

The

# Salisbury Review

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought

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runway with Anti, Pro HS2 with Anti,  
Pro Immigration with Anti, Pro Assad with  
Anti, Pro Renewable energy with Anti.....”

GLENWORTH  
CONSERVATIVE  
PARTY  
CHRISTMAS DINNER



## **An Islamic Poland?**

*Myles Harris*

## **John Halliday Christie**

*Tom Nolan*

## **Old Spanish Practices**

*Bill Hartley*

## **England’s Last Humourist**

*Alistair Miller*

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The  
*Salisbury Review*

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This November a crowd watching a 'friendly' football match in Istanbul between Greece and Turkey booed and chanted 'Allah Akbar' during a minute's silence for the victims of the Paris attacks. Allowing for the yobbishness of football fans worldwide and a long history of antagonism between Greek and Turk it still shows how little sympathy the west can expect from the Middle East over the Paris atrocities. The general view in the souks and bazaars is 'they deserved it' while many believe that everything from the Twin Towers to the Paris massacre was 'false flag' operations by the CIA and Mossad. We too have our delusions. In the recent house of Commons debate on the bombing of Syria, the general consensus on both Conservative and Labour benches was that the rise of ISIS was in no way linked with the chaos caused by the second Gulf War. Oil is thicker than water.

Such divided loyalties place the million Muslims admitted to Britain by the Labour Party as a treatment for the 'disease' of racism from 1997 in a difficult position. Like most immigrants, they know their life is now here while still being loyal to the 'old country' even if it is, like Pakistan, a pariah state run by psychopaths and crooks, or Afghanistan where murder is a sport like Football League. Instead Islam becomes their only moral compass in western society where to pious Muslims, young British women often wear almost no clothes, sex among unbelievers appears to have no more significance than shaking hands, and large numbers of the young spend their time drugged out of their minds, where if you don't work or get as many women pregnant as possible the state will reimburse you. Even more mysterious are the moral homilies of the west's leaders who while preaching non-violence and peace, fund the most terrifying war machines the world has seen. Enter the Stealth Bomber, Cruise and the Reaper Drone.

This has sowed confusion, sometimes amounting to psychosis, in the minds of many young Muslims who, urged to be 'British' and both attracted and repelled by the way the 'infidel' lives, often give in to its temptations only to be filled with the most bitter remorse. Enter the phenomenon of the drug addict urban bomber crying 'Allah Akbar' as he pulls the detonation ring of his suicide vest.

Despite this the racial doctors of the left recommend a further round of therapy. The 10,000 refugees a day now streaming into Europe are to be welcomed without question, even if among them are those who may transplant an entire failed way of life, complete with street fighting, jihadism and corruption, into Europe. Aided by the BBC which censors details of the brutal realities of Islamic life in the Middle East, such societies will grow vigorously in our democratic soil. Sending them back is never contemplated. So when Poland's Foreign Minister suggested that the



"But she's a refugee - Merkel and Juncker said we had to be more welcoming."

thousands of young Syrian men, now sipping coffee in our cafes and texting on their mobile phones, be formed into an army and sent back to retake their country he was laughed at. Europe, declared the therapists, needs these refugees as a corrective.

Not as long as migrants crossing from Turkey to Greece are admitted as 'refugees' under EU rules. They are not. Refugees are supposed to ask for asylum in the first country they come to, so every refugee arriving in Greece could be shipped in good conscience back to Turkey on one of the large Greek ferries now used to ship them further into the EU.

Turkey doesn't want refugees. They are expensive, (\$7 billion a year), upset local economies, and stoke local Muslim fanaticism. It is why in Izmir, Turkey's people smuggling capital, the government security directorate lives comfortably across the road from the

largest people smuggling operation in the country.

But given enough money to outbid her own people smugglers and drug runners Turkey would co-operate. She has already offered to set up a buffer zone 80km wide along the entire Turkey/Syria border, which could be used 'as an area for the voluntary return of refugees', incidentally splitting two arms of the Kurdish rebels fighting in eastern Turkey and Syria. In addition a clamp down on drug smuggling plus a European and US travel ban on Saudi and Qatari nationals, major sources of ISIL's funds, would go a long way to putting them out

of business.

But a dying EU lacks the will. Schengen is dead and its leaders failed to buy off African immigration at its recent Malta conference when the magic curse of 'colonialism' uttered by greedy African politicians asking for twice the money caused the white delegates to flee. It is *sauve qui peut*. Instead of David Cameron wasting his time touring the capitals of Europe negotiating Britain's non-exit from an increasingly Cheshire Cat-like EU, better for him to spend it in Ankara. There is however that question of ISIL's funding from Saudi Arabia and [back to contents](#)

# The Islamic Republic of Poland?

Myles Harris

In his yard in Katowice, southern Poland, the monumental mason, a cheerful man in designer glasses, chuckled.

'We have had a rush of relatives coming in to order fresh headstones for their grandparents. Under communism people liked to be remembered as 'Loyal Party Member' or 'Secretary of the Katowice No 3 district Transport Union'. They all have to be changed. Nobody is a Communist now. We are all Christians.' He took down a book of headstone designs. Each page showed a crucifix, adorned with either the head of Christ crucified, the Virgin Mary, angels or palms. 'Party Member' was replaced with 'Sacred to the Memory.'

Ten years ago, with only a sander and handful of chisels, he would never have been able to keep up with demand. With the latest equipment he recently bought from Germany: etching tools, an automated firing oven, a motorised hoist, and special drills, it was, he said, easy to help rewrite Poland's history in stone.

An elderly workman backed a small truck filled with blank headstones into the yard, got out and stood doffing his forage cap, Chekov style, at nobody in particular. His face was seamed with coal dust scars from years underground. Katowice had been a coal-mining region but now that the EU has replaced COMECON, and the West has gone Green, coal is bad. In consequence

the miners, once the aristocracy of communism, now get the average national wage of £5 an hour. The old miner would sup tonight on wodzionka, garlic and bread soup instead of bigos, the ham and meat cabbage stew he used to eat. Only people like the stonemason with the entrepreneurial wit to buy his gravestones ready made from China at a handsome markup and perhaps run a fleet of funeral cars on the side could afford bigos. There are winners and losers under capitalism.

The miner would go home to one of the small villages around the city with rutted streets, blackened brick cottages and inadequate street lighting. It was Autumn and at night in the mist they looked like a Second World War film set. On rounding a corner it felt as though you might come across a pillbox and sentry. Which uniform the sentry was wearing, Russian or German, would be optional.

Away from the villages the small country roads give way to packed six lane motorways lined by American style shopping malls. In the Katowice city centre two hundred foot high poster pictures of David Beckham and a black footballer stare down at the shoppers. Behind the pictures workmen who a few weeks ago might have been on a scaffold in Oxford Street are erecting stores for McQueen, Harvey Nichols and Armani. In the surrounding streets the



new Polish bourgeoisie, the sons and daughters of the old Communist elite, fill the coffee shops and bars. Neatly dressed, quiet and discreet, impoverished by the new economic system and lacking influence, they are anxious to do 'good', by which they mean bringing a form of communism back, and with it, one suspects, their power. Radio Poland (despite its boss being tortured by the old Communist regime so he stutters) is filled with such people.

'I am worried' said one, with links to a liberal arts faculty at the university, 'about the fate of Muslims in Poland. They should be integrated into our communities. We want to avoid the mistakes made in the west by giving them houses in our villages and towns so they don't form ghettos.' He gave the impression, that the left was possessed of a special moral sensitivity when it came to Muslims, that encouraging their integration into Polish life would act as a spiritual antibiotic, cleansing the stupidity and insensitivity of the right.

I outlined the Rotherham child abuse tragedy to the table. Britain has been gripped by an unaccountable terror of giving offence to migrants so that in many respects they were above the law. Now Muslims have their own. Parliament has recently recognised the legitimacy of Sharia law, where divorce can leave a woman destitute and her children awarded to the husband. White Christian culture on the other hand is held up to ridicule by our intellectuals, mainly because of its overtones of male headship and the importance of the family. In the west, if you are rich, it is smart to hire a nanny and return to work a week after your child is born, if you are poor you ask grandma because you cannot afford the loss of wages. Modern industrial woman needs a crèche, not a breast pump.

There was a shocked silence. Poland, sustained by its western Christianity through centuries of bloody conquest by rapacious enemies, was going to find it difficult to regard the church in that light or would a Catholic country that entertained the Knights Hospitallers be able to view males as secondary or motherhood as a variety of slavery?

If Poland does, it is because her intellectuals, like ours, have fallen into capitalism's trap. Capitalism, like communism, abhors history and borders, family or traditions. People are either consumers or profit takers. Capitalism brings the poison of excess, communism a wasteland of shortages. We seem incapable of controlling either.

Just as the immigrants brought about a lowering of wages in Britain, allowing our bankers to reap increasing millions in bonuses, so the flood of refugees from the Middle East will bring a fall of wages to Poland but bonuses to her bankers. So many from

the Middle East have become guests that have long overstayed their silly welcome in Germany, that the wages crash could be massive. Behind Beckham's picture there should be another of a line of Somali cabbage pickers toiling in the Polish rain.

Poland has history over Islam. That afternoon I was taken to Lipiowec castle overlooking the Vistula. From the castle's 13th century ramparts we looked down over the plain where in 1683 the King of Poland, John the 3rd Sobieski gathered his army before marching to the relief of Vienna. An Ottoman army of 300,000 under Grand Vizier Mustafa Pasha had besieged the city for the last two months: if he succeeded in taking it the whole of Europe was open to the Word of the Prophet.

My hosts knew every detail of the battle. Sobieski and his army of 45,000 men reached Vienna on the 12th September after a ten day march slowed partly because his battle horses, which were to take part in what was to be the largest cavalry charge in history and would decide the battle, were so big they had to be towed in carts pulled by four ordinary horses.

By September the 13th the Turks were routed. Europe sighed with relief.

Had the Muslims won, as Gibbon wrote of a previous victory over the Saracens at Poitiers (732):

*...the Arabian fleet might have sailed without a naval combat into the mouth of the Thames. Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Mahomet.*

To get to the castle we had climbed through a forest of immensely tall, upright trees, in which during the Second World War the Polish resistance army hid. Talk of the Resistance led to the party remembering Katyn, Russia's massacre of 22,000 members of the officer corps and police along with a number of intelligentsia in 1940. It stirs huge emotions among the Poles. So much so my hostess said she could not bring herself to watch Polish director Andrzej Wajda's 2007 gripping tragedy *Katyn*. In addition many are convinced the Russians arranged the assassination of Poland's President Lech Kaczynsk in the 2010 air crash at Smolensk while on his way to pay homage to the victims of Katyn. Not that the British are held in particular regard. Churchill is a dirty word and quite a few older Poles know how a number of prominent left-wing English churchmen tried to stop a memorial to Katyn being erected in Gunnersbury cemetery in London in the 70's for fear of offending Russia.

One of our party recalled a newspaper article in Poland's equivalent of the *Guardian*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, examining the idea that Stalin had not killed off Poland's ruling class because he feared them, or

because they posed a threat, but because they were, theoretically, ‘historically unnecessary’. From being national heroes, were Katyn’s martyrs to be seen as a redundant political class?

Such articles are, as in American and European liberal arts faculties, the academic’s source of power, because to separate a country from its historical traditions is to destroy it. It is why some intellectuals are particularly incensed by the story of the Battle of Vienna, which they declare to be of no historical significance, if not a romantic, racist, half myth. Islam, they assert, never posed and never will pose a threat to Europe.

A few days after I left, Poland elected the conservative Law and Justice Party headed by Jaroslaw Kaczynski to office. Kaczynski, a lawyer, is much despised by the left for his Christian and nationalist views, and his lack of enthusiasm, shared by 75 per cent of Poles, for the Euro. He is particularly outspoken on Islamic immigration. A healthy society, he asserts, puts the family first, the state second and foreigners last. Europe has reversed that order. Thus in many parts of Europe Muslims are allowed to retain their Sharia law, their

rights of assembly and expression are upheld over that of the native population (reinforced if needed be by the police) and they have full, instant, and free access to services of state, such as health, housing and welfare, services built and paid for by aboriginal populations over decades, in Germany’s case over two centuries.

In such circumstances a right wing, anti-Euro, nationalist government might seem a blessing, but, like the monumental masons’s old sandstone wheel, it will be the very thing against which the new left will grind the ideological tools it has used so effectively in America and Western Europe to lose us freedom of speech, assembly and expression. Aimed largely at the younger generation, if Poland can be persuaded to do political penance for not only defeating Islam, but being so vigorously Catholic, so anti-Russian and so nationalistic, there is a chance of the country’s gradual acceptance of mass immigration, thus contributing to the left’s dream of a Joseph’s overcoat of tribes occupying every part of Europe. Poland must not repudiate its history. If it does it will take all of Europe into the whirlwind.

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# A Plain English Murder

Tom Nolan

When in 1974 I was taken there for the first time, Mme Tussaud’s in London was not yet the flagship for the gigantic international concern it has since become. It was still a parochial affair, with a strong emphasis on the famous and historical figures likely to be familiar to the English visitor, and though I did not recognise half of the dummies on display, I knew that I should commit their shiny faces to memory, because one day their significance would be revealed. I retain a vivid impression of the brightly lit, high-ceilinged hall full of monarchs and world-leaders, and an even more vivid one of the stairway down into the Chamber of Horrors. This is now a carnival attraction of costumed buffoons who jump out at intervals to terrify the tourists thronging through. When I first saw it, though, it was still dedicated to the dark side of our national life, all the more haunting for its proximity to the thrones and chandeliers upstairs. It took a



while for my eyes to get used to the gloom, but soon a gesturing crowd of effigies became visible, many of them standing in replicas of the rooms they had murdered in – Mrs Pearcey in a parlour, Joseph Smith in a bathroom and so on – like stuffed animals exhibited ‘in their natural habitat’. But the tableau which most shocked me was that of Christie in the grimy kitchen of his 10 Rillington Place flat, taking a break from pasting wallpaper over a cupboard door, behind which three cadavers had been deposited like luggage.

Since then I have learned to appreciate the Christie case greatly, chiefly because it marks the transition from the classical tradition of English murder to the more discordant deviancy which came to supplant it. An example of the classical tradition (as defined by George Orwell in his ‘Decline of the English Murder’) would be Dr Crippen, Christie’s stable-mate in the Chamber of Horrors. Crippen did not murder to satisfy an obscure sexual compulsion, but in order to dispose

of an overbearing spouse who would not otherwise go quietly, and to marry the woman he loved – driven to the deed because it seemed to him ‘less disgraceful, and less damaging to his career, than being detected in adultery’ (Orwell’s phrase). And in some ways Christie fits this pattern well. He may not have been an established middle-class professional – in fact he was a factory clerk – but in terms of bearing and education he was a cut above his neighbours, and his demeanour was that of a quietly-spoken, fastidious lay-preacher who had always kept himself respectable. And he was adept at keeping a secret.

Over the course of a decade (1943-1953) John Reginald Halliday Christie strangled seven women and one baby at 10 Rillington Place – the seven women because he could not perform sexually except with a dead or dying woman, the baby because its presence would have aroused suspicion after the mother’s murder. He was, then, a serial killer – and of a type which has by now become familiar: a socially competent criminal of above-average intelligence successfully hustling his way through several worlds at once. There was the public world of regular work, regular home-life, regular contacts with the authorities. There was the twilight world of prostitutes, illicit sex, abortions and small-time criminality, for Christie had begun life as a crook and exploited his position as a Reserve Policeman to inveigle the many desperate women adrift in wartime London. And lastly, there was the murky world of his sexual obsessions which revolved around control, violence and necrophilia, and which he could never confess to anyone. So that Christie had the social standing to deflect suspicion, the contacts to procure his victims, and the insatiable urge to kill them. Is it any wonder he had such a good innings? He also had a remarkable gift for improvisation, which allowed him to frame Timothy Evans, the slow-witted husband of Beryl Evans, for her murder after Christie had first anaesthetised, then throttled her in the couple’s upstairs flat, and for the murder of their baby, Geraldine. Eventually, Christie’s fantasies and compulsions got the better of him. In December 1952, after Evans had been hanged in his stead, Christie killed his own wife, Ethel, so that he might devote himself to his murder-habit entirely, dispatching one victim a month until he was caught in March the following year.

This mixture of the old and the new in Christie’s character: the time-honoured hypocrisy and respectability no longer disguising intelligible criminal motives but a lethal sexual compulsion, is nicely complemented by the milieu in which he operated. The house in 10 Rillington Place, standing at the end of a sooty Victorian terrace, was a warren of tiny rooms

full of ancient sticks of furniture, dimly illuminated by Edwardian-era gas lighting. Even in 1950 it must have given the impression of being a post-First World War, rather than a post-Second World War house. And yet Christie could never have found such easy victims before 1939. The displaced European immigrants struggling to find their place in a new country, the disruption of the Blitz, the black-marketeering, the unexpected troop-movements, together they provided easier pickings for a serial killer than the inter-war period ever could. If it were not for the Second World War, Christie would have been a predator without a hunting ground. He was at once the last of the old-style killers, and the first of the new, a vital link in the evolution of British murder.

Christie, like many of his fellow waxen murderers, continued to fascinate the national imagination long after he had been executed. In 1974 Mme Tussaud’s could be confident that people would still recognise Mrs Pearcey, Joseph Smith, Crippen and the rest, despite the lapse of decades. But they have been put into storage now, or melted down, and in consequence a connection to the sinister side of our own history has been lost. There are, of course, countless sensational book and film treatments of their crimes, but there is nowhere now to savour that reverential communion with wickedness, desperation and misery I first experienced as an eleven-year-old in the Chamber of Horrors.

We might try to make good the loss, though, by founding a sort of Dark National Trust to commemorate great British criminals. This would entail purchasing and preserving the houses in which they committed their crimes, and opening them to the public – or, at the very least, affixing ‘black plaques’ by the front door. Had such a charity been in existence in the 1950s, 10 Rillington Place might have been saved for the nation, and tourists would still visit it today: the frowsy front room, the kitchen with its deck-chair of knotted string, the Evans’s flat on the second floor. And on the first floor (which was once rented by a certain Mr Kitchener) the tea-room would offer a Christie-related lunch-time experience. Gazing through the rain-streaked front windows, visitors would munch forlornly on HP Sauce sandwiches washed down with thrice-brewed Typhoo, to the accompaniment of a Light Programme dance band and the smell of Dettol.

*Tom Nolan is a linguist.*

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# Faith on the Danube

Mark Griffith

When I ask Hungarians what role they think Christianity has in their culture, they tend to look baffled. It might be hard for readers in the UK to imagine a country more secular and lacking in religious spirit than modern Britain, but Hungary might just be that country. Some writers have suggested that the national religion of Hungary might be science. They aren't joking.

In the west, many remember the fall of the Soviet-ruled East Bloc by the arrival of a Polish pope, John Paul II, plus strikes and lock-ins in the Gdansk shipyards that spawned a free, non-state Polish trade union, Solidarity. The appearance of Solidarity challenged the Soviet claim to be a political system representing proletarian workers. The leader of the strike, Lech Walesa, later became a national politician in Poland, espousing strongly Catholic views. The Christian belief of ordinary Poles and others was regularly described by writers like Bernard Levin in the *Times* as the iceberg of stubbornly-held faith on which the Soviet *Titanic* was doomed to puncture itself and sink. Many other journalists concentrated on similar themes – the vigorous Orthodox beliefs among ordinary Russians, Serbs, Bulgarians, the strength of the church in Romania, the defiant Catholic identity of Croats, Poles, Slovaks. The truth, as always, is a little more complex.

Much of the story about East Europeans under communism holding firm to Christian beliefs was correct, but as we watch today Vladimir Putin, a career KGB officer, trying to restore the glory and status of the Russian Orthodox church (even toying with a Romanov restoration, some rumour), it's important to remember that Soviet communism was not really that much more anti-religious than Western bourgeois liberalism. The two countries Hungary and the Czech Republic (it should more properly be named 'Bohemia and Moravia', split off from Slovakia since the early 1990s), are both easily as cynical and atheistic about religion as any Western democracy. It's worth noting that of the four great challenges to Soviet rule over its East Bloc satellites – the East German Workers' Uprising in 1953; a reformist Hungarian communist government, crushed in 1956; a reformist Czech

communist government, crushed in 1968; and finally a Polish trade-union movement with strong Catholic support and a Polish pope to protect it from abroad in 1980 – three were explicitly secular. Even the Polish shipyard workers were making liberal bourgeois demands (for a free trade union), albeit in a country united by Catholic faith.

Furthermore, three of those four uprisings had a part-Protestant/post-Christian aspect. Both Germany and Bohemia were cradles of Protestant Reform. There is a rarely-noted Protestant side to Hungary too.

Prague at the start of the 1620s was a modern-looking place, strangely familiar to our times, filled with free-thinking Jewish scholars, Christian and non-Christian occultists, astrologers, and Renaissance scientists entertained at court. That court, with the daughter of the new Scottish King of England James I as queen, had aspirations to be Europe's capital of Protestant Christian multiculturalism. Discussions there included morality myths – we'd almost call them science-fiction stories – about man-made 'golems'. These

were tales of artificial clay men moulded by kabbalistic rabbis which might return to haunt their creators. Remember, this is 200 years before Mary

Shelley's *Frankenstein* novella. Exactly 300 years after this precociously modern regime was crushed in the Battle of White Mountain by Catholic Habsburg armies in 1620, a play by Czech playwright Karel Capek (*RUR*) premiered in 1920, coining the modern term 'robot' and opening a new chapter of fantasy discussing how we might treat synthetic people. Or how they might treat us.

Hungary meanwhile developed a Protestant church of its own, inspired by the Anabaptists and the followers of Jan Hus (another Czech), and this took firmest root in the east of Hungary and in the oldest area where Hungarian speakers live, namely Transylvania, now part of Romania. So while Bram Stoker chose Transylvania to host the gothic fear of the ancient in his *Dracula* tale, early pieces of modern Europe are there too. Small richly painted wooden Protestant chapels from the 17<sup>th</sup> century dot the hills. Likewise, despite being nearer to the Orthodox Slavs, eastern Hungary

*Hungary ... developed a Protestant church of its own, inspired by the Anabaptists and the followers of Jan Hus (another Czech), and this took firmest root in the east of Hungary*

within its modern borders has more Protestant churches and believers than the western parts near Austria.

Yet almost no one in Hungary mentions their religious denomination or even professes to have one. Occasionally, a Budapest professional will refer to one obsessed parent or grandparent, sadly dominated by a church-going habit – as if it's a form of mental illness one has to be patient with. There is a small political party in Hungary called the Christian Democratic People's Party, which represents Christian interests at state level. It's vanishing rather in the way the male angler fish fuses with the flesh of the much larger female angler fish after sex, spending the rest of his life as an appendage of her body. The KDNP since the early 1990s has been in permanent coalition with Fidesz, Hungary's governing party. Hungarians cannot even vote for it separately, candidates being described only as joint KDNP/Fidesz members.

Fidesz meanwhile, which could broadly be described as Peronist in outlook, talks quite a lot about the church. This is framed in Kinder-Kuche-Kirche (Children-Kitchen-Church) terms, echoing some late-19<sup>th</sup>-century Germans who felt women should take care of the family and its spiritual upbringing. In a curious way, many Hungarians approve of Viktor Orban's attempts to maintain and revive village culture in Hungary, oppose multiculturalism and atheism, yet feel curiously little urge to attend church themselves. I am certainly not an observant Christian, but last December, 2014, I went to a Catholic Christmas Eve service in a village next door to the one I was staying in, whisper-translating chunks of the sermon for the Englishwoman who asked to me to go with her. A very small chapel about the size of a normal school classroom, it was packed, and we had to stand in the corridor among an overflow congregation peering round the door. A couple of farm labourers in the corridor with us offhandedly explained to me that this priest was new, since their usual priest who was better known and liked in the area had some months ago been killed by local ruffians.

This is the odd context of Hungary now. A country predominantly of villages, most with half-empty churches, with a population who dislike the prospect of large-scale Muslim immigration or state-sponsored atheism, are happy to see a government in power that talks a lot about Christian family values and national tradition, but don't actually bother with church much themselves. There is a certain amount of resentment of western, multicultural events like Gay Pride marches

*A country predominantly of villages, most with half-empty churches, with a population who dislike the prospect of large-scale Muslim immigration or state-sponsored atheism, are happy to see a government in power that talks a lot about Christian family values and national tradition, but don't actually bother with church much themselves.*

in Budapest, though opposition to them is more muted and peaceful than Russian or Ukrainian disruption of homosexual festivals. Of course, there are those who disagree – this is one of the most polarized countries I've ever visited. A woman in Budapest last month showed me with real outrage a small pamphlet headlined 'national faith' she got from her son's school, complaining they had sent him to a German-speaking school precisely to shield him from this nationalistic government-sponsored church nonsense. Hungarian liberals are a bit different from the western kind though. However critical they are of Christian belief, they have nothing positive to say about Islam either.

Of course the bulk of the country vaguely liking the idea of Christianity and tradition might be a prelude to actually reviving a real sense of Christian patriotism, but it's hard to know which way things will go. Many Hungarians will passionately complain that 150 years of Ottoman Muslim occupation in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries crucially retarded their once-Western nation (even more

so the other Balkan countries where Turks were in control for longer). Yet they are both immensely proud of themselves (sportsmen, scientists, writers, musicians) and at the same time hugely self-critical and pessimistic about Hungarian culture. Doubt takes centre place: doubt about religion, doubt about politics, doubt about history. The Hungarian word for 'doubt' is 'twoness'. Interestingly, it forms part of their word for 'despair'. To despair is to 'fall into doubt', and most Hungarians doubt everything. This makes them good at laboratory science, since they miserably expect to have to triple-check every result.

Once many years ago, when I remarked to a Hungarian theatre and film director that suicide rates were much higher in the east of the country he gloomily remarked that this was because those were the ethnically purest Hungarians, 'much less mixed than the rest of us'. To my amazement, a couple of sentences later he then said that the Islamic Ottoman occupation was probably a good thing for the country – a view I never heard before or since from any other Magyar. Why? I asked. 'Oh you know, contact with a higher civilization,' he muttered wearily, gazing out of the window.

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Mark Griffith lives in Hungary and writes a weblog at <http://www.otherlanguages.org>

# It's Hard to be a Woman

Jane Kelly

Most women realise quite early on that life is unfair. It is possible to lead the first thirty-five years or so in a fog of illusion about this but then as one's looks suddenly and unaccountably start to fail and you see your mother's face looking back from the mirror, a woman's optimistic outlook can change.

As Will Self pointed out on Radio 4 recently, Schopenhauer, in his *Essay on Women*, asserted that women are the victims of nature's harsh pragmatism:

*In the girl nature has had in view what could in theatrical terms be called a stage-effect: it has provided her with superabundant beauty and charm for a few years at the expense of the whole remainder of her life, so that during these years she may so capture the imagination of a man that he is carried away into undertaking to support her honourably in some form or another for the rest of her life, a step he would seem hardly likely to take for purely rational considerations. Thus nature has equipped women, as it has all its creatures, with the tools and weapons she needs for securing her existence, and at just the time she needs them; in doing which nature has acted with its usual economy.*

Nature is not so hard on most men. The pimply youth who can't get a girl, if he waits, may catch a desperate woman who finds herself still unable to 'secure her existence' by remaining single at thirty six. Men who are plainer of face these days, of all classes from government ministers to bus drivers who can afford a fare to Thailand, are also greatly aided by globalisation. Three female friends of mine who were single aged forty are still unwed, but my two best male friends, whom I found impossibly unromantic, are now both wed; to foreign women they met on line.

British men are notoriously unromantic, for that you may also read stingy and even misogynistic. Many greatly prefer the company of their male friends, down the pub, talking about football, rather than getting mixed up in female conversation. And what one once

described to me as 'the baptism of fire', they have to go through when the emotions are engaged. Many middle class British women find foreign men charming; beguiled by French and Italian manners, generosity, and apparent appreciation of women of a certain age.

But they tend not to marry them, while the British male, with all his flaws, is a magnet for foreign women from Irkutsk to Islamabad. Numerous internet sites and magazine adverts offer lovely ladies from all parts of the globe eager to marry, as long as it is someone with a British passport, who lives thousands of miles from their homeland.

China has over six hundred and thirty-two million Internet users, more than double the population of the USA. In the almond shaped eyes of many of these globalised lonely-hearts, to be British and male is still to belong to the finest club in the world. Even American women, often far more feisty than the UK

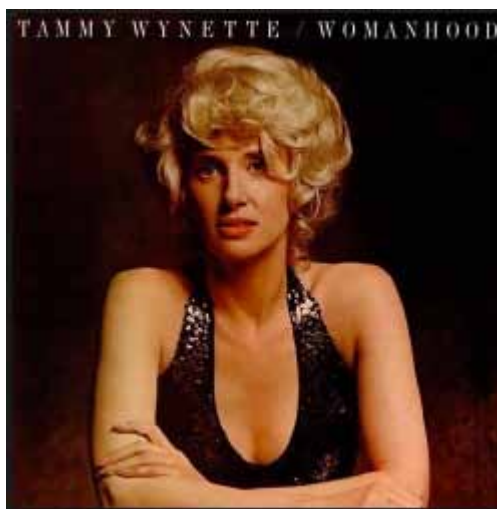
woman, are frequently captivated by what they see as some kind of old world charm. English men can be strangely reassured by their appreciation and marry them despite their ignorance of gravy, sponge cake or custard.

Despite all this international romantic traffic, any discussion of what used to be termed miscegenation is taboo. Mixed marriages are one of those topics, on a lengthening list, which can only be spoken about at home with the curtains drawn and the taps running. It is certainly safer not to speculate too much on what these marriages are really about.

Last week, Labour MP Helen Goodman was taken to Room 101 and forced to make the obligatory grovelling apology, after sending a tweet asking why, 'if China is so great, Jeremy Hunt's wife, who is Chinese, had come to England.'

Her tweet came after the health secretary referred to his wife's nationality when suggesting that the government's tax credit cuts would encourage Britons to work as hard as people in some Asian economies.

Goodman, or Goodwoman as she would be wise to



Tammy Wynette - Sometimes its hard to be a woman

rename herself, was immediately upbraided by the virtuous Left, led by Nadhim Zahawi, unbelievably the conservative MP for Stratford on Avon, who asked beseechingly;

*Helen that is a terrible thing to say. I hope you delete and apologise to Mrs Hunt. Have you been hacked?*

As if evil hacking pixies must have put the words on to her twitter page. The saintly leader of the Lib Dems, Tim Farron, wrote:

*Terrible tweet from Helen Goodman. Never attack politicians' families. I hope she apologises. Clearly she missed the 'Kinder Politics' memo.*

Unkind it may be to say it, but from Wendy Deng onwards, the evidence is that Chinese women want wealthy, western men, even Englishmen will do. Records on any kind on ethnicity are very hard to find but in 1978 there was not a single inter-racial marriage registered in mainland China; in 2012, 53,000 mixed couples married that year alone. Very few Chinese men marry foreign women.

Gong Haiyan, founder of China's biggest dating web site, Jiayuan, told the *Huffington Post* recently that for a Chinese girl, height, salary and home ownership are the most frequently selected criteria for choosing a mate. Chinese men of course are notoriously short and tend to live in rented flats, on low wages.

In the West we discovered love and romance in the 18th century and gradually attached morality to the idea of marrying out of regard and affection rather than just pragmatism or kinship links. Chinese women's desires are fuelled by old-fashioned pragmatism. Apparently there has even been a pop song in China recently about this, by one Gia W, entitled rather bluntly,

*What is Shanghai? Rich white cock and hungry yellow chick.*

British men, as seen on TV and film, with their sharp suits, iPhones and Ministerial car, can look like a Chinese girl's dream. Part of this attraction is their evocation of wealth and fashion, and what Americans call 'the Brit factor.' In China, footballer Wayne Rooney is a popular heartthrob with his own fan club. Actor Benedict Cumberbatch is affectionately referred to as 'Curly Fu' because of his hair. The communist groupies even drool over Princes William and Harry. Earlier this year, British actor Hugh Grant announced the birth of his second child with Chinese partner Tinglan Hong.

As many Chinese believe that *Sherlock* and *Downton*

*Abbey* actually resemble British life as it is lived, fascination is partly fuelled by a growing awareness of class creeping back into the Chinese consciousness. A British man on your arm, cabinet minister or not, symbolises the increasing pressure of Chinese social aspirations. Ugly and unwanted at home, to the Chinese they're automatically elevated to 'gentleman status' and Chinese women swoon.

BBC reporter Zoe Murphy reported on Chinese marriage in 2013. She interviewed a young girl called Yong Zhi, from Beijing. 'The West captured her imagination', says Murphy. 'She dreamed of travelling abroad. An addiction to Western novels inspired her to study English Literature at the prestigious Jilin University in northeast China. She says she knows of educated, good-looking women who go to certain bars in the hope of meeting a Western man to marry.

*They have an image in their head and want to live 'the dream'.*

According to Zhi, 'A mixed marriage can offer greater opportunities to travel and educate your children overseas. Being able to speak English elevates you in terms of salary and job opportunities.'

The Chinese women gain a great deal from these associations, often with men whom their native English women have rejected for good reason. They gain prestige and security, and

even if their chosen spouse is less wealthy than Rupert Murdoch, they get to leave China for an entirely different life-style. The men gain the prestige of having a wife and child when they could not do so previously, without the hassle of demands for equality or emotional support.

British women and Chinese men of course may be left to speculate bitterly on how and why it was that love and romance were replaced by a new global pragmatism, a stunning fusion of exploitation and greed which must, for complicated reasons of political correctness, remain entirely unmentionable.

*Jane Kelly was a celebrity interviewer for the Daily Mail.*

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# Old Spanish Practices

Bill Hartley

Around thirty years ago there were trades unions whose capacity to cause mayhem was such that only their initials were necessary to identify them. Examples might include the NUR, T&GWU and ASLEF. No-one needed to know what these stood for; newspaper industrial correspondents would simply explain what misery they were about to inflict on the public.

The Prison Officer's Association (POA) used to think of itself as being one of that group. Of course its capacity to cause trouble was more narrowly focussed and relied on an ability to derail ministerial careers and seriously discomfit senior civil servants. (Can you recall a single 'prisons minister' who went on to greater things?) Much amusement could be had from imagining a senior civil servant just in at the Home Office on a career move from Agriculture or wherever, being hurled into bargaining talks with the comrades. This was a union which once struck a deal with the Home Office allowing its members to accrue two years pensionable service for every year worked beyond a certain point.

Apart from the inability of civil servants to do labour relations, two things made the POA dangerous. The first was the determination of the National Executive Committee to resist change or reform. The second was that it presided over a collection of semi-autonomous branches, any of which could be led by a troublemaker whose big picture perception extended no further than the walls of the prison in which he happened to be working. These branches retained Spanish practices that would have made the Archbishop of Toledo blanch. Back when the chief officer grade still existed there used to be two classes: I and II. A particularly difficult POA branch chairman might often be sarcastically referred to as a Chief III and where management was weak he could wield more power than the one with a bit of silver on the peak of his cap. In those pre-computer days the staff detail office was run manually and jobs were logged on an acetate-covered board with entries made in wax crayon. In the event of a dispute it was

said one man with a damp cloth could bring a prison grinding to a halt.

It hadn't always been that way. Previously governors were often former military types who still used their old ranks. There was a multitude of ex-captains and majors in charge of people who had also worn uniform. Things changed in the 70s when declining industries brought in a new type of prison officer with trades union experience. The factory floor began to influence the other ranks just when the former military types

were retiring, to be replaced by social science graduates and due deference was not always extended as it had been to their predecessors. It wasn't unusual to find former sergeants and warrant officers running branches who delighted in tormenting the new breed of governor. Surrender was sometimes the best choice for a quiet life. A former governor of HMP Liverpool reckoned

that he spent the first two years in charge clawing back concessions made by his predecessor.

It was said that the comrades in the TUC didn't much like the POA as an affiliated union, perhaps because from time to time it had been responsible for locking up their members. Militant they might have been but in most other matters leading members tended to lean rightwards. It was said that the late Frank Tomney, the right-wing Labour MP for Hammersmith (he opposed sanctions against the rebel regime in Rhodesia), was supported by the Wormwood Scrubs POA.

Well into the present century the POA had the ability to frighten senior management. Although forbidden by law to strike this didn't stop rogue branches staging the occasional walk out. Wandsworth was the best remembered, but HMP Moorlands near Doncaster was more recent: the latter being because the governor had dared to discipline some of their members. By then, though, headquarters had got its act together and a court order was usually obtained and faxed to the branch chairman on the same day, ordering him to get his members back to work. Even so no-one could be sure that the order would be obeyed so the headquarters



command suite would be opened and governor grades who couldn't get out of the way fast enough, drafted in as strike breakers.

Today this once formidable union is a shadow of its former self. It was privatisation, or 'market testing' as it was euphemistically called, that did it. Ironically the programme has now been abandoned and there are many who believe that after its early promise at showing what could be delivered, the Prison Service soon caught up and in some cases overtook the newcomers. Added to which private jails have of late come in for a great deal of criticism from the prisons inspectorate and there was the scandal of private security companies who also run jails, charging the Ministry for tagged prisoners who were in fact dead. In short keeping tabs on these contractors could nowadays be seen as an unnecessary distraction.

A question sometimes asked by prison staff during the era of market testing was: what would happen if headquarters attempted to put one of the big local prisons out to contract? Previously it had been obscure training prisons or newly opened jails. An attempt was made with Brixton but the reaction of the private security companies had been that of Dracula faced with a crucifix. Then they tried again offering HMP Birmingham with the sweetener of a new jail, HMP Oakfield, as part of the package. Such a frequently discussed possibility might have prompted the National Executive Committee (NEC) to have a contingency plan but apparently not. It was said that headquarters awaited their reaction to the announcement with some trepidation. True, the local branch staged a walkout but they were back within an hour or so. Birmingham/Oakfield is now run by G4S. Failure to react was the beginning of the end for the POA as a force to be reckoned with in labour relations. Headquarters knew it had nothing to be frightened of any more.

Since Birmingham it has been downhill all the way for the POA. In the run up to a major round of restructuring the NEC trumpeted a 'no redundancies' agreement with headquarters. The fact was that it suited both parties. The Prison Service didn't even have a redundancies policy and since it is customary to seek volunteers the cost of paying off veteran staff would have been enormous, as other government departments discovered. Since then pay, terms and conditions have been eroded with the POA unable to resist. The age at which officers can take their pensions has been raised to 68 and the union's 'Sixty Eight is too Late' campaign failed miserably. An officer at Feltham pointed out that

*In those pre-computer days the staff detail office was run manually and jobs were logged on an acetate-covered board with entries made in wax crayon. In the event of a dispute it was said one man with a damp cloth could bring a prison grinding to a halt.*

a trainee baker at the local Sainsbury is paid £19,500 per annum; which is £2,000 more than a newly joined officer.

The best barometer of the POA today is to be found in the pages of *Gatelodge*, the house magazine. Years ago it was a treat for devotees of union literature, packed with articles condemning the perfidy of management and the dire consequences to staff morale; letters from members complaining about the disgraceful rate of boot and shoe allowance, or analysing the arcana of some obscure payment. Recent editions of the magazine have come over all soft and fluffy, whining

about violence in prisons as if this were something new. There are articles on women's conferences, minority issues and other progressive topics of a kind that would previously have been treated with derision. The best part used to be a lively section devoted to goings on at various

jails; an opportunity to mock local management or highlight the foibles of some hapless governor. These days hardly anyone seems to bother. Essentially the magazine reflects a toothless public sector union that no-one takes seriously any more. [back to contents](#)

*Bill Hartley was in Local Government.*

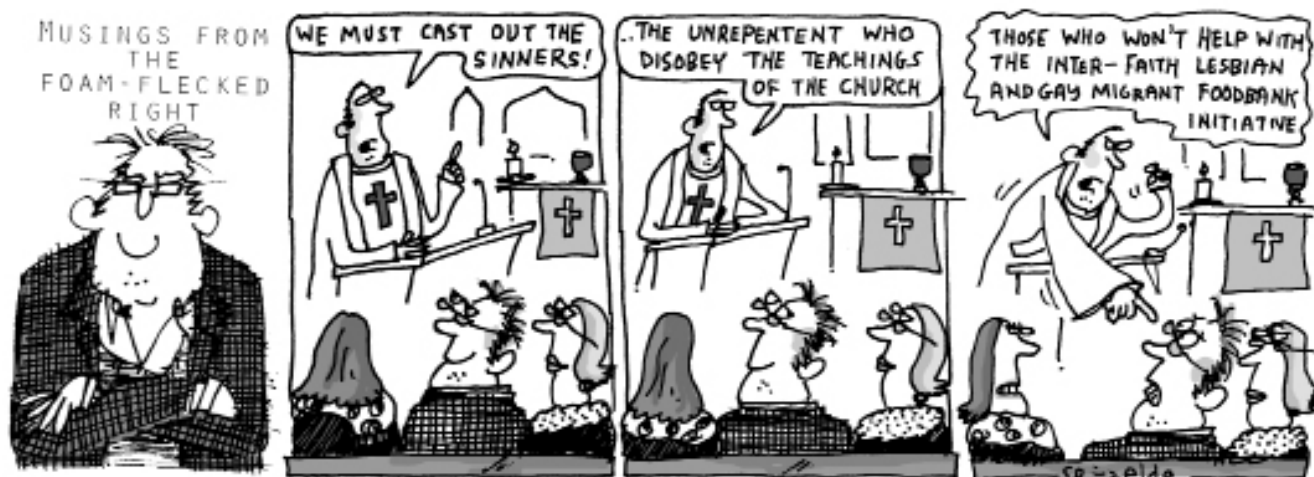
### ***A Christmas Carol***

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!

# An Extra Papa Don't Make a Mama

Mark Mantel



Laugh at my dusty words till you cry, but I feel sure that I'd never met a gay person until I went off to college in Greenwich Village at eighteen. You can tell me that they were there hiding in the bushes all along too frightened to show their rainbows. But when I rummage hard through memories of the old schoolyard I can't track a single snotty soul that I suspect had it in 'em. Well, except maybe this one little kid named Big Jamie. And look now how bright the band of gays has finally blossomed forth! They even wish to push baby carriages through the daisies and to proudly promenade about wearing bold new papooses. The rest of us are of course assured that the emerging gay families will be the same as all happy families. But I am not altogether sure, any more than I am sure that a soy-burger tastes like a real burger, or a vegan cookie tastes like a cookie made with butter and milk.

In particular, I fear that wrestling moms from their spots beside the rocking-cradles might have many young eyeballs streaming. Yes, I adored dear old Dad tremendously, and now that he's gone, I even miss the untamed aromas that emanated from his blazer composed in proper measure of bourbon, tobacco and armpit. But having a second dad just as fragrant would not have replaced one vicious thump from Mom's wooden spoon when my hand surreptitiously reached for the honey tarts. And the same is true in reverse. No

two women, however husky their combined voices or hairy their combined toes, could ever have benumbed my tender nostrils with the same unrepentant ferocity as did my aromatic dad. The notion that 'gender' can replace sex betrays a rather philistine unawareness of the distinct affects produced by each inborn human form. Every child instinctively knows this perfectly. And it is quite paradoxical, I feel, that a modernity that fancies itself protector of the 'best interest of the child' would deny the singular enchantment that emanates from Man and Wife.

Now, I certainly do not have apocalyptic visions of, say, Paul Bowles's story, *Pages from Cold Point*, about a dad fantasising about the lithe body and smooth skin of his adopted son Racky, being multiplied in the large. Indeed I rather accept that gay families are probably as steeped in respect and tenderness and petty annoyances as are straight families. I am even prepared to concede that two gays can make two exceedingly fantastic dads. But an extra papa don't make a mama. And not only don't he make a mama, but the lack of the feminine spirit will be something tragically irreplaceable for a child's sentimental education. It is of course true that many families, because of divorce or other unfortunate happenings, have only one parent anyways. But to systematise this deplorable mess, and make of it something praiseworthy and normal, is to construct a

sad artificial wilderness, no?

I am of course no expert. But I have wandered on a few good-faith walks along the pavements grey, to peek at all the gay families in the broad daylight. And while the children were undeniably well fed and warm, still my main impression was that the portrait was as contrived as a faithless wife. True, in all fairness, most straight families give me this impression too these days, with young dads unabashedly mixing baby-formula right there at the pub, as if that was a thing for a man to do, and young moms jogging with baby carriages, like they've discovered a new Olympic sport, and the world were one gigantic personal gymnasium for them and their spandex short-pants. And one must also allow that gays are arrivistes to the family scene, with all the usual ostentations. But despite all this, the many tableaux I saw of grinning gay dads seemed always to be unnaturally forced, and not entirely beautiful. And I doubt that even a great artist will ever paint it pretty, with yellow rays or violet. Could Raphael, for instance, had he lived today, paint a 'Father and Child' without betraying, a little sadly, that mother has fled?

But so what if these new families lack the natural diversity I speak of? Maybe they will have something else far better? Maybe they will help to rejuvenate a tired institution? Maybe they can even help teach our brats how to actually carry on a talk at the dinner table, or what a trout with skin and bones and eyeballs looks like on a plate? After all, they want families in a way that, say, Italians these days do not. Well, my purpose here is not to argue that what's happening is the worst of crimes. Rather, I would wish to slow what seems to me an abrasive stampede over holy ground.

The thing is, these questions go beyond who smooths the hairs of the tired children. Hell, in a sense, the voice of our manhood is touched. Smile if you like. Make innuendo if you like. But I recall how Numanus taunted the Trojans for their effeminate dress and for acting like woman. We might at least consider, Oh, what will be the effect of having dainty daddies batting their eyelashes over the bassinets of our future soldiers and sailors? We do have international foes out there, after all. And though I'm not saying our men need take fashion-lessons from the Taliban and plant fierce long beards on their visages, I am saying that we might at least consider that King Richard was our answer to Saladin once. What will be our lion-hearted answer in times to come?

*We do have international foes out there, after all. And though I'm not saying our men need take fashion-lessons from the Taliban and plant fierce long beards on their visages, I am saying that we might at least consider that King Richard was our answer to Saladin once.*

Something else. Things need not always be so explicit. I was reading the memoirs of the duc de Saint Simon not long ago. In describing the Sun King's gay brother, called simply Monsieur, the duc merely says, 'The taste of Monsieur was not for women.' And, indeed, nobody at court would have had the faintest notion to interfere with Monsieur's tastes. But Monsieur, likewise, had no wish to openly adopt children with his gay lovers, and overturn the entire social order to accommodate his particular preferences. Even those bejeweled courtiers had the political foresight to understand that a social order is built to give cohesion and meaning for the way most people live, not to openly bless what cannot be blessed. Can we not consider that, just maybe, there was some wisdom in taking refuge in a little hypocrisy, the old-fashioned tribute vice pays to virtue? And

can we not at least try to find a refreshing *via media* between Cromwell and Despensers sans our passionate intensity?

Lastly, I am told that the gay realm of life is the one realm where biological determinism is still *de rigueur*, but that every other farm and field is gender territory as far as the eye can see.

It's a bit of a headful, but as far as I can make out, a man who glances at a lady's legs commits a singularly gendered act, but the one who glances at a man's biceps is as biological as a marsupial rat-kangaroo found somewhere in Darwin. I am not sure what to make of such theories cast down upon my crown. But what I think I'm supposed to gather, once I chisel through the lilies, is that gay families will not necessarily beget gay children. Fine. They won't. But by this supposal, straight children still lack the benefit of adamant biological sanction. Who then is going to teach them, from the bosom of the gay family, how to act their gender? Is this what everybody means when they talk about the 'new normal'?

Probably I seem Oh so reactionary, worrying about who gets to care for the speckled egg, and who doesn't. But who can write solely for the tastes of our immediate public? One must rather watch the unwelcome show, like an outlaw in a cave, for how these new uncertain nests, loosed upon the world, will compete with the last couple thousand years.

*Mark Mantel is a Seattle lawyer.*

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# Modern Sanctity

Theodore Dalrymple

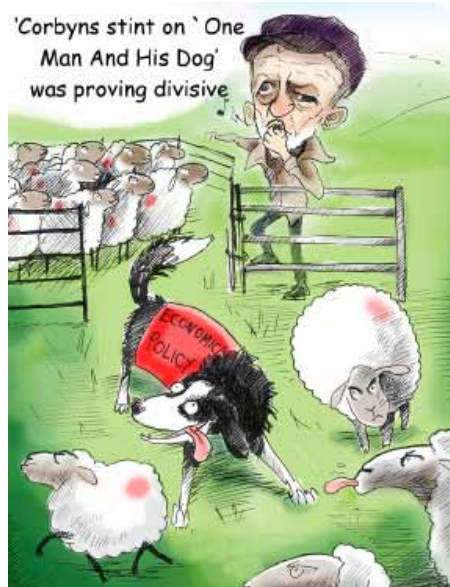
The late Lord Quinton, in an essay titled *Character and Will in Modern Ethics*, published in 1997, drew attention to what he considered ‘a large moral change’ in western society. He thought that the change was not just in the actual content of individual moral judgments: that what we formerly thought was good we now think bad, and vice versa. According to him, it went much further or deeper than that. He thought it was a change ‘of form’ that has ‘altered the whole conception of the moral agent’.

This is no doubt somewhat vague, but language cannot be more precise than the phenomena it seeks to describe. I think I know what Lord Quinton meant, and I would put it in a slightly different way: there has been a change in what is considered to be the proper locus of an individual’s moral concern. At one time, the individual was mainly concerned, morally, with his own conduct towards those around him and in his own small sphere. A businessman prided himself on keeping his word, a teacher on imparting knowledge to the pupils he had, a nurse on bringing effective comfort to her patient and so forth. This, of course, did not mean that every businessman, teacher or nurse succeeded or even tried to succeed; Man, thank goodness, is an imperfect creature. If it were not for imperfection, we should die of boredom, which is why Heaven is so difficult to imagine by contrast with Hell, of which there are a million possible variants.

Nowadays there has been a shift, not complete, naturally enough, and not in everybody’s case towards a public rather than a private morality. We are concerned more about larger, impersonal matters: the environment and climate change, say, or the distribution of income, rather than with our own day-to-day conduct. The good person is not so much the one who is generous or self-sacrificing, as well as self-controlled, in the little corner of the universe into which he has been thrust by chance or circumstance; it is the person who holds the right opinions about larger matters. An ever better person is he who militates to

bring about a better state of affairs in these larger matters. The best person is he who devotes his entire life to the task. Secular monomania is the modern sanctity.

Why has this change occurred? I think it must have some connection with the triumph, or at least the spread, of the social sciences, including economics, as well as modern means of communication. Not a sparrow falls, after all, but its demise is recorded on the Internet, or proclaimed on Twitter and Facebook. This increase in the means of communication has now been going on a long time, and started before Twitter and Facebook were thought of.



Sociologists, psychologists, criminologists, economists and others have taught all of us to think of forces invisible but powerful that act upon us and others. Everyone thus becomes a vector of forces rather than an agent; and while it is impossible for anyone truly to think of himself in this way, he begins to do so immediately he is accused of anything, or if he accuses himself of something. He even begins to believe what he tells himself while simultaneously knowing it to be false, thus plunging into a condition of bad faith – which, if not countered Socratically, can last a lifetime if there are sufficient

advantages or inducements to such bad faith, as often there are.

There is a confusion about the notion of men as vectors of forces. Freedom cannot possibly be freedom from all circumstances whatever because a circumstance-free life is inconceivable; the idea has no possible meaning or application. Therefore no one can say possibly that he is totally unaffected by his genes, his past, and things or events (such as economic downturns) that are beyond his individual control.

But that does not mean, either, that he is not really an agent. Because there are an infinite number of things that I cannot do does not mean that there are an infinite number of things that I can do. The rules of grammar of the language I speak forbid certain utterances but

do not in the least prescribe what I say.

Conservatives tend to concentrate on what people can and ought to do as individuals; liberals (in the contemporary American sense) tend to concentrate on what people *en masse* are unable to do and what is done to them, often by apparently impersonal forces. A manager who sacks a hundred employees may only be obeying an order, which itself is given only because of economic circumstances; theoretically, however, refusal to give or obey such orders which are known to cause distress is possible. Pressure of circumstance does not deprive us of agency, it merely makes it more difficult or costly for us to act in certain ways. How far we are able to bear the costs depends on our character. Most of us fall somewhere in between jelly and granite.

The besetting sins of those who take the conservative view are censoriousness, a disregard of mitigating circumstances and a wilful blindness to economic and social realities. The besetting sins of those who take the liberal view are an incontinent acceptance of low standards in others, an overestimation of mitigating circumstances, and ultimately the dehumanisation of huge numbers of people, in so far as the liberal no longer considers them agents at all. The conservative risks hard-heartedness, the liberal risks sentimentality, false pride and preening himself on his generosity of spirit.

Which of these hazards is the more to be avoided depends on circumstances, and it is unlikely that any individual, let alone society, gets the balance exactly right on all occasions. A man starving through no fault of his own surely cannot be held to exactly the same standards of honesty in a grocery store as a

millionaire. By the same token, a person in receipt of enough money for necessities cannot claim the same indulgence as a starving man just because other people have more than he.

I veer towards the conservative tendency for more than one reason. The liberal and his solutions tend in the modern world (we are not living in Victorian times) to call forth, exacerbate or maintain the very problems that supposedly make him a liberal in the first place and suggest to him his solutions. The liberal is a great infantiliser of huge numbers of people.

The second reason is that conservatives have, *grosso modo*, a better sense of humour than liberals. They do not believe in human perfectibility and therefore feel no obligation to express shock that life does not meet everyone's expectations. They can see the human comedy as well as the tragedy. They do not have constantly, and tiresomely, to expose their heart like a baroque painting of Christ in case they should be thought uncaring, the worst of sins for those who think that virtue consists of having the right opinions.

A man who ran a conference in a great foreign city to which I was invited told me something I found both interesting and plausible. He said that conservatives who believed in the desirability of inequality never complained of the conditions in which they were put up by the conference organisers; liberals who believed in the desirability of equality frequently did so.

*Theodore Dalrymple is a retired prison doctor and psychiatrist.*

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# England's Last Humourist

Alistair Miller

The name of Bernard Manning, once one of the nation's most successful stand-up comedians, a veteran of Royal Variety performances and the MGM Grand in Las Vegas (where he performed with Dean Martin), has effectively been banished from public consciousness. One hesitates before mentioning his name in polite company, or – heaven forbid – telling a Manning joke, for he has long been branded a racist and a bigot.

Manning was born in 1930 and brought up in Ancoats, one of Manchester's poorest areas. He left school at 14 to work in a cigarette factory and for a while in his father's greengrocers; but National Service opened up

his world. He guarded Rudolf Hess and Albert Speer at Spandau Prison in Berlin, and, more importantly, sang with the regimental band. After leaving the army, he worked the northern clubs as a big band singer, and started to build some gags into his act; he found he could make people laugh and the gags took over. He became a household name in the 1970s through the popular television series *The Comedians*, but by the time of the politically correct 1980s, his act was deemed unfit for mainstream consumption. Manning hit the headlines in 1995 when he was secretly filmed making offensive remarks to a black police officer during a charity dinner in Manchester, for which he

was condemned by John Major – though he claimed afterwards that the police officer had congratulated him on his performance. Though he played to packed houses in clubs and theatres across Britain, including his own ‘Embassy Club’ in Manchester, his television appearances were reduced to the occasional interview to the accompaniment of mixed boos and laughter from the studio audience. He died in 2007.

Manning poked fun at the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish; the Germans, Japanese, Americans, Jews, Muslims, Pakistanis, Asians, blacks, Chinese, Georgies and Liverpudlians; at anyone who was old, or young, or fat, or ugly, or on benefits, or who did not laugh at his jokes; and at himself (for being fat and ugly). Inevitably in a society that values inclusion, diversity and tolerance above all else, this was deemed unacceptable. In fact, Manning gave free rein to every prejudice and ‘stereotype’ that was going. He made fun of people for being different; and in so doing he gave vent to the hopes, fears and frustrations of the ordinary person. He voiced sentiments that many shared but would not have dreamed of voicing themselves. But people understood what he was getting at, and that is why they laughed. Manning always said that ‘it was only an act’, and ‘I say it because it makes people laugh’ and he was derided for this by his critics. But those who knew him best, his family and friends, insisted that he was not a racist in any shape or form. Indeed, when he died, his Asian neighbours of over twenty years paid him the warmest of tributes. He was, they said, ‘a perfect gentleman’. The sign ‘Shalom’, which he had above his door, Manning was proud of his Jewish roots, was no idle decoration. Manning was renowned for his generosity and his charity work (all inclusive and no fee), which ranged from sending local old folk to Blackpool for a Christmas day out and paying for a sick Asian child to go to Disneyland, to his lifelong support for the work of the Variety Club.

Was Manning ‘a racist’? Traditionally the term ‘racism’ refers to the scientific, or pseudo-scientific, belief that some races are superior to others and that racial purity is a virtue – the sort of view nowadays associated with proponents of eugenics and the Nazis. ‘Racialism’ refers to active discrimination against those deemed racially inferior as practised in (say) South Africa under apartheid or in the American South. Evidently, neither of these is applicable in the case of Manning. However, ‘racial prejudice’, which is what is usually meant nowadays when the term

‘racist’ is bandied about, is more difficult to pin down. Traditionally, it refers to irrationally or unreasonably hostile attitudes towards those of a different racial or ethnic origin. But what counts as ‘a hostile attitude’? Manning certainly made fun of Asians (including his neighbours) in his act. But did those who had spent the evening laughing at Manning’s jokes leave his act with hostile attitudes towards Asians? There is no evidence for this.

Perhaps Manning’s attitude towards Asians, and anyone else he poked fun at, was unjustified because it was ‘irrational’. Except that if it were irrational, nobody would have laughed. Manning’s audience laughed precisely because he revealed something about them and their prejudices, which they recognised to be true. In which case, it must be those who laugh who are at fault: to laugh at Manning is to reveal that you are ‘a racist’. Manning, then, merely played on our prejudices and stereotypical perceptions of others, and it is these that need to be exposed for what they are. But this will not do either. We do not choose our prejudices any more than we choose our emotions, however much we – or others – might wish to suppress them. Besides, our prejudices,



*Grimaldi*

along with our ‘stereotypical’ thought patterns and generalisations, are an integral part of our make-up as human beings. Without them, even the smallest decision would have to be preceded by an impossibly lengthy and complex cost-benefit calculation to establish the optimal course of action. Without them, we would never have survived in the first place – for while we were attempting to make a purely rational and impartial appraisal of the situation, the snake would have bitten us. We are in any case not disembodied calculating machines, but social and cultural beings whose needs and interests, hopes and fears, indeed our very rationality, are socially and culturally determined. Like it or not, our prejudices are the distillation of our collective experience; or as Dr Johnson put it, ‘one good prejudice is worth ten reasoned arguments’.

What was Manning’s take on the world? For a start, he thought that we pandered too much to the sensitivities of our Celtic neighbours: ‘There was an Englishman, an Irishman, a Scotsman and a Welshman captured by the Iraqis, who said ‘we’re going to shoot you but you can have one last request’; so the Welsh fella said ‘I’d like a thousand Welshmen singing Land of my Fathers’, the Scotch fella said ‘I’d like a thousand pipers playing Flower of Scotland’, and the Irish fella said ‘I’d like a thousand Irishmen doing the

River Dance'; and they said to the English fella 'what's your last request?' He said 'Fucking shoot me first!' Manning was a keen observer of regional differences: 'A Scouser went to a prostitute. She said, 'Do you want a blow job?' He said, 'Will it affect me dole money?' Or 'I go to Liverpool twice a year to visit my hub-caps'. He liked to draw attention to demographic change: 'I was in Bradford last week and I felt like a spot on a domino; they wait for it to snow in Yorkshire so they can count the population; dial '999' and you get the Bengal Lancers'. He liked to include the disabled in his gags: 'There's a blind fella walking through London with his blind dog and the blind dog slashed up his leg and the fella next to him said 'that's the nicest thing I've seen in my life, that dog just pissed up your leg and you give it a dog biscuit'; 'yes I'm just finding out where its mouth is ... it's going to get a kick in the bollocks''. He enjoyed repartee with members of the audience who were elderly ('Was it cold in the ground this morning?') or not blessed with good looks ('You're an ugly bastard aren't you!'). He enjoyed repartee with his fellow comedians, like the American, Jackie Mason: 'He's about as funny as woodworm in a cripple's crutch'. He made fun of himself: 'When I was born, I was so ugly they had to give the midwife gas'. Colour was no bar: 'All the black footballers they want to play for England, and they all say they've got a little bit of English in them; and there's one fella, his excuse is his great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather ate Captain Cook'. And nobody could accuse Manning of being twee: 'Do you know what

I'd like? I'd like to be on the *Antiques Roadshow*, and a little old lady comes up and says 'how much is this worth?' And I'd say 'do you want to know what that's worth? ... Fuck all ... Now fuck off with it!' ... That'd liven Sunday evenings up'.

There is no doubt that Bernard Manning did cause offence, and that much of his material was crude and tasteless. He was playing to working class men in a rough area of Manchester, not an audience of liberals at the BBC. His offence was not that he was 'a racist' but that he ridiculed the great orthodoxy of our time – the utopian project of creating an inclusive multicultural society, where all forms of difference are celebrated and all people are equally valued, a project whose success necessarily entails vigorous policing of all deviant thoughts and utterances. Instead he drew on the shared experiences and prejudices of his community, his own people, to make them laugh; and in so doing reinforce their shared loyalties and sense of identity. The dogma of multiculturalism, which we see now being effected in modern-day Britain in the form of ethnically and racially segregated communities who have little sense of a shared identity, is founded on a fiction, which is precisely why it lends itself to ridicule. Bernard Manning duly obliged. He told the truth ... and that is why his audience laughed.

*Alistair Miller's book A New Vision of Liberal Education: The Good of the Unexamined Life is to be published this year by Routledge.*

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# On the Beach

Daryl McCann

In Neville Shute's 1957 classic *On the Beach*, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the southern parts of South America, are the remaining habitable places in a post-apocalyptic world. Radiation poisoning has enveloped the northern hemisphere in the aftermath of nuclear war making that part of the planet unfit for human habitation. The great hope, according to the supposed scientific theory Shute calls the 'Jorgensen Effect', is that radiation levels steadily decline due to weather effects and allow for human life to carry on in Australia or, at least, Antarctica.

The notion of Australia and New Zealand as a refuge for a non-American Anglosphere had a certain appeal for Brits in the post-war years. Neville Shute (1899-60)

was himself a British expat who emigrated to Australia in 1950. He was not on his own. The threat Imperial Japan posed to Australia, especially during the crucial year of 1942, had jolted the Australian government into adopting a 'populate or perish' campaign after the cessation of hostilities in the Pacific War, the thinking being that a population of 7 million was way too small to defend our island continent. The original idea called for nine out of ten migrants to be British; the mix, over time, proved much more eclectic. Still, of the 4.2 million immigrants who arrived here between 1945 and 1985, as many as 40 per cent came from Britain and Ireland.

The Australian government's post-war promotional

material enticed would-be migrants with depictions of Down Under as ‘The Land of Tomorrow’, a frontier world in which a carefree rural outlook appeared to overlap with cosy suburbia. In 1964, when my wife’s migrant family moved into the sparkling new British satellite town of Elizabeth, there really were sheep grazing on the other side of the road. Over the long haul, of course, suburbia expanded in every direction and Elizabeth became a dormitory suburb of the nearest city, the provincial capital Adelaide.

For the children of British migrants, and Australian children generally, life often possessed a paradisiacal quality. Many now speak of having been allowed to roam free with friends all day on a weekend or during school holidays, being home before the streetlights came on the only parental stipulation. The McCann family’s rules were a little stricter than that, but a stretch of untouched nature, in the form of the Sturt River, was in easy cycling distance of our suburban home, and my friends and I spent bountiful hours there. The only problem with our local watercourse, alas, was that every decade or so it flooded the local district and thousands of suburban houses were affected. In 1970, the municipal council buried our beloved river, or more accurately creek, in what might be described as a cement sepulchre. Children today no longer fish tadpoles or any manner of freshwater critter out of the Sturt River – but they have their cable television and social media to be getting on with.

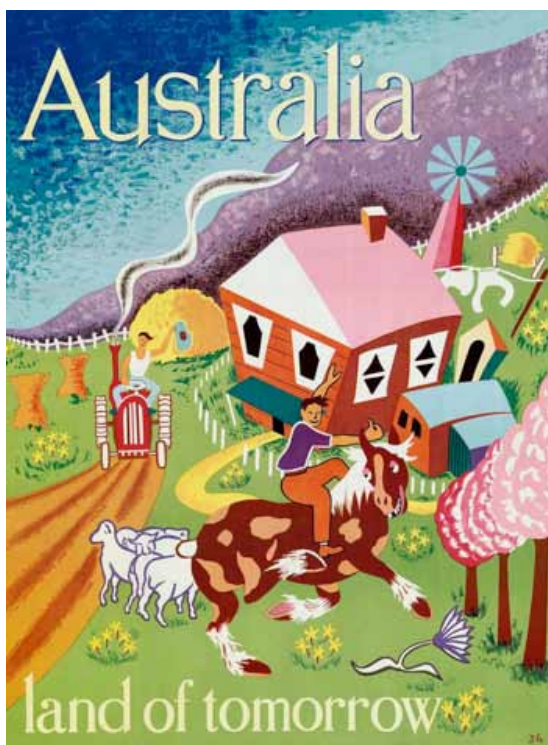
Many British-born friends, those who make up the tail end of the Baby Boomer phenomenon, remember their parents falling in love with the ever-present blue sky, the peace-of-mind of full employment and those handsome stand-alone bungalows that were eminently affordable. This older generation, which experienced the horror of the Blitz and dour life of post-war austerity, knew the extent of their good fortune – although if Australia back then could be called paradise it was one that nevertheless lacked some of the finer points of sophisticated living. Adelaide, the third largest Australian city at the time, had only a small number of restaurants in the 1950s. Though blessed with a range of wine-growing regions, few Australians

took much interest in the nectar of the gods, preferring beer or sherry leftover from the Christmas pudding.

This brings us to one of the drawbacks of growing up during the 1950s and 60s on the ‘wild frontiers’ of a Pacific incarnation of Britannia. We lived at the end of the world and, to borrow from Milan Kundera, life was elsewhere. The young and ambitious, from Barry Humphries to Clive James, felt they had to make it in the Mother Country before their own outwardly brash but inwardly self-doubting compatriots would take them seriously. There was a sense, despite the endless sunshine and the pristine beaches and the absence of crime and poverty, that exciting developments – in both popular and high culture – happened elsewhere.

The Beatles’ 1964 visit to Australia represents a case in point. Adelaide, notwithstanding a population of only 900,000 at the time, created the world record for a crowd turning up to meet the Fab Four. Three hundred thousand citizens lined the four-mile journey from the airport to the Town Hall. There are different explanations for this unlikely occurrence, not the least being British ex-pats living in satellite towns such as Elizabeth and Salisbury, cheering on four working-class lads from the Old Country, who had conquered the world with their poppy tunes and cheeky humour. Another perspective, and maybe more significant, is that The Beatles symbolised a fresh (we might say bohemian) take on life that contrasted strikingly with the conservative mores that prevailed until then.

The prime ministership of Sir Robert Menzies (1949-66) had, for instance, safeguarded Australia from the welfare excesses and fiscal irresponsibility characteristic of Clement Atlee’s governance. Moreover, the kind of ‘socially progressive’ legislation associated with Harold Wilson’s first administration (1964-70) garnered little support in Canberra until the Australian Labor Party broke its twenty-three year electoral drought in December 1972. Australians seemed to be an old-fashioned people inhabiting a newly fashioned nation-state. A few might have been nostalgic for the glory days of the British Empire but the idea – or possibility – of trading our sovereignty for membership of a new supranational institution, such as the European Common Market, was never in the offing. We were free to be ourselves, to follow our



own path; only we began to fear that our conservative way of doing things might be passé.

Helen Townsend's classic *Baby Boomers: Growing up in Australia in the 1940s, 50s and 60s* (1988) and the accompanying *The Baby Boomers Picture Show* (1990) captured some of the ambiguity of a generation that trashed one tradition after another only to end up feeling nostalgic for a world they did their best to destroy. Townsend was quick to mock the formal grammar lessons of yesteryear, and equate the Australian education system of the 1950s and 60s with totalitarianism. She even likened the public address speaker in every classroom during that time to 'a sort of big brother spy system', regardless of the fact it was an audio speaker, not a closed-circuit camera. The ubiquitous school marching bands of the era, not to mention Scout and Girl Guides gatherings, were 'reminiscent of a Nuremberg rally'. *The Baby Boomers Picture Show* documentary similarly bemoaned the greyness and regimentation of the Menzies era, only to declare at the end – paradoxically enough – that abandoning old-fashioned traditions had not ushered in a new rendering of paradise but diminished the paradise we already possess: 'We're not anchored anymore. We're not at home. We've lost our address.'

Today, there are still reasons to believe Australia remains 'the land of tomorrow' and that a sunny optimism about the place is not entirely unjustified. The breadth of our middle class, apart from New Zealand of course, has no parallel in the world. Australia, thanks to an unprecedented mining boom and the strength of China's economy, remained mostly unaffected by the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). The conservative Tony Abbott has been replaced by the less conservative Malcolm Turnbull, and yet Abbott's greatest achievement, Operation Sovereign Borders

remains in force. The crisis of irregular maritime arrivals and the people smuggling industry in general, so prevalent during the last Labor period in government (2007-13), has been solved.

That said, the kind of modern-day bohemianism associated with but not, of course, created by The Beatles and the Sixties generation has taken root in this island continent, like some introduced noxious pest. Bohemian socialism, which takes the form of identity politics in Australia, advocates every kind of anti-bourgeois divisiveness imaginable, from a separate parliament for Indigenous Australians to Sharia Law for Muslims, and all in the name of 'social justice'. On the education front, moreover, the so-called totalitarianism of Helen Townsend's childhood education, that is, academic rigour in a respectful and disciplined environment, has given way to PC orthodoxy, in which (say) exposing flaws in Catastrophic Anthropogenic Global Warming theory might be considered a crime against humanity.

This brings us full circle to Nevil Shute's 'Jorgensen Effect', the notion that, after a nuclear war in the northern hemisphere, radiation levels might steadily decline due to weather effects and so allow human life to carry on in Australia. The trouble, as both Shute's novel and Stanley Kramer's 1959 movie adaptation of *On the Beach* disclose, is that the 'Jorgensen Effect' turns out to be a false hope. Radiation fallout will inevitably make Australia no less inhabitable than countries in the northern hemisphere. Optimist that I am, however, I take solace from the powerful message conveyed in a discarded street banner at the end of Kramer's film: 'There is still time... Brother.'

*Daryl McCann has a blog at <http://darylmccann.blogspot.com.au>*

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# Is the Universe a Giant Wedding Cake?

Brian Ridley

**C**osmology is the theory of the universe taken as an ordered whole, and of the general laws which govern it. That's the OUD definition. But is it a science? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is no. This answer seems to be grossly at odds with what we believe we know about the universe – the Big Bang,

the accelerating expansion, the mysterious dark matter and dark energy. We have a model of the universe, albeit imperfect, but surely a product of science, based on reason and the empirical discoveries of large-scale astronomy. All of which is true; it is, indeed, based on science as we know it. But cosmology, by its nature,

cannot be studied by our science.

If you think about it, what science does to investigate a piece of the world is to isolate it as far as possible from extraneous interference. It can never do that with 100 per cent success – gravity and cosmic rays are ubiquitous, thirty cosmic rays go through you and everything around you every second – but it can get close. A single reading is never going to be convincing, experiments have to be repeatable. Furthermore, repetition helps to get rid of the bugs. As T H Huxley remarked long ago, ‘Belief, in the scientific sense of the word, is a serious matter, and needs strong foundation.’ The tiny fragment of science that we

know always focuses on a sub-element of the universe and assumes repeatability. From this it derives laws about the fragment that appear to be timeless. We, as it were, are trying to infer the existence of a billion-tiered wedding cake, as well as the guests, the venue, even the thoughts of the groom’s mother

about the bride, from studying one crumb. Extrapolating such experimental results to the universe as a whole has given us our current cosmological model.

Underlying this extrapolation are various assumptions. Repeatability, performing experiments with an expectation of always getting the same result, (when we drop a 5 lb weight to the floor we do not expect to see it fly out the door), assumes an absence of change, yet our cosmological model expressly acknowledges the universe is constantly changing. Stars are born, grow, and die, often in giant nuclear explosions. It also assumes that what is known about a sub-element is applicable to the whole, yet we know that the whole can be more than the sum of its parts.

The whole, for example, can have emergent properties that differ in kind from those of the sub-element. A few grams of carbon, six cylinders of oxygen, a cylinder of hydrogen, a flask of nitrogen, some common salt plus a pinch or two of fourteen other chemicals sitting on a shelf in jars give no hint of the living, speaking, reasoning human being that could be created from these constituents. If we have never seen a human being, we cannot look at the shelf and predict one. Similarly, if the universe has emergent properties, we can never discover them.

The fundamental nature of the universe that makes it quite different from anything that science ordinarily deals with is its uniqueness. Science studies the

properties of material particles, of which there are many.

Unfortunately, the universe cannot be regarded as an immense material particle, with a location in some space or other; it is unique and incomparable. It is what it is. Science has had difficulty coping with this, so it has had to invent a space full of universes, each universe different from another, among which is our own universe. A meta-universe consisting of an infinite number of universes can have a statistical distribution of properties against which our universe can be compared. This certainly allows the application of our science. The trouble is, there is no shred of evidence that such

a meta-universe exists. It cannot be verified or falsified. It joins mathematical schemes like those invoking many spatial dimensions as a sort of game, or perhaps an art form, allowing theoreticians to be creative.

What we are aware of is that we live in a universe that is singular

and contains all there is. There is nothing outside the universe that could contribute to its properties. Any science of cosmology must take all this on board. But we are also aware of something else of significance – we are directly aware of time. It is not the time of physics, which runs in either direction in its equations, or time that can be quantified like space; it is the time of direct experience, psychological time as Einstein called it, the time of the French philosopher Henri Bergson. Time, like the singular universe, is real. The question arises: What is the nature of the time ‘experienced’ by the universe in its evolution? The model we have – Big Bang followed by expansion – implies the existence of a global time that is unidirectional. Global time is anathema to the theory of relativity – it does not exist. The time experienced by an observer is different from the time experienced by another observer travelling with uniform velocity relative to the first observer. Take a five-year trip around the universe at half the speed of light and on your return to earth 32,000 years will have passed. This is no *Star Trek* fantasy. The predictions of the theory of relativity have been experimentally confirmed to a high accuracy, including its predictions regarding time. If the concept of a global time is to survive, it must be applicable only to the universe at large, and to be undetectable otherwise.

Perhaps the answer is to get rid of time altogether, as, in fact, cosmological science has done via the relativity



*Courtesy of Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California*

of simultaneity. Two events occurring at a distance at different times may be causally related, in the sense that one event may cause the other, provided that light can travel between them in the time available. All observers whatever their relative speeds will agree which event causes the other. What is real here is the ordering of causal events that all observers agree upon, irrespective of their measurements of time. Given the fixed speed of light, it is obvious that if the events happen at the same time according to one observer, there can be no causal connection. In this case, there is no agreement among observers about the ordering of events – the experience of simultaneity is not shared.

In other words, there is no generally experienced ‘now’, no general meaning to ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’. Time is unreal. What matters is the timeless causal structure of the universe – referred to as the block universe. Job done.

On another view of reality, all is still to play for. That view defines reality as what is happening now. Events in the past are not real, though they were real, influencing events now. Events in the future do not exist – they have no reality. The only reality is what is happening in the present. This can only work if the laws of physics are not eternal, but subject to change. Imagine the freedom theory would enjoy if this were the case. Suppose the velocity of light changed over time. Suppose the gravitational constant varied, so that the attraction of one bit of matter to another grew stronger or weaker. Our beautiful ideas about star formation would have to be radically revised, to say nothing of the effect on Einstein’s General Relativity. And then there are the quantum aspects of the universe. An adequate theory of quantum gravity has yet to

be invented, but even without that, any variation of Planck’s constant, that defines what a quantum is, would revolutionise our picture of the quantum world.

If this is growing over time, then atoms were once much tinier and have been growing ever since, and, ultimately, we would find ourselves in an entirely different world where everything, not only politics, becomes fuzzier. It is all, in principle, testable, and certainly stimulating. It is also consistent with there being nothing, such as a law-giving entity, lying outside our singular universe, the laws arising wholly from within the universe and sharing its evolution. Time itself becomes more Bergsonian (time eludes mathematics and science) as a creative force for change. Heraclitus (you can never step twice in the same river) wins over Parmenides (all change is illusion).

It seems that we are back to a problem that haunted the Greeks long ago – are time and change illusory, or are they the true reality? Physics, via the theory of relativity, eliminates time in favour of a timeless causal structure in the form of the block universe, and is clearly on the side of Parmenides. Heraclitean physics abandons timeless laws and makes time and change fundamental in its aim to make cosmology a science of the unique and singular universe. Parmenidean physics invents an infinite population of universes, along with an infinite set of physical laws, one member of which happens to be what we observe. Heraclitean physics has the task of explaining how a physical law comes about and how it evolves.

*Brian Ridley is a Fellow of the Royal Society.*

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# Degrees of Diversity

Benedict S G Beckeld

As I was sitting in the faculty lounge with the Ancient Greek New Testament in front of me, preparing to teach my students the Koine dialect of Greek through the Book of John and other selections, a colleague walked by and glanced at the book.

‘Ah yes,’ he said with a sniff, ‘have fun teaching them all about resentment.’

I did not bother pointing out to him that it was he who was being resentful by immediately associating anything Christian with mere resentment, even though the purpose of the exercise had little to do with

Christianity and more to do with a particular form of literary Greek.

During my academic career, from which I have withdrawn for now, I noticed that the longer almost anyone has been in academia, the more hostile he or she becomes to contrary opinions. This is why, to counter a common misconception, the oppressive and totalitarian tendencies of academia today are mainly the fault of the professors, not the students.

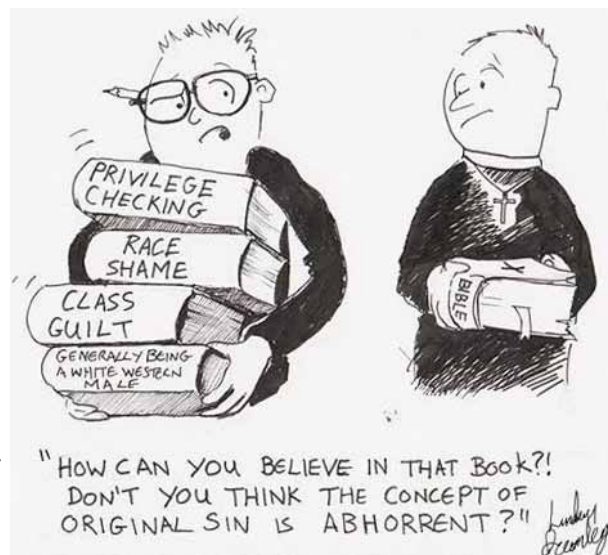
Once, when a student asked me in class why we should read Aristotle, considering the fact that he owned slaves and did not have any moral qualms about

it, I offered a rather lengthy reply. The main point of it was that morality generally comes after economics, and that while we can and should condemn slavery as cruel and unjust, our ability to do so is a type of moral luxury brought about by centuries of relative material abundance, a luxury Aristotle did not have. If a nuclear holocaust tomorrow wiped out all our infrastructure and four fifths of humanity, leading to a long period of extreme scarcity, most people's moral objections to slavery would disappear within a generation. That is to say, while discussing slavery and any other issue, we should be able to hold more than one thought in mind at a time, a feat which within the confines of academia should hardly be considered an insuperable barrier to productive thought. The students listened attentively to my reply, offering interesting follow-up questions, and many were convinced, even grateful that I had made them see the issue in a different light, because understanding how our common conceptions depend on factors far beyond ourselves, as I said, can help us take ourselves and the absoluteness of our precious convictions somewhat less seriously. When, however, I said much the same thing to a group of colleagues during a faculty meeting, it was tactfully suggested to me that I was a fascist and a patriarchalist. (I replied that in fact I much prefer John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* to Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*, but 'patriarchalism' as a vulgar catchword has become so popular that I doubt they understood their own reference.)

When I was newly arrived at a professorial position, the head of the department told me to avoid certain subjects and issues, since the university in question was a cosmopolitan one, with people of different ideas from all over the world. I repeated this (without naming the other professor) to the students themselves, who were in emphatic agreement with me that they should be treated and spoken to as adults, not as children who are considered incapable of handling certain ideas. When I was asked by colleagues to avoid literary pieces involving rape in any way, so as not to offend any student who may have been raped in real life, the students, again, agreed when I explained to them that the human mind is so incredibly complex that someone who has actually been raped can easily be reminded of that horrible experience by something that

to others has nothing to do with rape, but which in that person's mind by a chain of associations triggers the memory of the event. (Apparently my colleagues had never read Proust, or were themselves by decades of groupthink isolation beyond the human experience.) So to suppress certain ideas or works of literature in order to make the students more comfortable, as I replied to my colleagues, is double idiocy: it renders poorer by censorship the wonderful body of Western literature and philosophy that we do possess, while at the same time vastly underestimating the complexity of the human mind. In a real individual human being, an ice cream can trigger the memory of a plane crash; to another, it is cool and sugary.

The students are for the most part young and impressionable, and one can understand how they might fall victim to the prejudices of the day; it is the professors who fail to guide them out of that state who are guilty of dereliction of duty. When students



are upset at or offended by the material given to them, they are empowered only by cowardly faculty who back down and who fail to inspire them into seeing more of the larger picture. An article that a few months ago received considerable attention in the United States, by a professor writing under the pseudonym Edward Schlosser, appearing on the website vox.com and dated June 3, 2015, complained that students object to course material that they

find offensive. His response, and that of several of his colleagues, motivated by a fear of poor student evaluations and the loss of tenure prospects, was apparently to trim their syllabi and excise everything that might cause such offence. If these professors had some backbone and supported one another in refusing to self-censor, the problem would be much less acute, because aggrieved students would notice that they do not have the power to cause such changes in the material. It should be an axiom of human behaviour that power leads to the need to exercise it, and the more power such students have, the more aggrieved and offended they will become. If professors and administrators took away their power by refusing to self-censor, the number of offended students would rapidly dwindle. But, as is so often the case, academics look for conformity more than for anything else, even though they teach and laud the works of those who by

doing what they did were anything but conformists; that is to say, academics reject in the living what they esteem in the dead.

The rise of academic censorship over the last several decades is tied to a set of ideas going back as far as Nietzsche and his historicist perspectivism, and was given its biggest boost in the 1960s and 70s through that era's emphasis on emotion over reason. The young ruffians of those days, who are these days' tenured professors, also drew a lot of their moral relativism from an abuse of Wittgenstein's quite sensible philosophy of language and rejection of Cartesianism. They consequently insist that concepts are linguistic constructs used to establish a particular hierarchy and to subordinate certain groups of people, but they fail to understand that all human activity, including their own, is interest-based, and that the conclusion that ideas are power structures is therefore a trivial truth. They refute any previous claim to truth as a result of the particular prejudices of the time in which it was made, but the amusing thing is that they always exclude themselves from the charge of historical prejudice that they level against earlier thinkers, even though their own thinking is so clearly in line with the general anti-heroic, postmodern, and relativist standard of our own age. Today's academics are certain that earlier thinkers thought what they did for particular external reasons (elitism, economic superiority, etc.), but we are meant to believe that there are no external reasons for their own thinking, which is supposedly pure, free, and unconstrained by any economic, social, or historical factors. They believe they are establishing a value-free social science, even though such a science is neither possible nor desirable.

The obsession with language as arbitrary power constructs is nominalist in nature (essentially the belief that abstract things do not exist, or are in fact material, and that our words for them are simply names describing ultimately physical phenomena). Even though I am a card-carrying nominalist myself, it is nonetheless possible to abuse nominalism for very destructive ends, which academics do by assuming that the giving of a name to something must be solely for self-serving reasons and thus inherently suspect. (If for instance we call something 'barbaric', then surely we do so in order to impose our own control on that which is foreign to us.) Since this mode of thinking – if it can be called thinking – is quite attractive to those who feel victimized, whether professors vis-à-vis a society that fails to appreciate their genius, or students vis-à-vis professors who offer them supposedly offensive course readings, its corrosiveness becomes extreme once it is brought to its logical conclusion: our universities and their courses, our attempts at establishing islands of

free thought that may exist regardless of the powers that be – the very founding idea of the university – are mere assertions of power that, in the unquenchable spirit of Robespierre and Lenin, ought to be resisted.

Once this individual-based relativism has been established in academia as doggedly as it has, the only higher law possible can be that of the personal emotion, which of course is very empowering for students. When such emotion achieves the same status as in earlier times was accorded to the syllogism or to Aquinas' Natural Law, any suggestion outside of the orthodoxy of feelings and personal offence becomes tantamount to a breach of criminal law. The confluence of this state of affairs with the democratisation of knowledge – the fact that, to a great extent as a result of social media, anyone can weigh in on any subject regardless of expertise – leads to an atmosphere where censorship and groupthink are the new norm, where the words of an intellectual pygmy with an extremely simplistic understanding of social justice have as much weight for a subject as those of someone who has devoted a lifetime of study to it, an atmosphere where the independent-minded are driven away. Once a thought has been described as a nefarious power structure, the only thing needed to refute it, in the minds of those who would so describe it, is intimidation or simply a profanity that makes the ignorant laugh.

The democratisation of the university also contributes to its commercialisation (and vice versa), so that while the cowardice of professors has at least a pseudo-philosophical basis, that of administrators is more financial: The university has become a business that aims to make as much money as possible, and the more wealthy students can be recruited, the better for the business. I once heard an American Diversity Officer lament the fact of rising tuition fees, apparently oblivious to the fact that his own six-figure salary was partly responsible for it. When the American president declares that everyone should try to obtain a college degree (Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee dinner on October 18, 2010; Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee dinner on October 23, 2010; Democratic National Committee fundraiser on May 10, 2011), he not only devalues the degree itself but also the people without one, which is unfortunate, since also manual labour has dignity and usefulness (far more, in fact, than the labour of a Diversity Officer). When students are pandered to for commercial reasons, the pedestal upon which they are placed rises even higher, and what we say to them must be monitored even more. As I once told my students in the waning days of my teaching years, there are far more things that I as a professor could have said in the classroom than that would have gotten me sacked than there were

in, say, the 1950s. The students understood this and welcomed aggressive discussion. If we are to overcome the poisonous legacy of the 1960s, it is today's students, who one day will be professors themselves, who must

lead the way.

*Dr Beckeld is a Swedish-American freelance writer based in New York City.*

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# Telling Tales out of School

James Snell

Your school days are supposed to be the very best of your life. Schools themselves are idealised and painted in rosy shades by politicians of all parties. But the facts are a little less than rosy. Britain's education system is slipping down the international league tables; new members of staff and those in specialist subjects such as Physics are in short supply; and many older teachers are simply giving up, worried by lax discipline and slipping standards and bored by perennially dull classes of students.

My time in secondary education, which came to an end this year, did not live up to the golden characterisation of many a schoolyard novel. I have witnessed firsthand the decline of our schools, with an endemic left-wing bias, which has rendered places of learning effectively unable to achieve the fine ambition of providing a good education. Here, through a selection of examples from my own classroom experiences, I will attempt to explain how far the termites have spread, and how well they have entrenched themselves at the heart of our nation's once great system of education.

I have never encountered a community with as partial a sense of proof and evidence as that of my school. Man-made climate change, something which elicits strong feelings and controversy in scientific circles to this day, was simply assumed to be true; and it was taught to us as if it were a settled question. Evidence of any kind was simply not required. Instead we were treated to emotional platitudes from Geography teachers about how wonderful the planet was and how our nasty consumerist society was ruining everything. Climate scepticism was not considered by my teachers, and when it was raised the subject was quickly changed to something less contentious. However, if one wanted to make an argument about, say, the value of marriage in society and its benefits with regard to the stable bringing up of children, one might be confronted, as I was in a Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education lesson in Year 9, by a teacher angrily demanding evidence in support of such a statement.

To him this opinion seemed almost heretical and in need of justification. Yet the same was never

the case in other moral debates. Gay marriage, for example, was simply assumed to be right and morally justified, and I do not remember a discussion ever taking place on its relative merits. The same is true of multiculturalism, although one heroic teacher did tell us (presumably without the sanction of his superiors) about why many sociologists believe it has failed to inculcate community cohesion in Britain today. I can remember being shocked at that; my classmates and I had simply never been taught anything outside the liberal orthodoxy.

As it happens, on the climate change issue I am increasingly convinced that humanity is largely responsible for the climatic problems we may begin to experience with increasing severity in the coming decades. I disagree with the educational establishment not on substance but on style. In pursuing a policy whereby students are simply instructed that climate change is both real and a threat, schools fail to teach pupils about the value of evidence and inquiry, and they leave children the worse for that omission. Instead of allowing students to form their own views and assemble their own interpretations, they are simply dictated to and denied a valuable lesson in critical thinking. It is a failure which pervades modern education. Climate change being one of the most oft repeated elements of the school syllabus – as wittily exemplified by Sebastian Faulks in *A Week in December*: 'They were always doing the Holocaust at school. That and climate change.' – this is a great missed opportunity.

On religion the educational situation is as unbalanced, riddled as it is with double standards and false equivalences. In my time at school there seemed genuinely to be an unspoken taboo on telling the truth about Islamic fundamentalism and its relation to the religion of Islam as a whole. Entire assemblies were dedicated to drawing false distinctions between the 'great historical faith of Islam' and those who 'perverted' or 'distorted' its scriptures to their own nefarious ends. When I – admittedly in a spirit of provocation – relayed to a school society that there is a substantial section of Islamic scholarship which

considers the Prophet Muhammad to have been a paedophile, I was copiously and absurdly denounced. The teacher who led the discussion attempted to devalue my comment by suggesting that I had only said it in order to air an extreme view; when I corrected him on the matter of my own opinion he stared at me with shock and hurt in his eyes. The same teacher, a white man who is resolutely middle-aged and middle-class, is also a devout and enthusiastic follower of the Bahá'í faith, which I think speaks volumes about his risible sensibilities.

This desire to protect radical Islam from criticism – which was further manifested in the demand from a separate member of staff that I ‘respect’ the opinion of those who subscribe to its fascistic precepts – was not reflected in kind when one discussed elements of evangelical Christianity. In my sixth form Politics lessons, for example, every mention of the Southern Baptists was met with a predictable rolling of the eyes and a collective chuckle. It became an extremely easy way of eliciting laughter from the class, as those intent upon disrupting the lesson quickly discovered.

Indeed, right-wing political movements, such as UKIP and the American Republican Party, were frequent targets of mocking liberal scorn, which many classmates of mine cultivated with an unintelligent pride. Their arguments were not considered; their perspectives were denigrated, particularly with the buzzwords ‘racist’ and ‘homophobic’; and the American context in particular was disregarded in favour of a politically correct, typically European groupthink. Barack Obama, in combination with his Vice President Joe Biden, was a declared hero of many;

George W. Bush, on the other hand, was the subject of undue derision and mockery.

Left-wing parties and campaigns were and are hardly met with the same hostility. Recently a senior female member of staff devoted an entire school assembly to the fact that she did not care *for The Sun's* Page 3; while she was careful to include a sense of inclusivity in her argument – suggesting, for example, that the sexualisation it promotes hurts both boys and girls – there was no right of reply, and no one challenged her moral assertions. While the issue in itself is trifling, this goes some way to demonstrating the extent to which our education system propagates and insidiously enforces a single moral code, one which is left-wing in intent and practice, and one which reigns largely unchallenged at the top of our educational establishment.

All of the above represents a serious challenge for our society; after all, education helps to shape future generations, effectively dictating how our nation will think, feel and even be governed in years to come. It is not however insurmountable. It is possible that, with effective reform and careful stewardship, the educational malaise I have detailed can be rectified. Perhaps then future generations can be truthful in referring to their schooldays as the happiest of their own lives.

*James Snell is a student and journalist who has written for numerous international publications, including the National Review, The American Spectator, History Today, New Humanist, and Free Inquiry.*

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# Auto da Fé

Frances Hallinan

**A**t Hammersmith Magistrates' Court District Judge Elizabeth Roscoe ordered the destruction of a collection of paintings and photos belonging to the convicted paedophile Graham Ovenden depicting naked children. They included pictures by the 19th century French artist Pierre Louys and the German photographer Wilhem von Pluschow as well as some by Ovenden himself. The judge, declaring herself unafraid of the inevitable wrath of the art world, said the pictures and photos were ‘sexually

provocative ‘and fell foul of the child protection laws.

Things may not have got as far as burning paintings from the National Gallery, but nervous curators will be wondering whether anything with naked cherubs or children should go to their cellars.

Paintings are the most recent in a censor's list which has grown to such a size and with such devastating consequences few dare defy it. Words and thoughts are especially under suspicion. A woman in a full burka gets on a train and everybody looks the other

way. You can get six months if you say anything, even thinking about it is worrying, and in the present hysteria you wonder if there might be an offence of racially aggravated staring? Best to look out the window. How long will it be before we fear a transsexual with a six o'clock shadow and a short skirt boarding the train? Expressions of 'transphobia' are an offence.

Two neighbours fall out over smoke from a bonfire. The white neighbour makes an Alf Garnett jibe about suttee to his Indian neighbour, the latter's wife calls the police who arrive, helmet cameras switched on, further insults are thrown, and the white neighbour is handcuffed and led away.

There was a time when the police would have made the two shake hands, now they fear becoming a headline in the *Guardian*. Two months later, convicted of racial harassment, the 'racist' finds himself jobless, in a year he will be unemployable. Employers might hire an ex pick pocket or car thief out of compassion, but who would dare sign on a racist?

As it is the victim who defines the offence, almost anything can be racism from the grossest abuse to claims of suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder following a glimpse of a golliwog on a pot of Marmalade. As in the 15th century, racists like witches, are everywhere, even a race counsellor can be a racist, in fact those who are especially friendly toward 'people of colour (sic)' should be treated with especial circumspection.

Confirmation of our credence in this type of magical thinking is the widespread, often officially condoned, belief in paedophile covens and Satanic rituals. This first came to notice with the Orkney Islands witchcraft hysteria in 1991 (officially sanctioned) in which it was believed that covens of parents were subjecting their children to satanic rituals and raising the Devil. It took six years to discredit but recently the myth resurfaced in London with a police investigation costing over a million pounds into rumours that a group of witches in high office (all Tories) were torturing and killing children in secret paedophile rituals.

Running in parallel is a widespread belief in the 'recovered memory syndrome', long discredited by psychologists, in which a victim's mind is taken over by suppressed memories of child abuse, which can only be cured by the trial, involving a curtain which the accuser, known as a 'survivor', hides behind. In many cases, as in the witch trials of the 17th century, accusation alone appears to be enough for a conviction.

The clinical reality is that child abuse (which no sane person would deny exists with distressing frequency, especially in families) is always remembered by its victims, and the degree to which the perpetrator is punished bears no relation to the extent of recovery of his victim, nor accusers hiding behind curtains advance justice. As for paedophiles, no public figure dare stand up for the unfortunate victims of this terrible affliction, for an affliction it surely is. It is an old old story.

Why do people still believe in spells and witches' covens? Why do the police abandon the laws of evidence in the pursuit of paedophiles?

In past African societies, when the harvest failed or an enemy tribe carried off their women as slaves to sell to the white man, the villagers would be paraded and the witch doctor, backing and advancing to the beat of drums, would walk slowly along the line 'sniffing out' any witches responsible. A victim would be dragged out and beaten to death. Better to blame a witch

than the village chief.

'History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme,' said Mark Twain

We don't believe in God anymore, we don't believe in The Devil, but there has to be somebody to blame. Paedophiles and racists will do just nicely.

Drag them out!

*Frances Hallinan is a journalist.*

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# The Natives are Revolting

Penelope Fawcett Hulme

Throughout the seventies most of us became used to living in an increasingly diverse society into which people could freely import barbaric practises if they chose. We read about forced marriage, FGM, cruel animal slaughtering, children accused of witchcraft, and later people trafficking, but it was not done to comment on these issues because of the deeply rooted belief in cultural relativism. This certainty slipped a little near the end of the 1980s with the Salman Rushdie affair when even left-wing war horses like Harold Pinter became slightly queasy at the sight of book burning. But that was an issue for the chattering folk inside London's most expensive homes. The crisis which really allowed working class people to start openly questioning the terms on which we were living in our famously 'open society', came with the mass rape of white working class girls by Muslim men in Rotherham and other towns in the north east and Oxford.

The police and social services were found to have failed those children and their families; in some cases parents had been arrested and accused of racism for trying to protect their daughters. Other strange ideas were revealed such as that children should be able to freely choose to become prostitutes if they wished. It had been deemed, 'a lifestyle choice'. A view harking back to the ideas espoused by the left/liberal Paedophile Information Exchange, founded in 1974.

All that bogus thinking was finally swept away in March 2014 with the Jay Report which revealed that at least 1400 local white girls in Rotherham had been abused and raped for the previous sixteen years, almost entirely by Asian men. For months after there was the sound of some fine shibboleths crashing. To the failure of those public sector workers was added the reprehensible double-think of teachers and health care workers, who have consistently failed to report

girls going missing from school, FGM and child abuse in immigrant homes. It seemed there was a change in the zeitgeist and there would now be an insistence that all nationalities in the UK should uphold British law.

*Can Rotherham Recover?* (on Radio 4, Sunday 25th October) made me wonder if thinking had shifted that much at all. Or perhaps vested community interests prefer to keep certain things hidden, as they were before.

The programme, presented by Manveen Rana, started with dire economic news for the northern town. The main employer, Tata Steel, is about to cut 550 jobs. We moved quickly from that to mention the child abuse scandal, termed CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation). Rana said it had 'shocked the world', and many of the girls affected are now mothers themselves.

It seems they are still victims. Rotherham Social Services are now so desperate about missing cases of child abuse that they are targeting the former victims and their families, putting them in fear of having their babies taken away. The local Labour MP Sarah Champion stated her sympathy for the girls who are struggling 'to parent'. She also complained that the

sexual grooming is still going on, mainly via social media such as Facebook. She said the Conservative council are not doing enough about it and the Tory government isn't giving enough money to support the victims.

Chris Read, the new leader of Rotherham Council, referred dubiously to local social work as 'a work in progress', he lives in a world where people muddle along, turning nouns into verbs but prefer to worry about the real issue, which is how to start making more money. He believes the town's problems are not due to the sex crimes, but because of the 'lack of inward investment'.

"All I'm saying is that when immigrants come here, they should learn our culture."



You didn't have to be Emile Zola to notice that many vested interests in the town were emerging, and the victims of child rape were not among them. What of the Rotherham police, sixty of whom are still under investigation for their failures over the original cases? According to some of the parents of the girls who are now being investigated by social services, when they complained to the police and still complain about grooming very little is done. One mother said, 'they just don't want to do any work'.

A quarter of the way through, the programme veered off as Rana informed us that 'another challenge to the police' is coming from the EDL and a group called Britain First, which calls itself a 'loyalist group', who, she said indignantly, 'highlight the race' of the rapists. She didn't call them that, preferring 'abusers'.

To the sound of marching and violent chanting we heard that these right wing groups have held fourteen marches, not sure from when they started. A woman from Britain First was heard speaking about the need to 'support our children', followed by loud shouts of, 'scum, scum, scum'. It wasn't clear whether the abusive calls came from her people or the counter demonstrators from the Muslim community and 'Unite against Fascism.'

We heard from Hussein, a representative of British Muslim Youth, a group which opposes the Home Secretary's current anti-terrorist legislation and claims that the story of extremists taking over schools in Birmingham is untrue.

He said his community were 'sick of it, at boiling point', about the demonstrations from Britain First and the EDL, and he complained that the police were 'armed to the teeth'.

He demanded an end to the marches, saying he is supported by a 'growing number of people'. These include Chris Read who dreams of Rotherham becoming part of the putative 'Northern Powerhouse', encrusted with mighty industry such as Rolls Royce. There is also the town's Labour mayor, Maggi Clark. She wants the marches banned because they cost too much. Apparently the police have spent £4 million so far dealing with them, although they have been peaceful and there have been no riots.

Local Police Commander Jason Harwin not only wants to stop the stropky white folk cluttering up the streets with banners, but wishes to stop them 'assembling'. He says such combinations do not – yes, we could hear those magic words again which we thought had just been well buried – 'help community cohesion'.

*Local Police Commander Jason Harwin not only wants to stop the stropky white folk cluttering up the streets with banners, but wishes to stop them 'assembling'.*

Britain First claimed that 'hundreds' of local people contact them and they provide those people with a voice. The police say the marches are 'disrupting the community'.

As Britain First asked, 'Do you care about British children?' The police replied rather strangely that the marches are 'too much of a strain', they just can't cope with them anymore.

'Community cohesion seems to have taken a batting', said Morveen, leading us into old familiar territory. She interviewed a woman who goes around Rotherham completely veiled. She has received verbal abuse and says so have some of her neighbours. One of her son's friends, she says, 'has become a racist'. She said there is 'increased tension in the community because of these marches'.

Sarah Champion reappeared bemoaning 'hate crimes', and asking 'how can we hold the community together?'

As usual in the great tradition of imagined reality, no one asked when the diverse communities of Rotherham were ever together. We returned to the

issue of catastrophic economic decline. It seems that local taxi drivers (the main perpetrators of the rapes) can get no work. A bridal shop and boutique gift shop have closed and we are told this is 'largely because of the marchers'.

We were taken into the shabby home of a steel worker facing redundancy. It seems that between them, Tata and the angry white residents have said ta ta to any future prosperity. They have destroyed Rotherham and made it a place inhospitable to law abiding, cohesive Muslims, council members, social workers and the local police who just want a bit of peace and quiet.

Shame on them, particularly the white working class, so wilfully baffled and disaffected, harping on about their daughters being raped. Don't they realise that no one, in the north of England or in the British government is ever going to listen to them. They should surely do what their parents and grandparents did, put up with it, say nowt and pipe down.

Rana returned to issue a warning which many local people might find hard to understand; soon the Council will have to divert more money from social services to investigate yet more cases of CSE. The town is going to go broke if that sort of thing goes on. Not the abuse, she didn't mean that, the marching and mayhem that follow it.

*Penelope Fawcett Hulme is a social commentator.*

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# Migrants to be given Pensioners' Houses?

Patricia Morgan

**S**tarving or freezing?' That was the only choice open to the elderly according to shroud-waving charities.

Back in the 1980s, politicians eagerly competed over what they would do for pensioners. 'Does nobody else count?' I wrote as I spoiled a council election ballot paper. Adding to the £10 Christmas bonus, the government showed its generosity with winter 'fuel payments to forestall icy deaths and fended off terminal boredom for over 75s with free TV licences. Labour MP Michael Meacher said Margaret Thatcher was telling the elderly to 'drop dead' at Christmas despite her poll tax promise to end the unfairness suffered by the 'little widow'. She and the impoverished single mother would not then have to pay the same household rates as a family of four or more in one home. The single householder was now self-sufficient and dependent upon nobody.

What is on the plinth is liable to be brought crashing down. Lynda Blackwell from the Financial Conduct Authority wants OAPs in houses 'too big for them' to move house. The Council of Mortgage Lenders blames pensioners for blocking the property ladder as housing stock will have to be re-allocated, not least to accommodate 25,000 Syrians who will have extended families joining them. After all, the invective goes, the houses of 'that entitled, selfish, nasty generation' earned money while they did nothing. They don't care that their children and grandchildren will never own a home or retire and have the temerity to call young people selfish.

Pensioners were supposedly huge supporters of Mrs Thatcher whose impoverishment of generations of working people will take four lifetimes to mend. They cheerfully lined their pockets as she sold off the UK's assets and shares in the privatised companies while

grabbing the housing stock at ridiculously low prices.

In reality, the pensioners' star was ascendant in the 1980s as the post-war pact between family and government finally dissolved. One owed little to the machinations of the other, but more to the prevalent anti-family animus. The tax burden shifted onto families as allowances for dependents were reduced or removed. A flurry of means-tested assistance emerged to fund rising family poverty and the break-up of this policy. The married couples' tax allowance was removed because of the antagonism to marriage and male breadwinners, so lone parents became the only deserving 'family form'. While Thatcher's deregulation of the mortgage market is blamed for causing the spike in house



prices, there were also feminist demands to lend on the basis of two incomes instead of limited multiples of one. This helped to widen the class gap.

With pensioner poverty falling, the 'starving or freezing' ads would run alongside those for cocktails under palm trees. Ever-earlier retirement was encouraged and well resourced as useless teachers who had 'served' minuscule time in the classroom were paid off to spend decades on their backs. Hardly anybody recognised the growth of life expectancy, at least not in the UK while the government insisted that support for families could never be 'afforded' in good or bad years. Questions about vastly expanding pension expenditure were unthinkable and swiftly quashed.

The iron taboo suddenly lifted in 2010 as David Willetts was praised for *The Pinch: How the Baby Boomers Took Their Children's Future – And Why They Should Give It Back*. He estimated that 'baby boomers' owned more than half of the national wealth or £3.5 trillion, while the under 45s had but £0.9 trillion.

Who are these bloated 'boomers' lurking to gobble the young like an Incredible Hulk? Willetts' ones were

aged 45 to 65 and would have been born in the birth surge between 1955 and 1965. If these ‘boomers’ married young in the 1960s, they would have been under 10 years, if alive. Some are still not retired so they matured during the transition from family friendly to family penalising policies, whatever they might get later from the pro-pensioner splurge.

If ‘boomers’ were born around 1945, their parents would have been in more family friendly times. However, childhood might have meant rationing, bombsites, no heating and outdoor lavatories, or what is now ‘deprivation’ or ‘disadvantage’ – or worse if born 1930 to 1944. The term ‘current pensioners’ fits best. Boomers are just elderly, now or later.

Personal fortunes depend on where anyone is at any particular period and fluctuate over time since nobody leaps out of the pram and, ‘scooping the wealth pot’, runs with it for life. The recent financial crash is likely to change wealth distribution, for future ‘boomers’ are retiring just as the value of their pension assets is sharply reduced. Blaming an age group for economic trends is like holding a race or ethnicity responsible for earth tremors. Labelling the ‘boomer generation’ a ‘selfish giant’ resembles the dehumanising speech of despots preparing for social cleansing.

Willetts argued that ‘boomers’ should ‘share with the young’, but more wealth already passes informally down the generations than ever the state could provide. There is also labour which, like childcare, does not enter the money economy. The passing of family capital to younger generations should be made easy, not trounced. Certainly there are oldies who would rather buy a holiday home or world cruise than help their children. An acquaintance ostentatiously gave the equivalent of her children’s university debts to charity for the black babies. Is this what ‘sharing with the young’ means? Is it asking the state to expropriate and distribute the wealth that is otherwise passed down through family ties?

Home ownership is the crux of anger towards the old, with suggestions that older people are not entitled to live in houses they have paid for. If housing is out of the reach of younger people, this is because of an atomised and vastly increasing population rather than the elderly’s greed. Blaming ‘boomers’ is a diversionary tactic to avoid government responsibility for wantonly creating housing demand by encouraging single occupancy and migration. Corbyn’s dream must be for migrants to be given every pensioner’s house.

Over a quarter of households in 2014 contained one person. While 7.6 million live alone, more are under (4.1million) than over 65. Add in lone parents and there are 6.9 million non-elderly one-adult households. Willetts recognises that Britain’s average household

size is one of the lowest in the world while more equal societies have bigger households. When a couple break up, and the man is working, he will be counted as richer – he has no family to feed while the state dependent mother will register poor as they will need two homes, not one.

Smaller households absorb more land and materials, with lower efficiency of resource use per capita. There are more emissions, fuel consumption, cars, waste, pressures on water supplies as well as on health and social care. There are a myriad good reasons to encourage people to live together. Getting rid of the disincentives to mutual support and interdependence should include the council tax reduction for living alone. It might save resources if households got reductions for more people.

You cannot import millions of people without there being competition with the natives for shelter. The London area alone has 3,000,000 mainland EU citizens and an estimated 600,000 illegal immigrants. Britain’s population is forecast to become the largest in the EU and will hit 70 million by 2027. The government has promised to build one million homes by the end of this parliament so the race is on to slap the concrete down faster and faster in a vain quest to catch up with the number of arrivals.

The incoming tide also keeps down wages. This is what old unions called the ‘dilution of labour’, which is why they controlled entry to the trades. Younger people would benefit from being in a smaller cohort and a tighter labour market.

An amorphous swarm of ‘boomers’ have not committed intergenerational theft or ‘stolen their children’s future’. Governments have sabotaged the inter-generational contract and sponsored disintegration, and some politicians have expressly wanted to destroy the culture they despise by overwhelming it with outsiders. One consequence is that the indigenous population turn on each other so that social solidarity is replaced by a war of young against old, old against young. In a land without identity, continuity or cohesion, no one sees a past or future in the other. There are only those who get in the way of the present and are surplus to requirements.

*Patricia Morgan latest book is The Marriage Lines.*

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# Conservative Classic – 60

## *Battle for the Mind. A Physiology of Conversion and Brain-Washing*

by William Sargant

Jane Kelly

As I started writing this piece Khaled Assaad, 82, keeper of antiquities at Palmyra in Syria, had just been beheaded by ISIS, the so-called Islamic state. Unlikely as it may seem today, the old man stood accused of being a ‘heretic.’ It seems we are increasingly awash with religious fanatics, from blood-thirsty lunatics in the Middle East, to Pentecostalist Africans accusing their own children of witchcraft, to Jeremy Corbyn who has suddenly gone from political outsider to party leader, packing halls with 107,000 followers who hope the bearded Marxist will restore them, and us, to a new purity of thought.

Religious cults of course offer their followers the hope of long-term salvation and the immediate satisfaction of retribution against their enemies. The inculcation of rigid belief systems was described in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the psychologist William James as fulfilling a deep human need – but it was not until the 1940s that anyone tried to fully explain them. In his book, *Battle for the Mind*, psychiatrist extraordinaire Dr. William Sargant made a valiant attempt.

His 1957 work, *Battle for the Mind*, tries to explain how ‘Evangelists, Psychiatrists, Politicians and Medicine Men can change your beliefs and behaviour.’ It was one of the first books on the psychology of brainwashing. Rather than being a dry text book, Sargant is a writer who grips his readers, whisking them on a terrifying tour across the whole history of what he sees as mankind’s suggestibility, showing us our need for faith and how it can be inculcated in us, from the Oracle at Delphi to witch burning and demon possession, voodoo, snake-handling and psychoanalysis.

He is particularly good on Wesleyan Methodism of the 18th century, emphasising the apparent need of those who would change people’s minds to first excite

them emotionally, inducing trance and collapse before the conversion to new ideas is complete. He intensely scrutinised John Wesley and his brother Charles, who he says wrote hymns ‘addressed to the religious emotions rather than the intelligence.’ He spotted in the Wesley brothers, ‘physiological mechanisms,’ including fasting, scourging, discomfort, drumming, dancing, singing, disclosure of awesome mysteries and inducement of fear, and accuses the leaders of all the ‘successful faiths,’ of employing them.

Wesley would create high emotional tension in his potential converts by convincing large crowds that failure to achieve salvation would lead to perpetual hell fire. He exhorted them that anyone leaving the meeting ‘unchanged’, who died suddenly, which was not unlikely at that time, would go to the fiery furnace. This sense of urgency would gradually affect the whole group. Wesley learned how to capture an audience, terrifying them with his fixed countenance, and furious voice – ‘better fall



*Pavlov's house and laboratory*

here than fall into hell!’ – gauging the intellectual and emotional capacity of his audience so that he could bring them quaking to their knees. ‘They dropped on every side as thunderstruck,’ he wrote after preaching in Newgate Prison among many who were condemned. By use of ‘hellfire’ Wesley carried out an emotional assault on the listeners’ brains. He then provided an escape from induced stress by offering rescue, but only if the listeners were making a complete change of heart.

Wesley was clear that to be effective, ‘sanctification’ should be sudden and dramatic, like St Paul on the road to Damascus. He took this belief from reading about New Testament conversions. He even checked with 652 of his original converts and found that their experience ‘was wrought in a moment’. By exhorting, terrifying and then appearing to save his followers, Wesley achieved huge numbers of conversions. According to

historian Charles Smyth writing about the 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelical revival in Cambridge, preachers like him ‘produced a violent influenza of fanaticism’.

In looking at these religious converts Sargant sees that those who wish to disperse ‘wrong beliefs’ and implant different beliefs and attitudes, are ‘more likely to achieve success if they can first induce some degree of nervous tension, or stir up anger or anxiety to secure the person’s undivided attention. By increasing or prolonging stresses in various ways, or inducing physical debilitation, a more thorough alteration of the person’s thinking processes can be achieved.’

Political brain-washing similarly points to a new path to salvation after fear and other emotions have been stirred up; severe penalties are always offered for any backsliding. Sargant was a man of his times. While he was writing news was emerging that brainwashing in Korea had made captured American soldiers sign confessions and declare their loyalty to Communism. The Moscow show trials were still fresh in the memory.

Sargant was always, in part, writing about himself. Born into a wealthy Methodist family in Highgate, in 1907, he became interested in curing depression and the effects of trauma after the Dunkirk evacuation when he saw large numbers of military psychiatric casualties. He borrowed the word ‘abreaction’ from psychoanalysis to describe how patients would relive traumatic experiences under the influence of relaxing barbiturates. He also used insulin, ether, electroconvulsive treatment and sedation.

He found better results came from stirring up emotions about imaginary happenings. ‘Outbursts of fear or anger thus deliberately induced and stimulated to a crescendo by the therapist, would frequently be followed by an emotional collapse.’ He wrote:

*The patient would fall back inert on the couch as a result of the exhausting emotional discharge, not of the drugs. It then often happened that he reported a dramatic disappearance of many nervous symptoms. If, however, little emotion had been released, and he had only had his intellectual memory of some horrible episode refreshed, little benefit could be expected.*

In his research Sargant returned to Pavlov’s work of the 1890s. Most of us know that by observing dogs salivating at particular times before they were fed, Pavlov discovered ‘conditioning.’ But he took much more from the Russian scientist after discovering that he had induced neuroses and complete nervous collapse in dogs. Added to this was the effect he saw of near drowning by the dogs, during floods in Leningrad in 1924, when Pavlov found that much of the conditioning had been wiped out by the dogs’ terror.

He concluded that past a certain point all dogs are

unable to deal with stress and may suffer a complete inhibitory collapse, followed by a suppression of much conditioned behaviour; or lapse into a state compared with hypnosis or hysteria in humans. Changes effected in these states, in which the dogs were particularly susceptible to conditioning, tended to be long-lasting. Fear affected the central nervous system of the dogs, just as it affected those who heard John Wesley.

Not only did Sargant grow up among highly religious people, he was himself a severe depressive. *Battle for the Mind* was written while Sargant recovered from a second severe depression. He convalesced in Majorca, where the English poet Robert Graves helped him edit the book and provided a chapter on brainwashing among the Greeks and Romans, including drugs and bashing the initiate over the head in a dark cave.

All quite fascinating, but Sargant is a strange narrator. He also sounds oddly naive as he repeatedly states that Wesley’s efforts were socially beneficial because they distracted the British poor away from the French Revolution. As a writer he comes over as a humane man, not dogmatic like Pavlov (an irresistible pun). He writes with apparent humility; ‘Though men are not dogs, they should humbly try to remember how much they resemble dogs in their brain functions, and not vaunt themselves as demigods. They are gifted with religious and social apprehensions, and they are gifted with the power of reason; but all these faculties are physiologically entailed to the brain. Therefore the brain should not be abused by having forced upon it any religious or political mystique that stunts the reason, or any form of crude rationalism that stunts the religious sense.’

We can be grateful for his lively writing, but it’s doubtful whether anyone would be happy to see him approaching, white-coated, to their hospital bedside. He seemed to hate dogmatism in others yet as a doctor he was known for forcing his ideas on others. Dr David Owen, later a politician, worked under Sargant at St Thomas’ Hospital in the 1960s. He calls him ‘a dominating personality with the therapeutic courage of a lion’. But he is described by others as ‘autocratic, a danger, and a disaster.’

He was an early populariser of science in the bold tradition of Fred Hoyle, the English astronomer and science fiction writer who believed that AIDS came from outer space. Sargant came to believe that it was right to put depressed patients into an insulin coma to stop them resisting his choice of Electroconvulsive therapy, continuing with this even after several of his patients died. ‘Particularly violent treatments may be needed if firmly fixed delusions and obsessional habits are to be changed.’ he wrote in *Battle for the Mind*.

A man who consulted him for depression in the

1960s recalled receiving large doses of drugs and a course of electroconvulsive therapy. He was told that his depression was caused by chemical and hereditary factors and could not be resisted by an effort of personal will. The comedy actress Celia Imrie, who was his patient aged fourteen, suffering from anorexia, was given ECT and large doses of the anti-psychotic drug Largactil (also known as ‘the liquid cosh’) and insulin. She has written that her eventual cure was nothing to do with Sargant and his techniques.

In the end his research and his own ruthless practices were solipsistic and in vain. He could never find a cure for his own depression or anyone else’s because there has never been a true scientific model of the mind, no disprovable or provable theory of what makes us all tick. He was in the end shadow boxing and may have caused much harm along the way. Sargant himself seemed to admit that where the human mind is concerned, science can never give us the whole answer.

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## Reputations – 49

Alec Guinness  
Christie Davies

Sir Alec Guinness (1914-2000) was one of the great British actors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was a theatre knight different from all other knights. The others had excelled in heroic or tragic roles with sound and fury, or by speaking beautiful lines in a dulcet voice. Guinness’s best parts were often anonymous men who hid from the world; did not explore their inner selves in public.

Guinness was not a great success in Shakespeare and he never played Ibsen, but who can ever forget his George Smiley, the spy, a masterpiece of understatement and minimalism, where he conveyed meaning with a tiny change of the expression on his face or a subtle piece of body language. Guinness, like the Smiley he played, could disappear into a crowd like ‘a shrimp into the sand’, always closely observing others and giving nothing away about himself. John le Carré, the creator of Smiley, insisted that Guinness got the part. Guinness’s trade mark in this, as in so many parts, was stealth – remember him as Henry Holland in *The Lavender Hill Mob* or Professor Markus in *The Ladykillers*.

Something remarkable about Guinness was the range of characters he could play, from Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night* to the Hindu Professor Godbole in *A Passage to India*, from Lawrence of Arabia in Terence Rattigan’s play *Ross* to Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars*, Colonel Nicholson in *The Bridge over the River Kwai* to Benedict Boniface in the Feydeau farce *Hotel Paradiso*.

All actors have to transform themselves, shrugging off their real selves and the parts they played in previous productions, but few could do so as completely and

successfully as Sir Alec Guinness. In *Kind Hearts and Coronets* he played all six members of the D’Ascoyne family (each in turn murdered by Louis Mazzini) – a playboy, an enthusiastic young cameraman, a tedious doddering clergyman, a self-important general, a dutiful admiral, the Duke of Chalfont and Lady Agatha, a wild suffragette. During the making of the film of J.B. Priestley’s *The Last Holiday* Guinness moved back and forth between different stages of the hero’s life from one day’s filming to the next, since it was not shot in sequence. Guinness was a chameleon who could rapidly and completely change his appearance as he chose and could then build up a character from the outside. You looked at him and he had become the person he was playing. Not for nothing was he called the man with a thousand faces. He was the greatest of the mimetic character actors.

Guinness had learned the skills of the actor, the art of being someone other than yourself, at a very young age. He was the fatherless child of Agnes Cuffe, a barmaid and domestic servant, who also provided sex for the wealthy. His father, whom he never knew except as an occasional mysterious visitor whom he called ‘uncle’, was probably Andrew Geddes, a prosperous Scottish banker who had a wife and family. Geddes quietly paid for Alec’s education through a solicitor and he was sent to Roborough School, a public school so minor it can be classified as *minimus*. When Geddes died, he left Alec the meagre proceeds of one of his ventures in Patagonia. Alec was given the name Guinness from the place of his conception, probably Lord Moyne’s yacht; Moyne or some other Guinness may even have been his father. After he became a celebrated actor, both the

Geddes and the Guinness families were keen to claim him as a cousin. Fame trumps shame.

At his schools he had to hide his true identity lest he be exposed as a bastard with no known father to the moral and snobbish scorn of the 1920s. Further, he had to perfect the speech and manners of the little gentleman, which set him apart from his mother's relations who looked after him in the holidays but who talked 'common'. All his life Guinness was an obsessional stickler for 'good form'. He was utterly punctilious about dress codes, formal manners and even handwriting. He was a young foguey who in time became an old foguey, incensed that expensive restaurants no longer insisted on customers wearing a tie at lunchtime and bothered that men no longer wore hats and failed to take them off in the lift. As a boy Guinness was an outsider who had to be as alert as a spy in enemy territory, always watching and observing and never revealing who he really was.

Not surprisingly he soon became fascinated with the theatre, that place where nothing is real and identities are taken on and discarded as the situation demands. He was an obsessive theatre-goer and managed to trick his way into being allowed backstage. At school he wrote his own little playlets and declaimed them to others or put them on in a puppet theatre he had built himself. On one occasion he made himself up as Charles I and realized that he preferred being someone else to his own unsatisfactory self. In later life he recalled that there had never been a time when he did not want to be an actor. After school he worked for an advertising agency but soon switched to drama school, living in great poverty in a garret on baked beans and jam sandwiches and walking to school barefoot to postpone the day when his shoes needed mending.

During World War II he was terrified that he would be refused a commission because of his shameful origins, but he soon became the commander of a landing craft in the Mediterranean. He was to tell John Mortimer that 'the most difficult part I had to play in life was to be an officer and gentleman for three years in the navy'. To play the part of a gentleman means that you know how to seem like one but that deep down you know you don't qualify. Most former civilians commissioned in the navy in that war would later say of their time: 'I was a naval officer, I knew about navigation and gunnery and making sure the men got paid on time'. But for Guinness it was about looking dandy in his brand new uniform from a good tailor. Get the surface right and then build inwards to create the part; that was the key skill that made him a great actor.

And yet one of his greatest roles involved a horrid degree of self-revelation. He played the Cardinal in Bridget Boland's *The Prisoner* at the Globe Theatre

in 1954. The Cardinal is a pious, upright man, much respected by the ordinary people of his country in Eastern Europe, where he has been taken prisoner by the Communists and charged with war crimes and is being interrogated with the intention of breaking him down. The Cardinal is easily able to refute the callow materialism of his enemy, but then the interrogator reveals that he knows the Cardinal is a bastard and his mother a whore. He follows this up with the insinuation that the Cardinal's zeal for religion is merely a means of covering up his origins and cleansing away his sense of shame. At this point the Cardinal cracked and confessed and was discredited in the eyes of the people. Interestingly Bridget Boland knew Guinness well and had dedicated the play to him.

Not long afterwards in 1956 Guinness was received into the Roman Church. Father Philip Caraman S J, a close friend who had helped to steer him in, said that *The Prisoner* was the most significant play in Guinness's life. As a result of his uncertain and tainted origins, Guinness greatly feared chaos and the Church offered him a rigid frame to which he could cling and a guarantee of certainty and continuity – all the things missing from his early life. The liturgical reforms that followed Vatican II upset Sir Alec greatly, for the unfailing authorities at the centre to which he wholly subscribed began to dismantle the visible signs and symbols that he had come to see as familiar and eternal. Guinness was a man who built his understandings first on a mastery of outside appearances and only then moving in to understand the essence of a part or a person. He remained a loyal Catholic but was not a happy one.

He had another reason for being unhappy. He was bisexual but always stayed firmly in the closet even among a coterie of gay theatre friends. He lived in a closet within a closet. The skill in hiding a discreditable secret that he had learned as a bastard child enabled him successfully to deny his homosexuality, even though endless rumours circulated about his strong attraction to handsome young men, of his being arrested for cottaging, persistent importuning in public lavatories, and pleading guilty under the false name of Herbert Pocket, of his groping a male dresser in the theatre, and about the men who came and stayed the night, though not at the family home; his wife drew the line at that. He hated Sir Laurence Olivier for jokingly suggesting that he had had sex with the obviously gay Sir John Gielgud. Many were silenced by the fear or threat of an action for libel or slander including his first biographer. After his death his diaries revealed how very many sexual partners he had had. Some were casual. When in 1952 he was filming in Malta, then a big British naval base, it had been a case of 'Hello, sailor!' The

men whom Guinness described in his diary as ‘the most handsome bearded sailors I have ever seen’ would have termed our Alec ‘as ginger as a tomcat’. In England he had had longer affairs with those doing manual work in the theatre. It never really stopped.

Many gay Catholics live cosily with their condition, shop around for a sympathetic confessor, feel contrition, promise to amend their ways and then after a short interval return to the gay life with a quiet mind. But Guinness was a rigorist with a horror of sexual sin and lived in a state of angry torment fretting about his disordered passions. When Sir Ian McKellen started campaigning for gay rights, Guinness invited him to lunch, a very expensive one, and told him: ‘You really should not, as a leading actor, have anything to do with anything political, especially anything as dirty as homosexuality. I beg you not to do it.’ It was not self-revelation but self-loathing on Guinness’ part. The frame to which he clung had become a trap and

the closet a cage. He had rendered himself unable not to hide.

It is impossible not to feel sorry for Guinness, stigmatised twice by an uncharitable society. Yet it is often from such backgrounds that great actors emerge from Edmund Kean to Sarah Bernhardt to Charles Laughton. In the theatre nothing is real and those whose life is one of hiding can excel in make-belief. What made the remarkable, indeed peerless Alec Guinness unique was that he could transfer his daily life as an anonymous watcher into roles on stage and screen. His watchfulness meant he could take on the details of anyone’s appearance and convince the audience that he was really that person with all his or her attributes. He remains unforgettable.

*Christie Davies is the author of Stigma, Uncertain Identity and Disguise in Efrat Tseëlon (Ed) Masquerade and Identities. 2001.*

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## Roy Kerridge

I’m always pleased when Mrs Quashy from down the road, or one of her smiling friends brings me a copy of *The Watchtower*, the Jehovah’s Witness magazine. Among the delights of this informative magazine are the pictures. Some are of faraway places, some are of rare animals and occasionally some are of imaginative scenes from life in Kingdom Come, or the future Paradise on Earth. The earthly paradise resembles a National Park in the foothills of the Rockies, where happy couples and their children enjoy picnics and the company of ‘tame’ wild animals. Look closely and you will notice that each family is a separate race from the next – one white, one black, one Oriental yellow and so on. This seems to be goal of the worldwide anti-racist tendency, that each race is elevated to the ranks of a species, one that cannot and should not hybridise.

So much for race, but the same tendency is now taking over the most intimate and embarrassing area of human life, that of sexual relations. Tolerance is leading us to declare people to be separate species in this sphere. Oscar Wilde, now the archetypal homosexual, was also a husband and father. Nowadays people are expected to discover their sexual preferences early in life and stick to them. You can be a heterosexual or a

homosexual and never the twain shall meet. When I mention Oscar Wilde and his wife, many people look startled and uncertain, then say: ‘Well I suppose he was a bisexual. In the same way there is a party in favour of declaring ‘mixed race’ to be a ‘race’ on a parity with ‘black’ or ‘white’ and just as separate.

A leopard cannot change his spots, or colour, but as for his sexual habits, it’s up to him. Similarly people can do anything they like, falling in love at random. An indiscretion or a passionate affair should not have to label you for life as *a* anything. A boy in a boy’s only boarding school may do one thing, but when he leaves school he will probably do another. Why should he be stuck with a label such as ‘gay’?

The popular BBC sponsored idea now is that ‘gays’ can’t fall in love with women as they are gay: a race or species of their own. Gays are separate but equal from the rest of humanity. Now they marry one another and are supposed to lead exemplary lives. Not like the bad old days, when everyone was horrid to them. I was brought up in those days, the days of ‘queers’, and well remember how ‘queers’ seemed to be put on earth to make people laugh. This laughter was nearly always good humoured. Such an atmosphere is shown to great advantage in *Carry on Films* and in the *Round*

the Horne radio show.

*Kenneth Horne: Who are you?*

*Kenneth Williams: I'm Julian and this is my friend Sandy*

*Howls of laughter from the audience*

*Kenneth Horne: What are your hobbies?*

*Kenneth Williams: You must be joking*

Shrieks of prolonged laughter from the audience as they roll in the aisles in helpless mirth. It can't be good for them to laugh so much. Nowadays the humour has ended and the New Tolerance has led to an equally New Intolerance.

When I was at school, a day school, the boys found 'queers' to be the funniest thing on earth; they had a rhyme about Oscar Wilde, a parody:

*The boy stood on the burning deck*

*His back was to the mast.*

*To turn around he did not dare,*

*Till Oscar had gone past*

In school jokes, and in life as often as not, queers chased boys and boys of eleven or twelve often seemed to be their preference. Grown ups made cheerful jokes about scouts and scoutmasters, vicars and choirboys. Nowadays these same vicars and scoutmasters would not be queers or gays or homosexuals. They would be paedophiles, and hanging is too good for them. Only the matter of a year or two in the age of his rent

boy separates the gay (good) from the paedophile (inexpressively evil)

While the respectably married man, married to another respectably married man, seems to be an ideal, the paedophile is very much a reality. He is lumped together with child molesters and murderers. Far from arguing in favour of paedophiles, I am currently wondering if the old-fashioned humour and tolerance were not misplaced. Amid tears of laughter, few people tried to see the boy scout or choirboy's point of view. If society is oppressive to gays, the reverse holds true. Boys have always found public lavatories intimidating, especially the type where one man stands to your left and another to your right, and they never go away, just stand and stare.

Adolescent boys often have a secret fear: 'Am I gay?' It is a fear, not a feeling of pride or defiance. Most boys think 'gayness' to be a doom, a sign that desirable girls can never be theirs.

I remember once standing between two staring men in a lavatory, too nervous to finish, when suddenly a shiver went down my spine. At that moment, the man on the left made his move, but I gave a yelp and escaped.

'Suppose a shiver down the spine is a recognised sign of being queer?' I agonise.

Now older, and more mature, I know of course that it only means that someone is walking over my future grave. On this note of blatant superstition, it seems as good a time as any to draw these unpleasant speculations to a close.

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Christmas Gospel tells us that God became flesh. So Christmas is not a theory – it is not even a doctrine or a dogma – it is an event in the real world of things. Ask a child about Christmas and she’ll have the honesty to say it’s about presents: *Things*. When God became flesh, he did something that has immense practical usefulness. The English used to be thought of as a practical people – not like the intellectual French, their heads full of theories. There is a true story about when the French magazine *Paris Match* asked three important men who happened to be in Paris at the same time what they would like for Christmas. President Putin said he would like an end to the arms race; Barack Obama said he wanted peace on earth; the British Ambassador refused to answer the question. The journalist said, ‘But the Presidents of America and Russia have told me what they would like for Christmas’. The British Ambassador said, ‘Oh all right – I’d like a small box of crystallised fruits, please.’ He was right. Not only was his request more modest: it was the only one of the three that might possibly be supplied.

So when you ponder the wonder of Christmas Day, don’t let your mind stray into abstractions – the so-called *meaning* of Christmas. Think instead of the *things* we associate with Christmas and you will get a better understanding of the Festival. I have a friend, a priest, who phoned me up to tell me about an expedition he had made into Spain recently. He said, ‘The whole town square was taken over by crib-sellers. Large cribs, big as your car; small ones to put on the sideboard. Lovely, tangible, evocative, Christmassy.’

To get to the reality of Christmas, don’t remove yourself into some distant position from where you enjoy high-minded spiritual reflections. Enter into the world of Christmas *things*. The child understands this. That’s why we say Christmas is a time for children. Set up a game with a child and he won’t ask you for meanings: he’ll enter its world and regard it as reality. Tell the nativity story to young children and they don’t start asking whether it’s true: they’re far too busy dressing up as Mary and Joseph, sticking a paper star on a velvet curtain and making models of the lowing cattle. They are nearer to Christmas than the theologians.

You can give children religion neat. They can take it. It’s the adults who are sceptical and squeamish. The

child, first presented with the story of the Nativity of Our Lord, has an acceptance of it which is stronger and more immediate than any adult experience. It’s the child who takes religion directly, seriously. It’s the adult who’s detached and flippant. The poor grown-up *thinks about it*. The child *enters a world*. The adult wants to understand – as if the Incarnation were on a par with the binomial theorem. The child allows himself to be imaginatively possessed by it. The adult wants an explanation. The child enters the mystery. You must become as a little child.

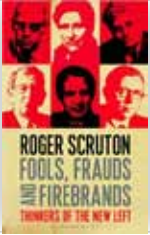
I grew up in the back streets of Leeds just after the war. My granddad had two newsagent’s shops between the gas works and the jail, about a quarter of a mile apart. Christmas Eve was the busiest time, selling toys. It was the bleak midwinter of 1947 – Herbert Morrison and Stafford Cripps and snow piled high for months on end. I was five and was given the Christmas Eve job of carrying messages between the two shops. I still can’t get the magic of it out of my head. Walking down the middle of the deserted road with pinpricks of frost on the gravel like a reflection of the starry night. I had a red scarf and I used to be told off for sucking the end of it. I had a paper bag of cocoa and sugar, which was replenished after each trip. As I walked through the darkness among the lighted windows, I heard in my head the whole time *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*. I knew then I was caught in the jaws of the hound of heaven.

*Peter Mullen*

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# ARTS AND BOOKS



## Inside the Academic Insane Asylum Christie Davies

**Fools, Frauds and Firebrands. Thinkers of the New Left**, Roger Scruton, Bloomsbury, 2015, £16.99.

Roger Scruton's book deals thoroughly with a wide range of dubious and in some cases dangerous leftist thinkers of the last fifty years. It is a descendant of his earlier work on the New Leftists, sections of which had also appeared in the *Salisbury Review*. His book of 1985 about the Left provoked and enraged many leftists to the point where they put pressure on his original publishers, Longman, to have it withdrawn. The fact that the leftists did so and their subsequent attempts to undermine his university career are proof that they had the totalitarian instincts of which they were accused. The leftists were unwilling or unable to deny the evidence or to refute the arguments that he had provided and so they resorted to crude abuse. The brave Scruton had forced them to cast aside their superficial adherence to the norms of liberal tolerance and to reveal their true position as unscrupulous repressors of anyone who strongly disagreed with them. Significantly, Scruton's accurate and pungent work was greatly appreciated in Eastern Europe and it circulated as *samizdat*. There the people knew from their own actual lived experience what socialism was really like. They also knew that the claim of the New Leftists that they could provide something different and better was a falsehood. Even if you were to fasten a human face on to the socialist monster, it would remain a monster.

Many of the thinkers that Scruton discusses here are more recent and others never really belonged in the now rather dated category New Left, but they certainly all belong in one or other or two of the three or all of the F-word sets in his title: *Fools, Frauds and Firebrands*. I am amazed at Scruton's moderation in using only these three F-categories. I can think of at least two more. Where indeed are we to place that contemporary fashionable left-wing hero, Slavoj Žižek, who is the latest purveyor of the weird ideas of the strange French Marxist and psychoanalyst Jacques

Lacan who hybridised two baseless untestable systems of thought? Žižek is a brilliant stand-up comedian; he moves effortlessly between designedly humorous nonsense and unintended nonsense, between the glorious and the garbled.

What is striking about thinkers that Scruton discusses is how much they differ by country. The three main Americans, Galbraith, Dworkin and Rorty, are all left-liberals who respect laws, property and the American Constitution, but they are also all frauds in the name of progress. The French by contrast were and some still are fanatical Marxists who hate capitalism, retreat from reality into meaningless abstraction and avoid the study of things empirical even by consulting what others have discovered. This habit enabled many of them to support the old Soviet Union and to declare that its worst excesses were irrelevant to the assessment of socialism. It was a society in the process of becoming which had gallantly left the capitalist road. If the Americans were the frauds, then the French were the fools and the firebrands.

Finally, there were the British ones, such as E P Thompson or Raymond Williams, who had an attachment to the particular customs and traditions, histories and communities of the British labouring classes. Thompson was greatly angered when Perry Anderson, an old Etonian, tried to import the alien abstract theses of Continental Marxism, and wrote *The Poverty of Theory* against them. Williams, the son of a railwayman from the village of Llanfihangel Crucorney, ended up joining the Welsh nationalists, vainly seeking a party that stood for the kind of community which had produced him.

The Americans are remarkable for their clever slide away from notions of objectivity. Rorty (whose name will amuse Australians for whom the word 'rort' means fraud) viewed 'truth as ... what is good for us to believe' So long as 'we' agree and 'we' are wedded to progressive opinion then what we say three times must be true. Everything is relative except equality. We can believe anything we like, quite unconstrained by reality, but those who express views that are politically incorrect are excluded from the 'we'. He is getting rid of objectivity in order to get rid of objections.

Dworkin, a professor of Law, seems to have known and used all the tricks of a barrister who sees his sole task as winning the case for his client and neglecting the pursuit of fairness. If Scruton is right that he did behave in this way, then he clearly

betrayed his academic calling. Dworkin undermined the equal rights that Americans should enjoy under their written Constitution by appealing to a nebulous set of egalitarian principles that he claimed underlay and were the origin of these rights. Goodness knows where they are to be found. By sleight of hand rights became attached to groups and not individuals and if a particular group could claim underdog status they were entitled to rights denied to others. Scruton shows in detail the slippery trickery of Dworkin's relentless arguing to win in the name of fashionable causes.

The third of his key Americans was J K Galbraith, one of the wealthiest journalists in American history, a good writer and gifted satirist while pretending to be an economist. Galbraith was not opposed to capitalism and saw corporations, controlled by what he called the technostructure, as necessary, but he did not believe in markets nor in the price mechanism. Galbraith thought that the prices of any items produced by large corporations would have been better decided by a group of leftist intellectuals like himself; he had been a price-administrator in World War II. Galbraith argued that companies like General Motors were able to dominate their customers, suppliers and few competitors who under conditions of oligopoly had to shadow the leader's prices and operations. For Galbraith General Motors was unchallengeable, almost eternal, but he did not live to see it go bankrupt. Galbraith didn't ever consider the limits to his model, such as the massive arrival of competitive foreign imports, the arrival of new products promoted by entrepreneurs or the corrosive ability of unions to push up wages and therefore costs. Indeed he saw the latter as a form of benign 'countervailing power'. If the signalling system of prices is not necessary and the technostuctures are so potent, then why should they not operate just as successfully in the countries of Eastern Europe? Galbraith was embracing the popular but badly flawed convergence theory which argued that socialist and capitalist societies were becoming more similar, possibly leading to the withering away of the Cold War. Then the Soviet Union collapsed, and he now claimed to have believed in markets all along.

It is easy to see why Galbraith was wrong. He wrote clearly and he exposed himself to refutation, even if he was selective in his choice of information, but neither clarity nor exposure to refutation characterizes the French Marxists. Where the Anglophone thinkers merely distort the facts, the French abolish them altogether. Here readers need Scruton's account most, for he has taken the trouble to slog his way through the tedious and impenetrable writings of Althusser, Lacan, Deleuze and Badiou. Their work had considerable impact in the humanities departments of universities.

After attending seminars and dipping briefly into the books of these thinkers when they seemed to impinge on my empirical work, I was happy to dismiss them as 'the higher Froggy nonsense'. We should be grateful to Scruton who has assessed the opaque works of these firebrands seriously and has proved that they were talking nonsense. He has taken representative passages and by subjecting them to a rigorous philosophical analysis shown that these little French emperors have no clothes. These authors write in an obscure way with much abstraction in order to protect their work from any kind of reasoned criticism. For them capitalism is merely the place where the capital-owning bourgeoisie dominate and exploit the proletariat who have to sell them their labour and as such it is the root of all evil. In opposition to this real evil they have described a socialist Utopia that is vaguely defined and fail to specify any way of attaining it. Any atrocities that have been or will be committed on the way to this Utopia are not crimes but necessities. Scruton rightly concludes that this is a religion for atheists with Socialism cast as the happy land far, far away. When the French Marxists use the word truth it does not have the everyday meaning of corresponding with the facts, but means faith, as in 'the Truth shall set you free'. The freedom to be gained is not that of freedom to choose but rather that which comes with a loss of a sense of personal estrangement. This is fine if your kingdom is not of this world, but it is a hopeless starting point for understanding the mundane material world.

Scruton's survey also covers the work of many more mendacious icons of the left, notably Edward Said and György Lukács. Even when he trashes them he does so fairly. He praises Perry Anderson's erudition and Foucault's recognition on his deathbed of the validity of Solidarity in Poland, which must have upset many true believers. Scruton is decent enough not to make use of Althusser's posthumous autobiographical memoir *L'Avenir dure longtemps* in which he admitted he was a fraud and always had been. Althusser wrote it after he had strangled his wife. He may well have been analysed by Lacan, that psychiatrist who made his patients worse. Scruton's is a timely book for not only are these irrational ogres of the past still sitting on university reading lists but new ones like Žižek keep popping up. Students need Scruton's book to help them resist the oppressions of equality. It is a masterpiece of refutation.

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## Jihadis behind lace curtains

Lindsay Jenkins

**We Love Death As You Love Life: Britain's Suburban Terrorists**, Raffaello Pantucci, 2015, C. Hurst & Co, £15.99.

After 300 pages of detailed, meticulous research on the very many British Muslims who have promoted or espoused violence over the past forty years, Raffaello Pantucci ends on a mournful note. There is, he concludes, 'very little understanding of how to counter and de-radicalise'. He writes interestingly and case by case about the three well known drivers that push or pull an individual towards destroying his fellow man: the ideology to create a global Caliphate; the grievance of not being fully part of British society; and mobilisation – that random spark, that chance element, which sets fire to the first two drivers.

Yet within the pages of his book, Raffaello Pantucci, RUSI's director of International Security Studies, has left clues which should help anyone working towards reducing the serious threats to this country. He does not dwell on the government's four pillar approach of 'Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare', but the story he so clearly relates shows a Government focussed on the last three of those and, given the undoubted challenges, with considerable success so far. But it is the Prevent policy, which he does not mention other than in passing, or the lack of a working Prevent policy, which would be the really absorbing and constructive angle to read about. So while applauding the book Pantucci has written, I wish he had written another. For unless readers take his stories, about 200 by my count, of British terrorists and translate them into an action plan, then we shall just get more of the same: threats, plots, bombs, destruction. As MI5 has repeatedly made clear, it has to succeed every time and that is a tall order.

Here are some of the many clues to preparing that action plan within the pages of Pantucci's book. An early conundrum is the author's caveat that it is only 'a tiny minority within a minority', as he puts it, which choose the path of violence. No doubt that is true. Yet when we know from the press that about 27 per cent of British Muslims said they have 'some sympathy for the motives behind the attacks' on the office of *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris, we clearly have something to worry about. The ComRes poll for the BBC reported that a further 32 per cent were not surprised by the

attacks last January, 11 per cent said that magazines which publish images of the Prophet Mohammed 'deserve to be attacked'. Finally, only 68 per cent of British Muslims said that attacks on the publishers of images of the Prophet are 'never' justified, while 24 per cent disagreed.

Not surprisingly, mass migration to the UK, especially from the 1960s onwards, is where the Prevent story should begin. The numbers are huge. From 82,000 Muslims in 1961 the census records a spectacular rise to 2,660,000 in 2011 of which over half were born in Britain. Pantucci reports that over half of Britain's Muslim communities can be traced back to Bangladesh or Pakistan. Even more interesting is that a quarter of Britain's Muslims trace their roots to just two places: for Pakistanis the Kashmiri area around Mirpur, and for Bangladeshis a majority trace their roots to Sylhet (Jalalabaad). The cause of that massive emigration lies in the partition of India and Pakistan and later events.

The result has been that communities rapidly grew in the UK with deep connection to specific parts of their home countries and in many ways are merely extensions of their home country. So not only do Pakistanis, even those born in the UK, often return to marry family members back home, but about half of the now third or fourth generations are paired with relations at home. So unlike other waves of immigrants over the centuries, this wave is different. Overwhelmingly, these immigrants have not fled in fear of persecution; theirs has been an economic migration. So there has been little natural integration, little attempt to adopt the ways of the new country, even to learn the language, and communities are continuing to this day to be somewhat insular. All of this has ramifications far beyond any discussion of terrorism and of this book, but which should unsettle the reader.

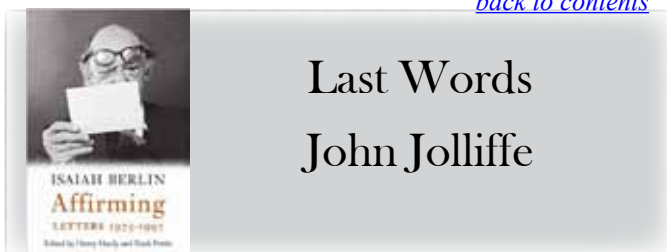
The other part of the immigration story is different and more complex. Young Arabs and North Africans came to the UK to seek work or to study and started the familiar chain migration. The numbers remain guesswork but may be in the order of 50,000 to 200,000 from places as disparate as the Yemen, Egypt, and Beirut. Many relished the freedoms of the UK compared with 'home' and London became the hub, the publication centre for radical papers, and a haven for dissidents to cause trouble back home. London, or Londonistan, became a battlefield, not only of ideas, but of gunmen killing each with frightening regularity.

Pantucci briefly mentions the head teacher in Bradford, Ray Honeyford, who was one of the first to flag up the problems of segregated communities and was drummed out of his job because he told the truth. Pantucci charges Honeyford's statements as being

close to racism in places. Considering the enormity of what Honeyford was describing in 1984, and the total blind eye turned by the Government, that is a sad reflection on Pantucci. Over thirty years later, little has changed but Honeyford has been proved right.

Today some Mosques are preaching hate, young Moslems travel in large numbers to the latest centre of trouble, most recently Syria, and worryingly their calls to jihad are now acting as a beacon to draw in those who were not born into Islam. So from Al Qaida in south Asia the brand and the franchise has led to conflicts from Libya to Tunisia, to Chechnya, to West Africa and across the Middle East, each with links back to the UK. And we see no lessening of migration, the numbers walking west are of Biblical proportions, no doubt also bearing with them more problems of the kind Pantucci has so clearly highlighted.

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## Last Words John Jolliffe

**Affirming: Letters 1975-1997, Isaiah Berlin, ed. Henry Hardy and Mark Pottle**, Chatto & Windus, 2015, £40.

This, sadly the last, volume of the letters is memorable in more ways than one. In general, because virtually nobody under the age of fifty (or sixty?) seems capable of writing a letter at all, let alone one of imagination or originality, and certainly not one of the essay length to which Isaiah Berlin's often extended. The curse of the so-called communications revolution, scrappy and semi-literate emails and texts, has dumbed down what was previously one of the great delights of many people's lives. You have to swim very powerfully against this tide to reverse this, and pretty soon, who is going to bother?

In the case of Berlin, it is not so much *après lui le déluge*, it is the opposite; the slow drying up of perhaps the most intimate and valuable source of first hand information on personal, political, academic, artistic, literary, cultural and historical topics, often of the greatest interest to future generations, and all illuminatingly to be found here, but, of course, not in an email. No doubt there will be exceptions, here and there, but not nearly enough of them.

The present volume covers the period 1975-1997, in the course of which he succeeded in completing the Herculean task of creating, as his monument, Wolfson

College, Oxford, through the enormous generosity of Sir Isaac Wolfson himself and his foundation, and then made possible by the Ford Foundation in America. It contains throughout enlightening and stimulating comments on the great moral, intellectual and philosophical problems of the day, and also on the passing political scene, particularly in America, where he was a regular visitor at a high level. This may sound daunting, but it is done with such a light and stimulating touch that you do not have to be in an expert to be carried along. His thoughts on the various policies pursued in Israel are likely to inspire occasional yawns in some readers, but that does not mean they are not important, and his loathing for Begin and the Stern Gang shines out reassuringly. His fairness and objectivity are often exemplary, as when he adds: 'One cannot, of course, blame any Palestinian Arab for hating Israel.' The passage in which he really sets out his stall is in a letter to the Director of the Mauritshuis at The Hague, too long to quote, or even summarise here but well worth seeking out on pp 205-10. Inevitably, when challenged about what he had thought or said thirty years earlier, his memory was sometimes inaccurate; 'I may be wrong; I often am' is one of his more disarming comments. He appears to have kept copies of his letters, but no other records, and he was too fond of talking to keep a diary. Indeed, his good friend Geoffrey Warnock, once observed, tactfully but aptly, that 'one can hear the voice of the brilliant lecturer, who totally convinces and excites his audience at the time, but leaves them wondering afterwards whether the brilliance of the lecturer was not rather greater than the interest of the text.'

It may be so; but it does not detract from the vitality and sparkle and wit of the letters, as well as their sheer humanity, which included frequent self-deprecation. False modesty is usually detectable, but Berlin's was the real thing. 'I suffer from despising everything I write. What others write is objective, valid, important, true, original, at least sometimes; what I write is invented by me, so what value can it possibly have?' How different from the smart alecs to be found at various universities. Yet he was often several steps ahead of his critics by his ready admission of most of the faults of which they accused him; such as writing chaotically; inaccuracy caused by his exceptional rapidity of thought and speech, which often led him off at distracting tangents; chronic unpunctuality in delivering even shortish pieces of work. Unquestionably, he was a talker first, and a writer, though a gifted and prolific one, second. This was sometimes held against him by those with lesser talents, especially those who, in the admirable words of Whitehead, 'know so much and understand so little'. Harsher was the verdict of the industrious

Namier, who commented acidly ‘How intelligent you must be to understand all you write.’

Very notable was the endlessly generous praise (occasionally exaggerated?) of the works of his friends and colleagues, scattered all through these pages, and too abundant to be quoted or shortened. His devotion to his friends ‘is not and cannot be changed by differences of opinion or even disapproval... bad blood cannot do anyone any good.’ The range of those whose help is acknowledged by the editor is astonishing: where else can one find Lars Roar Langslet, Wang Quian, and the rather unsteady sounding Mirko Wishke?

There is only the occasional condemnation: C P Snow, ‘tremendously unattractive, but not sinister like Beaverbrook...’; and the only All Souls colleague, A L Rowse, whose self-importance and self-pity he could not abide, ‘the temperament of a genius, without the genius’. One does not know how many more of these rare outbursts are to be found in other letters that have not been selected here, but he once or twice added guiltily to a complaint, ‘Better burn this’. Another whom he had no time for was Hannah Arendt: ‘I see nothing in her writings of the slightest interest, and never have... mechanical, a kind of patter’, and Peter Pears, ‘deeply and sincerely in love with his own unbeautiful voice.’

Of great practical value was his influence on the Boards of Covent Garden and more crucially of the National Gallery, where, together with the present Lord Rothschild and the Sainsbury brothers, he helped to scupper the Carbuncle Plan. Without their triumphant efforts, the programmes of such philistines as Harold Wilson and Harold Macmillan might have done even more damage than they did.

His estimation of other public figures are often arresting. Roy Jenkins, whom he liked, ‘no lack of ambition, only of will power to satisfy it.’ And at a higher level Solzhenitsyn, ‘the only individual who has ever succeeded in inflicting genuine damage on the Soviet Union. ... something spiritually grand and terrifying.’ But he rated Sakharov even higher. ‘Everything he says seems to be true, more simply and better put, braver and more moving than any other voice in the world today.’

The comprehensive footnotes deserve special praise, though in a bizarre way they give all names in full. Anyone reading this book will know who Mussolini was, but who needs to be told that his second name was Amilcare? But in general they are indispensable, and without them many of the names would be meaningless. (The photograph on the jacket of the book, though appropriate, seems rather unworthy, and jarring.)

Though the letters only dried up with Berlin’s death,

his vitality and amazing range never faltered. Not for him the moving words on the last page of Gibbon’s autobiography; ‘Two causes, the abbreviation of time, and the failure of hope, will always tinge with a browner shade the evening of life.’ There is no sign of this here. Berlin sparkled and instructed to the very end. Although this *is* the end, one can always, with great profit, go back to the beginning.

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## The Curse of Therapy Anthony Daniels

**The Strange Case of Thomas Quick: The Swedish Serial Killer and the Psychoanalyst Who Created Him**, Dan Josefsson, Portobello Books, 2015, £14.99.

Superstition springs eternal in the human mind and is never more dangerous than when that mind thinks that it is being rational. In this book, as important as it is gripping, the Swedish journalist, Dan Josefsson, recounts how a coterie of professionals under the influence of a charismatic but not very intelligent guru-figure, a rigid and dogmatic psychoanalyst called Margit Norell, caused what was probably the greatest miscarriage of justice of the past century in Sweden, one of the most ‘advanced’ countries in the world. The book is so pregnant with meaning, not only for Sweden but the whole of the western world, that no short review can do it justice. The publishers are to be congratulated for their decision to publish an English translation of it even before it had been published in Sweden, and the Swedish Arts Council for assisting in that translation.

Margit Norell was a woman who put all her passion into her work and into the creation of a cult following. This woman, who claimed that bad human relationships were the cause of all mental illness and distress, could brook no relationship of equality with any other human being: anyone who did not worship her and accept her word as gospel was an enemy not only of her, but of Truth itself. In this she was like Freud; but, also like Freud, she must have had charisma, for she repeatedly formed groups around her who took her for what she believed herself to be.

Among her beliefs, as strong and important to her as was antisemitism to Hitler, was that in recovered memory, the idea that people could forget terrible traumas very early in life (usually sexual abuse by a father) which caused severe mental disturbances later, at least until uncovered by psychotherapy that

was conducted by therapists supervised by her who understood and accepted the theory – and who, in reality, planted false memories in their patients, with often disastrous results. But as this book makes clear, no disastrous results or consequences could shake the faith of the true believers, utterly immune as they were to all common sense considerations, let alone firm evidence that contradicted their convoluted and contorted interpretations.

She managed to plant her acolytes, including senior doctors, into the Swedish forensic psychiatric service, into whose care a man called Sture Bergwall was committed. Bergwall was a homosexual with convictions for sexual assault on minors, who took almost any drugs upon which he could lay his hands. He once nearly killed a man in a drug-induced and sexually-charged frenzy, but because he was already a psychiatric patient he was not charged: a fundamental mistake that is regularly committed by our own criminal justice system, to the endangerment of the public.

In a clinic staffed by Norell's acolytes, Bergwall underwent 'therapy' in the course of which he 'remembered' not only that he had been seriously abused by his parents but that he was a serial killer as well. Bergwall had found the psychiatric clinic a comfortable billet, much better than life for him outside, in which he could not only buy illicit drugs but in which he could fool the doctors into prescribing huge quantities of tranquillisers. In order to make himself interesting to the staff and ensure his continued residence in the clinic, he claimed to have been the murderer of up to thirty-nine people, some real and some imagined and untraceable. He read about the real ones in a magazine article about unsolved murders in Sweden of the past few decades.

The staff, who believed implicitly in Bergwall's recovered memories (he changed his name to Thomas Quick), managed to suck the police into their cultish worldview, and eventually the courts as well. Quick was convicted of eight murders although the evidence was lamentably and even laughably deficient. Quick led the police an astonishing dance that cost millions, as they dug up untold hectares and drained lakes in the search for body parts under the direction of Quick's 'recovered memories.' There were no such parts to find, but there was always a psychotherapeutic explanation for Quick's constant changes of story and failure to locate the parts, an explanation that the police, and later the courts, swallowed hook line and sinker. In the meantime Quick resorted constantly to amateur dramatics which fooled everyone and encouraged the doctors to prescribe him huge and dangerous doses of a concoction of drugs, which by themselves rendered

him unfit for interview and made anything he said unreliable.

It wasn't even as if Quick was the first failure of the method of recovered memory 'psychotherapy.' The clinic treated a dangerous psychopath by this means and twice secured his release by pronouncing him 'cured,' planting stories in the press about its miraculous (and humane) method. On both occasions he committed serious and dangerous crimes within seventy-two hours of release; but even this did not dent the self-belief of the therapists, or (apparently) of much of Swedish society. There was a collective self-delusion that made seventeenth century Salem seem enlightened and self-critical.

At the heart of the problem lay the kind of moral exhibitionism that is far from unique to Sweden. Although they believed Quick to be guilty of many brutal and appalling murders, his therapists saw him as a Christ-like figure, better than if he had never killed. This was not because they were Satanists but because they were desperate to prove that perpetrators were really victims. Quick's alleged murders were re-enactments of the abuse he allegedly suffered as a child (never mind that his siblings denied that their parents were abusive, that just proved how strongly they were in denial about it); without that abuse he would never have strangled and stabbed people, dismembered and cannibalised them, etc. For the therapists and even the police he was a saint, if not a saviour, because he had the 'courage' to remember the abuse that most people would not have had the courage to remember. His murders brought light into the world.

Quick was richly rewarded for his preposterous and incredible stories, cosseted, made comfortable and given many privileges. As soon as he retracted his confessions, however, and as soon as his convictions were quashed one by one, he was subjected to much harsher restraints by the clinic than he had ever suffered before. While he was a self-confessed murderer he was honoured; once he was proved innocent he was reviled and considered dangerous. Evil be thou my good.

This book is as rich a stimulant of reflection as you are likely to read in many a long day.

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## Brunis and Brutis

### James Houston

**Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth Century Mediterranean World**, Noel Malcolm, Allen Lane, 2015, £30.

Most centuries have their periods of turmoil and the sixteenth century in Europe was no exception. The Ottoman Empire was still expanding westwards – a process which had ebbed and flowed for centuries. At the same time the rise of Protestantism in Europe had provoked the Counter Reformation, centred on the lengthy proceedings of the Council of Trent, the diplomatic ramifications of which engendered some curious European alliances.

The great achievement of this new study by Sir Noel Malcolm, is to inter-weave these historical movements and much else about the period, with an intriguing narrative of two extended and inter-married families originating from the Adriatic coast, the Brunis and Brutis. Malcolm stumbled on their histories accidentally, by way of a reference to a treatise about Albania by one ‘Antonio Bruti’, which he suspected to be ‘the first ever work of its kind by a named Albanian author’. For despite their Italian-sounding names, their residence for much of their lives in Venetian ruled cities (the *Stato da Mar*), and their many services to Venice, the Brunis and Brutis were Albanians, ‘albeit untypical ones’.

Their story starts in the Adriatic city of Ulcinj, now in Montenegro, which had come under Venetian rule in 1405 and remained so until conquered by the Ottomans in 1571. As the furthest outpost in a long stretch of Venetian territory on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, it was a frontier post of the Ottoman empire. As Malcolm notes, ‘the basic conditions of urban life here would not have seemed alien to anyone from mainland Italy’. Public and much commercial business was conducted in Italian, although most of the population had either Albanian or a Slavic tongue as their first language.

What seems to have set some of the Brunis and Brutis apart was their enterprise and gift for languages. Venice and the Ottoman Empire were periodically at war. These wars were not, as elsewhere, ‘wars of religion’ between a resurgent Islam and Christianity, but more traditional dynastic ‘land grabs’. Perhaps oddly to modern eyes, the French sided with the Ottomans in the war of 1537-1540, while Venice allied with the

Habsburgs (rulers of southern Italy, which Malcolm reckons to have been the Sublime Porte’s real target) who were also supported by the Pope. It is worth noting that later in the century Queen Elizabeth I supported the Ottomans, to encourage them to pin down Habsburg Spanish forces in the Mediterranean and distract their attention from the English Channel.

Antonio Bruti’s activities in this war set the pattern for the future. He used both his navigational and language skills to gather intelligence on Ottoman dispositions for his Venetian masters, combining this with his normal business activity of grain buying, both activities which he continued, after peace was restored in 1540, for the next thirty years.

Venice and her outlying territories needed to import grain in substantial amounts – by 1552 it was estimated that Venice needed 108 tons a day to feed its population, of which at least 60 tons had to be imported. Albania was a key source of supply, but most of it was under Ottoman domination which made ensuring reliable supplies difficult, especially during periods of tension.

The Ottoman empire was no totalitarian monolith however, and a complex system of ‘tributes’, gifts and outright bribes kept the wheels of commerce turning except in the most difficult times. Many key figures in the imperial court, such as the great military commander Mehmed Sokollu, were of Albanian or Slavic origin, and had converted to Islam, often after capture in battle. Although few of these went so far as to betray their new superiors, shared languages and residual cultural affinities enabled successive members of both the Bruni and Bruti clans to open doors to negotiation which might otherwise have been impenetrable. In time, Antonio Bruti became a key diplomatic ‘fixer’ and purveyor of intelligence for Venice with the Ottomans, sometimes divining their intentions through such apparently insignificant signs as an increase in the production of *biscotto* (ship’s biscuit) which usually indicated preparations for a naval campaign.

A steady flow of young Venetians (including Antonio’s son, Bartolomeo) went to Constantinople to master Turkish, ensuring that the necessary expertise was available to conduct the range of business between the two states (prisoner exchanges and controlling piracy were major issues). A formal system of training began of *giovani di lingua* (‘language youths’) who became fully qualified ‘dragomans’ (interpreters), under the Venetian *bailo* or ambassador to the Ottoman court.

Not all family members were in trade, or even diplomacy. Antonio’s brother in law, Giovanni Bruni, took to the Church, becoming Archbishop of Bar, a larger town than his native Ulcinj, further up

the Adriatic coast. He took his duties seriously by, for example, residing within his see (unlike many senior churchmen of his day) and generally being a conscientious pastor to his flock who were precariously positioned on the Ottoman frontier. As such he was summoned, in 1562, to the third session of the Council of Trent.

The Council had begun work in 1545 at the instigation of the Pope with the intention of reforming the Catholic Church and strengthening its doctrine, the better to challenge the Protestant insurgency and also consolidate an anti-Ottoman alliance of Catholic states. As such it underpinned the Counter-Reformation by which, as the author puts it, ‘the culture and religious life of Catholic Europe were gradually but profoundly transformed’. Malcolm offers a masterful summary of the Council’s sessions and their wider significance, in the third of which Giovanni participated.

As with a number of members of the Bruni/Bruti family, Giovanni’s end was tragic. War broke out again between Venice and the Ottoman Empire in 1571 and the Archbishop was captured at Bar and put to rowing in an imperial galley. He survived this, only to perish at the great battle of Lepanto in October 1571 in which the Ottoman fleet was soundly beaten and southern Italy saved from a likely invasion which, had it succeeded, would have changed history (but then, as Churchill said, ‘it is always being changed by something or other’).

By a cruel coincidence, Giovanni was indiscriminately killed (with many others) by Christian soldiers when their galley was captured – while his brother Gasparo was commanding a Venetian fighting ship which may have been only 100 yards away at the time. Gasparo had become a Knight of Malta, giving Malcolm an opening for a fascinating description of the life and activities of the Order at this time.

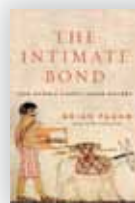
A series of deaths and misfortunes led to the branches of the families with whom Malcolm is concerned fading from history in the 1590s.

Malcolm ranges widely in this masterly study through the civil, economic and military organisation of the Venetian and Ottoman empires, and the conflicting strategies of all the key Mediterranean powers (including the ever-active Papacy). In doing so he updates and frequently supplants Braudel’s landmark study of the Mediterranean, especially shedding new light, through prodigious research and mastery of many languages, on the history of areas of the Balkans which are too little known.

In addition to being elegantly written, the volume is superbly produced, reflecting credit on both author and publisher. The illustrations are excellent, and the maps, glossary and family tree of great help to the

reader. It is a pity that such standards are now becoming exceptional in the world of publishing.

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## From Steppe to Sty

Celia Haddon

**The Intimate Bond. How Animals Shaped Human History**, Brian Fagan, Bloomsbury, 2015, £18.99.

The Ice Age hunters of 25,000 BC painted the walls of their caves with their prey – horses and deer. There can be little doubt that these early hunters had to know a lot about where and when these animals would be vulnerable so that they could kill them successfully. The underlying thesis of this book is that early man thus lived in ‘close intimacy’ with and respect for those they killed. Only after the publication of *Genesis*, where God gives Adam dominion over animals, does that respect falter.

This is a history of animal domestication through the ages, starting with the first domesticated animal, which was, perhaps surprisingly, the dog. Fagan believes that the dog was descended from the grey wolf, but it would be more accurate to say that modern wolves and modern dogs share a common ancestor. Those ancestral wolf packs started following bands of nomadic humans though the landscape. In the course of this, canine digestion altered so that they could digest human food scraps. Enter the modern dog around 15,000 BC, scavenger of human rubbish and even human faeces, a horrible factoid not mentioned in this book.

There may even have been an earlier version of man’s best friend in the late Ice Age, a wolf dog that later became extinct. Archaeologist Pat Shipman has come up with the surprising idea that perhaps these earlier wolf-dogs helped humans kill mammoths. This would explain the ancient sites where the remains of dead mammoths lie around in huge numbers. If these were the killing grounds of early man, not just some kind of animal catastrophe site, it may have been the wolf-dogs that made the mass slaughter possible for men. Thus a proto-dog may have shaped human history and aided the Ice Age hunter as he exterminated these huge beasts.

Their successors, our modern dogs, followed the early nomadic human families and helped with hunting lesser prey like deer. However they did not change the wandering human lifestyle. The animals that did this were the wild sheep and goats that were corralled and domesticated into farm animals. Fagan

suggests that domestication of these made possible the advent of Neolithic farming, though it seems to me that the practice of grain growing would have been the main driver of a settled village lifestyle. Transhumance (where animals and their herders transfer to uplands or wetlands half the year) and the nomadic farming of reindeer by the Arctic Sami show that permanent settlement is not an inevitable result of the domestication of food animals.

Where the author is on safer ground is his claim that domesticated food animals could become property in a way game animals could never be. 'Respect for animals endured,' he claims. Certainly the early shepherds and herder had to know a lot about their animals, in order successfully to breed from and manage them.

Why were some animals not domesticated? Fagan merely points out that the gazelle, for instance, can jump so high that fencing would be a problem. However, a much better discussion of this interesting question can be found in Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel*, where the zebra's unpleasant habit of biting people and *not letting go* probably accounts for the reason why this particular equid was never domesticated. (While Lord Walter Rothschild successfully drove a carriage drawn by two zebras, it would have been his groom who had to get close enough to harness these nasty tempered animals.)

The domestication of pigs probably came after that of sheep and goats, though 12,000 years ago the folk of Hallan Cemi in the Taurus Mountains of Turkey may have been keeping pigs in captivity or perhaps in some way managing, if not quite domesticating, the wild forest pigs in the locality. The problem is that archaeological evidence, which Fagan discusses intelligently, is slender. Deciding if bone fragments came from domesticated or wild animals, even with the help of DNA, is a tricky business.

The auroch, the ancestor of today's cattle, was a huge herbivore weighing about 700 kilograms. Julius Caesar described them as 'a little below the elephant in size. Their strength and speed is extraordinary; they spare neither man nor beast.' We shall never know how Neolithic farmers managed to tame and domesticate these formidable animals, though Fagan speculates that the auroch's capacity to rely on safety in herd numbers by bunching together may be the clue to early herding of them. The last European auroch died as late as 1627 in Poland.

Just as Ice Age hunters ritually painted deer and horses on the walls of their caves, so the early farmers gave their domestic animals a spiritual value. Animal worship and animal sacrifice occur in many of the early religions. In modern times the spirituality of beasts lingers on in the sacred cows of Hinduism, which must

not be slaughtered, or the animal sacrifices of African or Afro-American religions. These practices may have shown, and may still show an attitude to animals not unlike that of the early Ice Agers.

From food animals the book turns to transport animals, first the donkey then the horse, and finally the camel. Donkeys were probably the earliest pack animals and were domesticated from the desert wild asses of the Sahara desert. 'How the Donkey Started Globalisation' is one of the best sections of this book, giving credit where it is due to an animal often overshadowed by the flashier horse. For the first time humans were able to transport goods heavier than the hand axes and jewellery traded by Neolithic mankind.

From here, the book moves back to Europe and covers the history of European pet keeping and animal farming up to the modern day cruelties of feedlot cattle that never see grass and the hereditary faults of pedigree dogs and cats. Cats get only a few words in this book, perhaps rightly because most animal experts consider them only partially domesticated.

Fagan, a professor of anthropology, suggests that there was a greater respect for animals in prehistoric times and in hunter gatherer societies. Perhaps there was, but a bit more cynicism about noble savagery and more research would have made this a better book. At one point he claims that Ice Age humans possessed no individual wealth, ignoring their jewellery, their needles, their flint tools and their Venus figurines, all of which have been found by archaeologists. And there is no evidence that Ice Age man thought of animals as his equal.

As for respect, is it really more respectful to animals to hunt them down individually with bow and arrow rather than kill them in their thousands in slaughter houses? If it is, then the Minnesota dentist with his bow and arrow who earlier this year let Cecil the lion die slowly over 24 hours can claim that he has a respect for animals. This book paints the big picture of animal domestication through the ages clearly enough but its exploration of the relationship between man and beast lacks depth.

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## The Afghan Labyrinth Penelope Tremayne

**Farewell Kabul**, Christina Lamb, William Collins, 2015, £25.

This very long book (600 pages) more than justifies the time needed for reading it. A distinguished journalist,

Christina Lamb has devoted nearly thirty years to studying the stormy triangle of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and has lived from time to time in all three countries. Historically she sees most of its current troubles stemming directly from the partition of India in 1947: a hastily botched arrangement which left the three states hopelessly disproportionate to each other in size and strength, and bursting with mutual resentment, contempt and suspicion. Before President Bush's War on Terror unfolded Lamb had already been to Tora Bora and, in and around the caves, had seen men at work who her mujahedeen escort told her were 'African Arabs'. She quotes an Afghan friend, later appointed president of Afghanistan, who told her that 'Afghans don't like Arabs, who they think look down on them'.

*Farewell Kabul* is Lamb's compilation of entries from the diaries which she wrote while she was on the job so it is not a history of the Taliban, but it has a lot to tell us about their emergence in Afghanistan as part of a much larger jihad, from origins in Egypt by way of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920's, creeping on into Palestine, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. She is very interesting about the build-up in Kabul of revolutionary power by, among others, a Palestinian cleric, Abdullah Azzam, who in his book *Defence of the Muslim lands* 'compares Afghanistan to a drowning child whom everyone on the beach had the duty to try and save. In Kabul in the 1980's Azzam set up a pseudo-religious secret revolutionary society of which bin Laden was an early member. In 1984 this organisation launched a magazine called *al Jihad*, which Lamb tells us 'grew into a full-colour glossy with a circulation of 70,000 throughout Muslim countries across the world including in America'. Readers will recall that from Christmas Eve, 1979 until 1989 Afghanistan was under Soviet occupation. Bin Laden used those ten years not for fighting the Russians but to recruit and prepare followers, predominantly Arabs for Al Qaeda, the existence of which became official in 1985. A number of other mujahidin groups did form against the Russians, and were known as Taliban, but only one of them was of real value. This was the Northern Alliance, led by Ahmed Shah Massoud, a brilliant and masterly leader with a clearer understanding of political realities than any of his rivals. In the Press the word Taliban is now used indiscriminately for all those otherwise called jihadist, which is confusing and discredits those earlier Taliban who under Massoud fought the Russians rather than each other.

After the Soviet retreat in 1989 something euphemistically called peace was declared, and Hamid Wali Karzai was installed as President of Afghanistan. Massoud, the only man who knew what to do and might have done it, was shot dead by two north-African Arabs

on 9/9/01, two days before 9/11.

Lamb sees the cancer-like spread of neo-Muslim terrorism into Pakistan and thence Afghanistan as rising directly from the partition of India in 1947 and she is surely right. Pakistanis have been kept on the boil for the last fifty years by near paranoid fear and hatred of India, driving them to the ruinous costs of building their own nuclear bomb. The price included the leaking of nuclear materials and technology to other countries and an apparently abject surrender to the Arabian model of Islamic revolution, while keeping up an effusive pretence of loyalty to its allies the USA, Britain and NATO. Many questions need answering about this head in the sand Pakistani policy, the first being 'what were the Intelligence Services of the relevant nations doing between 1979 and today? Not too much is said here about the Americans and British, but the accounts given of bin Laden's contacts with Pakistan, Arabia and the north African states, the maintenance of HQs at Tora Bora and Peshawar and the invasive growth of Al Qaeda tell a great deal. Lamb's criticism of Coalition forces in action – she was embedded at different times with both US and British units – is mild except when it comes to excessive bombing of civilian targets by the American air force which she makes clear were almost wholly counterproductive. In general she leaves the impression that the USA relied too much on huge expenditure in both money, most of which went directly into the wrong hands, and armed forces, while the British sent too little to carry the day. Nor did British forces get the clear and unhesitating political support that they should have had. There is a discreet but plain hint that the Blair government, in the shadow of the Iraq, had lost heart.

This is a saddening book because it about disillusion, both national and personal, particularly in the case of Pakistan, it is a study in self-destruction. And it must have been almost unbearable for the author, who had given so much work and so much of herself, not for her own sake, but in the hope that Pakistan's leaders would see where their course was taking them.

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## A Political Fan Dance Scott Grønmark

**Getting Out Alive: News, Sport & Politics at the BBC**, Roger Mosey, Biteback Publishing, 2015, £20.

This could have been a fascinating book. Roger Mosey was a key member of the short-lived BBC Director-General George Entwistle's crisis management team

– its ‘Gold Commander’, no less – in the wake of the Jimmy Savile scandal and *Newsnight*’s disastrous libelling of Lord McAlpine; and early publicity for ‘Getting Out Alive’ suggested that it might offer confirmation of whispers I had heard during my time at the BBC that Mosey was ‘a bit of a Tory’.

Mind you, the idea that Mosey might be a Conservative sympathiser seemed unlikely. He created the politics-obsessed, agenda-setting modern incarnation of the *Today* Programme; he went on to run the predominantly left-wing Radio 5; and he was subsequently the head of a news operation whose programmes endlessly trumpeted the unalloyed benefits of immigration, the EU and...well, benefits. The triumphant climax of his career was undoubtedly managing the BBC’s coverage of the 2012 Olympics, which was only marred by the pantomime version of British history peddled by the socialist director Danny Boyle in his risibly propagandist opening ceremony. A somewhat surprising CV for ‘a bit of a Tory’.

Mosey isn’t, of course. His favourite Conservative politician is evidently Ken Clarke, and the only politicians he refers to by their first name (a worrying habit in a former journalist) are left-wingers like ‘Paddy’ Ashdown and ‘Gordon’ Brown. Indeed, Mosey got on so well with ‘Gordon’ that the chancellor offered him a job as his special advisor – a role which might have tempted Mosey, had he not received hints that a senior job in television could soon become available (it did, and he got it). Just in case we’re tempted to infer that Mosey was a known Labour supporter, he assures us that he hadn’t voted Labour in twenty years – but, in the political fan dance now routinely performed by former BBC news folk, he omits to tell us which party or parties he did vote for (he was a teenage Liberal before joining Labour at Oxford).

As for deliberate bias, Mosey’s position seems to be that there wasn’t any – at least, not on his watch: ‘I would defend *Today* against any charge of intentional political bias.’ He claims never to have worked with any editor who deliberately distorted coverage in favour of Labour or the Conservatives (chance would be a fine thing). To bolster his claims of personal impartiality, he cites hiring Michael Gove as a *Today* reporter and Edwina Currie and Richard Littlejohn as Radio 5 presenters. When addressing unconscious bias among BBC news staff, he is, however, willing to concede ‘a problem with a default to ‘groupthink’ – a set of assumptions that seem reasonable to everyone they know.’ This, though, is hardly a startling admission: the former BBC political editor Andrew Marr suggested in 2007 that the disproportionately high number of young urbanites, gays, and ethnic minority staff employed by the BBC was responsible for its ‘innate’ liberal bias.

As an example of groupthink, Mosey cites a *Today* production meeting: ‘Rod Liddle remembers one morning...when a producer said, disparagingly, ‘The Eurosceptics believe Germany is going to dominate Europe!’ This generated laughter from bien pensant colleagues. ‘But what if it’s true?’ was the response from the editor, and he set the team thinking about items that would examine whether Euroscepticism had some well-founded beliefs.’ According to Liddle, the editor was Mosey himself.

An anecdote which highlights news employees’ fear of stepping out of line concerns a report on the *Ten O’Clock News* from a part of Britain with a large immigrant (presumably Muslim) population, in which the inevitable vox pops featured only one white local, who claimed that integration was going swimmingly. Mosey emailed the reporter to ask whether the lone white voice had been representative, only to be told that most of the others had been ‘fairly rabidly racist’, but that the reporter had been nervous of using any of them in case his piece was deemed inflammatory. Mosey reported the incident to his fellow news board members, who were, he tells us, ‘appalled’. But not, apparently, sufficiently appalled to do something about it, or, presumably, the reporting of the current invasion of Europe by hordes of mainly young male Muslim economic migrants wouldn’t be so monotonously sympathetic. If people as powerful as Mosey long ago recognised ‘the BBC’s inclination to feel more comfortable with a liberal agenda’, why hasn’t the organisation addressed the problem, rather than continuing to employ people from, for example, the *Guardian* and the Labour Party?

When it comes to the chaotic aftermath of the McAlpine scandal, we find the Gold Commander in strictly non-revelatory mode. We learn nothing new of consequence, except that Mosey despises the BBC Trust. Readers can safely skip this section of the book.

Setting one’s disappointment aside, it’s a decent enough read, albeit as Pooterish as this sort of memoir tends to be. For instance, Mosey refers to his circle of friends and advisors as his ‘kitchen cabinet’. Recalling a 1996 visit to Wembley with sundry New Labour bigwigs, he writes: ‘As a boy in Bradford, I would have thought I had died and gone to heaven if I had had this degree of contact with prime ministers and chancellors and foreign secretaries.’

He’s good on his childhood (humble circumstances in Bradford), his education (grammar school, then Wadham) and his early career (a stint in commercial local radio followed by a move to the BBC). There’s lots of ‘who, me?’ faux-humility regarding what was an extremely successful career. I’d left television news by the time Mosey took charge, so my only memory is

of a gnome-like figure smiling gently to himself in vast TV programme review meetings – a self-contained, wary little man who looked as though he'd be good at keeping secrets. Fanciful, perhaps, but this book reinforces that initial impression: it's oddly bloodless, almost painfully careful. One suspects that revealing he was adopted can't have come easily to Mosey. He talks about – and names – his friends, but, strangely, there's absolutely no hint of a significant other. Mosey's natural caution is evident on every page – any criticism of the BBC is balanced by statements like this: 'I believe unequivocally in the BBC as a force for good in British life' – and the book's very title advertises his relief that 'after decades of doing some of the BBC's most scrutinised jobs, I got out alive.' It's as if he considers this feat of survival – rather than his Olympics triumph – his finest achievement.

When Mosey left the BBC in 2013, he followed the example of several senior colleagues by becoming the master of an Oxbridge college – in his case, Selwyn. I imagine that, for a former head of BBC news, presiding over a large number of extremely clever, querulous, career-conscious left-wingers and an ever changing cast of brainy, ambitious, thrusting young liberals must seem oddly familiar. And we at last get to hear of a significant other – a 'sweet-natured basset hound named YoYo'. As a basset-lover myself, I warmed to the man for the first time, three pages from the end of the book.

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## Ukraine: the EU's first Colonial War James Monkton

**Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderline**, Richard Sakwa, I.B. Tauris, 2015, £18.99.

The original anti-EEC campaigners in the early 1970s understood correctly the political implications of the European project and were concerned about the loss of UK sovereignty. Two decades later, they mobilised unsuccessfully again to try and prevent further European federalisation ushered in by the Maastricht Treaty. As an historian with a special interest in military history and the origins of conflicts, my overriding concern was that the EC's two-pronged advance of integration and expansion would create dangerous crises where none had previously existed. These fears are being realised today in the war in Ukraine.

The EC's economic ambitions were dangerous enough, but the EU, ever driven by grandiose schemes,

threw more oil on the fire when it forced through the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, trampling Irish democracy in the process. Ireland's 2008 ratification referendum produced a 'No' result, which was rejected by the EU. Lisbon created the post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the first holder being the inept Catherine Ashton – the post has gone exclusively and successively to members of the EU's socialist grouping – and with it unbridled designs on even wider European dominance, supported by its own Foreign Office: the European External Action Service. As Richard Sakwa demonstrates in this book, this process has led to the EU sticking its nose into Russia's sphere of influence and provocatively prodding the nuclear-armed Russian bear. Sakwa deplores the EU's 'Wider Europe' project, 'a Brussels-centric vision of a European core that extended into the heartlands of what had once been an alternative great-power system centred on Moscow'. He argues that post-Soviet Russia wished to be incorporated into a 'Greater Europe', but was blocked by the EU, NATO and the US.

Sakwa convincingly demonstrates how the EU is to blame for the escalation of Ukraine's internal political problems into an armed struggle causing thousands of deaths and dangerous destabilisation in Eastern Europe. The author offers meticulous research and sound reasoning in his analysis of how the conflict unfolded. The short-term origins since Ukraine's independence lie in the country's internal tensions between the Orange and Blue factions: the Orange tendency are 'monists', who aspire to full Ukrainian identity within its borders; the Blue 'pluralists' recognise the diversity of the country's past, most of all its links with Russia. He also discusses the Gold faction: the super-rich oligarchs who are key players in Ukraine's polity. The EU, US and NATO cheered on the monists while Russia encouraged the pluralists.

The EU's subsequent tactless and blundering machinations to draw Ukraine into its orbit has helped to tip the country into civil war. Despite its automatic dismissal of popular rightist movements within its budding empire, the EU had no qualms about jumping into bed with extreme nationalists in the Ukraine, exploiting their anti-Russian fears, all under the guise of 'democratism'. Russia perceives, with some justification, that the West uses the promotion of democracy 'as a cover to advance its strategic objectives including regime change'; the EU's support for the Maidan rebels in Kiev in 2013 has done little to reassure it.

Enlargement fatigue coupled with stilted recovery from the 2008 financial crisis and the concomitant Greek problem has left the EU unable to gorge on

any more states, and the Ukraine, a nation of over 40 million people, is too big for even the voracious EU to digest for the moment, anyway. So instead it is concentrating on further developing its Eastern Partnership (EaP) and setting its sights on the six former Soviet countries on the EU's border (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine). The purpose of EaP is to provide these states with an eventual stepping stone into the EU. It also forced them into the invidious position of having to choose between Russian and West spheres of influence. Nowhere was this dilemma felt more keenly than in the Ukraine. The EU is thereby directly challenging the economic partnerships dominated by Russia, which sees itself facing substantial economic and strategic issues by the prospective loss of Ukraine. The EU was at a loss to know how to react coherently when meeting its first geopolitical opposition to expansion by an external power. Sakwa rightly observes 'the EU was launched on the path of geopolitical competition' and 'instead of overcoming the logic of conflict, on which the EU disingenuously justifies itself, 'the EU became an instrument for its reproduction in new forms. This is not the EU that a whole generation of idealists, scarred by the memory of European civil wars [*sic*], sought to build'.

The crunch point came in November 2013, with the EU's planned signing ceremony of the EaP's Association Agreement in Vilnius. Facing tight upcoming elections, on 21 November Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich announced that he would postpone signing. For this, the EU and US governments denounced him as basically an unreconstructed soviet apparatchik and Russian lackey. In fact, he was an enormously corrupt oligarch out to feather his own nest and that of his dynastic family, not unlike other Ukrainian oligarchs – in the Ukraine 'the fastest route to personal enrichment is political office'. Putin did not even like Yanukovich, who held out for a better deal from Russia: \$15 billion immediate support and desperately needed preferential gas tariffs. The EU who could not match such a bribe insists on viewing international relations through the lens of *realpolitik* rather than through ideology.

The EU helped foment the Maidan protests in Kiev's central square, having spent €496 million over the past decade subsidising front groups. When the killings in the square in February 2014 were judged to be the result of pro-European Maidan camp snipers, EU High Representative Ashton commented 'I think we do not want to investigate'. The result was the revolutionary overthrow of a deeply crooked but, crucially, democratically elected regime and the slide of the Ukraine into an ugly war which has the potential

to become a catastrophic one.

Sakwa apportions blame for the conflict squarely on the US-NATO-EU axis. EU expansion goes hand-in-glove with NATO expansion. Sakwa reveals the little-known fact that the Lisbon Treaty insists that 'accession countries are now required to align their defence and security policies with those of NATO'. Thus, 'EU enlargement became the harbinger of the NATO enlargement'. The countries that had suffered under the soviet yoke reasonably took the first opportunities offered to ally themselves with the democratic West to make their break from Russian hegemony permanent: Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined NATO in March 1999; the Baltic states, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia followed in 2004; and Croatia and Albania joined in 2009. This made historical sense for these countries, but the process crystallised the Russo-West divide, shifting the Cold War borderline further east to Ukraine and Russia itself. This left Russia's traditional buffer-zone defence strategy in tatters, and Russia feeling insecure. Furthermore, these new NATO members brought with them fresh and justifiable grievances against Russia that ensured continuation of Cold War enmities into the post-Soviet world.'

The EU and NATO have an almost Orwellian necessity to create a new enemy. For the EU, it serves a higher, state-building purpose. We know that the West 'won' the Cold War; that it was not a hot one (in Europe, anyway) makes it easier for Russia, which swiftly jettisoned its communist past, not to feel like it was defeated. The absence of any Congress of Vienna or Treaty of Versailles underscored this position. Yet the West has refused Russia a place at the table of Greater Europe, pursuing instead its goal of Wider Europe. The cautiously opportunistic Putin seized upon the unnecessary chaos in Ukraine to annex Crimea (he needs an all-weather port). He is probably uncertain about what to do next other than to ensure Ukraine's neutrality for he tends to react rather than initiate. Alas, the shedding of so much blood has entrenched further already bitterly held positions in the Ukraine. Sakwa's argument that in treating post-Soviet Russia as an enemy, we have created one, is very convincing.

The book has a few drawbacks. There is a lot of repetition and indications of haste in an effort to publish the book during such a live topic. Sakwa explains the rational thinking behind Russia's actions admirably, but is overly indulgent towards a semi-dictatorial Putin and his kleptocratic rule. However, these are minor flaws in an essential book of modern European geopolitics, with something of real significance to say on nearly every page.

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## 20th Century Tolstoy? Martin Dewhurst

**Limonov: A Novel**, Emmanuel Carrère, London, Allen Lane, 2014, £20.

As the editors of this journal know, for several months I have been discovering plausible reasons for postponing my reading and review of this ‘novel’. Why ‘notice’ a book that I thought, after dipping into it, most readers would find irritating, presumptuous and a waste of time and paper. I was both right and, more importantly, wrong.

Eduard Limonov (real name Savenko) is one of the most prolific contemporary Russian writers, only a small selection of whose enormous output is available in English translation. Born in 1943, he grew up in a large Ukrainian industrial city before, like so many other Soviet provincials, moving to Moscow in 1967 or 1968 (characteristically, Carrère gives both dates) in search of fame or, perhaps even better, notoriety. In early 1974, at the same time as the loathed Solzhenitsyn, Limonov left the USSR and spent a few years in New York and then almost a decade in Paris. He returned to the USSR in 1989 and subsequently did several stints and a bit of fighting on the Serbian side in (the former) Yugoslavia. Back in Russia, after the 1991 coup and counter-coup, he created the National Bolshevik Party, which opposed nearly everyone and everything. Later he went East, to the mountainous Altai Region, with a handful of followers. There he was detained, taken back to Moscow and accused of stockpiling weapons. He spent several months in the renowned Lefortovo pre-trial isolation facility before being sentenced to a few years deprivation of liberty, most of it spent in a correctional colony near Saratov on the Volga. Since his release, Limonov has lived most of the time in Moscow, wondering whether he has really become a genuine hero of his time or, what he has always dreaded, a ‘loser’, a failure, a ‘superfluous man’.

And all this time he was writing, writing, writing – poetry, journalism and novels (most of which, like the book under review, were more like colourful memoirs, whose proximity to the truth can, by outsiders, only be guessed at – though Carrère often seems to take nearly everything at its face value. He also makes some simply amazing factual mistakes, claiming, for instance, that one of Limonov’s particular targets, Isosif

Brodsky, hijacked a plane in Samarkand in an attempt to reach Afghanistan. So why should I admit that my initial reactions were too negative and now encourage readers of this review to buy, borrow or, which might particularly please Limonov, shoplift this book?

First, so far as I can tell, not having read the French original, it has, with very few exceptions, been exceptionally well translated, by John Lambert, into North American English. Perhaps Carrère writes too much about himself and his mother and didn’t know Limonov nearly as closely as a contemporary biographer should have done, but he makes his subject come alive as the weird and totally unconventional character that he is. People of a traditional or conventional disposition may well be offended and sickened by the overly frank passages about Limonov’s sexual activities, and feel uneasy about Carrère’s assumption that most of what Limonov writes about himself and others is true, but something very important gradually becomes clear: intellectually and psychologically this Ukrainian-Russian writer is in certain respects very similar to other ‘heroes of their time’ with a criminal record and a criminal mentality who also may in due course be regarded as great failures, not as great creative historical figures. While reading this volume I found myself periodically comparing Limonov both to Stalin and to Putin, two other twisted and perverse individuals who were (in one case) or still are (in the other case) profoundly lonely and unhappy men, wallowing in their cruelty, yet occasionally trying to redeem themselves by doing something genuinely good.

Here is what Limonov writes about a five-year-old boy who has just died of leukemia: ‘Let the rich boy die. I’ll be glad even. What the hell, why must I pretend that I’m moved, that I sympathize, that I’m sorry. I’m not moved. I don’t sympathize, and I’m not sorry! ... No amount of radiation therapy or money will help you. Cancer won’t defer to money. Even if you give it a billion, it won’t retreat. And that’s as it should be. At least there everyone is equal.’ But Carrère immediately adds: ‘I also think that if anything could have been done to save the little boy, especially if that something was hard or dangerous, Eduard would have been the first to attempt it, and he would have given it everything he had’. How similar this would have been to the periodic arbitrary grand gestures by certain people who have attained positions of hardly controllable power over others

At this point I recalled a recent obituary of Robert Conquest by another extremely prolific contemporary Russian writer, Dmitry Bykov, who claims that whereas Solzhenitsyn thought that Stalin committed his monstrous crimes because he was a communist,

Conquest explained much more convincingly that the main reason for Stalin's ruthless purges and the mass terror is that Stalin was certainly not a communist but rather a Great Russian imperialist, for all his talk about socialism in one country. In other words, one might add, Stalin was, and Putin and Limonov are, *bolsheviks* in the sense that all three want(ed) their country to become even *bolshe*, bigger. They, whether ethnically Russian or not, were/are infected by the centuries-old Russian messianic tradition, still so alive in what Putin does and Limonov writes.

One difference between these three unappetising

individuals is that Limonov is a much better writer than the other two, but this is not clear from Carrère's presentation of him. To realise that Limonov really is an accomplished and original Russian writer, those who read only English-language works will have to find a copy of Andrei Rogachevskii's *A Biographical and Critical Study of the Russian Writer Eduard Limonov*, 2003 (Carrère shows no signs of having read it). However, his book is a very useful introduction to more academic studies of Limonov's output, and is, in sum, a jolly good read.

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# THEATRE

## Henry's War Ralph Berry



**H**ENRY *V* is a great war play embedded in a greater anti-war play. Everything depends on the inflection given in performance. The RSC traditionally disapproves of war and has no intention of permitting alien emotions in the audience, as the latest production (by Greg Doran) demonstrates. The programme draws attention to the parallels between Canterbury's rigmarole in the Council Scene and Tony Blair's dodgy dossier. 'On your imaginary forces work', says Chorus (Oliver Ford Davies, who through muscular gesture invites as much audience participation as possible), and work they have to. On the set pieces they have no choice.

The tuning fork is the two great battle orations. 'Once more unto the breach, dear friends, or close the wall up with our English dead' is delivered by Henry (Alex Hassell) on a bare stage, completely alone, in a kind of interior monologue. He is rehearsing to himself what he ought to be saying to the troops. It is difficult to whip up the emotions of the storming party when the leader has no followers, only a rapt communion with self. 'This day is called the Feast of Crispian' is delivered to some eight officers and men, who stand unmoved and unmoving as the leader speaks in even tones. Henry appears to be leading a seminar in Peace Studies (Conflict Resolution) at a progressive Northern university, as he muses on the advantages of surviving the battle (one can attend the Agincourt Reunion).

This approach to Agincourt descends from Adrian Lester's take on the oration, in Nicholas Hytner's production for the National Theatre (2003). 'He simply talks to his men and tells them that they are here to do a job, and that the job may go well for us, or it may

not go well for us, but the point is the job and how we carry it out.' (*Players of Shakespeare 6*, p. 159) The key word here is 'job', a word unknown to Shakespeare and not strikingly apt for fighting. As a duty manager's address to a group of disaffected council workers at the start of the day's toil, this approach might serve well enough. It hardly seems up to the onset of a great battle.

But that is the RSC/National Theatre approach to Agincourt, and it does nothing to glamorize the victory. Michael Bogdanov in his 'Post-Falklands' production for the English Shakespeare Company (1986), took a more original line. He re-created the troop-ship send-off at Southampton as a football job invasion of the Continent, with repeated shouts of 'ere we go', and a banner-waving alliterative anathema of the Frogs. The polar alternative to all this is on record in Kenneth Branagh's film of *Henry V* (1989). Patrick Doyle's music is crucial to the film's meaning, and is quite different from Walton's score for the Olivier film. Walton *illustrated* the play; for the charge, he wrote charge music. Doyle comments on and interprets the action. Olivier admitted no musical competition to his Harfleur and Agincourt speeches; Branagh made the two speeches into great operatic arias. The repeated, minor key questionings of the pre-Agincourt soliloquy are resolved at 'What's he that wishes so?' The keynote here is serenity, the key major. What follows leaves the personal and broadens into a public anthem. This is music for a great State occasion, such as Parry or Elgar could have composed. It swells into a noble and passionate acclamation for the English soldiers, the celebration of a great victory to come. And the core value is brotherhood, which comes at the cost of

Henry's own brother, the Duke of York.

The current Henry is not attuned to the military. Richard Burton, who had served as a navigator in the RAF, came on with the Orderly Officer's bark: 'How now, what's the matter?' ('Any complaints?') Alex Hassell ran on to the stage, as if deeply concerned at an affray, and after making clear to Michael Williams his ownership of the glove was amazed when Williams struck him in the face. Reeling back, he took it, and then magnanimously forgave Williams before ordering the glove to be filled with crowns. The RSC audience seemed to give Henry credit for being a good sport. I cannot help feeling that discipline in the Army of Normandy would not be improved by the Commander-in-Chief being struck publicly by a common soldier. It is not like Patton or Montgomery.

This is the first of the Histories with a British (rather than English) Army. The regions get mixed showing here. There is not much to be made of Captain Jamy, certainly not an embryo SNP activist. One does not warm to Captain MacMorris, the Ulster explosives expert, whose grief at having his mining operation halted by the Harfleur peace process ('I would have blowed up the town') is too poignant to enlarge. Gower, the Englishman, is born to be a camp follower of the CEO: 'wherefore the King most worthily hath caused every soldier to cut his prisoner's throat. O 'tis a gallant King.' The regions' voice is Fluellen's, the Welsh bore who constantly reminds Henry how important it is to be born in Monmouth (from whose centre, incidentally, one can walk into England within a few hundred yards).

Henry is obliged to listen to the importunate Fluellen. The burden of the regions goes with the English crown.

As for the final scene, contemporary values crowd in. Henry persuades a doubting Princess Katherine (Jennifer Kirby) that kisses are acceptable between the leaders of society: 'we are the makers of manners', the coming motto of the celeb culture. The re-entrance of the King of France is a crux. Olivier, with 'Here comes your father,' announced the next step in the diplomatic dance: Hassell and Kirby, who are already exploring the new permissiveness, pull apart sharply at the King of France's approach. There are echoes of the Glums, Ron and Eth, whose sofa negotiations are interrupted by Jimmy Edwards: ''Ullo, 'ullo, 'ullo!' And at the close Henry and Katherine fall to eating each others' faces. The RSC does not underplay sexual passion. It does however purvey a wholesome belief in the power of women to influence brutish men. Burgundy's speech, an appeal to the leaders of France and England to restore 'this best garden of the world,/ Our fertile France', is given to Queen Isobel of France (Jane Lapotaire). This follows the Company standing order, that whenever possible a male part should be re-assigned to a female. Gender imbalance is to be corrected through enlightened casting policy. The RSC advances its agenda through many creeks and inlets: Trevor Nunn's phrase for the traditional *Henry V*, 'The National Anthem in Five Acts', can be laid to rest now. The company disapproves of war, as an incitement to patriotism and worse, nationalism, and is wholly in tune with current fashion.

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## Radio 3: Privatisation Hyenas Circle

Michael Simison



Political parties which have been out of power for along time tend to indulge in introspection and ruminate on perceived injustices and slights. It is an understandable condition but one which is self-defeating, for it produces policy not built on sound foundations, that is little more than an expression of impotent rage.

After 18 years without a parliamentary majority there are plenty of Tory backbenchers with reams of policies which they have yearned to see introduced. Their Holy Grail is the abolition of the BBC. This disbanding of

an organisation they see as smug, self-serving, and propagandising is now appearing on the horizon. It is too early to tell if it is only a mirage.

During the coalition years the Conservatives flirted with their members about what they would do if they were not shackled to their little yellow allies, and following their electoral success the man chosen to be Culture Secretary got Tory pulses racing. John Whittingdale has long been a critic of the licence fee and has not disappointed the backbenches yet. Immediately the government started to suggest that the BBC needed

its wings clipping, if not plucking completely. George Osborne suggested that the BBC's website illustrated just how imperial it had become and that the wind would soon be changing.

There is a strong argument for reining back the BBC's output and reducing the number of both radio and television channels. Complete abolition, though, would be a disaster for High Culture and British education, both of which are embodied in Radio 3.

The abolitionists usually offer up two alternatives for Radio 3. One, which would supposedly conserve its cultural output, is that of a subscription service. Whereas the other, philistine approach, simply propose it should fight it out on the free market, funded through advertising. Neither would be even a partial substitute for the current service.

The example which the subscriptionists offer up is Sky Arts, a service which, on top of the standard Sky subscription, is a further charge still. Sky Arts typically broadcast a mixture of programmes; at the high end is live ballet, theatre and concerts, however, predominantly they show biopics of forgotten figures from the more popular realms of cinema. It is hardly a bastion of the High Culture yet it is frequently touted as such.

More importantly, it is not a model of success. Its number of channels has been cut from two to just one and its programmes rarely have more than 30,000 viewers. It claims this is a core viewership and indeed it can expand outwards to nearly 100,000 for significant broadcasts. Yet this figure pales in comparison to Radio 3's regular cohort of 1 million or so listeners.

A large part of Radio 3's importance to British life is that it exposes people to music, which, because of the continual debasement of education in state schools, they may not otherwise come upon. The number of those who are drawn away from the drudgery of perpetual pop-music may not be huge but it is, nonetheless, significant. It demonstrates the timelessness of Reithianism and the BBC's commitment to public service and education.

If Radio 3 were to be hidden behind the curtain of subscription it would deprive not just those who could not afford the charge; it would also strip away a key, yet often overlooked, outpost in Britain's cultural education. Few more than those who had been lucky enough to be exposed to 'classical' music in childhood would appreciate it in adulthood.

Many who might be wholly receptive to music of such calibre would be denied the solemn beauty of hearing the St. Matthew Passion performed in full and the exquisite delicacy of Mozart's piano concertos or Beethoven's string quartets. It would be hidden behind the veil of a classical education whereas it should always broadcast universally in the knowledge that anyone can tune in, accidentally or experimentally; transforming

their conception of music in the process.

If the populist, philistine approach of Classic FM were to be implemented, one would be lucky to hear more than a choice aria from the St. Matthew Passion, or the slow movement of Mozart's 21st piano concerto. Classic FM is the perfect case study in how 'classical' music is contorted in the pursuit of the base appeal of the masses. In the land without public subsidy advertising reigns supreme and the quality of the music is consequently lowered. Not only must pieces of music often be fragmented into their separate movements so as to create a sufficient number of breaks for adverts; most of the music chosen must be that with the broadest appeal.

The end result is hardly an inspiring concoction. The most popular movements from a few composers' works interspersed with Einaudi does not make for scintillating listening. Yet this would inevitably be the result if Radio 3, cut adrift from the Licence Fee, were to embrace advertising. That which is most popular tends not to be very good or varied. Just as subscription would reduce the output and listeners, free-market floatation leads to the lowest common denominator on repeat. There are only so many times in a day one can listen to the 1st movement of Beethoven's Fifth.

Recalling his experiences as a Viennese student in 1919, Karl Popper wrote that: 'a Marxist could not open a newspaper without finding on every page confirming evidence for his interpretation of history; not only in the news, but also in its presentation – which revealed the class bias of the paper – and especially of course in what the paper did not say'.

This view of the Left, as evidenced by Jeremy Corbyn's online militia, no doubt remains an accurate description. Still, the Right has shown that it too can be susceptible to the paranoid cries of the deluded. If the BBC were to be abolished, it is likely that it would be at the hands of a 'conservative'. Yet, ultimately, it is the conservative who would suffer the most. Radio 3 broadcasts the echoes of our nation's past on a daily basis. Without it Choral Evensong would not ring out twice weekly in each home; Composer of the Week would not refresh our knowledge of the familiar and re-introduce us to the forgotten; and Record Review would not instruct and discriminate in a way which is unique within the current sea of cultural relativism. Radio 3 is a precious commodity and it would be unwise to be either cavalier about its future or uninterested in its demise.

*Michael Simison is an organist.*

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# FILM

## Tangerines

Director Zaza Urushadze

Merrie Cave

This atmospheric film reminds us about the misfortunes of people living in Eastern Europe in the former Soviet territories. We should be grateful that in Western Europe populations have generally been homogenous and that usually we have lived peacefully with our neighbours. The end of the Cold War brought the revival of ancient conflicts between different 'tribes', which had been simmering under the Soviet yoke. We heard plenty about the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia but not nearly so much about Georgia which was conquered by the Tsars in the 1860's.

The action takes place in Abkhazia, in 1992-3, a province of Georgia, which only scholars know much about. When Georgia broke free from Russia after the Cold War ended, the Abkhazians took the opportunity to get self-rule. Most of the population are Muslim and have little in common with the Christian Georgians to the East or Russians to the north. They describe their country as being at the end of Europe on the Black sea coast 300 miles east of the Crimea. The film shows beautiful shots of the landscape, particularly of the coastline. Georgian forces invaded Abkhazia to disarm separatist militias which were backed by Russia, but they fought back causing a brutish civil war. After fierce fighting a Georgian military defeat was followed by the ethnic cleansing of the Georgian majority in Abkhazia.

The story is about two elderly Estonians caught up in this vicious civil war. I was mystified by the presence of a Baltic ethnic group living in Abkhazia and thought that it must have been one of the wartime re-settlements when Stalin treated whole populations like parcels and plonked them thousands of miles from home. However a few thousand Estonians have lived in Georgia since the 19<sup>th</sup> century because of Russian colonial policies. Estonians were among those peasants invited to emigrate all over the Russian Empire to better themselves economically. By 1989 there were 2,316

Estonians in Georgia of which around 1500 lived in Abkhazia.

As the film opens we see two elderly farmers, apparently the last Estonians in their village. Most of them had by now gone to Estonia because of the civil war. Margos is staying on until he can harvest his bumper tangerine crop while Ivo, also a carpenter, is busy constructing boxes for Margos's tangerines. He intends to stay but we are never told, despite all the photographs, of family members who have gone to Estonia. From the outset we see the random cruelties of civil wars: Chechen soldiers, many of them mercenaries, drive up and demand food from Ivo; fortunately he has some and fortunately they leave without hurting him. Later the soldiers get into a vicious skirmish with Georgian soldiers in front of Margos' house leaving only one alive from each side. The two old men now become Good Samaritans and manage to drag the bodies from the scene and bury them in a pit. They then take the two survivors who are badly wounded back to Ivo's house: Ahmed, a Chechen mercenary on the Abkhazian side and Niko a Georgian. A doctor comes to set up drips and give them other medicines.

Once the pair start to recover they rant on about killing each other but Ivo makes them promise not to take their revenge in his home. Both the old men try to make the two enemies see the senselessness of their hostility while the fierce aggression that we see in their faces gradually fades as they become influenced by the old men's humanity and common sense. When Chechen soldiers come to the house, Ivo persuades Ahmed to tell them that Niko is also a Chechen soldier and is unable to speak because of his wound. Margos is desperate to get his crop harvested and hopes some soldiers will help him but Chechin shelling hits the village, completely destroying Margos' property including the precious tangerines, his passport to a new life. Ahmed offers Margos money he has earned as a mercenary, which is refused.

The denouement is violent and only two of the four main characters survive. Although the film is a joint Estonian/Georgian production (in Estonian and Russian with English sub-titles), it does not take sides between Georgians and Abkhazians, showing only in a small sub-conflict that war, particularly civil war, is a tragedy for both sides.

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# IN SHORT

**Gimson's King and Queens, Brief Lives of the Monarchs since 1066**, Andrew Gimson, Square Peg, £10.99.

Schoolchildren have rightly preferred exciting stories about personalities in history lessons rather than trends and themes so every school library should have this enjoyable book, a fine example of how history should be written, as entertaining as Sellers and Yeatman but with historical accuracy and plenty of lively quotations and interesting anecdotes.

Our monarchs have possessed an infinite variety of talents, vices and virtues but none of them was ever boring. In the Middle Ages war was the national sport whose conflicts were dominated by the Scots and the French, so kings had to be effective warriors. Some of them behaved like the Sopranos, murdering tiresome barons and even killing their own relatives. After the English lost their lands in France, they returned home to fight among themselves in the Wars of the Roses.

Weakness of character or strange habits might lead to the loss of their crowns or their heads. Henry VI was one example but left a fine legacy to the nation in building Eton and Kings College, Cambridge. William Rufus was so detested that the clergy refused to carry out services on his death while John had a worse press than any of them except Richard III, but like many gangsters was 'kind to his mother'.

Our female monarchs have all made a difference: Elizabeth I sacrificed her emotional life for the safety of the realm and gave us years of peace after the tumult of the Reformation. Queen Anne skilfully moderated the squabbles between Whigs and Tories and oversaw the successful union between Scotland and England. During the Victorian era a useful alliance was forged between the Crown and the middle classes whose views the Queen shared and articulated, while our present Queen has shown a tireless devotion to duty in an age when that virtue has become unfashionable.

Some monarchs have been underrated: it is a shame that William III is only popular in Northern Ireland, for he deposed the dreadful James II without another civil war and adroitly managed the transfer to a constitutional monarchy. George VI restored the prestige of the monarchy after his brother had abdicated for his personal comfort. Churchill and the King personified our defiance to the Nazis; during the war no other monarch had talked to so many of his subjects and shared some of their experiences.

Why has our monarchy lasted so long when so many others have bitten the dust? Gimson concludes that it is our most democratic institution, for it has adapted itself to changed times successfully. Even in the Middle Ages our monarchs were not as despotic as others and paid some attention to public opinion. We were lucky to experiment with a republic early and enthusiasm for one soon petered out. Most of the popular innovations came in the 20th century: We should be grateful to Edward VII who revived grand ceremonial at state occasions bringing the magic of monarchy into ordinary peoples' lives. George V and Queen Mary were pioneers in carrying out more homely public engagements; while nowadays the whole Royal family involves itself in the life of the nation.

*Merrie Cave*

## **The Good Migrant**

'I know two great men, you are one of them, the other is this young man.' wrote Charles Batchelor, a famous American engineer, in the letter to Thomas Edison he gave to Nikola Tesla. It is to Tesla we owe alternating current, electric generators, a/c motors and the transformer, an electric car (running for a week), a wireless controlled boat, lighting by alternating current, national power grids, and the establishment of a trans-Atlantic wireless telecommunication facility at Wardencliff on Long Island.

Nikola Tesla, who had only four pence when he set foot in America, was born in 1856 into a Serb family in the village of Smilijan in Croatia. He inherited his extraordinary genius from his mother who, despite a lack of formal education, had a genius for constructing mechanical devices. At the time there were only two careers for bright young men, soldiering or the army, but Tesla having nearly died of cholera was sent by his father, an orthodox priest, to the University of Graz to study electrical engineering. Tesla could solve difficult differential calculus in his head in seconds.

Known as the God of Lighting, Tesla invented the brushless induction motor, a system of rotating coils and magnets which switch the flow of electricity at every half turn producing the now familiar a/c current.

Alternating current cost Tesla long and fraught battles, known as 'The War of Currents' over its advantages over direct current as means of distributing

electrical power. His rivals Edison and Marconi did not want to give up their patents and were prepared to destroy him in the fight. To do so Edison arranged public electrocutions of animals to demonstrate the superior safety of d/c over a/c, something which is not proved to be totally true in all circumstances.

Without Tesla our life today would not be the same.

The next time you put your body into an MRI scanner, (its power is measured in Teslas), or ride the London Underground remember the Serbian boy with four pence and a piece of paper.

*Sylwia Pucher*

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I would like to thank our readers for their generous support over the past year, making it possible to contemplate a secure future for *The Salisbury Review*. I would also like to thank the staff who have worked so tirelessly to make the magazine a success, as well as our excellent contributors and artists. I wish you all a Happy and Holy Christmas

Myles Harris  
Editor  
*The Salisbury Review*

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Salisbury  
Review*

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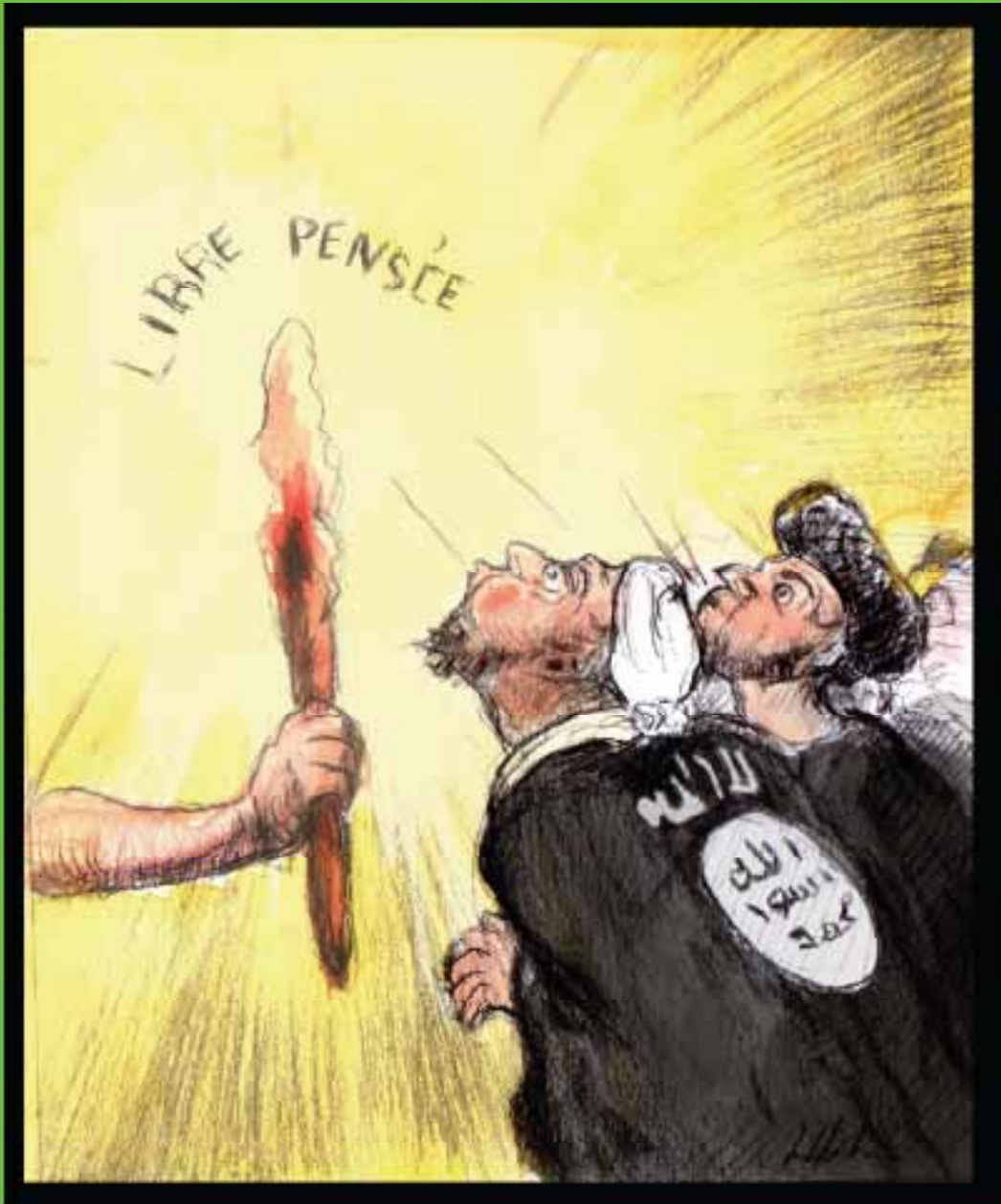
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In memory of the victims of the Paris massacres November 2015

After Daumier's 'Répétition générale du concile'  
A satire on free speech and the Catholic Clergy 1869 British Museum

Artist Lindsey Dearnley