It deftly turns the accused into the accuser, and few are those with presence of mind enough not to swallow the bait and start to defend their past conduct even if it has been indefensible. As in battle, attack is the best form of defence. How many times does a victim of the *tu quoque* reply, 'Yes, I have behaved badly in the past, but that is irrelevant to the matter in hand'?

We all use other forms of *ad hominem* argument. Only today, for example, I saw the following line in the front page of *The Guardian*: 'Chris Huhne: Nigel Farage's supporters are the least likely to be well-educated.' In the article itself, Mr Huhne says, 'UKIP's supporters are old, fearful and anxious.' This is *ad hominem* in pure culture, as it were, a dangerous way of proceeding, one might have supposed, for someone with Mr Huhne' personal history. The educated might be wiser in their wisdom, but they are more foolish in their folly, than the uneducated, for as Thomas Gray remarked a quarter of a millennium ago, a lack of education:

> *their crimes confin'd;*
> *Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,*
> *And shut the gates of mercy on mankind;*

To be old is no crime and indeed until the advent of pop music age was associated with wisdom; and while it is possible to be anxious without cause, so it is possible to be insouciant without prudence. That a man is fearful by itself tells us nothing about the reason, or absence of reason for his fear. In 1938, for example, Mr Churchill was old, fearful and anxious. Who would say that he did not have much to be afraid of?

But Mr Huhne is not to be altogether reprehended for his article because, being human, we are all, unless we suffer from Asperger's syndrome, more interested in our fellow beings than in dry facts or conjectures about, say, Britain's balance of trade or future prosperity within and without the European Union. When I see a picture of Mr Huhne, for example, I do not ask myself what his position is on the percentage of our energy that should be derived from fossil fuels, or on the economic effects of progressive taxation: rather, I see a member of a corrupt and oligarchic class of political mediocrities (mediocre, that is, in everything except their ambition) who brings to mind the words of the literary journalist, Charles Whibley:

> *Politics is the profession of the second-rate… We do not need the fingers of both hands to count the statesmen who have served England since the seventeenth century. The Ministers who have served themselves are like the sands for number.*

A glance at the commentary on the internet about newspaper articles will reveal how soon is the resort to the *ad hominem*, and how quickly attention is diverted from the question supposedly at issue, how soon abuse becomes not only *an* argument but *the* argument. Who, nowadays, if he were about to engage in a public debate with someone, would not look him up on the internet to find something discreditable out about him, some idiotic thing he once said, for use in a dialectical tight corner? As far as I know, only the Queen has managed never to have had anything taken down and used in evidence against her. I certainly have not managed it.

The desire, then, to purge political discourse of unscrupulous argumentation such as *ad hominem* attacks, or *tu quoque*, is utopian and amounts to the desire to abolish politics altogether; politics without abuse would be like literature without murder, it would not survive for long.

If you tell me that I have used *tu quoque*, well then, I will return *tu quoque*, you also have used it, in this very instance. As for the *argumentum ad hominem*, only a robot would never, ever resort to it.

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

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The Bishop of Wakefield

Jane Kelly

Censoring God's Word?

There is a new, lively Pope in the Vatican, famous for his common touch and his progressive attitudes but Vatican insiders say his approach to Satan is decidedly old-school. In many sermons, Pope Francis warns that Satan, the devil, Old Nick, whatever you choose to call him, is a real, ever-present entity, as real as you or me. How different indeed from our own C of E: Beelzebub was long ago banished from our shores, and from our holy writ. He is never mentioned these days. In January the story broke that the Baptism service, used since 1998, with added tinkering in 2000 and 2005, was going to be revised again, this time to exclude any mention of Mephistopheles or Sin.

The new service asks parents and godparents to 'reject evil, and all its many forms, and all its empty promises'. That evil could be floods, terrorist attacks, or a run on Sterling, as it's not clear whether it's physical or moral, and it seemed that Old Nick as the fount of immorality had been chased well away. There were accusations of watering down concepts of sin and repentance. We like our liturgy light, but I stood wondering whether there is any other country where they regularly vandalise their own beloved texts, and who is doing it? The cleric behind this latest reform is the Rt Rev Stephen Platten, Bishop of Wakefield, 67, who told the excited press that naming the devil in the Christening service was theologically problematic. He is head of the Liturgical Commissioners, leader of the mysterious body which changes what we read and hear on Sundays for our own good, whether we like it or not.

He has been one of the Lords spiritual, since 2009. I waited for him at the House of Lords, in what might have been a Victorian school cloakroom if not for a policeman toting a sub-machine gun. His office is lined with oak cupboards, walls hung with paintings of churchmen of the past, he wasn't sure who, apart from a caricature of David Sheppard, once the influential bishop of Liverpool and Labour peer, a key figure in the revival of the Anglican church in the 60s and 70s, when theology suddenly became a popular topic again.

Bishop Platten charged me £3.50 for his new book, *Rebuilding Jerusalem*, published by SPCK, described on the cover as 'a visionary book', setting out his plans for regaining the hearts of the people of England. A bit late perhaps and trying to achieve that end by changing the liturgy has been going on for years. When this latest hacking was announced, one newspaper claimed that the language of Shakespeare had been replaced by that of EastEnders, obviously not noticing that the mighty 17th century liturgy had been abandoned in the 1960s.

The good Bishop is a very busy man and seemed affable but rushed. Since the announcement that he is changing the Baptism service, he has had to deal with brick-bats from the press. He is not too worried about criticism though, secure in his faith that he and his highly educated colleagues know best.

'This matter is too complex for newspapers to understand', he says.

The public are also disgruntled at having their Christian faith continually updated. For the last fifty years Anglican services have been changing. Many alternative forms of worship with varying levels of demotic English are presented within single leaflets which means hunting through to find the right bit, unless someone, un-poetically, calls out the correct page number.

'Changes in the liturgy usually come from Evangelicals', he said, speaking very fast, 'because they want to be more 'matey'. And of course feminists don't like the word, 'Men' but generally I say, if it's poetry, leave well alone. For instance, Robert Bridge's great hymn, 'All My Hope on God Is Founded', was recently changed, the words, 'Pride of Man' replaced by 'Human Pride'. 'But that's the editors of hymn books, we can't do anything about it.'

He says he does not go around vandalising carols and likes to keep quality writing, but there are exceptions to this. For instance in the hymn, 'There is a Green hill far away, without a city wall', 'Without', should go in case people can't understand that it means 'outside.' He obviously doesn't think that the public can be trusted to solve puzzles, or stick with difficulty. Catering for the needs of an increasingly ignorant public runs alongside the problem of meeting the needs of political correctness, which is also the root of what he and the Church Commissioners do.

In his new Baptism service, the word 'Submit' (to Christ) has also been rejected as too problematic. 'People don't like the word, 'submit' he says. 'Not just

feminists although they had something to say about it. The Synod were fighting about that word in the 1990s. The point is, Jesus was never assertive, he doesn't need anyone to submit, he's not an authoritarian. I don't believe in a wrathful God.'

It sometimes seems to an outsider that divine judgement has been replaced by sympathetic understanding. The new Cof E Christ apparently did not come to bring a sword or turn over money tables in the Temple, he came equipped with a psychotherapist's couch. Perhaps the aim is to provide gentle sympathy and above all, something for everyone, allowing for their limited understanding. I didn't like to ask.

'We are in fact responding to a lot of complaints about the *Common Worship* edition of the Baptism service', he says. 'We were asked by the Synod three years ago to produce texts in accessible language.' This radical tinkering started, not for the first time, in Liverpool. A hot bed of clerical radicalism under Sheppard, who helped draft *Faith in the City* in 1985, the report on urban poverty which incensed Margaret Thatcher, this time the behaviour of Liverpool's laity was the issue.

'We decided we had to change the prayer over the water in the font', he says. 'In 2011 clergy from Liverpool complained about the prayer because it could not be easily understood by the people who were there. It was not working in Liverpool. They requested materials in 'culturally appropriate and accessible language'.

He talked rather as if Liverpool was some outpost of the colonies. 'Have you seen what some of those services are like?' he asked, sounding exasperated, like a missionary returning home to find his work misunderstood. 'Sometimes my wife despairs. You can get 300 people there, who never normally go to church, some of the blokes turn the service sheets into paper aeroplanes.'

Some might suggest he employs bouncers in the porch, or explains the service in advance, rather than change the whole ceremony to suit what sound like imbeciles, but that is not his view. 'It's a factor of the way society has changed', he says, sounding like a resigned modern schoolteacher.

'The language at present is like forcing everyone who reads the *Daily Mirror* to suddenly take *The Times*, you can't do it.'

It seems that everything has to be, if not dumbed, then toned down. The current Pope mentions the Devil a lot, he has no problem with picturesque language, but Platten doesn't think that lively language will pacify the pews in Liverpool. He fears it might result in more misused service sheets. 'The word devil is problematic', he says, 'because most people don't speak about devils anymore. People think it's a joke so we have to get rid of that. In the 1998 version there are just too many images; it's sophisticated writing and if you're educated you can glory in it, if you're not it's too much. In the new version we will concentrate on something more terse, concrete and clear.'

What about the people who go to church to glory in their cultural heritage. In his book he talks about the liturgy as food, and includes many extracts of fine poetry, so he must know that most new liturgy appears to have been written by a committee of cloth-eared illiterates or corporate sponsors. But pleasing educated people is not his mission.

'It's very hard to produce this stuff whereby it says what you want, but isn't too complex', he says, perhaps his time studying at the Institute of Education showing again. 'We are never going to communicate with everyone, but we have to try. We must present a God who is with us at all times, not just one who only intervenes in times of crisis. All the churches recognise the importance of change and in the C of E we've done it well. We've kept the traditional Book of Common Prayer, and we continually revise our other texts. This is the strength and weakness of our church; we work it out as we go along, trying things out, reflecting, then trying to build something from that. To outsiders it might look like a chaotic process, but it's unique, and it works.'

The decline in church attendance, with only ten percent now attending church regularly, might tell another story. As the Bishop of Norwich blew in to the room fresh from giving a *Thought For The Day* on Radio 4, and Wakefield rushed out, I recalled something from Ralph Inge, once Dean of St Paul's, quoted in the Bishop's book: 'The Church which is married to the Spirit of the Age will be a widow in the next.'

I didn't get the chance to say it as he was gone, a man on a mission, caught up in a whirlwind of devout tinkering.

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

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Gays Persecuting Christians

Christie Davies

Why do Gays refuse to show the same tolerance to Christians that was shown to them by the Wolfenden Report ?

Fifty years ago the police were instructed to stop prosecuting gay men for private sexual acts. The man who brought this about was the Conservative MP Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Thomas Moore, a splendid old reactionary known for his strong support of the reintroduction of flogging as a criminal punishment. One of his constituents, a respected businessman, had committed suicide rather than appear in court charged with a homosexual offence. Shocked by this, Sir Thomas asked the Home Secretary Henry Brooke in 1963 whether he intended to implement the proposals of the *Wolfenden Report* which had recommended that homosexual activities should no longer be a crime. When the government took no action, he tabled a motion in April 1964 calling on the government to decriminalise homosexual acts since this 'would tend to prevent much blackmail and many personal tragedies'. In July 1964 the Director of Public Prosecutions instructed the police that only he could initiate prosecutions and from that point the law effectively ceased to be enforced.

Sir Thomas' reasons for wanting the law changed were utilitarian. The reintroduction of flogging would deter violent crime and thus would reduce suffering. Abolishing the criminal penalties for homosexuality would remove gay men's fears of arrest and imprisonment and the shame and revelations of a public trial and conviction. Gays could dwell safely in their closets free of intrusion and from the threat of blackmail. So long as sexual acts between men were illegal, gay men who were blackmailed could not with impunity call the police to arrest the blackmailer. Blackmail is one of the nastiest of crimes; blackmailers are cruel and relentless extortionists and a threat to reveal a man's homosexuality was a good source of income for them.

These were also the reasons put forward in the debates in Parliament by those who wanted the law abolished and in 1967 they succeeded. Simply not enforcing the law was not sufficient, for it still left gay men in a state of fear and uncertainty. The central argument in Parliament was about reducing suffering. Arguments about rights were not deployed and there was no nonsense about equality because it was recognized that the law caused unnecessary harm to many people. We should not today underestimate the fear many respectable men felt, whose lives would have been destroyed by a conviction for a victimless sexual crime. As one of them put it in an interview in the 1990s:

> *You may find it difficult to visualise what it was like to live in an era in which imprisonment accompanied by disgrace was a possibility which could at any time become a reality. At a Christmas party, when everyone was in festive mood I would feel a sudden cold clutch of fear at the heart, at the thought that I might be spending the following Christmas in prison.*

Why would a free society want to put any of its citizens through that kind of torment? I am certain, it had nothing to do with the protection and preservation of family life.

Rather it was to ward off the wrath of God. The original offence combined sodomy and bestiality to form the abominable crime of buggery committed either with mankind or with any animal, defined by the Buggery Act, 1533 and confirmed in the Offences against the Person Act, 1861. These two unnatural activities are, of course, linked together in the Book of Leviticus, which declares that their perpetrators should be put to death. Until 1861 sodomites were liable to capital punishment in England. The last executions took place in 1835 when John Pratt, a groom aged thirty, and John Smith, a forty year old labourer were executed in public outside Newgate. On that occasion the Royal Prerogative of Mercy was extended to men sentenced to death for burglary, robbery and attempted murder but obviously not to the far more heinous crime of unnatural vice committed by Pratt and Smith in private but observed through a keyhole by their landlord. In Scotland capital punishment for buggery remained until 1889, a mere 125 years ago.

Today any humane person regards the savage Muslim sharia law with horror; under it sodomites may be executed by stoning, by being burned alive, by being hurled off the top of a high cliff or by having a heavy wall toppled on to them. Yet in 1835 we behaved in a not dissimilar way. Our ancestral law-makers were,

and the Muslims still are, inspired by the story of the prophet Lot and God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as a punishment for rampant homosexuality. Gay Christians have tried to claim that the men of Sodom who demanded to 'know' the angels visiting Lot were merely guilty of violating Middle Eastern rules of hospitality but it is clear from the text and from Lot's attempt to placate them by offering up his virgin daughters that what they were after was sex with the angels and all angels are necessarily male, since they are the messengers of God. Both sodomy and bestiality are crimes against the very order of the creation of the universe, for humans and animals and man and woman were created separately. Sexual acts eroding the boundaries between these absolute and eternal categories, thus challenging the cosmic order, demand severe penalties.

The institutions that seem most threatened by sexual connections between men were all-male where men had no access to women – the armed services and notably the navy, even the merchant navy, whose men might be at sea for some time, single-sex boarding schools, monasteries and the celibate priesthood. The Roman Catholic Church did not suppress homosexuality until it had eradicated clerical marriage and priests' concubines. More British naval officers have been tried by court martial and executed for buggery than for murder. It was feared that tolerating sexual relationships between different ranks in an all-male hierarchy would undermine order and discipline. Decriminalising homosexual acts in 1967 did not affect the disciplinary rules of the armed forces. Even for those who only indulged when strictly off duty and whose conduct in the service was acknowledged to be exemplary could be penalised for private sexual behaviour. The European Court of Human Rights intervened to strike these rules down.

Some homosexual practices could not be permitted in institutions with a strong manly tradition. In the supposedly tolerant cities of ancient Greece an adult male citizen was allowed to play the active role in all-male sexual contacts but never the passive one which was reserved for boys, slaves and foreigners, those who had no manly status to lose. The catamite had abandoned his masculinity and let the side down by becoming inferior – like a woman, in ancient Greece, as in the Arab world today, was regarded as very inferior. Sodomizing a captured enemy was seen as an exemplary humiliation and a celebration of victory over him; that is probably what happened to T E Lawrence at the hands of the Turks.

The Labouchère amendment to the *Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885*, created a new offence of gross indecency under which all forms of sexual contact between men, not just sodomy, were punishable by two years' imprisonment, the sentence handed out to Oscar Wilde in 1895. Gay historians claim that this was a response to a 'crisis in the bourgeois family'. This view is nonsense and yet it is widely accepted and taught. Henry Labouchère, a Liberal MP, hated the established order and frequently attacked it in print. An unbeliever, he did not uphold family life. He lived openly with Henrietta, an actress who was the legal wife of a Bristol solicitor. Labouchère and Henrietta even had an illegitimate daughter. Whenever 'Labby' addressed a political meeting the rowdier plebs would shout ''Ow's 'Enrietta?'

Labouchère was an ultra-radical except for his violent opposition to women's suffrage. Women were inferior and homosexuals, particularly if effeminate 'pansies', were letting the side down by not living up to the code of the master sex. This is why society has never been as severely opposed to lesbians as their male counterparts. In Britain today the inferiority of women is a central tenet of the Muslim religion and way of life. Some lower class male Jamaicans in south London are given to macho aggression and to songs that extol the killing of 'batty boys' (homosexuals) but no one is willing to say so.

Labouchère pressed for his amendment when there was agitation over the trafficking of underage girls as prostitutes and for the raising of the age of consent from 14 to 16 to make prosecution easier. Labouchère knew that there was a similar trade in young rent boys. This was why an age of consent for boys was introduced for the first time, something regarded as ridiculous where the other party was female. Previously it was difficult to prosecute men who had sex with boys without also prosecuting the boy, who was presumed to have consented to the unnatural act. Some of the many rent boys with whom Oscar Wilde consorted were probably under age so that even today he could be sent to jail for his activities.

Unfortunately my account, based on extensive research, of why homosexuals were persecuted is anathema to gay activists. I have supported their cause over the reform of the criminal law, censorship of their magazines, adoption of children and gay marriage. My views are unacceptable to them because my support has been based on Enlightenment values, particularly liberty and the search for truth. Gay activists now denounce these values as contrary to their ideology. The same agitators who objected when the laws of obscenity and blasphemy were used to restrict their freedom of speech now gloat when earnest Christians are harassed by the police and fined by the courts for expressing 'homophobic' views rooted in scripture.

Gay activists have become post-modernist 'queer

theorists', for whom all explanations are equal, so you can choose the one that suits you regardless of the evidence. Hence their unwillingness to criticise the nonsense written by the gay Catholic historian John Boswell, who grossly distorted the facts to suggest that gay marriages had been celebrated in Christian societies in the past. This is why they will not abandon their anachronistic view that the persecution of gays in the past was to protect the family and particularly royal families and landowning classes who needed heirs to maintain their lineage. In fact gay kings, like Edward II and James I, have often been succeeded by their sons. What lies behind this false thesis is that today's gay men and lesbians resent the pressure to marry coming from their grandchild-hungry mothers and fathers and project their own feelings on to the past. Like the theologians who tried to claim that the destruction of the Cities of the Plain had nothing to do with a homosexual lusting after angels, they have become deserters from the scholarly search for truth as well as enemies of liberty.

Christie Davies is the author of The Strange Death of Moral Britain *published by Transaction.*

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A Faraway Country

Alistair Miller

The things my Czech friends like and admire about Britain belong to a country that no longer exists

In the spring edition of this magazine, there was a tribute to the Poles for their role in the Battle of Britain, and an appeal that Poles coming to this country to work and contribute to the exchequer be welcomed. This is a tribute to another European people many of whose young people are also coming here to work and to improve their English – a people to whom perhaps we owe an even greater debt of honour.

Neville Chamberlain once spoke of the Czechs as 'a faraway people ... of whom we know nothing'. But his actions and those of our allies the French in 1938 changed that picture dramatically. Historians differ in their analyses of the Munich Agreement, with AJP Taylor going so far as to defend the policy of appeasement as perfectly rational in the circumstances – and adding for good measure that whereas Warsaw was razed to the ground, Prague escaped the war untouched. An old Czech friend – a journalist and the first Czech to broadcast back to his occupied homeland over the BBC – told me that he understood Chamberlain's position and would have done the same. On the eve of the Munich agreement, the Czechs had a large well-equipped and well-trained army dug in on a fortified mountainous frontier, fortifications that certainly impressed Hitler when he later inspected them. They were prepared to fight; and were strong enough to have held the Germans for some weeks. The German defences on the French border were non-existent, the Siegfried Line being, according to General Jodl, 'little better than a building site'. Had the British and French stood up to him, Hitler might well have backed down and Czechoslovakia would have been saved.

Of course, it is impossible to tell what would have happened or what would then have followed. Hitler might well have been toppled by an army coup (the German general staff was not prepared to fight a war on three fronts) and the Second World War might have been averted. On the other hand, the Second World War might have begun a year earlier – with Prague, the most beautiful city in Europe, left in ruins. What is certain is that in 1938, by agreeing to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, the last democracy in central Europe, we effectively handed it to the Germans, who subsequently marched into Prague without a shot being fired; and, as it turned out, condemned it to a further forty years of oppression behind the Iron Curtain. Jan Masaryk, the Czech minister in London, expressed his view of the Munich settlement to Lord Halifax: 'If you have sacrificed my nation to preserve the peace of the world, I will be the first to applaud you. But if not, gentlemen, God help your souls.' Halifax's response is unrecorded.

Speaking from the British point of view, it could be argued that appeasement was a rational policy at the time. Few wanted war and Chamberlain had been warned by his advisors (wrongly as it turned out) of imminent gas attacks on London and massive casualties within days of war breaking out. Chamberlain's 'peace in our time' was greeted with *almost* universal acclaim in Britain; and only one minister resigned – Duff Cooper. But there is no doubt that the Czechs felt the betrayal deeply. One friend, lately a diplomat, told me

that he particularly resented the suggestion that the Czechs, because they had not fought in the war (that is, fought as a nation) were somehow lacking in courage or fighting spirit. There has been no official apology, though David Cameron, a relative of Duff Cooper's, speaks openly of the shame of Munich.

The Polish contribution to the Battle of Britain is quite well known; less so that of the Czech squadrons of the Royal Air Force. At a time when experienced pilots were in very short supply, the experience of the 89 Czech and 145 Polish pilots was invaluable. Josef František, the leading Czech ace, with 17 kills to his name, actually flew with the legendary Polish '303' squadron. I was walking across Wenceslas Square in 1990, the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, and unexpectedly came across a large gathering of veterans dressed proudly in RAF blue. It was the first reunion of the Czech pilots since the war, the first time in over 40 years that they had been free to speak of what they had done.

Living for 18 months in the Czech Republic, I found many things sympathetic to my English eyes. Here was a nation, like Poland, that if only the British knew, or cared, was a natural ally in Europe. I met many people who had the highest regard for Britain and for the English people – partly on account of the British role in the Second World War and partly out of a general feeling that despite Munich, the British were, somehow, a highly civilized people. One gets a sense of this in Karel Čapek's *Letters from England*, from the 1920s. He is perplexed at the foibles of the English, but at the same time has the deepest admiration: 'sometimes you have a sense of uneasiness at feeling so solitary in the midst of these kindly and courteous people; but if you were a little boy, you would know that you can trust them more than yourself, and you would be free and respected here more than anywhere else in the world'. My next-door neighbour, who spoke perfect English on account of having escaped to fight with the British army during the war, wanted to handle some English banknotes. 'Ah, this is real money', he mused. 'Tell me, are British goods still the best in the world?'

Then there was the sense of humour. Czechs have much the same sense of irony as the English. We laughed at the same things – something I could not always say of my German, French or American acquaintances. No doubt the Czech sense of the absurd has its origins, in part, in having to live under communism and having to express oneself in coded language; and prior to 1914 of having to live under the yoke of the Austrians. One sees it in Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk*, which begins with the landlord being arrested for saying that he had removed the portrait of the emperor because the flies kept 'shitting' on it. But whatever the origin, it is there; and with a shared sense of humour comes a shared perception of the world, a shared sensibility – together with a healthy scepticism of rationalist designs and utopian dreams. I once asked a Czech doctor how his car, an old Skoda, went. He replied, 'it goes'. 'So it works', I said. 'No', he replied, 'it doesn't work – it goes'.

Then there is, to English visitors' eyes, the remarkable level of education. Without exception, everyone I know who has been to the Czech Republic, including to lecture, has returned feeling ill-educated and ill-read. I have experienced the barrage many times: 'Have you read Nietzsche? What do you think of Steinbeck? Plato? Goethe? Locke? G K Chesterton? Saint-Exupéry? Graham Greene?' I once showed a Czech girl who had just started training as a nursery school teacher around Oxford. We were in the hall at Christ Church College and her eyes lit up in recognition at one of the portraits. 'Ah, John Locke' she exclaimed. She had studied him at school. Somehow, one does not envisage a comparable moment of recognition from an English nursery teacher (or indeed, any English teacher) visiting Prague: 'Ah yes, Comenius!' I spent a delightful evening with a physicist and his family. All were musical – though Jan could not find the time to practise his violin. He lectured in English, French, German and Italian. For 'a hobby', he taught Latin and Greek. And yet the slight air of pedantry was more than compensated by warmth and good humour. The overall impression was of people who were deeply civilized. Jan was worried that on completing his studies his son was planning to go on a sailing holiday in Spain with friends. Instead of just enjoying himself, he could be doing something of value – like learning Catalan. Jan managed to dissuade him. His son went on to advise the president.

Czechs get annoyed when cast as Eastern Europeans, when their capital, Prague, is 200 miles west of Vienna. Bohemia was the wealthiest province of the Holy Roman Empire and, later on, of the Habsburg empire. Between the wars, Czech industry was so advanced that the Japanese paid fact-finding visits. I once mentioned Robert Maxwell to my host – wasn't he a Czech? 'No, Slovak' shot back the reply. 'And from the far eastern end of Slovakia', he added for good measure.

In many ways, the things my Czech friends like and admire about Britain – about *England* (no one abroad makes the distinction) – belong to a country that no longer exists; or, at least, they belong to a people whose traditions, traditional characteristics and sense of identity – whose *Englishness* – it is no longer permissible to refer to in public for fear of causing offence to others. Not the least of the good reasons for welcoming the Czechs and the Poles to this country is that they might be able to remind us who we are.

Alistair Miller is a teacher.

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Multicultural Musical Chairs

Ricardo Duchesne

Who are today's racial extremists?

Contrary to what academic elites, government officials, and the mainstream media tell us, immigrant multiculturalism is one of the most extreme ideological policies ever devised. This strictly Western-initiated policy is bringing an irreversible alteration in the centuries-old ethnic and cultural composition of European nations. Yet the political landscape is so entrapped by the political correctness of this sinister ideology that its proponents are portrayed as moderate and tolerant characters living up to the true spirit of liberal ideals, whereas the opponents of mass immigration are seen as 'far right extremists.'

Recently I decided to investigate the ideas and policies of some of the political parties designated in the media as both 'extreme' and 'right-wing.' Since the parties that are so labelled exist primarily in Europe, the main search phrase I used was 'Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe.' What struck me right away is that the *only* reason a political party in Europe is called 'extremist', 'xenophobic', and 'deeply conservative' is its opposition to high immigration numbers – *irrespective* of overall platform. I was also puzzled by the fact that both the left and the 'moderate' right-wing media (such as the widely read magazine *The Economist*) use these inaccurate labels.

I am not denying that there are few accurately described extremist parties or groups in Europe. The majority of parties that are called extremist, however, generally fit within the Western liberal tradition; they are as varied in their political viewpoints as the other mainstream parties. They include an interesting combination of nationalist, traditionalist, pro-European, social conservative, libertarian, socialist, and environmentalist policies. They advocate a moderate approach to Europe's immigration problems within the framework of liberal-democratic institutions. These parties are regularly called 'neo-fascist' by leftists only because they question the transformation of European nations into immigrant multicultural states.

How has it come about in the Western world, and only in the West, that parties wishing to maintain, conserve, and avoid a radical alteration in the historic identities of their nations are called 'extremist' by the standard media outlets, while the forces calling for a permanent revolution in Europe's heritage, including the rooted European character of Canada, the United States, and Australia, are called reasonable and moderate?

I will start with an overview of the respective platforms of some of the major 'extremist' parties of Europe. The *National Front* in France led by Marine Le Pen came in third in the 2012 presidential election with almost 18 per cent of the vote. The *Front* is a nationalist party claiming to be 'neither right nor left', but simply for the cultural and economic integrity of France, advocating a combination of free market, protectionist, and social welfare policies. The party supports the typical role governments have played in France in health care, education, transportation, and energy, but criticizes the way welfare has become a form of government-assisted mass immigration into France at the cost of French tax-payers. The party's chief concern is the threat posed to France's liberal and secular values by Muslim culture. They want to deport illegal, criminal, and unemployed immigrants, and believe that unrestricted immigration from Islamic countries poses a 'mortal threat to civil peace in France'.

The *Party of Freedom* in the Netherlands is led by Geert Wilders, and in the 2010 general election it won 24 seats, making it the third largest party. This party, too, is primarily concerned with Muslim immigration; it advocates zero Muslim immigration, banning the Koran, repatriation of criminals of foreign citizenship, and an end to Islamic 'gender apartheid'. Its other policies are also neither right nor left: a 10-year Dutch residency and work experience requirement for welfare assistance; constitutional protection of the dominance of the Judeo-Christian and humanistic culture of the Netherlands; repeal of anti-smoking legislation in bars; investment in more nuclear power plants and clean coal plants to reduce dependency on imported oil and because coal is cheaper; withdrawal from the European Union; the cutting off of tax money to 'political left' organizations; documentation of the ethnicity of people who commit crimes.

True Finns in Finland became the third largest party in the 2011 parliamentary elections. Known as a nationalist party, the party opposes the granting of Finnish nationality through mere migration or by claiming asylum. Their solution to declining birthrates

is to encourage young women to give birth to more Finnish children; they are socially conservative, opposing abortion and homosexual marriage. Yet the party endorses left-wing economic policies, is critical of corporate globalism, and strongly supports the Finnish welfare state.

The *Swiss People's Party* won almost 30 per cent of the vote in the 2007 Federal Council election. They advocate low taxes and very limited immigration, and oppose increased involvement of Switzerland in supranational organizations including the UN, EEA, and EU. They stand for strict neutrality in foreign conflicts while calling for a strong role for the Swiss army as the institution responsible for national defense. The Swiss People's Party is known as an 'extremist' party because it would like Switzerland to retain its ethnic character, which is already mixed, but for the cultural Marxists the mix is too 'European' and 'White'.

The *Denmark's Peoples Party*, the third largest party in Denmark, is socially conservative in its defence of the traditional family, the Monarchy and the Church of Denmark, but also wishes to maintain a strong welfare system for those in need and to protect the environment and natural resources, while promoting entrepreneurship and economic growth by strengthening education and encouraging a work-ethic. On immigration, the party platform states:

> *Denmark is not an immigrant-country and never has been. Thus we will not accept transformation to a multi-ethnic society. Denmark belongs to the Danes and its citizens must be able to live in a secure community founded on the rule of law, which develops along the lines of Danish culture.*

The *Progress Party of Norway,* the second-largest party in the Norwegian Parliament, is libertarian, a firm advocate of classical liberal principles, small government, low taxes, individual rights, and free market economics. It is against the radical transformation of Norway into a globalized multicultural place; hence the media calls it 'extremist'.

The *Sweden Democrats* obtained just under 6 per cent of the vote in the 2010 general election. It describes itself as a 'nationalist' party: 'Keep Sweden Swedish.' The media calls it a party 'for anti-immigrant nationalism.' It acknowledges the value of Sweden's 'generous welfare state' while identifying itself as a conservative party in matters of law and order, advocating life without parole for the worst crimes and repatriation of foreign citizens found guilty of serious crime. It also wants to end funding for multicultural initiatives and strengthen support for traditional Swedish culture. It favours the 'traditional' family, stating in its website that every child should have 'one father and one mother'.

The *Freedom Party of Austria* had support in opinion polls of around 24-29 per cent in 2011. This party believes that nationalism, liberalism, and social democracy are not only compatible but intrinsically connected. It wants to ensure the survival of Austrians' German identity. It is neither left nor right in supporting privatisation and low taxes combined with support for the welfare state. It maintains that current immigration policies undermine the welfare state; socialism and national identity are impossible together with unrestricted immigration.

Finally, *UKIP* (United Kingdom Independence Party) in Britain currently holds 9 seats of the UK's 73 seats in the European Parliament, and has recently shown an increase in popular support from around 3 percent in 2010 to about 13 percent in early 2014. Long known for its advocacy that Britain leave the European Union, other policies of UKIP include support for 'traditional conservative and libertarian values', cuts in corporation taxes and the abolition of inheritance taxes, a 40 percent increase in defence spending, a five-year 'freeze' on immigration for permanent settlement, firm steps for the removal of illegal immigrants, and an end to the active promotion of multiculturalism. Its leader, Nigel Farage, opined recently that 'in scores of our cities and market towns, this country in a short space of time has frankly become unrecognizable…Whether it is the impact on local schools and hospitals, whether it is the fact in many parts of England you don't hear English spoken anymore.' The mainstream liberal media, including *The Guardian*, found this statement dangerous, claiming that the UKIP is fuelled by 'racism and bigotry', or, at the very least, that its views 'overlap with the extreme right'.

It is truly astonishing that all these parties have been so designated by both the left and even the mainstream 'conservative' news and opinion outlets: *Business Week*, *TIME*, *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, *Nation*, *Slate*, *National Post*, *Euro News*, *CBC*, *CTV, BBC*, *The Economist*, and, in agreement with all these venues, *Al Jazeera*. Such uniform inaccuracy bespeaks the successful 'march through the institutions' carried out by cultural Marxists. The mere wish to retain the ethnic and cultural identity of one's nation in opposition to unrestricted immigration makes one a xenophobic fascist. In the near past, love of country, loyalty, attachment, and respect for one's ancestors was normal and accepted by the both the right and left parties. People then did not consider Western civilization to be a mere set of universal values, rule of law, democracy, and freedom, but also a particular set of customs and religious beliefs, a people rooted in a uniquely European historical experience and ethnic identity.

The political landscape has undergone a fundamental shift since the implementation of immigrant multiculturalism in the last few decades. It is hard to believe that during the 1950s and 1960s members of the Labour Party in Britain were making the case for immigration controls on the grounds that Britain could not afford to be the 'welfare state' for the whole of the Commonwealth. Labour was then a party that actually represented the interests of the native working class and did not want competition for jobs and downward pressure on wages. Elsewhere in Europe the left also objected to guest workers in the early days of immigration. But times have changed, and today the left looks upon immigrants as a future constituency to promote multiculturalism, government expansion, and the overthrow of the traditional values of the European peoples.

On the other side of the political ledger, the right views immigrant labour as essential to economic growth and corporate globalization. It reduces everything to economics and regularly uses the Marxist language of 'inevitable' in reference to a 'looming' labour shortage due to low birth rates and retiring baby boomers. It barely challenges the feminist downgrading of motherhood and the traditional family. It refuses to ask why non-Western countries facing the same economic and demographic trends are refusing immigrant multiculturalism, and why all Western nations were created in the past under far more difficult circumstances without employing ideologies that would forever destroy their ethnic and cultural heritage. The mainstream right has accepted the leftist claim that opposition to immigration is 'xenophobic'.

Both the conventional right and left should therefore be held morally accountable for endorsing the extreme policy of mass immigration that is abolishing the God-given distinctiveness of Europeans.

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Becoming Bourgeois

Penelope Fawcett Hulme

Inside the housing bubble

I was sipping green tea from the depth of a new Heal's sofa, smiling benignly at my friend as she scuttled around her new kitchen looking for things in unfamiliar drawers. The room, shining like an operating theatre, was about the size of my whole flat. I watched her staring stupefied before her new range cooker, which has as many knobs and dials as the flight deck of a Jumbo Jet, and I felt so happy for her that I hardly knew myself.

Everything in her new house, even the mousetraps are hand carved, and I might once have felt a bit resentful. In fact I'd have been seething with unpleasant emotions, as property envy is surely at least as strong as sexual envy in this nation's psyche. But I was free of all that, because I'd just received a massive offer for my own property, a one-bedroom basement flat.

Two years ago an upmarket estate agent refused to give me a valuation on it as he said he never bothered with properties like mine. I assumed he had turned up purely out of malice to tell me that I lived in something un-saleable. Now apparently it's worth at least half a million. It's best to say it like that, rather than £500,000 which strangely doesn't sound like much at all.

Nothing is secure, the foreign buyer needs a mortgage and has to convince his bank. Mortgage agreements are thirteen per cent higher than last year, so he may get the money, but whether it happens or not my life changed with that offer. One phone call transformed me from a sad sack with unkempt hair gazing into estate agent's windows at unobtainable homes, avoiding the withering gazes looking back, into the kind of person who buys a property with stairs, somewhere leafy with neighbours who say, 'I'll bid you good day,' and recycle everything into separate boxes. I even felt a strange oneness with those women who live in period properties, have their highlights done every fortnight, wear socks only at the gym, and pick the batter off their fried fish.

I bought my flat for £72,000 in 1996, and it went on the market for £250 thousand in winter 2012. It was on for £340 thousand last summer. By then I was in the hands of foxy young men with oily quiffs and elongated squared off shoes, who were barely able to conceal their indifference to my situation. They wanted me to sell, but I couldn't afford to buy. Growly voices down the phone offered me 500 square feet in Shepherd's Bush, but I've got over 800 of them where I am. It was like entering a battle to buy a bit of turf.

As the super-rich moved into Westminster and Kensington, London began hollowing out. Wealthy

people began leaving the centre for Chiswick, Hammersmith and Acton. Even dismal places like the ex-council estates of east Acton, built around HMP Wormwood Scrubs, canopied by a strange, menacing microclimate of dust and grime, suddenly became desirable.

I began to realise that like most other people, and after living in London for over half my life, I couldn't afford anything better than I had already. To get two small bedrooms meant moving further out and if I wanted stairs, I'd probably have to go to Sunderland.

I began looking at the south coast and Essex, cheap but too far from my friends. Guildford was closer but expensive, and in February sadly under water. Watford was affordable but ugly. I would go off to distant places and find appointments hadn't been arranged. I found a flat in Berkhamsted which shared its drive with the local fire-station. When I mentioned that this wasn't in the glossy brochure, the agent told me coldly that I should have looked it up on Google before setting out.

In December a buyer offered me £360k which seemed very good. They were jubilant with excitement, then asked me to reduce the price by twenty thousand. At Christmas, exhausted, I took it off the market.

While I was languishing, prices rose by eighteen percent, and after pitiful texts, emails and pleading calls from estate agents, I put it on the market again last month, at £400k. At first it seemed like the same old thing; I had a look at Oxford but allowing for fees and stamp-duty couldn't afford properties over 600 square feet. As that market combusted I was in the wrong place.

'You need to be here, the cash in hand,' the Oxford men told me. Properties were sold on line without being viewed, one in ten above the asking price, leading to agonising battles between buyers.

After sealed bids on my flat, came the mighty offer and I could take my place among the lucky ones who inherited flats rented out for decades, now unexpectedly worth a fortune. Who bought a property for £10,000 in a slum area in the 1970s, now selling it for millions. The property bubble had bounced me back into the bourgeoisie, where I had once been until an unfortunate move to what estate agents term 'an increasingly popular area,' that is a crummy location.

In London there are no bad locations now. For the first time I can sit back among the yummy mummies who always radiate contentment. I now understand that they were not guilty of smugness after all, it was more an absence of envy. By background, looks or money they were simply free from the bitterness that comes from feeling excluded by cruel fate from the good things of life. I don't have any extra cash, I can't buy handbags or shop at LK Bennett, but like them I now have the chance of a house, and that brings with it, for an English person, a kind of spiritual grace.

I can smile and make polite conversation in the best houses in Chiswick because I have been validated as someone worthy of belonging to the householder class, and with that have acquired, almost into old age, what my mother would call, 'the right attitude'. Two weeks later my sale fell through.

Penelope Fawcett Hulme is a social observer

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"Sorry, son, but you're not going to be able to move back in with us - we're moving back in with your grandparents."

Hate Speak in Australia

Daryl McCann

The Australian left is still determined to suppress free speech

As Tony Abbott's Coalition Government warns the Australian people of a tough budget ahead to pay back debt incurred from six years of the previous Labour Government's reckless spending (2007-13), a sense of *déjà vu* pervades the land. We have been here before. After the Whitlam debacle (1972-75), it was Fraser's Coalition administration (1975-83) that had to repair the nation's finances. Similarly, Labour's Paul Keating bequeathed his nemesis, John Howard, a $96 billion debt – not an astronomical figure in today's terms, perhaps, but quite something back in 1996.

The pattern seemed set in stone. Stage 1: Cheery and idealistic Labour politicians, full of colour and movement, sweep into office promising the world. Stage 2: The party commences and all seems bright and light and hopeful with no hangover in sight. Stage 3: The bills arrive and the manic reverie of free beer and skittles for all begins to sour. Stage 4: In the cold, grey morning after the night before, swinging voters demand the books be balanced and, somewhat reluctantly, vote in the stolid and fusty Coalition parties. Stage 5: The books balanced once more, carefree Labour politicians start promising the world.

Coalition prime ministers (and state premiers) have mostly accepted their role in Australian politics as the strait-laced parents who are no more than a resented necessity. It is all right for Mum and Dad to pay off your MasterCard but quite another to offer an opinion on 'life-style' issues. John Howard was the Coalition Prime Minister from 1996-2007. He entered into the 'History Wars' debate about the treatment of Aboriginals in the first half of the twentieth century, and he also appointed the odd conservative to the board of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), but by and large he concentrated on fiscal probity. Given the rising unpopularity of Julia Gillard, who replaced Kevin Rudd as leader of the Labour Government in 2010, the expectation was that Opposition Leader Tony Abbott would make himself as small a target as possible and prevail in the coming election by default. But Abbott surprised many in an address in 2012 to the pro-business Institute of Public Affairs (IPA). He promised to reform Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act if elected at the 2013 election. A healthy democracy, asserted Abbott, only thrives when 'robust speech from different points of view in the philosophical compass' is permitted, which must include 'the freedom to be obnoxious and objectionable'.

Labour, several months before the September election, ditched Julia Gillard and replaced her with ex-PM Kevin Rudd. Maybe the chaos that attended this last minute change of leaders explains why the ALP allowed Abbott's proposed Racial Discrimination Act reform to go under the radar during the September 2013 campaign. The unprepared Rudd, who appeared to make up policy as he went along, focused on the budget cuts that would occur if Abbott were to win office. 'Cut, cut and cut!' he warned whenever a microphone was waved in his general direction, overlooking the fact that Australia had long ago arrived at Stage 4. Gillard, while prime minister, had demonised Abbott with personal attacks on him. She would, with the benefit of parliamentary privilege, accuse the then Leader of the Opposition of being disrespectful towards women, a misogynist no less. It was never very edifying, and she provided no evidence for her slurs other than the fact that Abbott criticised her policies, and yet playing the man was more helpful to Labour's cause than defending the government's appalling economic record. If Gillard had remained Labour's leader for the 2013 election, she would have attacked Abbott's social conservatism – but she no longer had a say in Labour strategy.

Apart from his bold move to 'turn the boats back', which has effectively solved the problem of irregular maritime arrivals in Australia, the Abbott government proved exceedingly cautious after coming to power. Some began to wonder if the Coalition had the courage to take on the PC brigade and amend the Racial Discrimination Act. It came as something of a surprise, then, when Senator George Brandis, Australia's Attorney General, announced in March of this year that Cabinet was ready to make a move. Most significantly, the Coalition's proposed legislation would do away with the right of somebody to instigate charges against another person for 'offending' them.

In a recent interview with a journalist, the Attorney General conjured up the spirit of Voltaire (1694-1778): '…if you are going to defend freedom of speech,

you have to defend the right of people to say things you would devote your political life to opposing.' The Attorney General can make recourse to the Enlightenment all he likes but somewhere along the line many of those who would define themselves as 'progressive' thinkers came to believe that liberty is dangerous. People who, in an earlier incarnation, revolted against 'The Man' censoring movies, magazines, pop songs and D H Lawrence are now adamant that 'freedom of speech needs qualifiers and social agreement'.

The commentariat, with a few honourable exceptions, have maintained their rage against the Attorney General even though it will still be against the law 'to vilify' or 'to intimidate people' on account of 'their race, colour or national or ethnic origin.' Supposed representatives of ethnic organisations have joined forces with the chattering classes to assail the Abbott government for threatening to 'open the floodgates' to every kind of bigotry in Australia. The lowest gambit in the campaign to thwart Section 18C reform has been to conflate bigotry itself with the Attorney General's admission that the expression of bigotry is a likely outcome when citizens are free to engage in unfettered debate. If the Attorney General is not a bigot himself, his adversaries contend, then he must at any rate be an enabler of bigots.

Of course the Abbott government has a lot on its hands just reining in Labour's fiscal recklessness. In a period of only six years, Labour took government debt from zero to $16 billion a year in interest payments alone. There are Coalition politicians who wish the whole Section 18C controversy had been avoided so they could focus on the main game – the economy. When the Attorney General first announced his proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act, one member of the Cabinet is rumoured to have wondered out loud, 'Who's been drinking the right-wing Cool Aid?'

Given that Tony Abbott's leadership style has been cautious and pragmatic, his preparedness to court controversy is worthy of note. Some believe his intrepidness has to do with the conviction of media personality Andrew Bolt, who is unquestionably Australia's most high profile conservative journalist and television personality. In 2011, Bolt was found guilty of infringing the Racial Discrimination Act. Nine fair-skinned and urban Aboriginal Australians believed they had been offended, insulted and humiliated by a series of articles Andrew Bolt wrote. The conservative columnist voiced the opinion that the pool of government scholarships, grants and suchlike provided for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders would be better spent on Indigenous Australians who endure rural isolation and are patently disadvantaged by the remoteness of their environment. In other words, state-sponsored positive discrimination or affirmative action should be predicated upon social need rather than race. To those who despise Australia's most prominent conservative media commentator, the name Andrew Bolt was and remains synonymous with racism. Conversely, almost every conservative in the land – including many rural and isolated Aboriginals – considers Andrew Bolt to be the victim of 'New Racism'.

The heated debate in Australia about Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act obviously points to deeper issues at play. Class warfare has given way to a new kind of divide. For the modern-day Left or 'New Class', Australia is a diluted version of apartheid South Africa, a land of bigoted rednecks who need to be tamed or even silenced by the powers of the state if prejudice and narrow-mindedness are not to get out of hand. The likes of Andrew Bolt and by extension Tony Abbott and the Coalition government are racist, misogynist, Islamophobic, homophobic, xenophobic, and so *ad infinitum*. They are, as Lenin put it so charmingly all those years ago, 'former people'.

The world looks a little different from the other side of the barricades. 'Progressives' might take the high moral ground on everything from so-called marriage equality and the rights of Palestinians to Catastrophic Anthropogenic Global Warming but, from the vantage point of conservatives, they seem to be possessed of a new kind of atheistic religion. They feverishly campaign for the maintenance of laws against hate speech and yet a burning hatred characterizes their every denunciation of opponents. There is surely something Orwellian about the desire to suppress the free speech of a liberty-loving people. In these unusual times, the Attorney General's plaintive cry makes more sense than ever: 'The state should never be the arbiter of what people can think.'

The paradox in all this, of course, is the long-time reputation of the Coalition parties as paternalistic accountants, lawyers and farmers. Against its better judgement, perhaps, Abbott's government is riding the wild surf of freedom – nothing stolid or fusty about that.

Daryl McCann is a frequent contributor to Quadrant *and other Australian magazines.*

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Angels of Mons

James Docherty

How two French peasants came to be awarded the OBE and a Pension by George V

In this year's commemoration of the Great War, we have heard much about the politicians, the soldiers and the battles. there has been less about the ordinary people who were reluctant actors in the drama.

One tends to think of a battlefield as a bare arena on which the rival forces meet and fight, but the region of Northern France which saw most of the action was inhabited by men and women – mostly poor peasants who had somehow to carry on living there. Many died in the bombardments but, for the survivors, life had to go on. They had to scrape a living: The cows had to be milked and the hens had to be fed.

Before the opposing armies became entrenched for years, the struggle was quite mobile. The first few weeks saw the 'Retreat from Mons' as the Allied troops were forced back by the Germans. Rapid movement and general confusion sometimes led to soldiers being trapped behind the enemy's lines after losing contact with their units. After the defeat at Le Coteau in late August, three troopers of the XII Hussars found themselves in this dire situation.

Their only hope was to hide and the three cavalrymen decided that it would be safer to move separately and on foot. They left their horses with a farmer who gave them food and set off, each to try his luck at rejoining the British lines. Corporal Fowler made for the woods and 'living rough', managed to keep himself alive for several months. Having only a vague idea of his whereabouts, in constant dread of being found and shot, he remained in hiding in the thickets till January 1915 when he was discovered by a peasant who hid him in a haystack and brought him food. Louis Basquin lived in a tiny house in which it would have been impossible to conceal anyone but he took the soldier to his mother-in-law who lived in the same village of Bertry.

Madame Belmont Gobert lived with her daughter Angèle in a two-up-two-down house. German soldiers were billeted in the upper rooms and the poor women knew of the penalties for those who helped fugitives, but they agreed to take Fowler in.

Their guest was a ragged, bearded figure, dirty and blood-stained, who spoke not a word of French and had spoken to no one for months. Once they had cleaned him up, the problem was – where to conceal him? The only hiding place was the large wooden 'armoire', a cupboard in the kitchen where plates and pots were dept. It had two compartments, one of which had shelves. Fowler crept into the other parts and, amazingly, spent most of his time in this cramped position for the next three years. He could sleep only by day when his hostess was able to 'stand guard' over the armoire. With German soldiers coming and going there was a constant risk of discovery. Mme Belmont-Gobert had always to be on the alert, using all her ingenuity to disarm suspicion.

Despite the wartime privations – shortage of food and constant surveillance by the enemy – the women managed to keep Fowler concealed until, by 1919, the tide of war had turned, British troops re-entered the village and were met by a strange, bent figure who claimed to be English. At first he was arrested as a spy, but was eventually recognised and sent to join his regiment in England.

He told his incredible story to his commanding officer, Major E H Spears who, as Sir Edward Spears, was to play an important role in the next war. Spears felt that Mme Belmont-Gobert deserved some reward but the War Office would pay only a grudging two pence a day as 'billeting allowance' for three years. The officers of the XII Hussars passed the hat round and were able to augment this miserable sum.

But people talked: Corporal Fowler's story and the heroism of Mme Belmont-Gobert became widely known. The King heard about it and having just started the Order of the British Empire conferred the OBE on both women, the only people in France to hold the honour.

Major Spears made enquiries from time to time and a year or two after the war found that Mme Belmont-Gobert and her daughter were destitute, living on what Angèle could earn from embroidery. Something more tangible than a royal decoration was called for. Spears approached Lord Burnham, proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph*, who sent reporters to Bertry. They confirmed that the two women were in poor health and in dire poverty. There was a wave of sympathy in Britain and Lord Burnham and his readers subscribed a large sum to offer as belated justice and gratitude.

As the story became even more widely known, the King heard about it again and decided that more should be done. Mme Belmont-Gobert and Angèle were brought to London to be royally entertained. A magnificent reception was give for them by King George and Queen Mary. The Lord Mayor and other distinguished guests joined in acclaiming them and they went home with a substantial fund which enabled them to live in modest comfort.

It is interesting that the King was, of course, George V, a monarch who is often regarded as rather stiff and dull. From television, we are familiar with the journalistic stereotypes of his father, the fat old libertine, and the shy young man (GeorgeVI) who found himself reigning by accident. It is hard to imagine Edward VII or George VI taking personal and practical interest in case like that of Madame Belmont-Gobert and Angèle.

James Docherty is a retired GP.

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The Brain – a Heaving Sea of Intuition

Brian Ridley

The work of a philosopher who believed there is more to living things than chemistry and physics

Does time exist or is it an illusion, a trick of the brain like railway lines appearing to converge in the distance? Do living creatures fundamentally differ from inanimate matter? Do they possess some extra, elusive quality that will never be discovered by rational enquiry?

If you want to know, Henri Bergson is your man. Bergson was a philosopher, but of a kind that other philosophers found exasperating. Bertrand Russell likened Bergson's thought to a 'heaving sea of intuition'. Julian Benda dismissed Bergson as 'perhaps the only philosopher to have been really understood by the vulgar'. And, for some inscrutable reason, the Roman Catholic Church put his works on the Index. Which, oddly, did not stop him receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1927.

Born in Paris in 1859, Henri Bergson became the darling of the intellectual life of Paris with his book *Time and Freewill* (English title) in 1889, and through his lectures at the Collège de France, every one of them open to the public. Attendees included T. S. Eliot. After his book *Creative Evolution* in 1907, his darlinghood spread to the United States much abetted by an enthusiastic William James who explained Bergson to his countrymen in his book *The Pluralistic Universe*. Oxford awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1909, but the general tenor in England, with its rampant rationalism and boring analytical philosophy, was not favourable. Nevertheless, by the early years of the First World War, Bergson had become a cult figure, had received the Legion of Honour and had been elected to the Académie Francaise.

Naturally, there were dissident growlings about what to the red-blooded French was the feminine nature of his philosophy, compared with that of the great Descartes. Worse was to come after he questioned certain interpretations of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. This was heresy of an high order. At a time when Einstein's reputation had never been higher, this was unforgivable. Seen as anti-science and anti-rationalism (libellous slanders both), Bergsonism wilted and lost its glamour. Its fashionable replacement, pathetically, was Marxism. It is only recently that what Bergson had to say is again taken seriously.

What Bergson had to say is encapsulated in his books (English titles) *Time and Freewill, Matter and Memory, Creative Evolution* and *Duration and Simultaneity*. In those books there are two pervasive flavours and a specific focus. One of the pervasive flavours was not to Russell's taste. Bergson was adamant that intuition should not be dismissed out of hand. He was sure that reason had to be a vital ingredient of thought if an understanding of the world was to be achieved, but its essential nature is to proceed from what is given to what is implied; and what is given has to rely on intuition. Russell would surely go along with that; it was the other flavour, I suspect, that bugged him. Bergson was adamant that life, living things, consciousness, were in an entirely different category from inanimate matter. Life was matter taken over by the life force that he called *élan vital,* the source of life and its evolution. The living and the inanimate were fundamentally different, the latter being the proper object of scientific research, the former beyond reduction to physics and chemistry. To Russell this smacked of the supernatural, and he was not alone in thinking so. Nevertheless Bergson's book *Creative Evolution* sold like hot cakes when in came out. More annoying still, it was the specific focus of his books, time and what Bergson made of it, that appealed to his readers.

For Bergson, time as experienced by each one of us is significantly different from time as measured by our clocks. A clock works on the regular repetition of something, be it the swing of a pendulum or the frequency of radiation from a hot cadmium source. However it is engineered, the *tic toc* must be absolutely regular. And here is where intuition plays a big part. Isaac Newton believed that there was an absolute time, a time that flows equably and everywhere without regard to anything external. So a clock in London would measure the same time as an identical

clock in San Francisco, or one on the moon, or on Alpha Centaurus. The number of *tic tocs* of the clock measures time and is the measure that science uses. Bergson's point is that time described by *tic toc* is not the time we directly experience which might be more accurately represented by now, now, before, before, will, will, before, now... We intuit the past, the present and future all at the same time. Clock time is an abstract mathematical time and has nothing of the properties of real, experienced time.

The time we directly experience, Bergson calls duration. At any moment we experience a present that still contains the past and is already melding into the future. It cannot be represented by a single event, nor can its flow be represented by a sequence of numbers, as clock time can. In a sense, Bergson's duration is biological time, to be distinguished from scientific time. And here we see trouble brewing for Bergson *vis-a-vis* Einstein.

According to *The Special Theory of Relativity*, a twin that zooms off into space at a good fraction of the speed of light will return to find his earthbound twin much older than he is. Relative to earthbound clocks, a clock on the rocket runs slow, so the rocket twin doesn't age as much. Bergson did not go along with this paradox at all. Duration is duration, biological time is biological *time*, so there can be no difference in ages between the twins when they meet up. Any paradox is the result of the scientific misapprehension of the nature of time.

Passionate defenders of Einstein's theory accused Bergson of not understanding Special Relativity; this was certainly not true, but that became the general opinion. His reputation plummeted and it has remained low until more recent times. Bergson attended a reception in 1922 in honour of Einstein where he voiced his worries about special relativity, and Einstein concluded in reply that there was no philosophical time but only psychological time and physicist's time. So it was inevitable that Bergson's time and Einstein's time became subjects of intense discussion.

So what has changed? All predictions of the Special Theory, insofar as they have been tested, have proved correct. However, profound analysis of what the theory has to say about simultaneity, two events spatially apart that happen at the same time, proves that in actual fact the universe is timeless. There is no preferred moment that can be called the present, and no meaning to past and future. As theoretical physicist Lee Smolin has put it in his book *Time Reborn*, the only reality is all the causal events in the universe taken together, creation's history, in other words, taken as one. It is as if it were necessary to invent a second dimension of time from which to look down on the events in the usual dimension and see them all at once. Physics here seems to have belatedly caught up with the Bible:

> *That which hath been is now, and that which is to be has already been, and God requireth that which is past. Ecclesiastes 3:15.*

Or, more recently:

> *Time present and time past*
> *Are both perhaps present in time future,*
> *And time future contained in time past.*
> *If all time is eternally present*
> *All time is unredeemable.*
>
> T S Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Such a view renders the universe as timeless as a block of stone. This concept of a block universe, now generally accepted as an unavoidable conclusion of Relativity, to say nothing of the Bible and of Mr. Eliot, is anathema to Lee Smolin, who believes that universes, like animals, evolve, disappearing down their own black holes only to expand from the other 'end' of the hole as a new, inflating universe but with its physical constants subtly changed, inclining him to insist on the reality of the present and to speculate that the laws of physics may evolve over time. We seem to have heard before of the fundamental significance of the present and of time as an evolving force. No mention in Smolin's book of Bergson and his duration and creative evolution. Can't expect everything.

Bergson saw the *tic toc* time that physics uses as being like space, amenable to mathematical quantification in terms of numbers, but missing the essence of real time. He saw time, not as a passive coordinate, but as a force inducing consciousness and evolution, seemingly without purpose. Physics cannot deal with consciousness in any deep way. It is true that physics has discovered that if a composer wants his listener to hear double the sound of two violins, he has to increase the number to eight, not four (perception of sensation being governed logarithmically by the Weber-Fechner Law). But science's attempts to reduce the brain to a computer would certainly be seen by Bergson as magnificently missing the point, the product of an ideology that ignores the *élan vital* of the universe. But it seems that the stultifying nature of the block universe is provoking some interesting thought among the princes of physics. Is it possible that Bergson's time has come?

Brian K Ridley is a Fellow of the Royal Society.

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Yes, Madam President

Ron Capshaw

America's next President will be a woman

The next incumbent of the White House is almost certain to be Hillary Clinton. While not a psychopath like Claire the wife of Frank Underwood (Kevin Spacey) in the American version of *House of Cards*, she radiates the same barely concealed ruthlessness. Hillary is cut from the same cloth as her husband; a wily political operator with political convictions relegated to the back seat.

The Obama campaign in 2008 tapped into their liberal base's distrust of the Clinton dynasty, still fresh after two decades, with slogans such as 'change you can believe in'. However, after being touted as the saviour of American liberalism, President Obama has fallen remarkably short of the idealism he instilled in many of his followers. Unemployment remains stubbornly high, his health care reforms have been beset by considerable difficulties from the start and Guantanamo Bay is still open. As a result, liberals have since re-invested their hopes in Hillary Clinton, championing her for the Presidency. The same donors that bankrolled the Obama campaign have already lined up behind her and she is the unambiguous front-runner in a race to the Democratic presidential nomination which has not yet even started.

But before the donations begin to fill her war chest, it should be recognized that far from being a true liberal she is, in fact, an oleaginous pragmatist in the mould of her husband.

The portrait that emerges from her political background is that she is not the opposite of Bill; instead she completes him. She too has no ideological core and is more interested in what plays in both the Democratic heartland and the swing-states, than in championing ideals.

Given Hillary's debut role in politics, this is odd. She began her life's work as a 'Goldwater girl', a nickname for the female teenagers who worked for Barry Goldwater in his 1964 presidential campaign. Goldwater demonstrated his principles explicitly, even to a disastrous extent. His firm belief in the state's rights over the Federal Government compelled him to vote against the Civil Rights Act; the legislation which repealed the 'Jim Crow' laws, ending racial segregation. Unsurprisingly, this annihilated any chance he had of reaching the White House. The inclination to hold principles over votes did not rub off on her. Instead, a decidedly un-Goldwater-like duplicity followed.

While her contemporaries were taking to the streets, unashamedly displaying their contempt for the political establishment, Hillary was playing both sides in the 1968 Presidential elections – one of the most controversial and polarising in US political history. By day she knocked on doors for Richard Nixon the Republican nominee; by night she wrote position papers for his opponent, the Democrat, Hubert Humphrey.

In 1971, she found a partner in political shenanigans: Bill. Even then he was intent on crafting himself so as to be superficially appealing to the American electorate. Just like Hillary, he too played both sides. While others were gleefully burning their draft cards, Clinton, in a notorious letter to the draft board, stated he would be willing to enlist in Vietnam in order to one day be a viable political candidate. Christopher Hitchens, an Oxford contemporary who was part of the same student protest movement in England, suspected that Clinton was funnelling information to the police; Bill was always elsewhere when police raids occurred.

Famously, the President and First Lady would retreat into the idealism of the '60s when his philandering and her murky business dealings got them in trouble. Otherwise, these 'convictions' were disposable. In the '90s, she joined liberals in denouncing the '80s as the era of corporate greed – a decade during which she padded her fees like any Republican corporate lawyer, charging $4,000 an hour plus travel expenses for trips as meagre as the three-hour drive from Little Rock to Fayetteville, Arkansas. This supposed champion of feminism expressed her desire to get Jennifer Flowers, her husband's long-time mistress, on the stand, where she 'would break her'.

Admirers like Carl Bernstein, who when a reporter on the *Washington Post* had helped topple Nixon, during the Clinton years mutated into another of the President's standard bearers. He attempted to spin Hillary from a soulless political operator to an idealist conflicted by competing passions. For him, she is an

'emotional conservative' and 'intellectual liberal' – a phrase which is nothing but meaningless. Should it be believed that at heart she is a traditionalist whilst in her head an iconoclastic radical?

If so, why did she bemoan the fate of African-Americans, but had no problem with the administration withdrawing Lani Guinier, Clinton's black nominee for the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, when she became a political liability? Why did she attempt to channel Eleanor Roosevelt, who sought to be the conscience of President Roosevelt, and yet retain the thuggish conservative political advisor Dick Morris for the purpose of keeping poll numbers high? Bernstein's yin and yang is really not a duality; it is simply pragmatism in the service of the power hungry.

In the 90s, liberals rationalized voting for Bill, as the price they had to pay for getting Hillary who was the brains behind the operation. Now liberals may get their wish but, once again, pragmatism will ride roughshod over principle.

Ron Capshaw is an American political columnist living in Virginia, his work has appeared in The Washington Times*,* The New York Times *and* The National Review.

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Home Thoughts from Abroad

Gabriel Hershman

An Impersonal Age

Recently I submitted a copy of my book for a literary competition. Or more accurately four copies. Four judges. Four books. Although I never entertained any realistic expectation of winning the prize I did briefly fantasise about being invited to the award ceremony and hobnobbing with that great triumvirate of luvvies – Callow, Fry and Everett – for a theatrical biography was the subject in question. Yes, I can be that shallow.

At least I felt that I would be notified when the winner was announced. Wrong on both counts. Not only was I not invited but no one even bothered to tell me who had won. Eventually, after I had requested whether my books could be returned, I received two books, one of which arrived in (suspiciously) mint condition. When I asked the judge in question (over email) whether she had read my book she replied that she had – 'every single word of it'. The implication was that she had found it rather an ordeal. At least this is what I inferred. (And almost two months down the line, by the way, the administrators of the website in question have still not bothered to update it so that it announces the name of the winner. The press, on the other hand, have been notified.)

Casual indifference to matters of courtesy and a total reluctance to give encouragement to unknown authors, is not really that surprising. Such slights are routine in 2014. For example, it is almost remarkable if someone at a national newspaper now responds to an email or telephone enquiry. It is in many cases a waste of time even trying.

The demands of technology are a feeble excuse for a degree of rudeness that makes the anonymous person feel quite insignificant. (Not me, I should say, because I am by now totally conditioned to such indifference from publishers and media in general.) Many people trying to break into print media tell a similar story. Unless you know someone, such establishments are closed shops. If you do manage to speak to a human being, you are likely to be greeted with sarcasm and condescension.

Many children's authors are altogether weary of that dismal witticism – that isn't – along the lines of 'so do you want to be the next JK Rowling?' or the bored reaction when suggesting a new topic. Perhaps it's true that most literary submissions are usually dross. That is SO not the point – as people say nowadays. Such behaviour is rude but also manifestly self-defeating because the genuinely talented – of which, naturally, aspiring authors like to think they number – are being genuinely overlooked. Sadly, such reactions over the phone are normal in today's Britain, the only exception being calls to financial institutions where the staff sound unctuous because conversations are recorded.

Britain is more impersonal than it ever was. Struggling artists – indeed anyone who is not rich or famous – have never had such trouble breaking through. Casual putdowns are routine as if those in authority have learnt man management by watching that odious quiz show *The Weakest Link*. People have little or no interest in each other unless some immediate financial incentive applies. As for the fate of the unemployed, especially young people applying for jobs – we can only pity them if this is the attitude

of people hiring.

Many reasons are given for such indifference but at its core is a loss of interest in our fellow beings. Even run-of-the-mill solicitousness has been supplanted by a kind of prurient curiosity about the problems of the rich and famous. Doubtless the Left blame the 'me me society of Thatcher' but this is wrong. The entrepreneurial society relied for its success on nurturing new talent and unleashing a new work ethic. It should have meant encouraging individuals to take an interest in each other. And, by the way, I have always noticed that the worst offenders when it comes to sheer rudeness and impersonal treatment are those on the Left. Perhaps that's because they don't believe that humans have much responsibility for their own actions – or indeed an obligation to help others – and prefer to look to the government to solve all problems.

Young people, in particular, could do with some individual human interest and some mentoring from their elders. We all need to feel valued. If young people – in particular – become just 'problems' in the view of society then we should not be surprised if they feel that we have given up on them.

Gabriel Hershman is a British journalist living in Sofia.

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Conservative Classic – 55

The Making of the English Landscape by W G Hoskins

Michael St John Parker

WG Hoskins, one of the towering figures of mid-twentieth-century English historiography, is sometimes presented within the profession as a sort of imitative member of the *Annales* school, a meticulous reconstructor of rural realities and an arduous interpreter of regionally organised detail. Hoskins was certainly a staunch advocate of fieldwork-based, evidential scholarship, yet his most influential and popular book is above all else an intensely personal statement about its author's love affair with the English landscape. It is a deeply conservative work, not just because it cherishes what our ancestors made and what we have inherited, but still more because it expresses the value of what Hoskins calls 'qualitative civilisation', as opposed to the quantitative opposite.

The conviction in Hoskins' writing gave him much power over the imaginations of his readers. Charles Phythian-Adams recognised this, when he said, in a memorial lecture delivered in 1991:

> *Never before in this country has an academic historian either so directly reached outwards, and then touched the sensibilities of a mass society at the grass roots, or so successfully exhorted others actually to become historians themselves.*

Hoskins believed that historical awareness is generated in an individual by personal experience, but it may require a catalytic effect to bring the experience to fruition.

I was fortunate to grow up in a town which was well known to, and much loved by, Hoskins – Stamford, in Lincolnshire. It is greatly changed now, but in the 1950s, as seen from the rising ground to the south, it appeared as a gentle drift of silvery stone houses, happily punctuated by dreaming towers and spires; the River Welland meandered through it in Addisonian tranquillity; and if the Great North Road had forgotten its manners, so that it stormed across the bridge in a fury of stinking metal to snake its way through the very vitals of the place, the streets to either side seemed all the more disposed to withdraw into their memories of eighteenth-century routs and nineteenth-century hunt balls.

The Marquis of Exeter, distantly grand and privately generous, presided over a still-Edwardian social order from his palace in Burghley Park, south of the town; the Earl of Ancaster, eminently dutiful if somewhat Wodehousian, supervised local government from Grimsthorpe Castle to the north. And Captain Roberts (it was a wartime commission, punctiliously respected by his customers), wiry-built and ginger-moustached, in khaki sweater and muddy boots, drove his father's milking herd of Lincoln Reds down Foundry Road to the water meadows, and back again to their urban dairy, twice every day; dung-scented *rus in urbe.*

The schoolboy's mile-long walk between the paternal rectory and the remains of the fourteenth-century college that had nearly become another Oxford, and now housed the grammar school, cannot always have been the dreamlike progress that memory makes of it. But once the North Road had been safely crossed next to the garage presided over by Mr Dexter (portly,

white-coated father of a subsequently-famous son), every path offered an intoxicating choice of mediaeval ramparts, Tudor almshouses (which we called callises), and haughty Georgian frontages.

As the years went by, the late afternoon walk became ever more circulatory and exploratory, and frequently came to a halt in the back room of some antique shop, where piles of architectural prints and rude Regency cartoons lay waiting the time for their value to rise. Then in the summer there were bicycle rides along drowsy lanes in Rutland, and expeditions on the paternal motorbike into the ancient emptiness of Lincolnshire. 'Why' and 'how' were questions that rose irresistibly from the quietness of those walks and rides – questions which were sharpened during school hours by brilliant history teachers, but not yet met with answers.

When I eventually found Hoskins' *Making of the English Landscape* there was no shock of novelty; rather, it was almost a recognition of something long familiar – even, in an impersonal way, the realisation of a personal affinity. This can hardly have been at the time of the book's first appearance, in 1955; probably it was the result of reading it at Cambridge, a few years later. Whenever it was, the subtlety with which he touched the strings of sensibility was incomparable, and enduring in its effects.

> *... at Stamford, the beautiful town that Celia Fiennes and Defoe had admired so much remained almost exactly as they had seen it: but fossilized, moribund.*

True, for the late nineteenth century.

> *... the hedge-thorn ... for a brief spell in early summer it is the most beautiful of all the Midland trees, with its continuous miles of white may-blossom glimmering as far as the eye can see. W H Hudson says somewhere that May the eighteenth is the crown of the English summer: in the Midland fields on that day these miles of snowy hedges reach perfection, so dense and far-reaching that the entire atmosphere is saturated with the bitter-sweet smell whichever way the summer wind is blowing. From the hedgerow trees near and far come the calls of countless cuckoos, and the lesser sounds of an infinite number of small birds.*

But there was much more to *The Making of the English Landscape* than the effective conjuring of an idyll, albeit one with occasional cutting edges. Hoskins was propounding a whole methodology of historical work, a new style of gathering and analysing evidence, a new way of looking at the material realities of the landscape which embraced everything from geology, through demography and economics, to politics and sociology. Part of him was a minute and assiduous antiquarian, never tired of proclaiming the importance of maps and mud on the boots, and sensitive to the names of the cows in his seventeenth-century peasants' fields (he would have appreciated Captain Roberts); but a larger part was an inspired synthesiser who drew meaning from detail which others found merely curious. Phythian-Adams remarks that 'The true genius of W G Hoskins lay … in his ability to relate his discovered particularities to universals which others had not previously perceived.'

The purpose of the book is plainly stated in the Introduction: 'What I have done is to take the landscape of England as it appears today, and to explain as far as I am able how it came to assume its present form, how the details came to be inserted, and when'. The approach is broadly chronological: it opens with an account of the pre-Roman landscape, and covers Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian influences before two chapters on the Middle Ages, followed by another on the period between 1500 and 1800 which Hoskins saw as the 'flowering' time of England's rural landscape. The enclosure movement is given a chapter to itself, as are both the Industrial Revolution and the Transport Revolution. Hoskins then turns, somewhat uneasily one may feel, to a chapter on towns, before concluding in decidedly unhappy mood with 'The Landscape Today'.

The range of Hoskins' research is demonstrably encyclopaedic, his style is simultaneously authoritative, elegant and accessible; the text is masterfully complemented by photographs and maps. He has no time for the purple prose which for so long characterised English topographical writing: on the contrary, he applauds geologists because 'they are concerned with facts and are not given to the sentimental and formless slush which afflicts so many books concerned only with superficial appearance'.

And yet, this is a book throbbing with passion – love for the beauty of the English landscape, and also, increasingly, horror at the devastation of that landscape by towns, industry, war, the greed of men. Hoskins' 'total and abiding abhorrence of both modern mass society and, worse, the destructive potential of its technology' arguably limited his approach to the history of the urban, as opposed to the rural, landscape. For him, in 1955 at least, an England founded on agriculture was the only England worth having: '… since the year 1914, every single change in the English landscape has either uglified it or destroyed its meaning, or both'. It was a view which he modified in later life, but never quite abandoned.

It would be a bad mistake, though, to see *The Making of the English Landscape* as an exercise in nostalgic escapism. Like William Cobbett and William Morris, both of whom might be considered as among his

spiritual ancestors, Hoskins was a radical conservative with a positive vision, not a mere reactionary. The stubborn strength that made him resolutely proud of his humble origins, and committed to his evening classes for working people around Leicester, made him into a prolific author and a doughty campaigner against the profiteers and planners whom he saw as destroyers of England's heritage of rural beauty. He would have defeated the arrogant vandalism of such as Nick Boles by means of argument, not emotion.

The academic establishment was slow to recognise Hoskins; one might almost say it found his maps and muddy boots embarrassing, and it is instructive to compare his career (1908-1992) with that of his fellow-West Countryman, A L Rowse ((1903-1997). Both began as 'scholarship boys', and remained proud of the fact, and of their regional roots. Both were 'originals', whose voices resonated through the world of scholarship in highly personal accents. Both were specially sensitive to the power of place, and understood its influence over human behaviour. But whereas Rowse was delighted to metamorphose into the quintessential Oxford don, indulging his foibles among the ivory towers of All Souls and cutting a figure in at least some corners of smart society, Hoskins was always a provincial square peg in an academic round hole.

He was engaged to lecture in economics and economic history, but he decried economics as 'distasteful, arid and wrongheaded'. He spent his most productive years in the rather *Lucky Jim* atmosphere of the nascent University of Leicester, where he was a somewhat isolated figure – for some time, indeed, the only member of his department. When, after the War (in which he served drearily as a statistician with the Board of Trade), his achievement was partially recognised by the award of a readership (but not a college fellowship) at Oxford, he found the place disagreeably pretentious.

Rowse fluttered the fashionable dovecotes, while Hoskins tramped the hedgerows. Yet Rowse failed to be elected Warden of All Souls, while Hoskins founded a school of History which made Leicester justly famous. More, Hoskins defined and effectively established an entire academic discipline – one that even Oxford has had to recognise, albeit through slightly gritted teeth, and with subtle reservations of the protocol sort.

Nor has Hoskins' influence been confined to academic matters. *The Making of the English Landscape* proved to be a milestone in the history of the English conservation movement – and a thorn in the side of political Conservatism, which has always had a tendency to believe that the profit motive serves the highest good. Like other rebels, Hoskins ended by writing at least part of the agenda for what was to come; the National Trust, the CPRE, and countless environmental and conservation groups up and down the country, owe much of their truly conservative principles to this one avowedly 'pioneering' book.

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Reputations – 43

Brooke's War

Ralph Berry

Rupert Brooke is the first casualty of the Great War centenary. He has not been forgiven for 'If I should die' and 'Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour'. The politically correct have him in their cross-hairs, as we can see from the Principal Historian for IWM's First World War Centenary Programme, Nigel Steel. He weighs in with this judgment of history:

> *Brooke's high-flown phrases have inspired and consoled generations of young men who found themselves facing the threat of death in war, although to many readers today they appear awkward and over-sentimental.*
>
> *The Sunday Telegraph, 1 September 2013*

After the covert sneer of 'high-flown,' comes the balanced reproof: while Brooke inspired young men, many of them about to die in their country's first major war for 60 years, he puts off many readers of 2013, none of whom faces that fate. It is not a strikingly logical or fair judgment. Brooke was of his time and must be judged within that time, the values and excitements of August 1914. There were perhaps three main motivations in those who enlisted then: a simple patriotism, a longing for action and adventure as a way of getting away from a dead-end job, a means of resolving personal problems that had grown oppressive.

It is clear from 'Now, God be thanked' that the third motive was strong in Brooke. This is not rare in literature, and there are distinguished precedents. They

include Hamlet, in his final soliloquy, the narrator of Tennyson's *Maud*, and Byron in his last poem: 'If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*' It would be gracious to admit Brooke to their company.

Currently, Charles Hamilton Sorley is being promoted as the anti-Brooke. 'Many believed that Charles Hamilton Sorley was the best of the soldier-poets of the First World War.' (Nigel Steel, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 13 October 2013.) These 'many' had not secured for Sorley a mention in the third Edition (1946) of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, though he is named on the slate stone in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner that commemorates 16 war poets. His sonnet, 'When you see millions of the mouthless dead' (1915) is his last poem, bleak and stoic, written after battlefield experience. Its final line is 'Great death has made all his for evermore', not a bid for wide popularity. Indeed, it rejects 'the easy sentimentality and popular patriotism so prevalent at the time' (Steel). That makes him a forerunner to Sassoon and Owen, and thus in line for the Honours Board of history.

If ever a poet were judged in the light of events yet to come, it was Brooke. Over the commentaries looms an unspoken 'Little did he know.' Of course he did not know. No one did. The four years of trench warfare were hidden from the minds of those dwelling in the existential present of 1914. A few intuited the future: James Elroy Flecker, a consumptive who died in January 1915, wrote in the spirit and language of Brooke yet measured the task accurately:

Our foes – the hardest men a state can forge,
An army wrenched and hammered like a blade
Toledo-wrought neither to break nor bend,
Dipped in that ice the pedantry of power,
And toughened with wry gospels of dismay;
The Burial in England

That is the verdict that historians now pass upon the German leadership. But Flecker's poem gathers together the romance and the realities of war.

The unseen presence in all Brooke commentary is Wilfred Owen. Owen had nothing to say in 1914. The war found him in the French provinces, near Bordeaux, earning a living teaching English. His poetry missed that wild-fire blaze of exaltation that went over England, to which he did not return until April 1915 and where he enlisted in October 1915. His trench poetry became with Siegfried Sassoon's the template for war poetry; but as A J P Taylor reminded us, it was not anti-war poetry. Owen has been assimilated into the anti-war agenda, but like the others of his class he wanted to destroy 'Prussia' and never regretted fighting it. I merely point out that for two kinds of patriot the world of 1914 bore no resemblance to 1917, and it is absurd to speak as if one age got it wrong and the other got it right. Both were valid in their time. The *zeitgeist* ruled.

Brooke died on April 23rd 1915 at Skyros, with the Royal Naval Division on the way to the Dardanelles. That doomed campaign was, if you like, the apotheosis of Brooke's 1914 sonnets. It is celebrated in what was an extraordinarily popular novel, Ernest Raymond's *Tell England* (1922), which by 1973 had gone through 40 editions. *Tell England* is a sustained homage to Rupert Brooke: its narrator is called Rupert Ray, and we follow him through his boarding school experiences until he enlists, at the age of 18, and is sent to the Dardanelles. His Colonel shows him 'a little blue volume bearing the title *1914*', and Rupert reads with his friend Doe these lines:

These laid the world away, poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth, gave up the years to be
Of hope and joy –
Blow, bugles, blow –
Nobleness walks in our ways again –

This is a direct (not quite exact) quotation from Brooke, unacknowledged by name but the master spirit of Raymond's Dardanelles campaign to come. That campaign is idealized in the Colonel's address to the officers on board the troopship *Rangoon*. He views the Dardanelles Straits as the Hellespont of the Ancient World, and the Anglo-French effort as a crusade.

'You're going out to force a passage through the Dardanelles to Constantinople. And Constantinople is a sacred city.' *Tell England* is a paean to 'Dulce et decorum est,' a post-war counter to Owen's rejection of 'the old Lie'.

Churchill's vision was less exalted, but harder and focused to the realities of war. He saw by the end of 1914 that the Western Front was a stalemate, and that the energies of the two great empires should be directed to other solutions. 'Are there not other alternatives than sending our armies to chew barbed wire in Flanders?' (Letter to Asquith, 29 December). The Dardanelles campaign, said Attlee (a Suvla veteran), 'was the only imaginative strategic idea of the war.' His extraordinary energy and imagination, added to what Clementine Churchill called 'the deadliness to fight Germany,' was still short of the central and co-ordinating power needed to see the great project through.

The Dardanelles campaign was fought not far from Troy, and in Churchill's *The World Crisis: 1911-1918* one catches his intuition of another Trojan War determined by the mighty gods. Time and again the balance might have tipped the other way, with the final decisive factor being the incompetence of the British military leaders. Generals Stopford and Monro will live in Churchill's contempt, though not with subsequent Westerners. ('Monro was right': Nigel Steel). Turkey threw up a genius, Mustafa Kemal, later Kemal

Ataturk. His noble and eloquent words, inscribed in English close to the Anzac Cove cemetery, are a fitting memorial to a great cause, for Turks and British.

Rupert Brooke remains for us. Churchill's deeply-felt obituary (*The Times*, 26 April 1915) pays unstinted tribute to 'the very few incomparable war sonnets which he has left behind,' and to a gallant spirit well prepared for death. There is no trace of a proto-Sorley viewpoint in Churchill. Brooke left a handful of poems that have entered the canon, mostly from the last year of his life, and his *John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama* (1916) is still the best book on Webster. He has become a litmus for attitudes to the Great War: of 'Now God be thanked' the latest historian, David Reynolds (*The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century*) has a single word only, 'sententious.' The author of *Gallipoli* (L A Carlyon) has of 'If I should die', 'these are the lines for which Brooke is remembered *even today* [my italics].' David Stevenson prefers to say nothing of Brooke, beyond noting his immense popularity. The anti-war poets went on to lead the giant wave of historical revisionists, who undermined the idea of the just war, and cast Brooke aside. The historians find Brooke embarrassing, and the Dardanelles campaign is judged a catastrophic error of Churchill's. Yet Gallipoli deserved more than the ill-fame it brought to Churchill, and Gallipoli, where he never arrived, was Brooke's war.

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Roy Kerridge

When my niece Omalara was eight, she told me solemnly that a girl in her class knew the phone number of the devil. The devil is a popular man in England, his line is always busy.

Far from being insulted, most Englishmen are amused when a Nation of Islam-type black man tells them 'The White man is the devil'. I never recollect hearing that Englishmen felt upset when Chinamen referred to them as 'foreign devils'. If anything they felt complimented.

Among many West Indians and American Negroes it is very different. To them Satan is a real and terrifying figure, a source of great anxiety. Reggae, rap music and blues are often condemned as 'the music of the devil'. Lucifer, the chief musician in Heaven, brought his talents to earth when he fell, but used them to entrap unwary souls. With unwitting pathos, my evangelical Jamaican friend Mrs Wiltshire told me of the death of her son with these words: 'The devil has taken my son. He was a musician, you see and so cannot enter into Heaven.' Gangsta rap music, like bygone Rasta reggae and party blues, is obviously a very bad influence on young men. A Pentecostal Bishop (and magistrate) of West Indian origin addressed his London congregation on the subject of sin, and listed a number of fearful examples.

> *After the sin of bestiality, we come to the sin of Snoop Dogg. The rap singer Snoop Doggy Dogg used to be an ordinary person in America, with an ordinary name, then he dies unsaved, and met the devil in hell. The devil sent him back to the world with a new name, Snoop Doggy Dogg, the man who sold his soul for fame.*

Apparently a legend has grown up around the notorious rap singer that echoes the older legend of blues singer Robert Johnson. Johnson was believed by some Southern Negroes to have sold his soul to the devil in return for the gift of guitar playing. He met Satan at the crossroads at midnight, and the pact was made. Snoop Doggy Dogg's mythical deal with Satan differs somewhat. Already in the power of the Evil One, in hell, he was allowed to return to Earth on condition that he become a rap singer. He lives here on Earth to this day, rapping conscientiously.

As for Robert Johnson, shortly after finding fame as a blues singer, he was murdered by a jealous husband, in 1937. Years later his myth was taken up by white hippies on both sides of the Atlantic, all greatly admiring him for selling his soul. Most ex-hippies believe that Johnson's record 'Crossroads' describes this event.

*****

God's Ways are not our Ways.

Where there is no Welfare State, as in Mayhew's London, every possible money-earning niche a man can think of, and more, is occupied. Strange occupations, beloved of Dickens, multiply. Such niche-finding, occupation upon occupation and inside occupation, is only a faint echo of the millions of life-saving niches to be found Nature, 'careless of the single life.'

For instance, sea fishes have mouth parasites. Who can imagine the mind of a fish's mouth parasite? A fish-mouth parasite is a humbler form of life than a fish, and so according to Darwin must have evolved first and then sat around for a million years waiting for a fish mouth to go into.

No other little animal would think of entering a fish mouth on purpose. They have been made especially for the task. In the South Seas, big fishes go to certain coral landmarks known as cleaning stations. There they wait, with mouths hung open, for the Cleaner Fish to arrive. When the stripey lean Cleaner Fish arrives, the big fish seem to sigh in ecstasy as the cleaner enters each mouth in turn and eats up all the parasites.

Gratefully, the big fish allow the cleaner to leave their mouths in safety. But there is also a fish known as the False Cleaner, hard to tell from the real thing. A big fish thankfully allows the False Cleaner to enter, only to die in agony as the False Cleaner rips out the fleshy inside of the mouth and eats that.

Can this be God's joke? At all events, it proves, if no other proof were needed, that God's ways are not our ways. The nearest human equivalent would be a false dentist who steals gold teeth.

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ETERNAL LIFE

Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

So said Jesus to Simon Peter at Caesarea Philippi in response to Simon's recognising him as the Messiah or Christ.

We can surely trust Our Lord's promise, but we must be under no illusions about its meaning. Christ promised that he would not leave himself without witnesses, nor that he would hasten to preserve the shambles of, for instance, the modern Church of England. Many times over the 2000 years of its history, the Christian church has failed its Founder and gone wildly wrong. But the church persists and now there are more Christians in the world than there have ever been. Christianity is particularly strong in sub-Saharan Africa and is increasing in China. Thanks very largely to a Pentecostal revival in Central and South America, the faith is thriving there too, where a strong Protestant ethic is lifting men out of crime and drug-taking and women out of prostitution, thus alleviating poverty – not by so called 'liberation theology', which is only a form of Marxism, but by traditional Christian morality.

Illustration of canto XXXIV of Dante's Inferno, from a manuscript in Rome, Vatican Library

However in Europe, whose missionaries evangelised the world, Christianity is in poor shape. The Christian faith created Europe, built its churches and great cathedrals, its hospitals and universities. It established the virtue of charity as the foundation of social and commercial life through the trades guilds and livery companies, each of which is dedicated to one of the saints. This faith created a wonderful set of political liberties, penetrated every social institution and dominated art, literature and music for a thousand years. Now our political masters throughout the continent strive by every means to obliterate Christianity from public life. A new ethics and a new politics based on the Enlightenment and the French Revolution has emerged: liberty, equality, diversity, relativism and political-correctness. Since this new ethics denies the ancient concept of Original Sin and produces a false definition of the human character based on the illusory dogma of progress, the political and social ethics of Europe is correctly described as a heresy.

Perhaps Christianity will be, if not obliterated in Europe then diminished to a degree that renders it ineffectual, removed from the hearts and minds of huge populations. This secularising process is helped by the bishops, the clergy, and the whole apparatus of church governance. The Latin Bible, King James Bible and Luther's Bible have been ditched and replaced by inferior modern versions. Churches have been re-ordered so that the priest now faces the people when he is speaking to God. Thus the

visual presentation of transcendence has been debased into a cosy, inwards-looking circle of the likeminded. Traditional liturgies have been discarded and replaced by doggerel forms which reflect the social gospel and the progressivist outlook. (No mention of sin or repentance, for example, in the new Anglican Baptism Service). The doctrines of the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and the Miracles have been 'demythologised' so that what meaning they retain is only as metaphors for socialism.

Well might Jesus have asked whether the returning Son of Man would find faith on earth. Yes, but not much of it in Europe.

So what can the traditional Christian do? What he must do is pray, repent of the secularising apostasy and ask God to destroy it. Today's Christians must emulate the desert fathers who escaped degeneracy in their time by retreating to the wilderness where they set up new forms of community. There are no physical deserts available in Europe today, but we can draw ourselves apart by forming strong links with one another by means of modern technology and communications systems: in effect electronic parishes with their website magazines, traditional theological teaching by Google. And we should copy St Augustine (who fought the Pelagians and the Manichees) and St Dominic who, armed with the Rosary, waged intellectual and spiritual warfare on the Albigensian heresy.

Likewise, traditional Christians today are called to exactly the same spiritual and intellectual warfare. We shall need to use guerrilla tactics and subversion. What passes for civilisation in Europe now is a heresy at least as demonic as any of the old ones. We can take comfort from the return of missionaries from the continent we evangelised preaching repentance, faith and morals, to our decadent society. Of course, these missionaries are despised by secular European hierarchies, *bien pensant* practitioners of the secular Enlightenment. We were told to rejoice when persecuted. Only nowadays the persecution comes from a rotten core and it is self-inflicted.

Pray with me that God will deliver us from this body of death, that he will give us the courage, the devotion and the means to cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armour of light. As the old revivalists used to sing, Come and join us!

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

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With sadness but gratitude, we record the deaths of our contributors during the past few years

Barry Bracewell-Milnes
Brian Crozier
David Edelsten
Antony Flew
MRD Foot
Vice Admiral Louis le Bailly
John Marks
Kenneth Minogue
Ronnie Payne
Audrey Parry
George Ross

We also record the recent death of
Prince Loewenstein who was a generous friend
and donor to us over many years.

Missing, Presumed Alive

Owen Matthews

How the Future Worked, Alexander Boot, Bretwalda Books, 2013, £12.99.

How the Future Worked is a charming and at times fascinating memoir of the author's childhood and youth in post-war Moscow. Alexander Boot grew up doubly handicapped – in Soviet terms – by a Jewish ancestry and a father who had spent much of the Second World War as a prisoner of war of the Nazis. A strong rebellious streak, combined with a fondness for vodka and carousing, combined to make the young Boot a 'non-person' in the eyes of the State. But he was also luckier than earlier generations of anti-social elements. Rather than face the Gulag or forced employment as a janitor (as his fellow exile Joseph Brodsky did), Boot was allowed to renounce his Soviet citizenship in 1975 and leave the country in the company of a motley collection of Jewish intellectuals and career criminals.

Boot's story is an unusual one – not only because of his rare escape from the clutches of a system which ground down writers of his generation like Venedikt Yerofeyev or Boris Ryzhy, but also because of the lightness and humour of his narrative voice. There is none of the melodramatic tear jerking of Maxim Gorky's misery memoirs, just a relentlessly dry, and rather English, drollery. 'The Germans remained unimpressed', writes Boot of a heroic Soviet cavalry charge against the advancing Wehrmacht, sabres drawn. 'As their tanks provided adequate protection against the razor-sharp blades. The latter could not, however, ward off the Germans' machine gun bullets.' The book is also full of classic Soviet jokes, which help offset the eccentrically non-chronological narrative. 'Radio Yerevan is asked if a man can get pregnant. The reply is, 'We don't know but experiments are being conducted all over Armenia."

At its best Boot's memoir is a slightly more respectable version of Yerofeyev's tragicomic alcoholic memoir *Moscow Stations* (*Moskva-Petushki*), with its colourful tales of drinking and seductions. It's also reminiscent of Grigory Feifer's brilliant erotic memoir of his days as a student in Moscow in the 1970s, *Moscow Farewell*. Boot has written it in English, which gives the prose a strange flavour. It's irritating at first – a few too many 'water under the bridge' 'for my sins' 'I beg to differ' and other clichés – but actually its stilted voice becomes part of the piece, rather like the journalism Eduard Limonov writes in wonderfully idiosyncratic English.

Boot has a knack for skewering the tragicomic details of everyday Soviet life. The seventeen neighbours in the communal apartment where he grew up are vividly portrayed – including a lecherous Polish aristocratic amateur photographer who keeps trying to persuade Boot's mother to pose in the nude, or another who sadistically waits until a user of the shower is fully lathered before turning off the hot water if it is not their appointed day for a wash. Red hot irons are flung across the kitchen; gossip is traded. 'The communal flat is a microcosm, it is the distillation of the Russian spirit', writes Boot. 'It is the stage for tragedies and comedies compared to which Shakespeare's plays are a soap opera.' His father's story is also fascinating. Captured with hundreds of thousands of other Soviet troops after the fall of Kiev, Boot senior amazingly managed to convince his German captors that he was an ethnic German. He quickly found a German woman to look after him and got a job in occupied Western Ukraine as a railwayman. When the Red Army returned three years later he, even more amazingly, talked his way out of immediate execution and the Gulag – the usual fate of prisoners of war and 'collaborators' and rejoined the Soviets in a punishment battalion. Boot senior returns to his wife in Moscow only to find her new husband answering the door wearing his old pyjamas – she had been told he was missing, presumed dead. Little Alexander is the child of his second wife (third, if one counts the German lady) and, though he leaves the family early in the author's childhood, Boot senior continues to make regular appearances, mostly as a charming chancer 'who played the baksheesh system considerably better than Alfred Brendel played the piano'. He makes a crucial intervention in his son's life when he identifies the most influential man in the Institute of Modern Languages, who can be the recipient of a handsome bribe to ensure the clever but lazy young Alexander's admission – not the Institute's director but its doctor, on whom all the professors rely

for sick leave and the dispensation of trips to the Party sanatorium.

Where the book comes a little adrift is where Boot tries to explain Russia and the Slavic soul. With the customary provisos that Russia is a mystery wrapped in an enigma (*per* Winston Churchill) and impossible to understand with the mind (*per* Fyodor Tyutchev), Boot tells us that 'the difference between East and West is that the body and Soul are not conjoined … [Russia has] a hyperactive exterior and a depressive interior'. According to Boot, Russia 'can create a sublime culture and then in the next breath destroy it … she can delight at the world and the next historical instant terrify it'. True, doubtless. But these are the kind of sweeping generalizations that usually make more sense after a few glasses of vodka.

No matter – this is a personal memoir, not an analytical book. It's exuberant and chaotic, colourful, erratic and not always very logical. As the author would not hesitate to point out, it is not unlike like Russia itself.

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A Grandee in the Ranks

John Jolliffe

Private Lord Crawford's Great War Diaries, ed Christopher Arnander, Pen & Sword, 2013, £19.99.

After war broke out in 1914, countless thousands of people from all walks of life, both here and in France and Germany, found themselves in entirely unfamiliar situations, but it is difficult to imagine any more extraordinary transformation than that of the 27th Earl of Crawford & Balcarres, when he volunteered as a private soldier in the Royal Army Medical Corps, at the age of forty-five.

Crawford had been in the House of Commons for eighteen years until the death of his father in 1913, and had served as a whip under Bonar Law. He had then taken his place among the landed grandees of Scotland, with a title dating from 1180. But one of his forebears had married the heiress of a potentially rich, but run down, coalmining estate near Wigan in Lancashire The family had gradually added to it by buying up other nearby pockets of coal-bearing land, and the next generations had developed the Wigan Coal and Iron Company, of which Crawford was a director, until it employed 10,000 people.

But Crawford also inherited an unshakeable commitment to public services, with an interest in the arts and sciences which led him to publish a book on Donatello, to serve as a Trustee of the National Gallery and to co-found the National Art-Collections Fund in 1903. After his service in the RAMC he chaired the Royal Commission on Wheat Supplies, a crucial job which came to control most of the world's exportable grain, at a time when Britain was in danger of being starved out, and later when the food situation had become desperate in devastated areas in France and Belgium. (German territory was virtually untouched until the summer of 1918.)

Meanwhile Crawford worked day and night at a Casualty Clearing Station at Hazebrouck, about fifteen miles behind the front line, south-west of Ypres. Only (fairly) minor wounds could be treated there, and arrangements had to be made to pass on the many more serious cases to fully equipped field hospitals. It was life at the sharp end. If the soldiers were physically damaged, those who looked after them endured extreme physical exhaustion in primitive conditions. Initially Crawford had to set up and maintain two operating theatres, but his daily tasks included stretcher bearing, assisting the surgeons, fetching, unpacking and repairing equipment, managing drugs and instruments, delivering laundry, making splints, x-raying, carpentry, painting, white-washing and scrubbing. Once he had to hold the horse of an officer who was on a shopping expedition, who considerately tipped him sixpence. All rather a change from the Whips' Office and directing a large mining company. He comments that there were hundreds of junior officers in the early stages of the war who were 'utterly incompetent to lead men, to inspire confidence or respect, to enforce discipline, to behave even as gentlemen.'

One curious detail that emerges is the great unpopularity of the volunteer nurses, many of them bossy and tactless, who worked among the male members of the RAMC. (Several of them turned up with tennis rackets and parasols, as if for a country weekend.) And this was at a time when women were being successfully pressed into service in factories, canteens and other regions of the war effort.

At length, after over a year in the Clearing Station, Crawford was prevailed on by Bonar Law to return to England and to become the head of the Board of Agriculture, with a seat in the Coalition cabinet. His wartime diary is only a fraction of the whole journal, which he kept up until his death in 1940, and which was well edited by Professor John Vincent in 1984. This portion has been edited with great skill by Christopher Arnander, one of his many grandchildren. The background information, photographs and maps are set out with maximum clarity, and add greatly to the reader's understanding of the whole context.

Altogether it is a unique document, of the greatest interest to any one studying the Great War. Today, who isn't?

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Animals' Belsen

Celia Haddon

Farmageddon, The True Cost of Cheap Meat, Philip Lymbery with Isabel Oakeshott, Bloomsbury, 2014, £12.99.

There are no words for 'animal welfare' in the Chinese language, writes Philip Lymbery, author of *Farmageddon*. It comes as no surprise, then, that China is the bad guy of animal welfare and animal conservation. As most of us now know, Chinese medicine is largely responsible for the poaching of African rhinos for their horns and the torture of bears milked for their bile through open wounds in the smallest of cages.

In the days of Chairman Mao, animal welfare was denounced as bourgeois in line with *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848, which declares that members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals are 'bourgeois socialists'. But the new Chinese capitalism is not helping animals either. The system is now adopting the worst excesses of the West's industrialisation of farming.

Not that the backyard farming, which is slowly being driven out of business, was kind to animals. Lymbery describes a visit to a small Chinese pig farm, run by a family. The pigs were living in dark indoor sheds in stalls so tiny that one of the sows had her back legs sticking on to the back of the neighbouring pig. Every time she moved, the pig below suffered. A huge pile of needles and drugs showed that the owners injected antibiotics at random, being unable to pay for a vet. Pig manure ran into a pipe that emptied into the nearby river.

The mega farms that are now taking over from these backyard sources of filth are not going to be much better for the animals. Muyuan, a company financed by the International Finance Corporation, the private lending arm of the World Bank, is planning to raise nine million pigs a year in China by 2017, equivalent to the entire British pig industry. The company's 'farms' will be so mechanized that a single pig man will care for 3,000 pigs. These pigs will never see daylight and they will sleep on slatted floors without straw so that their excrement can be easily collected below.

In theory this pig muck will be filtered and recycled into biogas for lighting and heating. In practice, when Lymbery went to visit a working Muyuan factory, there was a huge lagoon of muck tucked away out of sight. Dying trees in this lake of excrement testified to the toxicity of the contents. It was so inadequately banked up that it looked as if it might overflow into nearby farmland at any time. Ironically, the initials 'UN CDM' on the farm's buildings showed that this plant had been accredited by the UN for its environmental record!

China was just one of the countries visited for this book by Philip Lymbery, the chief executive of Compassion in World Farming, in an international travelogue of modern farming methods. The husbandry in factory farms, wherever they are sited in the world, causes problems for nearby humans as well as the animals kept in miserable confinement. Hardly surprisingly, keeping animals in huge numbers in closed feeding lots has a great potential for the spread of disease.

To counter this, antibiotics are added to animal feed as a preventative for infections. In turn this hastens the growth of bacterial resistance to antibiotics. About half the antibiotics in the world are given to animals not just for acute disease but for such conditions as 'blanket dry cow therapy,' where cows are routinely injected in the udder to prevent mastitis when they stop producing milk. Then the antibiotic-resistant bacteria are spread through meat to people who eat it and to the workers who come into contact with infected manure. So far only 25,000 people a year die from drug-resistant infections: more deaths can be expected, as the resistance grows.

In theory factory farms take up less land space than fields and barns. In practice, since cattle are no longer directly grazed on grassland, acres of land have to be given over to growing soya or corn to feed the indoor animals. If you order an Argentine steak in a London restaurant nowadays, the bullock will have been reared not on a grassy ranch but in a mucky pen. The fields outside that used to feed it will now be growing soya to be made into cattle fodder.

And don't order salmon, either. The same madness applies in fish farms. Theoretically farming fish should preserve the stocks of wild fish. In fact, farmed fish like salmon and trout are carnivores and have to be fed wild fish. To produce one tonne of farmed salmon can take between three and five tonnes of wild fish ground into fishmeal. Some of this fishmeal will have travelled from Peru to get to the fish farm in Scotland. We are plundering the seas not for fish that humans eat, but for fish that fish eat.

Philip Lymbery plays fair with his readers. A visit to the Prince of Wales organic farm shows how difficult it is to make a living out of old-fashioned farming. His

cows, ewes and pigs are part of a crop rotation system but the farm apparently struggles to break even. Change will not be easy.

Then there is the influence of Brussels. Thanks to European Union subsidies, half the EU budget goes to subsidise farmers, with the biggest proportion of it going to large landowners. Brussels *has* banned the non-medical use of antibiotics in animal feed and has done a smidgeon for animal welfare. Battery hens now have a perch and about a postcard of extra space within their cages. The EU gave egg producers twelve whole years to make this small change, and half the countries had not done so when it came into force in 2012. There are countries where it will never be properly enforced.

So can we ordinary people do our bit to stop the mad global system of intensive farming by choosing free range over factory farmed? Not easily. Labelling for milk and meat tells us very little about how the animals concerned are kept. Photos of fields or grazing cattle conceal the concrete feeding lots or small pens where the animals never see grass. 'Fresh' or 'Farmed' or 'Natural' on the label disguises the true state of affairs. Only 'free range' or 'organic' are reliable guides.

Philip Lymbery's book is well researched and referenced, but his co-writer, a *Sunday Times* journalist, has persuaded him to craft his prose with 'colour rather than just facts'. At times this 'What I did on my travels' style grated on me. I only hope that the journalese may make the book more accessible for others. After reading it. I changed to organic milk as a health precaution for myself and as an encouragement to farmers who let cows graze grass.

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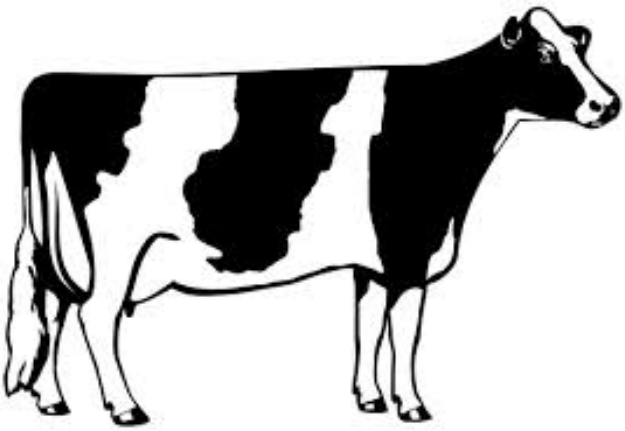

The Rise of Anti-politics

Jonathan Story

Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy, Peter Mair. Verso, 2013; £16.99, **Politics in the Age of Austerity**, Armin Schäfer, Wolfgang Streeck, Polity Press, 2013, pb £18.99.

That the EU is in crisis, no one can doubt. Their flagship policy for a single currency is a shipwreck. At Copenhagen, in December 2009, the leaders of China, Brazil, Russia, India and the United States talked about environmental policy, sidelining the Commission which had planned the Climate Change conference as the coming out party for the EU as a regulatory power on the world scene. A new industry has been spawned by academics as eager to publish about disintegration as they were to talk about integration. Germany's Social Democrat Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier, recently in London, said that the rise of 'Eurosceptic' parties like Ukip, Germany's Alternative for Deutschland (AFD) and the French Front National, posed a threat to the European peace. 'History before the First World War', he reminded his audience, was a history of not talking to each other, of nationalisms which could no longer be [tamed] by reason.

Steinmeier's SPD is the key member party of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, the second largest group in the European Parliament. The S and Ds should be of considerable interest to readers, since they represent the healing of the rifts in the second, third and fourth socialist internationals. With the end of the Cold War, Stalin's feud with Trotsky became irrelevant, while former communist parties, social democrats or Trotskyites, could regroup and rebrand. One of the main results of this rearrangement of party alignments is the Progressive S & D group.

The two books under review provide a fairly complete overview of S & D views about democracy, the EU and capitalism. The authors are from the centre left: Mair, Francis Mulhern writes in his forward, was a 'precocious socialist' at University College, Dublin, but also worked for the *Irish Times*. Mair died suddenly in August 2011, before completing the book, which has been assembled by Mulhern out of manuscripts. Wolfgang Streeck is a stalwart of German political science. Their combined message can be summarized: democracy is weakening, capitalism reigns, and the EU is incomplete. Gloom reigns.

Mair states his thesis in his opening sentence: 'The age of party democracy has passed'. Political parties,

he writes, have become so disconnected from the wider society that they no longer seem capable of sustaining democracy in its current form. Political parties no longer engage voters, as seen in the fall in party membership, disengagement from politics, and more electoral volatility, all of which allow more scope to the media to set the agenda. In the past, political parties were rooted in their own constituencies and clienteles; now, they are more identified with public office, and feed off rather than run the state. 'Experts' reign, beyond the reach of the common citizen, with the result that people are not so much semi-sovereign (the title of the US political scientist E E Schattsneider's 1960 book, *The Semi-Sovereign People*), as non-sovereign.

Paradoxically, as Mair points out, the indifference of western electorates to democratic politics waxed just as democracy, in the phrase of Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, became 'the only game in town'. Why this should be, Mair implies, has multiple causes: the rise of anti-politics, illustrated by Tony Blair's mendacious statement that 'I was never really in politics'; the expansion of the regulatory state, the infatuation with independent central banks and, not least, the experience of populist politics which led Fareed Zachariah, the American political commentator, to renew the distinction made by Edmund Burke between popular and constitutional government. Zacharia's argument, based on his experience from India, is that law and representative institutions predate popular democracy, and are essential for its good functioning.

The main chapter in the book is on the EU, and the growth of its apolitical system. Not only do the EU's powers hollow out the representative function of its member states, but the EU was a house built by politicians to take opposition out of politics. 'Europe, Mair writes, 'appears to have been constructed as a protected sphere, safe from the demands of voters and their representatives'. Yet, as he points out, it is only in the nation states that the relevant authority lies. The result is that EU regulations 'hit' home, and home 'hits' Europe in the form of scepticism about both national and EU affairs, combined with a rise of 'populism'. 'Without any mechanism for opposition, we lose voice and by losing voice, 'we lose control of our own political systems', both national and European.

The Schäfer/Streeck volume, *Politics in the Age of Austerity*, argues along similar lines: democracy depends on choice, and citizens influence the policy of governments through elections. This no longer holds because neo-liberalism reigns, and with it the markets. The financial markets caused the global recession, and the EU hopes that austerity will help economies 'adjust' in the longer term. The authors rightly question whether this will happen, and fear that decades of work to seek a common European interest will be lost. Better to have diluted democracy, one of them writes, in the EU, than a stronger national democracy that is ineffective at tackling issues that are beyond its geographical reach.

Several conclusions about European social democracy can be drawn about the state from these two books. The authors are convinced that the dragon to slay in European politics is 'nationalism'. European nationalism caused Europe's two world wars, to which the antidote is internationalism. Europe in the form of the EU is the answer to both. The nations of Europe are too small to deal with global challenges like climate change and need to be superseded by a new system, run by people who know that their project is in the long-term interest of the peoples, whatever populist demagogues may say. The champions of Europe must soldier on, regardless of the flak that comes their way. If opponents win out, and Europe recedes into its narrow nationalisms, the continent will become a backwater, a subject of world politics, and a museum to a great past. Therefore the EU project requires heroic action to succeed.

Markets are the other 'dragon'. There is no understanding in these books of how politics has shaped global markets: that it was politics that created the Euro: that the dollar standard since 1971 is the US answer to determined Japanese, then Chinese mercantilism; that the size of the foreign exchange markets is directly linked to the increase in the number of states with their own currencies since 1945 from 51 to 190 as a result of applying President Wilson's ideal of a world made up of self-determined peoples; that the growth in the size of the world bond markets is caused by a half-century of determined deficit spending by rich governments, notably social democratic ones. No, we are assured, capitalism reigns, especially financial capitalism, and its handmaid, 'neo-liberalism'. World affairs are conducted by a small political and economic élite, far removed from popular controls. These arguments have political traction, echoing much of what social democrats, and Lenin, wrote about before 1914.

The third factor is the merger of the traditional strands of the left around a European project that is, from the S and D perspective, the only one capable of constraining capitalism, and overcoming Europe's inherited *kleinstaaterei*. Unfortunately, this project, as Mair points out, comes into its own when the age of party democracy has passed, and democracy is the only game in town. The EU may be, as Mair suggests, a political system, which extracts resources, regulates policies (failing to dredge the Somerset Levels, in favour of promoting wetlands as bird sanctuaries), responds to demands, but has a tin ear to multiple signals that

national systems do not want to be hollowed out, and seeks to create a new European identity. But it fails, as Mair rightly identifies, because national states remain the only viable source of authority, however sceptical voters have become of all politics. The implication, not spelt out in Mair's book, is that the EU, and its coterie of *bien pensants*, are busily sowing the dragons teeth of 'populist' opposition. Nigel Farage's simple message is: 'I want my country back'. He is not alone.

These books help to explain, as much by omission as by commission, why social democrats have not prospered in the European crisis since 2008. Social Democrats helped to create the Euro; they fought for bloated budgets; they legislated for rigid labour markets; they backed open borders and immigration; they enthused about climate change, without regard to American or Chinese hostility to binding international commitments. EU social democrats enthused about the German model for the EU, yet it was a Social Democratic government in 2002, which introduced labour market reforms in Germany which have since helped to consolidate German hegemony on the continent. The balance of power among major European states is once more visible; it does not feature in these books.

Social democrats tend to be nationalistic, but prefer to cover themselves in internationalist ideals because they are part of a long tradition across the continent of hostility to capitalism, particularly financial capitalism, with its association with New York and London and their inhabitants. They share this space with the radical populists social democrats claim they oppose. They oppose radical populists in the name of 'Europe', hence their hostility to Europe's financial centre in London. But because the EU is their answer to Europe's ailments, they have become enthusiastic members of the distant élite, part of the problem, not the solution.

In the early twentieth century, when party politics was in its heyday, social democrats backed democracy. They no longer do so. The heart of democracy as a form of government is debate and opposition. German Foreign Minister Steinmeier says he brooks no opposition from nationalists. In Europe's present condition, that is where opposition to the EU project is most active. The May 2014 elections to the European parliament show how active they have become.

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Inside a Modern Bedlam

Anthony Daniels

The Last Asylum: A Memoir of Madness, Barbara Taylor, Hamish Hamilton, 2014, £18.99.

Memoirists usually try to present themselves in a favourable light so that even their faults have something, such as charm, to be said in their favour. No one could say, however, that the present author attempts falsely to win the reader's good opinion of her. Her self-portrait is of someone who is both self-righteous and self-absorbed; but there are reasons, fortunately, for supposing that it is over-coloured. She seems, for example, to have maintained numerous friendships throughout her many troubled years, which would have been impossible had she been as she depicts herself here. Moreover, the last part of the book is a brilliant analysis of what is wrong with Britain's psychiatric services. Only someone with a concern for others could have perceived the shortcomings and analysed them so well.

The author is of Canadian origin. Her father, of Welsh descent, was a left-wing firebrand of the Stalinist school; her Jewish mother a successful lawyer, elevated to the bench, also of strong left-wing convictions (she subscribed to *China Reconstructs* during the Great Leap Forward, one of the greatest disasters in human history). She absorbed her parents' left-wing world view but subtracted Stalinism and added feminism. As parents, hers do not seem to have been exceptionable, though like others they had their imperfections. The father was a domestic authoritarian, but to no grotesque degree, while her mother was an intellectual and social snob who was ambitious for her daughter to succeed in a literary or academic way.

Taylor left Saskatchewan, where she grew up, for London, and though she does not explain why she did so, it was presumably to escape the demands of her mother. In London she engaged on PhD research on the place of women in an Owenite utopia, later published as a book, but at the same time her personal life was a terrible mess. She drank to excess, took tranquillisers and sleeping pills, had many unsatisfying relationships with men, felt thoroughly rotten, and lived in homes shared with other left-wing intellectuals whose life (according to her) she made a misery.

She undertook psychoanalysis, which seems to have lasted about twenty years and taken at least 4000 sessions. Whether it did her good or harm cannot possible be determined with certainty, though

I am inclined to believe that it did her harm, in so far as it reinforced, if it did not actually induce, her self-absorption and self-dramatisation. It certainly reduced her parents' income. Laced through the book are accounts – I am not sure whether they are transcripts – of some of those sessions, which seem to me to be mind-numbingly boring and repetitive. The psychoanalyst did not adhere to the classical silence, interrupted only by making lapidary interpretations from time to time. On the contrary, he replied to his patient's remarks with what to me would have been a maddening mixture of banality, self-assurance and dubious propositions. Four thousand sessions, talking about yourself! Compared with this, climbing Everest is but a walk in the park; her psychoanalysis was a magnificent feat of endurance. Here is one exchange:

She: What about the other dream? The second dream?

He: What?

She: I said what about the other dream? What about the first dream? What about what I said about that?

He: There's nothing there.

She: What? What do you mean?

He: I just told you. There's nothing there. You've told me nothing.

She: Nothing! What do you mean, nothing?!

Eventually he says 'Dreams! I have tried to show you how this works, how the mind works. But you don't want to learn anything; you just want to go on hating me, attacking our work here, attacking yourself. I don't know what to do. I don't know how to help you.'

Compared with this, last year's bus timetable makes interesting reading. But fortunately the last part of the book more than makes up for the deficiency of the first part. The author was three times admitted to Friern Hospital, one of the many giant mental asylums that the Victorians built on the outskirts of cities and towns throughout Britain, and which were about to be closed down (and turned into 'luxury apartments' – why are all apartments 'luxury' and why do they all 'stun'?).

In describing her experiences in Friern (formerly Colney Hatch, so notorious that the name itself was a metonym for madness), the author loses her self-absorption and condescends to look around her. She describes the patients and staff very well; they come alive and the atmosphere of the ward is conveyed so that one feels one was actually present.

Surprisingly the author's experience of the asylum was more positive than negative, although it was physically run down and the staff were demoralised by imminent closure. The patients provided support for one another while the place itself, and its beautiful grounds, really did offer asylum. There was a genuine community spirit to the place until it was closed down – in the name of community, of course (we live in an age when almost all official pronouncements have a meaning directly contrary to their connotations).

The author's final chapter, about the organisation of psychiatric services in Britain, is so good that it ought to be laid before the Minister. Her diagnosis is frequently spot on. An unholy alliance of cost-cutters and radicals has eviscerated humane services, such as they were (highly imperfect), and replaced them by mechanistic, impersonal and frequently callous bureaucracies that believe in form-filling as the solution to all problems in the way that Central American peasants once believed in prayer to miracle-working Virgins as a cure for the illnesses of their livestock or children. The author is not wrong when she says that a patient can now expect to see ten or twenty different 'mental health workers' – social worker, junior doctor, occupational therapy student, etc – in the course of one episode of illness or mental disturbance, and to form a personal relationship with none. The cruelty of this, encouraged and even imposed by an ideology that sees psychiatry as a purely technical exercise to right a brain dysfunction, such that even taking a proper history is no longer deemed essential, hardly needs emphasis. It is to the author's credit as an observer that she spots this indifference to a patient's history as being of such vital importance. The complete absence of asylum, except for those with a very large, even huge, amount of money, has been brought about by the reduction in the number of hospital beds. Such beds as are available are perforce occupied by mad axe men (in deference to the author's feminist sensibilities, I suppose I should call them mad axe persons, but the fact remains that the vast majority of them are men), which means that admission is not possible, let alone recommended, for anyone who would nevertheless benefit from a break from his or her daily surroundings and problems – as did the author. In one city known to me the number of beds was cut to such an extent that, thanks to neglect in the community, three new secure units, (hybrids of prison and psychiatric hospital) were needed. There are now four times as many 'secure' beds in the city – very expensive to maintain, of course – in the city as 'ordinary' beds. This, to put it in a nutshell, is quite mad.

This book is a tale of two authors. It was a curious experience to dislike one and warm to the other.

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No Country for T E

Penelope Tremayne

Faisal of Iraq, Ali al-Allawi, Yale, 2014, £30.

This is an excellent book, and deserves a wider readership than, I fear, it will get. Its size is against it (it weighs in at more than a kilo); and the portrait photograph of King Faisal on the dust-jacket, arresting as it is, may only suggest another Lawrence of Arabia tale full of passion and camels. But it is a recapitulation, meticulously sourced and set out, of a long, unnecessary and fatal tragedy of errors. It would be easy to dismiss the chunk of twentieth century history that it covers as the collapse of a molehill, compared with the huge upheavals that surrounded it: the First World War, the destruction of the tottering Ottoman Empire, the falls of the Persian and Russian Empires. However, the present debacle in Syria as well as one or two other places undergoing what journalists now call an 'Arab Spring' are products of the collapse of that molehill once called the Arab Revolt.

Professor al-Allawi has twice held ministerial posts in the government of Iraq. He has a formidable grasp of his subject and a lot, all of it interesting, to say about reactions between the Arab states and statelets that have emerged in the last century, and other nations. If the power hungry and neurotic Kaiser Wilhelm II had not overreached himself and joined with Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) in attempting to seize the Suez Canal, things could have turned out very differently, and it was a close-run thing, for at times Kemal and his revolutionary, doctrinally non-Islamic Committee of Union and Progress appeared in Arab eyes to offer a stronger tree to lean on than did the warring Christian states. Certainly the fierce old Sherif Hussein of Mecca had leanings that way.

The appeal of the Arab Revolt to both France and Britain was that it compelled Germany, tied by military treaty to Turkey, to divert fighting troops to the Middle East, thus relieving some of the pressure that had almost broken the allied front in France. As the revolt spread some form of general control became essential in the liberated areas; and who was to provide it? During the rather premature Peace Conference of May 1916 the Mandate system was evolved, put forward and adopted, as the only sticking plaster available for emergency first aid purposes, and France's later high-handed exploitation of it was predictably disastrous.

The events dealt with honestly and dispassionately in this book hinged upon two quasi-diplomatic engagements: the Sykes-Picot Agreement in May 1916 and the Balfour Declaration in November 1917. These were not recognised treaties with defined and signed national commitments; yet both came to be treated as if they were inalterable, and they resulted in the political burnt porridge of which the remains can still be seen throughout the near and Middle East. In al-Allawi's well-chosen words: 'The Agreement mixed the implausible and unattainable together with the downright stupid.' It was in theory secret, presumably because it had no real validity, but it was made public – so much for secrecy – in November 1917 by the newly installed Bolshevik government, which claimed to have found a draft of it among the Tsar's papers in St Petersburg. Much, though not all, of it was later confirmed in a resolution passed by the Paris Peace Conference of April 1919, although it had already proved as damaging as anyone could have hoped. Among other things it had allotted to France under mandate, complete control over Syria for a minimum of 25 years: an obviously intolerable arrangement. Faisal, who after the capture of Damascus had been installed as King of the still undefined country, could see what it was all leading to. The Syrians, who had been promised independence, refused to sign the Agreement, as did the King himself, for he felt treaty bound to Britain and France, and so gave up the kingdom that had so recently been pressed on him.

The Balfour Declaration, much more world-changing, hung by a still thinner thread. It was not a public statement but a letter from the British foreign secretary at the time, Arthur Balfour, expressing a view to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the Zionist movement in Britain but not a member of the British government.

In 1918 the idea of a League of Nations to keep a universal peace seemed irresistible; what is much harder to explain is why, after the Second World War, the same naïve hopes and huge resources were poured into the same pit. In Faisal of Iraq we are shown some of the piling up of misjudgement on misjudgement and mistake on mistake that laid the continent open to the dictators and the Second World War. There is much more about the fate of Iraq, the born again country, than about King Faisal himself, but I think that is correct. Faisal was a modest man, of great talents, courage and unshakeable loyalty both to men and to ideals. In his last few years he was a dying man, though not many seem to have recognised that or taken it into account. Could he have kept a firmer hold on events if he had been less a product of European education and thought?

All together the story of the Arab Revolt is a grim and saddening record of false hopes and failed attempts, but al-Allawi is even-handed in recounting it. He writes clearly and dispassionately about the Arab dilemma,

about the extinction of the Hashemi and about the King himself, telling it all in a clean English which could put many contemporary writers to shame. There are also unusually high standards throughout the book of proof reading and of accessibility to the footnotes, which contain a lot of valuable information.

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Sewers and Sensibility

Lindsay Jenkins

High Minds: The Victorians and the Birth of Modern Britain. Simon Heffer, Random House, 2013, £30.00.

Simon Heffer has written a dipping book, rather like a wonderful dining table covered with many delicious and tempting treats. But it would take some resilience to read his book cover to cover, indeed the multiple subjects do not lend themselves to that degree of coherence. Nonetheless, most of it is delightful entertainment, fascinating gobbets and a nudge of what one should have learnt at school if only one had stayed awake, concentrated or indeed remembered. How easy it was to exclaim and often 'oh yes' to revived memories of learning about the Chartists, the Corn Laws and Prince Albert and the Great Exhibition. These are indeed powerful issues which would lend themselves to the latest television fad along the lines of 'what have the Victorians done for us'. Laid out in 896 pages is much of the answer.

Indeed the number 896 is critical to any review of this book. It is a vast and weighty tome, literally so at two pounds 12 ounces or 1251 grams. Little hope therefore of propping yourself up on the pillows and surviving without cramp for any length of time. If you venture into this book – and you should – then go for the e-reader version, that way it will not damage your health. Random House would have done well to encourage Heffer to write a series of shorter books on Victorians Who Made a Difference and we would have been more comfortably entertained and enlightened.

Despite that weighty downside, Heffer has written a *tour de force* of considerable conviction encompassing *inter alia* detailed accounts of Dr Arnold and his revolution at Rugby and his impact on schools for future generations. Here are the important issues like free trade, hunger and the Corn Laws, public schools, John Stuart Mill and the secular progressives battling Thomas Carlyle and the romantic reactionaries. If you want to know all there is to know about sewers, railway mania, the Great Exhibition and Prince Albert, this is your book. There is plenty here to amuse and interest; from crime to punishment, and the struggle between Italianate and Gothic architecture.

Anyone looking for a chronological review of Heffer's chosen period, 1830 to 1885 (so not the whole of Victoria's reign), would however be disappointed. The nearer the reader gets to the end, the more he is dragged back to 1850. The more the reader might wish to focus on the state of Britain, the more the divines of the middle of the period intervene. Further, Heffer deliberately chooses to ignore foreign policy, empire, and defence. This is very much a social reformer's view of the Victorian world from the gutter to the intellectual.

Heffer should be commended for illuminating the narrative with so much original material, with careful documentation cleverly intertwined with the text, so that at no point is this a struggle to read. It might be cavilling in the midst of so many riches to point out that there is little reference to the world before Victoria's, little sense of the Georgians on which it is built, or indeed earlier, and little sense of continuity. It is a danger of course that in trying to encompass so much, it is too easy for the book's vision to become unbalanced.

To mention only one area, in the chapter on the rights of women Heffer tells the story in just two or three pages. Like most of the subjects in this book, my *alma mater*, Bedford College, London, founded in 1849 was a huge breakthrough. Here for the first time in this country women could have a university education. Heffer concentrates on two struggles; the one was to raise money, and the other to find women who had acquired a sufficient education to be able to go to a university at all. Both of course are critical points. But as with his other subjects, Heffer scarcely pauses for breath before rushing to the next topic.

Contrary to much of the spirit of the age, Bedford College was secular, progressive and libertarian. It had no chapel, which was a far cry from Dr Arnold's approach at Rugby. Pragmatism ruled then as it did for the next 150 years. This was no crusade for women's rights and equality as many have it today, and contrary to Heffer's chapter heading. In the words of the first woman to teach history at the College, Alice Gardner, 'The question of equality or inequality of the sexes is as relevant to the discussion of the educational claims of women… as an investigation of the comparative merits of wheat and oats would be to a discussion on systems of irrigation.' In other words, not at all. Generations of women have benefited from that central point and Heffer missed it.

There in a microcosm is the limit of this book: a wonderful *tour de force* to be admired, an entertainment, but perhaps not scholarship.

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Prelude to War

James Houston

1913: The World before the Great War, Charles Emmerson, The Bodley Head, 2013, £25. **1913: The Year before the Storm**, Florian Illies, (trans Shaun Whiteside and Jamie Lee Searle), The Clerkenwell Press, 2013, £14.99.

Why study a year? Some, like 1492, 1789 or 1914 because they were major historical turning points; others, including 1913, as harbingers of future events It is tempting to will the key players to retreat from the ruinous policies which turned a tragic, but essentially routine, Balkan assassination into a global catastrophe. These authors try to see if 1913 offers pointers to the disasters of the following year. Neither views the year as part of a critical path to war. Instead they both offer, in different ways, snapshots of a world on the brink of disaster which are the more poignant because so few people foresaw what was to come.

Charles Emmerson takes us on an international tour which focuses on major cities seen through the eyes, variously, of diarists, travel guides and material from newspapers.

His sketches of the 'great powers' of 1913 are familiar. The United Kingdom is still pre-eminent in global finance and naval supremacy though the United States is fast catching up in the former sphere and Germany in the latter. Britain faces rising labour unrest and suffragette agitation (which took an increasingly violent turn in 1913) and a simmering conflict in Ireland. Across the Channel, Emmerson reminds us that Paris was still the city of light and the capital of world culture – a role which it lost in 1940 and has never recovered. French politics were still dominated by revanchisme: an obsession to settle scores with Germany over her defeat and territorial losses of 1871.

The immature German Reich, led by an impetuous Kaiser, was failing to match its rapidly growing economic power with a stable constitutional balance between the Crown and its democratic institutions, while in Russia the determination of the Romanov dynasty to cling to autocracy in the face of rapid economic and social change made a re-run of the revolutionary outbreaks of 1905 very likely.

In the United States, reform was in the air. The need to redress the balance between a weak federal structure and the powerful financial interests exemplified by the JP Morgan bank had brought Woodrow Wilson, a strong reforming President, to power in 1912. Wilson was determined to focus on domestic issues while in office, though he presciently remarked just after his election that he had no experience of foreign problems. Emmerson reinforces all these verities, but without much analysis or attempt to set them in a broader historical context.

More telling are his studies of the 'emerging powers' and the stupendous speed of their economic growth. Even under the creaking Romanov dynasty, celebrating its tercentenary in 1913 with characteristically medieval pageantry, Russia 'was not just stirring economically it was exploding'. Foreign investment poured into transport, mines, factories and power stations while significantly, the German Empire, despite political tensions, was the source of 'half of Russia's imports and destination for a third of Russia's exports'.

Further west, Argentina was being tipped as a destination for investment with more promise for the future than Canada, Australia or even the United States – 'the speed and scale of change in the country was vertiginous'. In 1913 the first underground railway line in the southern hemisphere (built with British money and expertise and run by a British operator) was opened in Buenos Aires which was now being talked about as one of the great cities of the world. 'Paris', declared one over-excited American visitor in 1913 'is now the Buenos Aires of Europe' – how wrong can you be?

1913 was marked by an '*apaisement des esprits*' rather than an escalation of tensions. Both Emmerson and the German Florian Illies, at one of the few points their narratives converge, mention the marriage of the Kaiser's daughter in Berlin in May that year, which was attended by Tsar Nicholas and King George V (the last time the three cousins met) as an occasion which seemed to promise a calmer international climate. As one British newspaper remarked, 'it is .... legitimate to assume that the political horizon is clear'. The various Balkan wars seemed to be burning themselves out, Franco-German crises over Morocco had receded, while French and German officials were amicably agreeing to minor adjustments to their respective colonial frontiers in West and Central Africa.

Both authors see the 'Zabern Affair' in November as an ominous sign of how localised incidents could suddenly escalate into international crises. It was triggered by the brutal response of a German commander in 'occupied' Alsace-Lorraine to some minor raillery from a group of local French speakers. Emmerson speculates that the reaction in Germany, where the Social Democrats demanded the resignation of the Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg (he of the 'scrap of paper' in 1914) demonstrated a 'tendency towards more parliamentary independence'. Illies, more convincingly, argues that the Affair 'threatened

peace between France and the German Reich more than any previous event' and cites the leading liberal German newspaper that the court martial's acquittal (to the undisguised satisfaction of the Kaiser) of the commander whose behaviour provoked the crisis 'has laid down the right of the unrestricted dominion of the (military) towards the bourgeoisie'.

Illies rarely refers to international power politics, but focuses on the creative and personal lives of Austrian and German writers, artists and, perhaps inevitably, psychoanalysts. The result is an absorbing (and skilfully translated) picture of 1913, which exploits its sources in memoirs, diaries and the occasional press quotation with a light touch, although it would have benefitted from an index and some biographical notes on the key figures.

We witness the great rift between Sigmund Freud and his erstwhile disciple Carl Jung over what seems now to be a minor dispute about an alleged tendency of Freud to 'treat his pupils as patients'. Freud was then studying parricide, which may have sharpened his reaction. After an acrimonious exchange of correspondence in January 1913 and a frosty meeting later, the two great psychoanalysts never met or spoke again.

Others are more preoccupied with marital problems: Thomas Mann writes of the 'severe bliss of marriage' which must have understated his relations with Frau Mann as the implications of his recently published *Death in Venice* dawned on her. Meanwhile 'Hermann Hesse is living very unhappily in Bern with his wife Maria' while the unfortunate Arthur Schnitzler 'spends 1913 immersed in subversive positional warfare (*sic*)' with his wife Olga. All this is tame stuff compared with the travails of Franz Kafka who, despite his morbid fear (shared with Oswald Spengler, already preoccupied with *The Decline of the West*) of women with their clothes off, is pursuing a Berlin typist, Felice Bauer. Writing to his intended 'what each of us would gain and lose' Kafka confesses that 'you would gain a sick, weak, unsociable, taciturn, sad, stiff, pretty much hopeless human being' while to seal the deal with the Bauer family he describes himself to his prospective father-in-law in similar vein as 'taciturn, unsociable, morose, selfish, a hypochondriac and in generally poor health'. Later Felice decided to make a more conventional marriage.

Not surprisingly, many of Illies' subjects are preoccupied with death and suicide, the prominent art dealer Flechtheim deciding to spend the whole of 1913 planning to kill himself to get it right (he died of natural causes in 1937). Three great classics of the modern era were published: Robert Musil's *A Man without Qualities*, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (Anatole France's quipped that 'life is too short and Proust is too long' – and he had only read the first volume). Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* famously convulsed the world of music in a Paris production which 'sent shockwaves as far as New York and Moscow'. Everyone who was anyone was in the audience, described by Illies as the 'noblest and most cultivated in old Europe' from D'Annunzio, Ravel and Debussy to Coco Chanel and Marcel Duchamp. Whatever their verdict on the ballet, it was certainly an occasion which none of them would ever forget.

Great changes are also reflected in the art world with the famous Armory Show in New York in February exposing the American public to contemporary art by what Theodore Roosevelt termed 'European extremists' followed by the First German Autumn Salon in Berlin featuring nearly 'everyone who was avant-garde in 1913', ninety artists from twelve countries, including Italian Futurists, Cubists, Klee, Chagall and Kandinsky.

The young Adolf Hitler, Stalin and Josip Broz (Tito), (all in Vienna at the same time in early 1913) have walk-on parts as do Berthold Brecht, Colonel Redl, Louis Armstrong, Charlie Chaplin and the Emperor Franz Josef and his heir presumptive Franz Ferdinand. Hardly any British figures rate a mention, except Captains Scott and Oates, posthumously. Links with the modern world are cited, with the openings of the first Aldi and Prada stores and the first edition of *Vanity Fair*.

If these authors do not firmly relate the world of 1913 to the outbreak of war, they both furnish material for speculation about its origins. Many countries were enjoying economic growth, but lacked the political maturity to restrain impetuous and aged rulers from permitting the deployment of their power. A few months later this failing would bring disaster on their heads and extinguish dynasties which had dominated much of Europe for centuries. As commentators and analysts today might do well to remember, neither the formidable network of economic relationships between the key great powers nor (least of all) the cosmopolitan instincts of Europe's cultural avant-garde could restrain short-sighted, chauvinistic politicians, egged on by restless, nationalistic elements within their own populations, from gambling on a 'short victorious war'. It turned into a blood bath, the effects of which we still feel today.

On 31 December 1913 Arthur Schnitzler spent the afternoon reading a new book *The Great War in Germany*. In the evening, he wrote in his diary, 'roulette was played'. Only seven months later it was being played again in the chancelleries of Europe.

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The Tudor Mafia

Merrie Cave

Tudor, The Family Story, Leanda de Lisle, Chatto and Windus, 2013, £20.

One of the pleasures of an addiction to the past is finding a book which gives you new insights and facts. The Tudors were our most colourful dynasty, recently inspiring a torrent of television programmes, books and novels, but this book while reading like a thriller blends meticulous scholarship with lively prose and riveting detail on every page. Keep your finger in the family tree to make it easy to follow. Leanda de Lisle concentrates on the passions and motives of the personalities of those strong men and women who changed history – think of Lenin or Churchill – much more than economic or social trends.

In 1485 England had been torn to bits by the Wars of the Roses. Yet by 1603 the Tudors bequeathed a distinct nation state, having survived challenges which were as serious, sometimes worse, as those of their predecessors. Thanks to Elizabeth's economic policies the country was at last peaceful and prosperous, Parliament was allowed an increase in its powers, and having survived Spain's invincible Armada, England became sovereign of the seas until the 1930s. It was also a time when under the patronage of the young and glamorous Henry VIII, lover of music and the arts, that those talented ambassadors of the Renaissance, Erasmus and Holbein were introduced to court. The tomb Henry commissioned for his parents in Westminster Abbey was our first Renaissance masterpiece while the outpouring of great literature in the Elizabethan age must have been the most prolific in history.

Most history lessons begin when Henry Tudor defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth but Leanda de Lisle starts the story when the ordinary but handsome young Owen Tudor from Wales, fell literally into the lap of Catherine de Valois, Henry V's widow, at a dance. 'Who would not judge it fortune's greatest grace, since he must fall, to fall in such a place.' The couple married secretly for Owen's country was deemed 'most vile and barbarous'. After Catherine's death, Owen had to go on the run and was eventually executed after fighting in King Henry VI's cause. His children were taken into the king's protection and the two eldest, Edmund and Jasper, were created Earls of Richmond and Pembroke.

Apart from the obvious candidates, the two Marys and Elizabeth, formidable women, were influential personalities of the period. Here we learn much more about the female founder of the dynasty, Margaret Beaufort who, descended from Edward III through the Lancastrian line, was married off to Edmund Tudor when she was twelve. She was a brave and resourceful woman. Having survived giving birth to the future Henry VII when she was thirteen she subsequently used her wealth and wits to keep her beloved son safe from his enemies, especially during his exile in Brittany after the Lancastrian star had waned. Another formidable Tudor was Margaret Douglas the daughter by the second marriage of Henry VIII's elder sister Margaret Tudor. In her previous marriage Margaret Tudor was the wife of James IV of Scotland killed at Flodden. She engineered the doomed marriage between her son Henry, Lord Darnley and her niece Mary Queen of Scots, thus extending the Tudor bloodline into the Stuart family, but did not live to see her grandson James ascend the English throne.

The Tudors might have been defeated by the problems which engulfed their predecessors, but their Machiavellian resolve surmounted them. All the Tudor monarchs kept an eagle eye on their close relatives with better claims to the throne than they had. Even quaint imposters like Perkin Warbeck came to a sticky end, either locking them up or killing them. Margaret Douglas would veer between being tolerated or suffering house arrest. Henry, unable to produce 'the heir and the spare' required to preserve the dynasty and prevent civil war after his death, after twenty years turned into an ugly, cruel and paranoid man relying on indiscriminate murder to solve his problems. He may have been suffering from Cushing's disease which would certainly account for his rages and increased girth.

Both Mary and Elizabeth were threatened by descendants of Henry VIII's two sisters Margaret Tudor and Mary Tudor who had married Louis XII of France. The latter's descendant Lady Jane Grey reigned for nine days before Catholic Mary established her rule.

Civil war could have broken out several times over the frequent changes of official religion. Henry VIII broke with the Papacy when he wanted to marry Ann Boleyn; a short period of Calvinist Protestantism followed under Edward and then there was a swing back to Catholicism under Mary. Elizabeth's Act of Settlement finally established a moderate Protestant Church of England. It was no wonder that many ordinary people became confused and turned to paganism. The Dissolution of the Monasteries filled Henry's empty coffers but caused great social unrest and hardship. The Pilgrimage of Grace (1536), supported by Yorkist families like the Percys and the

Nevilles, was the biggest rebellion since the Peasant's revolt of 1381. Catholic Mary, the legitimate child of her parents' marriage, symbolising resistance to the break with Rome was also a focus of the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Catholics enjoyed relative toleration for the first twelve years of Elizabeth's reign but after the Papal Bull of 1570 they were forced to choose between their church and their country. In 1569 when the Northern Earls rose for 'the preservation of the Queen of Scots' Gloriana became Bloody Elizabeth when she ordered the ruthless suppression of the rebellion; the estimated total of executions was around 800-900, far exceeding the number that her father and sister had hanged. She had little alternative: the Massacre of St Bartholemew's Day in Paris showed what might happen in London if there were any lapse from firm resolve.

Elizabeth, the most successful Tudor and our greatest Sovereign was lucky to enjoy a long reign and to have outstanding Secretaries in the Cecils and in Sir Francis Walsingham, all of whom oozed guile and resourcefulness. She embraced Fabian tactics and triumphantly proved that where there is no solution to a problem, it is better to do nothing. Her advisers and Parliament were obsessed with the need for her to marry but she realised, unlike many of her subjects, that marrying might mean, at the worst losing her life as her mother had, or if to a foreign prince the endless complications it would bring, as the English religious conflict was part of a wider European one which would only be settled in the next century. Famously announcing to Parliament: 'I have already joined myself in marriage to a husband, namely the Kingdom of England', she went along with receiving foreign suitors, using them as a tool of foreign policy. She heroically sacrificed her emotional life for her realm. When her wily advisers wanted to execute Mary Queen of Scots, she remembered her suffering under her sister Mary: 'I stood in danger of my life, my sister (Catholic Mary) was so incensed against me.' After the Babington plot brought clear proof of Mary's guilt she agreed to sign the order and it was sent so quickly, she had no time to change her mind. To the end she havered about the succession, but on her deathbed gave an affirmative sign for James Stuart.

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Very Stiff Upper Lips

David Twiston Davies

Running the Show: Governors of the British Empire, 1857-1912, Stephanie Williams, Viking, 2011, £10.99.

Who would have wanted to be a colonial governor in the late 19th century? A worldwide organisation off-handedly created by British genius, the Empire promised variety, excitement, the heady freedom to exercise power in a way impossible at home. A few posts came with a luxurious lifestyle. But many involved physical danger, bitter loneliness in appalling climates as well as the dim awareness that when (and if) the holder retired to Cheltenham or Bath nobody would be interested. Inevitably the answer to the question must be: anyone who could not get anything better at home.

Stephanie Williams is a child of Empire whose interest in the colonial service was kindled when she came across four volumes in the Public Record's Office, labelled Miscellaneous. These contained an 1879 questionnaire sent to those governing colonies around the world which had been acquired – occasionally with enthusiasm, but more often with extreme reluctance – by HMG. The respondents' answers ranged from astonishment that anyone should be interested in explanations of the difficulties involved to what they really deserved to be paid. They came from widely different backgrounds, merchants, explorers, army officers and talented administrative clerks followed by scientists and aristocrats brought up to rule. The requirements for the job were vague: to suppress slavery, prevent the locals fighting each other and ensure that the blue book recording a colony's official business was sent home every year. Since so many of these territories were weeks and months away, the Colonial Office was generally prepared to let them get on with the job in their own way provided they did not take on too many new responsibilities and avoided major trouble.

The first of the empire builders here is Sir John Glover, a dashing naval officer who went to sea at eleven, helped to chart the Niger river, and was severely wounded in a battle on the Irrawaddy river in Burma before becoming known on the West African coast as Golobar, chief of the Forces of the Great Sultana Queen of England. The distance from London enabled him to ignore many instructions, though his dispatches home could be so confusing that one clerk in Whitehall

complained that he seemed to want to go to war over a sheep.

Since Williams is not writing full biographies but character sketches, showing how these strong individuals flourished in their particular territories, she is able to switch her attention to contemporaries, such as the explorer Sir Richard Burton and the black former Muslim slave, Samuel Crowther, who became Bishop of Niger. Not the least of her book's charms is the way her characters reappear in other parts of the world, as when Glover ends up a highly popular governor of chilly Newfoundland.

William des Voeux quarrelled with his father in England, was called to the Toronto Bar, then became a magistrate on the Caribbean island of St Lucia. It was an appointment with no prospect of promotion, where the other magistrates were hand in glove with corrupt plantation owners. Eventually he sent a damning report to London, then was promoted to Trinidad and Fiji before ending up in Hong Kong as one of the most admired heads of the service.

But not all had happy endings. William Douglas became the Resident at Palmerston (now Darwin) in the Australian Northern Territory, where predictions of plentiful food and water proved a mirage and his health and sanity were ground down by unrelenting hard work; he ended his career a marine clerk in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

One of the most striking tragedies is that of Sir Bartle Frere, who arrived in South Africa after a highly successful Indian career to be confronted by troublesome Boers and the Zulu leader Cetewayo, who said he was ready to kill anyone, and proved it when his impis wiped out almost an entire regiment at Isandlwana. It is instructive to realise that while Frere was blamed for a tragedy which had been long in train, Cetewayo was considered even at Buckingham Palace as magnificent in defeat.

On the other hand Sir Percy Girouard, a French Canadian railway engineer with a burning drive to pave the way for commercial prosperity, failed in east Africa for not being able to satisfy its aristocratic settlers and those determined to protect the land rights of the Masai tribesmen.

More successful were those with less dramatic roles marked out for them. Sydney Olivier, a socialist uncle of the actor Laurence Olivier, rebuilt Kingston, Jamaica, after an earthquake and saved it from the hands of a white clique; he went on to be Secretary of State for India and a member of the House of Lords. Henry Hesketh Bell was a modest social climbing commissioner in Uganda, who used his London contacts to persuade the government to move villagers on Lake Victoria inland to isolate the tsetse fly, finally identified as the cause of sleeping sickness. Sir Arthur Gordon, a son of Lord Aberdeen and a friend of Gladstone, obtained the governorship of the new colony of Fiji, and stimulated outside property developers to set it on the steady course which was only destroyed when the United Nations forced the islanders to seek independence and then abandon a greatly loved Queen. Williams rightly puts proper emphasis on the vital role of wives who followed and supported their husbands, often in appalling circumstances. The marriage of Frederick Lugard and his wife, the *Times'* colonial editor Flora Shaw, was an ideal working partnership in Uganda; but they had no children to pose the dilemma of whether the wife should take them home to be educated. Sometimes the absorbing strain of governing choked love in marriages. Sir Frank Swettenham in the Malay States realised that his passionate responses awoke scarcely veiled disgust in his wife, which led him to an assumed chilly indifference.

The price of empire could be heavy for its servants. But these snapshots of an age when British pluck and creativity flowered against a colourful tapestry makes today's EU seem a paltry failure in comparison.

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Calvary – A Comedy

2014
Director John Michael McDonagh
Starring Brian Gleeson as Father James Lavelle, Chris O'Dowd as the Penitent, Aiden Gillen as Dr Frank Harte

The film, a modern Calvary set on the west coast of (Ireland and billed as a comedy, although I did not hear a single laugh from a London audience and the silence as the final credits rolled was profound), opens in a Catholic confessional.

The penitent explains that in his childhood he was raped both anally and orally by a priest for years.

'As you can imagine', he says, 'I bled a lot'.

The pederast priest is dead, but his victim seeks revenge. Revenge has to mean something, it has to shock. What better way could there be but by killing, not a bad priest, but a good one. His confessor is a good priest. His penitent tells him he intends to kill him two weeks hence. He should make his peace with God.

The priest, frightened but uncertain if the threat is genuine but recognising his penitent, consults his bishop. The latter, a suave committee man in a tailored soutane, gives him permission to break the seal of the confessional as the penitent was not confessing a sin, only declaring his intention of carrying one out. Legalistically perfect sound, but not only is this advice betrayal of the inviolability of the confessional, it leaves little doubt in the priest's mind that his bishop would sell his own mother for high office.

The priest visits the local police chief intending to give him the penitent's name only to find him closeted with an American rent boy in the early stages of AIDS dementia. The rent boy at first refuses to leave, mocking the priest and offering to let him bugger him. When he does leave, shouting Californian clichés about relaxing and chilling out, and the priest finds himself alone with the policeman, he finds he cannot bring himself to reveal the penitent's name. The policeman gives him a pistol to defend himself, but warns him should he use it he is on his own.

The priest returns to his parish. Most of us have forgotten what priests do apart from conducting funerals. So it comes as a shock to realise that they have, in absolute humility, to hand out often devastating moral advice. One of the priest's parishioners, angered by his advice to stop committing adultery, shouts at him 'Who do you think you are, a star in EastEnders?' Moral advice is now the prerogative of TV. The old passion plays have given way to soaps, the Holy Family replaced by living tableaux of contemporary morality: the passion and suffering of gays, feminism, the sin of racism, males as fallen creatures.

The priest is then witness to a series of encounters with human suffering: the woman taken in adultery, a lifer in Portloaise Prison refusing to reveal where he buried his last victim, a business man unhinged by greed, a botched suicide, and death itself. The priest gives the last rites to a 30-year-old man on a respirator, the victim of a road accident. Can he explain the tragedy to a distraught wife as an expression of God's love?

All of this, as at Calvary, is accompanied by the yells and taunts of the mob. A father seeing him speaking to his nine-year-old daughter on a country lane, shouts at him to clear off or he will smash his face in. Priests are paedophiles, full stop. Arsonists burn his church down and cut the throat of his beloved Labrador; he is beaten up by a publican.

He meets the devil in the guise of an intensive care doctor. Smilingly, and slightly apologetically as if he was telling a particularly dirty but exceedingly clever joke, the doctor tells the priest that a few years ago an anaesthetist colleague made a mistake during an operation resulting in a child being deprived of speech, movement, hearing and sight. When the child wakes from the anaesthetic expecting to hear his parents' voices, to feel the touch of his mother's hand, for his sight to return, nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody speaks, all is darkness, for ever. What was God's intention in this?

Calvary is one of a trilogy by the director of *Ned Kelly* and *In Bruges*. The first of the trilogy, *The Guard*, was about an unconventional Irish police sergeant's collaboration with a black FBI agent sent to track down drug smugglers in the West of Ireland. The Sergeant says to him, 'I thought only black lads were drugs dealers; I'm Irish; racism is part of my culture'. The last of the trio, *The Lame shall Enter*, now filming, is about a wheelchair-bound abusive paraplegic in South London.

What McDonagh is examining in *Calvary* is familiar to anyone who whose job involves human despair. Long recognised by the Catholic Church as a

purely spiritual disorder, an insight arrived at by pure reason, like a mathematical law, existing outside of our physical selves, it has nothing to do with clinical depression or unhappiness, either of which which may or may not be alleviated by psychotherapy, happy pills, a love affair, religion, art or a few bursts of ECT. Spiritual despair is the ineradicable suffering built in to all of us. Cast out of Paradise we are condemned to live in total spiritual and intellectual darkness. Like the boy in a coma, we will never feel the creator's hand, hear his voice or open our eyes to the light. Not only don't we know, we know we don't know, nor will we ever know.

Gripped by despair all of the characters at some stage ask for God's love. A flicker of understanding crosses the face of the felon in Portaloaise who will not give up the place he has buried his last victim. But then he realises that such an unconditional gift of love to the relatives would be giving away his last bargaining chip for early release and remove the aura of mystery he has surrounded himself with. The flicker of recognition dies. The adulterer on the way to a tryst stops to speak to the priest but changes her mind and flaunts her lover in front of him. The doctor makes fun of himself, asks the priest to judge him, then counter attacks with his terrible parable. Only the businessman, the good thief, just at the end asks for and accepts forgiveness.

The film, set in the breathtaking scenery of the West Coast of Ireland, a world of restless seascapes and primeval black mountains, moves toward its climax. Not until the very end have we any idea of who the priest's assassin, his Judas, will be, nor do we know if he will defend himself with the pistol the policeman gave him. See the film to find out.

Is *Calvary* nothing more than a sophisticated joke about what many people in Ireland, and practically everybody in atheistic Britain, now thinks of as a fairy tale? We all know Darwin showed us we are accidents of evolution, and neurologists can look into the brain with scanners and show love not hiding his face among a cloud of stars but exchanging dopamine molecules across receptors in the amygdala. For many of us, brought up in The Faith, God died when theoretical physicists discovered the multiverse, and we learned there was no creator, only an infinite succession of universes that have had no beginning and no end. There are no good bedtime stories any more, we are grown up and have to switch the lights out for ourselves.

But when the lights go out and silence descends, is $e=mc^2$ and a rosary of DNA sufficient to lighten our darkness?

Fr*ancis Hallinan*

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ART

Andrew Wilton

The King's Pictures: The Formation and dispersal of the Collections of Charles I and his Courtiers, Francis Haskell, edited and introduced by Karen Serres with a foreword by Nicholas Penny, Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, 2013.

In the opinion of Peter Paul Rubens, that much-travelled doyen of Baroque painters, who came to London in 1628, Charles I was 'the greatest amateur of paintings among the princes of the world'. The England of the first two Stuart kings, James I and Charles I, was enjoying a cultural golden age. Shakespeare was still alive until 1616, his plays performed before royalty and an enthusiastic public. His fellow dramatist Ben Jonson wrote masques for the court that were designed by the country's first Italian-inspired architect Inigo Jones. John Donne and the Metaphysical poets were in full voice. James's elder son Prince Henry was a precocious collector, surrounded by a coterie of 'virtuosi' whose interests extended from ancient marbles to modern painting. One of these, James's Ganymede George Villiers, whom he created 1st Duke of Buckingham, became a confidant of Henry's brother Charles, after Henry died at the age of 18, and helped him to become one of the greatest art-collectors of any period.

Inigo Jones had pioneered a 'Grand Tour' collecting habit; the Earl and Countess of Arundel filled Somerset House with pictures and classical marbles. Just along the Strand, Northumberland House became home to another remarkable hoard of treasures; the great Scottish landowner James, 3rd Marquess, later 1st Duke of Hamilton amassed old master paintings, collecting them for the King as well as for himself. Charles of course, thanks to his unique authority, and with enthusiastic advisers like Kenelm Digby, Endymion Porter, and the modest wax-modeller Abraham van der Doort, who assumed the role of Keeper of the royal pictures, came to possess as fine and extensive a representation of the art of the Italian

Renaissance as has ever been assembled. Another Netherlandish artist, the unscrupulous but talented Balthazar Gerbier, proved an inspired agent in the ferreting out of masterpieces. Haskell takes his reader on a briskly observant walk through Westminster and the neighbouring streets to spell out what an astonishing assemblage of masterpieces this small band of English and Scottish connoisseurs had brought together in a ridiculously small area of London.

These men were inevitably rivals of one another, and they were rivals too of many foreign amateurs and potentates: Philip IV of Spain, Marie de' Medicis, Henry IV of France, the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II and several Dutch, Flemish, German and Italian princes. They competed for examples of the great High Renaissance masters – Durer and Holbein, Raphael and Leonardo, Correggio, Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese in particular. As for the moderns, the English monarchy was extraordinarily lucky in attracting the services of two of the greatest of them, Rubens and Van Dyck, both from Antwerp; and Gerard van Honthorst, from Utrecht, supplied portraits and a superb allegory in the manner of one of Inigo Jones's Court masques. Despite the active involvement of Philip of Spain in these negotiations, it is interesting that the contemporary Spanish painters – Velazquez, Murillo and Zurbaran – did not figure on the British shopping lists; they only began to be taken seriously in the eighteenth century and later. Similarly, the French landscape painters, Claude Lorrain and the two Poussins, Nicolas and Gaspard, had to wait nearly a hundred years for recognition.

When Charles's rule disintegrated after 1640, the precarious balance of this connoisseurly pyramid faltered and collapsed. Very soon works of art began to haemorrhage out of the country. The temper of the ensuing Commonwealth under Cromwell hardly favoured the kinds of art that the Stuarts had enjoyed: there were serious arguments about what was respectable and what not. Charles was influenced by the tastes of his Catholic wife, the French princess Henrietta Maria, and for the Puritans images of the Saviour, either as a child or as an adult, and of His Mother, were blasphemous, while the nudes of classical mythology were effectively obscene. Many pictures were defaced or destroyed, and many more were taken to Europe where eager rivals were able to snap them up for their respective royal collections. Almost as soon as Charles had been beheaded, the palace of Whitehall was stripped and hundreds of pictures amassed for sale in Somerset House (the Arundels having decamped to the Protestant Netherlands), and over the next five years ambassadors and envoys from all over Europe came to pick off what they liked. Some things were retained for Cromwell's own palace, where tapestries were especially prized as wall-coverings and draught-excluders.

The British capital still boasts extraordinarily fine collections of Old Master paintings, and some sculpture; much has returned to the Royal Collection. One thinks of the Mantegna *Triumph of Caesar* (now at Hampton Court) and the Raphael tapestry cartoons in the V&A. The great *Apotheosis of James I* that Rubens painted for the Whitehall Banqueting House ceiling was in place when Charles passed under it to the scaffold, remained to preside over the ceremonials of the Commonwealth as well as of the Restoration, and is still there today. But many masterpieces also once in London are now in Paris, Munich, Vienna, Madrid and Berlin; in due course, with the ebb and flow of wealth, a great deal of this booty arrived in the cities of North America. One of Van Dyck's greatest pictures, his *Rinaldo and Armida*, fetched up in Baltimore, of all places. Perhaps with the current threat to the Detroit Institute of Arts we are witnessing the start of another cycle.

The subject is daunting in its ramifications. Haskell is well known for his work on the cultural history of collecting, especially of antique sculpture and old master paintings. He delivered these essays as the inaugural series of Paul Mellon Lectures in London in 1994, and died in 2000; having worked on the subject for many years, no one was more aware than he that it was far from having been completely investigated; though in this book he (perhaps deliberately) plays down some of the most significant developments, like the now well established demotion of some of Raphael's most prised late works – the *Madonna of the Pearl*, for instance, which was Charles's pride and joy – to products of his studio, some even posthumous.

Haskell's work has been edited with that awareness clearly in view, and this book attempts to bring the scholarship somewhat up to date, while acknowledging that it can only be as it were a preliminary overview. But it is lucid, perceptive, and very richly illustrated so that we can get an immediate sense of what Charles and his courtiers achieved, and of what England lost by their fall from power. Haskell ends by stressing that they were indeed a tiny group of dilettanti, whose discernment led to nothing. But it is also fair to say that the great burgeoning of art appreciation in the decades of the Grand Tour, up to the French Revolution, must be seen as a continuation of sorts, and represents an almost comparable, and more broadly based, efflorescence of British aesthetic sensibility. The British national collections of today, and the Royal collection itself, would not be what they are if the great Stuart spending spree had never happened.

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IN SHORT

Consider the Fork: a History of How we Cook and Eat, Bee Wilson, Penguin Books, 2013, pb £8.99.

This riveting book explores the history of how we invented tools and gadgets to improve the satisfaction of our greatest need. Bee Wilson's research is impressive and wedded to her lively style the book makes a terrific read. Anyone who has struggled to light an old fashioned range will appreciate the changes which have liberated women from the kitchen which, with birth control, were far more important than equality legislation in women's emancipation.

Anthropologists aver that the discovery of fire and then cooking food over an open fire was the most important development in history and changed us from apes into humans because cooked foods enlarged our brains and gave us surplus energy. However until the invention of enclosed brick chimneys and cast iron fire grates in the 16th and 17th centuries cooking was very dangerous due to the risk of long-skirted women and toddlers setting fire to themselves. Indeed smoke from indoor fires still kills a million people a year in the developing world.

The enclosed fire extended cooking methods and different pots and pans; the Greeks used clay pots while the Romans invented fine metal frying pans. Boiling allowed people to eat stuff like cassava which would be toxic raw. A surplus of cheap cast iron in the 19th century made the closed range very popular but gas ovens, appearing around 1912, were the real revolution as ranges were so difficult to light. More recently microwaves have abolished the need to tame fire altogether.

In the past being handy with a knife was much more important than being literate. Everyone in medieval and Renaissance Europe, even women, carried a knife around with them. By the seventeenth century knives had shed their mystique because we started to lay tables and knives were joined by forks. When Richelieu saw a dinner guest using the sharp end of a knife to pick his teeth, he ordered all his knives to be blunted; the manufacture of pointed knives later ceased by royal command. In the distant past diets were monotonous in winter and spring because all stored foods were salted. Canning didn't catch on until an efficient can opener was invented. By the end of the nineteenth century refrigeration revolutionized eating habits, providing fresh food for everybody all the year round.

The invention of the modern frozen food industry was romantic. Clarence Birdseye, a biologist, was on a fur trapping mission in the Arctic when he noticed that fish and game tasted better in the winter because it froze more quickly. He used his baby son Kellogg's baby bath for his experiments and soon found that quick freezing was equally successful with meat as with delicate garden peas.

Merrie Cave

Peace and War, Britain in 1914, Nigel Jones, Head of Zeus, 2014, £20.

Because of the anniversary of the Great War we are being bombarded with information about the war to end wars, which changed our history. We have had a TV debate between two historians about whether the war was worth fighting, which split opinion and set up two warring camps. The education secretary Michael Gove blasted left-wing 'Blackadder myths', which denigrate the war and deny the guilt of Germany.

This book looks at the peace before war. Nigel Jones has created a lavish coffee table book which looks at the whole of English life *ante-bellum*. The front cover has a Getty image showing a soldier with his mess-kit standing on his front door-step surrounded by his relations. People were so buttoned up in those days, that it's impossible to tell from their faces whether he's coming or going and whether they are happy or sad. Our grandparents were very different from us and Jones asks the question, 'What was it really like, the England of 1914?' He examines every facet of that year.

What a thrilling time it was; the age of Lloyd George, the 'Welsh Wizard' who began the welfare state. There was civil war among Ulstermen, the rise of the Labour Party and Trades Unions, civil conflict from middle-class ladies demanding the vote for other women of their class, wild modernist experiments in painting and writing, and the British upper classes, on grouse-moors and country house weekends, enjoying what was to be their final fling.

The book took me back not to 1914 but to 1974 and my History A level, when we covered the rise of the British Empire, rivalry with Bismarck's Germany and the build-up to World War I. This book would have been useful then, as it is a rollicking good read; Jones is particularly good on 'Spy Fever', and the birth of

the Secret Service. He tears through the end of the Edwardian era, not in great depth, but gives interesting vignettes and some pithy images. Describing Britain sitting 'smugly behind the steel castles of her navy', he writes without the left-wing bias of the teaching in my school years, so readers can make up their own mind about life in 1914.

The only disappointment is the use of cliché, with chapter headings such as 'The Darkening Sky', 'Home Fires', 'Descent into the Dark'' but perhaps they are hard to avoid. He sometimes sounds like a writer of spy fiction from the time: 'Beneath the placid surface of Edwardian England, seething currents were stirring', and lapses into some rather lazy language. Bismarck's Germany is 'the new kid on the block', the Franco-Prussian War a 'wake-up call', to Britain. This is a pity as there is much research and breadth of knowledge shown in these glossy pages.

Jones has written something that could be called a coffee-table book, but it has extra *frisson* as Britain increasingly resembles unpleasant aspects of the society our grandparents knew; capital is again in the hands of very few, not aristocrats these days but the giants of new technology who make millions but do not need to employ many workers. In 2014 we are threatened not by new military empires but mysterious foreign oligarchs and kleptocrats living among us, who use property as their currency. Workers are again on low wages with short-term contracts and the middle classes are increasingly insecure. We now examine that time a hundred years ago, not just to learn about a war, but to find out where we in the age of the welfare state went so wrong.

Jane Kelly

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