

The

Salisbury Review

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought



Trump's Madness

Theodore Dalrymple

A Belief in Witches?

James Ackhurst

War in the Yemen

John Deverell

The Closing of the Universities

Margaret Brown

Artificial Intelligence isn't so intelligent

Mark Griffiths

Come Back Benny Hill

Jane Kelly

SPRING 2018
Vol 36 No 3

£6.00



Contents

3 Editorial

Articles

- 4 “Time for your Injection Mr President”
Theodore Dalrymple
- 6 British Involvement in the War in Yemen
John Deverell
- 7 Toad Hall on the Thames
James Monteith
- 9 HS2: the Great Anglo-Chinese Railway
Brendan Sharp
- 11 American Father
Mark Mantel
- 13 Gay Marriage Down Under
Daryl McCann
- 15 Hyde Today, London Tomorrow
Lindsey Dearnley
- 17 Charged with Illegal Staring
Alex Claridge
- 18 A Belief in Witches?
James Ackhurst

Columns

- 35 Conservative Classic — 69
Jonathan Haidt’s *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are divided by Politics and Religion*
- 37 Reputations — 58
Arthur Bryant

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

The Salisbury Review,

48 Kingfisher Road, Shefford, SG17 5YQ

Changes of address or other enquiries should be sent to the same address or emailed to

info@salisburyreview.co.uk or by phone to 01462 234279

Credit card payments by phone

01462 234279

- 21 Social Justice for South Paws
Penelope Fawcett Hulme
- 22 The Closing of the Universities
Margaret Brown
- 26 Reliable Knowledge
Brian Ridley
- 28 Why Artificial Intelligence isn’t Intelligent
Mark Griffith
- 29 Mervyn Matthews 1932-2017
- 30 Trump’s ‘Shit Holes’
Alistair Miller
- 31 Come Back Benny Hill
Jane Kelly
- 33 The EU: ‘Not Holy, Not Roman, and Not an Empire – Yet’
Niall McCrae
- 34 From the Bedside
Berenice Langdon

Arts and Books

- 39 David Twiston Davies
on the Establishment
- 40 John Jolliffe
on Oliver Letwin
- 41 Scott Grønmark
on Adam Smith and David Hume
- 42 William Gisby
on Roger Scruton
- 43 Celia Haddon
on Edward Lear
- 44 Anthony Daniels
on Mental Hospitals
- 45 Alistair Miller
on Brexit Opportunities
- 47 Martin Dewhirst
on Russian dirty tricks
- 48 Penelope Tremayne
on Pakistan
- 49 Alexander Adams
on the Soviet Nomenklatura
- 51 Peter Mullen
on Real British Values
- 52 James Monkton
on the perils of Brexit
- 53 FILM
Jane Kelly on *Darkest Hour*
- 54 IN SHORT



The
Salisbury Review

Editor: Myles Harris
Managing Editor: Merrie Cave
Consulting Editors:
Sir Roger Scruton, Jane Kelly,
Alistair Miller
Artist: Lindsey Dearnley

48 Kingfisher Road, Shefford, Beds, SG17 5YQ
Tel: 01462 234279
E-mail: info@salisburyreview.co.uk

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

When the BBC smugly announced that two ‘British’ Jihadists with Arabic names accused of torturing, crucifying and beheading unarmed civilians had been captured in Syria, many British listeners were enraged. What could be less British? What would foreigners think we as a nation had come to?

This type of slap in the face is intentional, frequent and part of the left’s postmodern project to deconstruct our way of life. If you tell a people they no longer have any say in who lives in their country, you will destroy their idea of nationhood. A country that does not feel itself to be a nation has no borders.

A skilled interrogator will tell you it is not difficult to change the meaning of highly emotionally charged words such as ‘British’. Show somebody a picture of a cat, tell them it is a dog, then put psychological pressure on them, either by inducements, threats of imprisonment or physical pain to say it is a dog, and you will be surprised to see how many hesitate and some even agree. If everybody else in the room absolutely and convincingly insists it is a dog, the victim will come to believe it even sooner. If you don’t care if it is a dog or a cat, you will not be easily persuaded, but if you are deeply emotionally invested in the one or other belief, or afraid, you are vulnerable. Which is why many in Britain, fearful of the pointing finger of the left, are persuaded of an obvious lie; but not all. Patriotism burns deeply in many an Englishman’s heart, and to be told a medieval killer with an Arab name who spits on the idea of our country is British is the equivalent to a blow in the face.

Mao Tse Tung realised that words were society’s anchors, and if rooted up, nobody would know what anything meant anymore. China would then descend into a state of anarchy over which only the head gangster, Mao himself, would rule. What was needed was the pointing finger of shame. Which was why in the cultural revolution prominent political figures and academics were cornered in their offices or homes by chanting mobs demanding they confessed to accusations which were clearly totally untrue – the more untrue the better.

The surgeon of a famous hospital might be ordered to confess he was poisoning his patients on the instructions of the CIA. Once he had confessed – under such pressure nearly all did – the victim was paraded through the streets in a dunce’s cap and forced into some humiliating activity such as licking a lavatory bowl clean, and then sent to forced labour. In a country where ‘face’ is often a necessity of life, many committed suicide.

A teacher in Britain in 2017 addresses a classroom of girls as ‘girls’. One of the girls objects, saying she has redefined herself as a boy. The school authorities are involved, suspend the teacher and issue a press statement saying he has breached equality policies and will face disciplinary procedures. An unusually vicious twitter storm, backed by several transgender support groups, erupts. His life is made a nightmare and Britain’s education authorities ban the words ‘girl’ and ‘boy’ in all schools. If you can persuade millions of people that a girl is a boy, or frighten them into keeping quiet about the fact it is not true, you have your hands on the levers of power. Last year in Canada, a bill was passed making it an offence to call a girl a girl or a boy a boy, if the one addressed did not wish you to.

But, you protest, we do not parade political figures through the streets wearing a dunce’s cap. Where are the mobs?

Have you never heard of a twitter storm? Have you been the victim of one? How many times in the last six months have you watched public figures apologising unreservedly for some chance politically incorrect remark or previously innocent action and then resigning? Victims of Nazi, Soviet and Chinese Communist brainwashing recalled that the only effective defence against such methods was an unshakeable but unrelated belief in something else. Jehovah’s Witnesses were notable survivors of the Nazi death camps. Fundamentalist Baptists resisted Mao’s mobs. The weakness of our Maoist opponents is they have no beliefs; they are just a mob. We are not a mob; we are a nation, with traditions and history. Time we spoke out.

“Time for your Injection Mr President”

Theodore Dalrymple

Psychiatric diagnosis is a dubious enterprise at the best of times, let alone when conducted at a distance and the psychiatrist has had no personal contact with the human subject of his supposed skills, or even with anyone who has had such contact. Nevertheless, the temptation for psychiatrists to diagnose public figures from newspaper cuttings, glimpses of them on television, and so forth, is very strong, and I doubt whether there is a psychiatrist in the world who has not had a diagnostic crack at Donald Trump. Not, of course, that he would care a jot if they had: indifference to the opinion of others in this instance is entirely justified and indeed laudable.

American psychiatrists discredited themselves mightily in 1964 when 1,189 of them (out of more than 12,000 surveyed, most of them not bothering to reply) delivered themselves of the opinion that Senator Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate for the Presidency, was psychologically unfit to be President. This was at the high-tide of Freudian psychiatric and cultural influence, but it is unknown to what extent the opinion of the psychiatrists put anyone off voting for Goldwater who might otherwise have done so. It took a few years for the psychiatrists as a body to attain sufficient insight (as we psychiatrists call it) to acknowledge that the pronouncement of the 1,189 had been blatantly political, quite without scientific foundation and therefore an abuse of whatever small authority they had.

Still, psychiatrists are only human (more or less), and it is only natural for them to use their experience of humanity in general to assess important political figures in particular. For many years, for example, I puzzled over the psychopathology of Anthony Blair, our former Prime Minister, and eventually, it came to me in an

illuminating flash: he was suffering, poor man, from delusions of honesty. A delusion is a fixed, false belief that is impervious to evidence or reason, and that is out of keeping with a person’s culture. Mr Blair seemed

to believe, all the contrary evidence notwithstanding, that he was an honest man: but whether this was out of keeping with his culture is another question. Increasingly, delusions of honesty seem an advantage, if not an actual requirement, in the upper echelons of our public administration; and therefore, strictly speaking, are no longer delusions but rather normal beliefs.

With regard to Mr Trump, the diagnosis, superficially, at any rate, is easier to make. He is suffering from, or rather he makes others suffer from, his narcissistic personality disorder. But here we must enter caveats.

The first is that Mr Trump may be a very different person in private from what he is in public: in other words, his public persona is an act, a cunning and calculated self-presentation designed to achieve certain ends. No one, surely, can deny his cleverness: he could hardly have got where he is without any ability. Given his cleverness, then, his public persona might be an act: perhaps in private he is modest, charming, considerate, witty, self-effacing and so forth. Personally, I rather doubt it; if his facial expressions are part of his act, he is one of the greatest actors of the past hundred years. But I cannot say that I know that his public persona is real and not an act, and my instinct about the matter is not evidence. I have believed psychopathic murderers to be innocent, and innocents to be psychopathic murderers.

The second caveat is the uselessness of the diagnosis, which is merely a re-description of behaviour and has no explanatory power whatever. A personality disorder is only a loose concatenation of undesirable,



undesired or dysfunctional personality traits that persist over time and in different situations, but is then often taken to account for behaviour. The explanation is the same as the thing to be explained: we know that he has a personality disorder because of how he behaves, and he behaves as he does because he has a personality disorder. Oddly enough, our courts and judges sometimes swallow this stuff whole. For them, bad behaviour is excusable, or at least mitigated, if it goes on for long enough, for then it becomes illness rather than freely-chosen wickedness.

How easy and beguiling is cod-psychology! Mr Trump exhibits both an immense self-regard and an eggshell sensitivity to criticism (of himself, not of others): how is one to reconcile these two apparently opposed characteristics? Nothing easier for the psychologist, of course. He simply introduces into his reflections the philosopher's stone of modern psychology: self-esteem.

Mr Trump's seemingly inflated self-regard is actually reaction formation against low self-esteem, perhaps caused from a very early age by being the son of a self-made property developer, whose achievement no man who inherits \$250 million, as did Mr Trump, can hope to equal, let alone exceed. After all, the first \$100 million is always the most difficult to make; and hence any criticism of him is either mockery of his pretensions to distinction and achievement on his own account, or resuscitates his inextinguishable feelings of inferiority to his father. Hence both his high self-regard and extreme sensitivity point at source to the same problem: low self-esteem. The latter is not only the explanation of Mr Trump's character but also of the whole history of the world.

By the same token, if his self-presentation as a militant vulgarian were merely a ruse or a means to an end, it would hardly reflect any better on his character than if he were a sincere vulgarian: for what kind of person would consciously adopt such a persona in order to climb to the top? Only someone very unscrupulous, or avid for power.

It is a discomfiting thought that the very qualities that make Mr Trump so repellent a man even for many of those who voted for him should be the very qualities that others of his voters liked and admired. They liked him for his (apparent) crudity, vulgarity, boastfulness, insensitivity, shamelessness and ignorance. This was not only because he appeared so different from members of the despised political establishment (Republican as well as Democrat), but because these were qualities that they valued in themselves. Despite his billions, he was one of them.

But Mr Trump's ability to polarise the population raises interesting psychological questions about his

opponents also. If he had been an 'ordinary' politician, would anything he has actually done have aroused the frenzy of hatred that he has in fact aroused? Those who opposed his policies would surely have done so in far more measured terms than the ones employed against him. As is appropriate to an age of celebrity, then, it is his manner rather than his policies that antagonise opponents so disproportionately.

And here we may indulge in a little more cod-psychology. The vehemence directed against Mr Trump is, like his exaggerated self-regard, reaction formation. Except that in this case it is against an awareness that, in rejecting past orthodoxies, he is not only right but appeals to the still small voice within the orthodox themselves – the voice that tells them they were deluding themselves all along, or saying things that they knew not to be true but said nevertheless to establish their reputation as good, caring, generous-minded liberal people. The vehemence of their hatred for Mr Trump, then, is an inverted sign of their secret illicit agreement with him, which they repress by means of their continual insults.

This leads us to a general conclusion: that where the human mind is concerned, everything is the opposite of what it seems, except those things which are exactly what they seem. And only psychiatrists can tell the difference.

Theodore Dalrymple's latest book is The Knife Went In (Gibson Square).

We have moved house so if you're thinking of contacting us, our new address and telephone number are:

*48 Kingfisher Road
Shefford
Beds
SG17 5YQ*

Tel: 01462 234279

Email is the same as before:

info@salisburyreview.co.uk

British Involvement in the War in Yemen

John Deverell

Yemen is a country of paradoxes. In classical times it was called Arabia Felix – but today it is a most unhappy place. The people are generous – yet they have nothing to give. They are hospitable – but many of them have not the wherewithal to be hosts, their houses having been destroyed by the three-year old war that continues to lay waste the country. There are fine harbours and ports – when I first visited over 50 years ago, Aden had the fourth biggest throughput of shipping tonnage in the world. But a combination of bombing and maritime blockades has greatly reduced the utility of all ports. For years the country has been a by-word for insecurity – but during my many visits to the country I had never felt unsafe. This was because I travelled around with local people whom I trusted. I never thought that one day a rather more immediate danger would be from the air.

And the bombing shows no signs of abating. The scale of death and destruction has been significant. Press coverage has been minimal since global attention is largely focused elsewhere. Yemeni government forces, operating under the direction of an unpopular president and supported by a Saudi-led military coalition, continue to fight Houthi rebels. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman seems impelled to continue the war, not least due to Saudi concern about Iran and that country's support – albeit limited – to the Houthis. As a result the Royal Saudi Air Force has carried out many thousands of sorties against the Houthis and the facilities from which they might benefit. Ports, market places, factories, hospitals, schools and other items of vital infrastructure have been damaged or destroyed and estimates indicate that well over 10,000 Yemeni civilians have been killed. And yet it is unlikely that the fighting will have a decisive outcome any time soon.

Britain has been supplying arms, ammunition and training to the Saudis for many years. British arms sales to Saudi Arabia have grown five-fold since Riyadh entered the conflict in Yemen. As a result the British government has been accused both at home and abroad of complicity in the deaths of innocent Yemenis. Collateral damage from war from the air – or indeed from war of any sort – is inevitable. It would be most difficult to speculate how many might have been killed by British-made bombs or aircraft. Whatever the figure, those who wield weapons have a moral and legal duty to minimize it.

Last year the High Court in London rejected a judicial review brought by the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT). CAAT had called on the British Government to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen. It claimed that the sales failed to comply with British arms export criteria. These include the direction that sales should not take place if there is a clear risk that British-made arms might be used in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law. As House of Commons select committees had stated, 'it seems inevitable that any violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by the coalition have involved arms supplied from the UK'. Indeed, British Defence Secretary Fallon admitted in the House of Commons that the Saudis had dropped British-made BL755 cluster bombs over Yemen. These weapons are outlawed by international convention because of the indiscriminate deaths caused by their delayed action bomblets. But the Defence Secretary insisted there was no breach of international law because the cluster bombs were being used against 'legitimate military targets'.

After working in the region for many years and having travelled throughout Yemen, I was invited by the Department for International Development to advise on humanitarian access. Getting aid and commercial food shipments into Yemen had been proving very difficult – and indeed continues to be so. This has been despite considerable efforts by third parties, including Britain, to establish a streamlined and timely system to help the navies of Saudi Arabia and her allies to determine which ships can go unhindered into Yemeni ports – and which might be carrying items of use to the Houthi rebels and can therefore justifiably be diverted, boarded and searched. Therefore only a fraction of the pre-war daily imports of food, fuel, medicines and other necessities for living gets into Yemen. Even less gets to where it is really needed. Medicines and doctors are much reduced and are harder than ever for Yemenis to reach. Foreign medical aid often cannot deploy to where it is needed because of the security situation. And so disease and death stalks the land. Dengue fever, cholera, diphtheria and malnutrition are rife. Many have died who would, without the war, have stayed healthy and have had access to life-saving drugs. Overall, 80 per cent of the population is in need of humanitarian support. And millions of children are unable to attend school. This reduction in education will itself have serious implications

for Yemen and its future.

Ceasefire talks between the two sides have started and been aborted several times. There have occasionally been glimmers of hope that the talks might lead to an end of the fighting – at least in the north of the country, the South being very fractured. I was asked to attend ceasefire talks in Kuwait on behalf of the UN. I had the privilege of being the only non-Arab person on the UN team invited to meetings between senior military officers from each side. We sat together twice a day round a table with the parties to the conflict, many of whom knew each other from before the war. We helped them to look for ways to de-escalate the fighting and reduce tension. Each meeting started acrimoniously, with mutual accusations of breaking the assurances given the previous day. After about a quarter of an hour the officers from each side began listening to each other and finding points of agreement. A further quarter of an hour led to mobile telephone calls with the aim of stopping certain military actions or confirming locations. After two days the representatives of each side began to sit with each other rather than face to face in confrontational mode across the table. It was a good example of opposing sides getting to know each other better and working together in pursuit of peace. I had hopes that the politicians on each side might follow this example in the days that followed the military talks. But this was not to be. The politicians did not personally share

the dangers to which their soldiers were exposed – they had less ‘skin in the game’ – and no doubt they wanted to present a strong stance to their constituencies. Therefore the demands they made in terms of preconditions for a ceasefire were unrealistic. For example, the government side insisted that the Houthis disarm and withdraw before a ceasefire could be agreed. In my opinion such objectives should be regarded as an outcome of ceasefire talks, rather than a precondition.

As a result the fighting continues and Iran no doubt draws considerable satisfaction from the resulting distractions, expenditure and international opprobrium experienced by Saudi Arabia. The war was arguably avoidable. Like most wars – especially those fought by incompetent militaries – it is most unlikely either to have a decisive outcome or to benefit any one group. It will be remembered mainly for the suffering and death imposed on innocent people and for the immense and needless damage caused to a beautiful country, its buildings, infrastructure, economy and culture. And many observers will argue that the British government bears some of the blame.

John Deverell has worked in every Arab country in the Middle East and North Africa. As a senior British Army officer he was Director Defence Diplomacy in Whitehall. He was awarded the CBE and the OBE during his time in the Army. www.deverellassociates.com

Toad Hall on the Thames

James Monteith

Those familiar with the outer boroughs of south-west London can hardly fail to have noticed a striking demographic contrast – a contrast that is all too emblematic of the cityscape of modern Britain. There, separated by the A316, the arterial road which connects Central London with the M3 and the South West, reside the boroughs of Richmond-upon-Thames and Hounslow: the one populated with well-educated middle class professionals, overwhelmingly ‘white British’, graced with leafy streets lined with handsome villas, lively local pubs, chic boutiques, trendy cafés and delicatessens, and returning liberal or liberally-minded conservative members of parliament (Vince Cable in Twickenham and Zac Goldsmith in Richmond); the other increasingly resembling a giant transit camp, with spoken English now a rarity on the high street, traditional pubs converted into Tesco Metros or curry houses, and new arrivals stuffed into sheds at the bottom of people’s back gardens. They might as well be two different worlds. As my niece, visiting from Australia and travelling into Hounslow

from Richmond on the bus remarked, ‘Mummy, it’s like being in a foreign country!’

Richmond has the greater natural advantages and was always more likely to be favoured by the privileged: the river Thames and the villas, palaces, temples and grottos, that still adorn its banks, the Royal parks, the delightful greens of Richmond, Ham, Kew, Twickenham and Hampton Court, and the majestic view from Richmond Hill that Turner painted. Hounslow, by contrast, was endowed with the world’s busiest international airport. But Hounslow, too, has its oases: Syon Park – living in nearby Isleworth, I used to cycle over to sunbathe in its grounds, almost a rural idyll, with its cows grazing in the distance; Osterley Park and its Elizabethan stable block, perfect for afternoon tea; Hanworth Park and Hounslow Heath. There are shady streets of handsome Victorian and Edwardian villas just as there are in neighbouring Richmond, albeit now somewhat run-down and tending to multiple occupancy.

Yet, whereas Hounslow, Feltham, Isleworth and Brentford have been the focus of frenetic high-rise high-

density housing development, their skylines dotted with colossal cranes, Richmond, Twickenham, Teddington and the Hamptons (some two thirds of the borough falls under the designation ‘conservation area’ – a useful ploy, that) are virtually unscathed, the only significant high-rise development consisting of elaborate loft conversions for housing grown-up children and au pairs. The disparity is all-the-more invidious when one considers that it is the enlightened liberals of Richmond and Twickenham, so representative of the ruling elite, who are overwhelmingly supportive of open borders, the EU, free movement, diversity and multiculturalism – and therefore, presumably, the high-density housing and overcrowding that inevitably accompany an exponentially growing population. A friend in Teddington who goes on ‘Stop Brexit’ marches remarked, ‘If I had a neighbour who flew an English flag, I’d move somewhere else.’ Naturally, no one in Richmond would dream of ‘flying the flag’ (such vulgarity), but then the English are still in the overwhelming majority. One must cross the border from Hampton to beleaguered Hanworth to see the sad remnants of the uneducated working class fighting to preserve their identity, flags-a-flutter, local pub now boarded up. They appear on the streets en masse on Remembrance Day, led by a lone piper; and for a few hours, it is as if the clock had been turned back fifty years.

A cynical observer might suspect that lurking behind the moral self-righteousness of the bourgeois liberals of Richmond, as of the liberal intelligentsia in general, is shameless self-interest. The diversity, high-density housing and shed conversions of neighbouring boroughs ensure a ready supply of cheap menial labour in the form of builders, repairmen, delivery van drivers, taxi drivers, gardeners, dog-walkers, cleaners, waiters and waitresses, shop assistants, bar staff, dish washers and au pairs. Open borders suit highly paid professionals who spend the evenings networking with colleagues overseas and have second homes in the Dordogne, Provence and Tuscany. Population pressure and ‘white flight’ ensures rocketing house prices in desirable areas endowed with private schools (and state schools stuffed with the offspring of middle-class professionals), which is good news if you, or your parents, are owner-occupiers. The well to do can sleep easy in the knowledge that sundry newcomers from

faraway places are housed elsewhere.

Yet this, I think, would be unfair. We can only suppose that were the liberal elite offered the opportunity to share in the vibrant diversity they take such pride in espousing for others – to see Somalis, Eritreans, Pakistanis, Afghans, Iraqis, Albanians, Slovaks and Romanians (nothing wrong with that) throng their streets, mosques (not a single one in the borough) rise alongside and then replace their churches (for enlightened liberals are not on the whole great church-goers), East European grocers and Western Union branches spring up on their high streets, pre-fab classrooms carpet the fields of their neighbourhood primaries to cater for the burgeoning school population, and their local pubs close – that they would leap at the opportunity.

So, let us build homes, not in overcrowded Hounslow, or in the Green Belt, where Kempton Park in neighbouring Sunbury is now earmarked for housing, such is the pressure on Spelthorne borough council to ‘deliver’ its housing target – but where they are most needed and where, we must assume, they would be most welcomed. Let us build instead, and build big, in Richmond-upon-Thames. Let us build homes for a

million people! For there is in the borough a 2500-acre site – a windswept grassy wasteland dotted with woods and ponds and populated by herds of Lyme disease infested deer – simply crying out for development.

To see what Richmond Park could become, we need only look across at adjoining Roehampton and the spectacular Alton West housing development. Completed in 1958 and inspired by Le Corbusier, this much-admired experiment in social housing (now Grade II listed) consists of high-rise ‘point’ and ‘slab’ tower blocks set in landscaped parkland. The original planners, however, were rather conservative and held back from fully realising Le Corbusier’s vision. Instead of the 17 stories of the Cité radieuse (Radiant city) in Marseilles, they built only 11 and 12; and instead of elaborate communal facilities, the residents had to make do with gallery access. The original city in the sky contained 337 apartments accommodating 1,600 residents, and boasted interior shopping streets, a hotel, restaurant, nursery school and rooftop terrace complete with paddling pool, all set in a spacious park of some seven acres. Contrary to what some critics would have one believe, Le Corbusier’s masterpiece is popular among residents and much sought after by the middle-



class professionals of Marseilles.

If Richmond Park were developed along these lines, with say 500 slab blocks each accommodating 2000, then a million people could be housed in style and comfort. With the blocks well-spaced within landscaped surroundings, most of the woodland could be preserved. Moreover, with preference given to migrants, the diversification of Richmond-upon-Thames, its transformation into a diverse inclusive multicultural community, would be accomplished. The development of Bushy Park, Hampstead Heath, Wimbledon Common, Greenwich Park and the central

London parks would follow apace, and another million and a half people could be housed. On what grounds could our liberal-minded ruling elite possibly object?

With a little imagination, the dream of a diverse inclusive borderless multicultural society can be realised and the current housing crisis solved – at least until the next million migrants arrive. But our liberal ruling class should realise the dream in their own backyard.

James Monteith is a writer living in London.

HS2: the Great Anglo-Chinese Railway

Brendan Sharp

The head of the British Army recently confessed that either army of our two most dangerous foes, China and Russia, could walk in here with little difficulty. Which left me with an uneasy feeling about the HS2 line the Chinese are putting in bids for between London and the North. In my worst moments I wonder if it may be part of a very long-term military project for the rapid movement of Chinese troops and equipment from one end of the country to the other in the event of war? It seems unthinkable, but Russia did the same thing in Afghanistan prior to its invasion of that country, building a network of heavily reinforced roads for its tank and armoured carriers to move on. There is no doubt that the Russians mean us harm. Lately they have been surveying our electricity cables in the Channel with a view to cutting them in time of war. China, which regularly deploys cyber warfare units against us, will have access to the software involved in running both HS2 as well as Bradwell, Essex and Berkeley nuclear power stations. Once both the latter are working, with China fully invested, the Chinese could, in an instant, cut the main communication link between north and south and plunge a considerable part of Britain into darkness.

In the immediate future Beijing views Britain (referred to in official blogs as a ‘fallen world leader’) as ripe

for the commercial taking, a view that will have been bolstered by the collapse of Carillion to the tune of £1 billion in debts and half a billion of pension obligations. It’s the sort of thing mafias do when they have gutted an industry. Russia and China are the world’s two leading Mafia states.

According to *The Economist*, when Xi Jinping became the country’s leader in 2012, Guangdong was the biggest manufacturing centre of illegal narcotics, and in 2014 nearly 60 per cent of drug making occurred in the province of south east China. Guangdong is directly linked with Guangshen Railway Co Ltd., the operator running between Guangzhou and Guangdong. Should a huge UK project be linked with this kind of culture? At any rate, China is arguably funding HS2 to bolster its

own economy in terms of profit, whilst cultivating its own infrastructural reputation overseas. This is a pattern China is repeating all over the world, not only in Africa, but in unlikely places such as the Caribbean where Chinese airfields, roads and power stations have sprung up. America seems to have forgotten the Monroe Doctrine and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Meanwhile Big Capital gathered in Britain to carve the cake. According to the chairman of HS2, ‘Britain faces a paradox. London is one of the great global cities. It will



remain so; but we have to ensure that it does not become a victim of its own success.’ He meant that London has become an economic prosperity zone, something akin to Hong Kong, which enjoys tax advantages compared with the rest of China. Similarly, London is sucking in brains, capital and talent at the expense of the rest of the UK while giving nothing in return. Building a high-speed rail line to the north, it is contended, will reverse that trend. However, there is absolutely no reason why it might not do precisely the reverse, with more and more people from the north flocking to London.

Private Eye reports that Mark Thurston, chief executive of HS2 Ltd, earns a remarkable £535,000. Socialist Remainer Andrew Adonis, a former transport secretary, was among those knighted last month in the Honours list for his ‘personal and public service’. The award is absurd and completely undermines the legitimacy of the Honours System. Former Director General of HS2 Dr David Prout has been appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath for services to transport. How can individuals facing such huge widespread criticism publicly be given this title? It beggars belief.

Environmentally, many rural counties will be hit hardest. A resident of Stoke in an interview with a local paper, the *Stoke Sentinel*, fumed at the prospect of ‘Fifteen drilled boreholes tearing through the village just a few hundred yards from my home, 10 metres deep: If they do that they don’t need to raise the A55 so drains can go underneath it. But the whole project is really going to ruin the valley.’ Her frustration is utterly justifiable. The planned route will wipe out ancient woodland. Such natural beauty is priceless.

The Conservative Party have for many years portrayed themselves as guardians of the environment, a title they lost to the Green Party decades ago. Following Theresa May’s recent cabinet reshuffle appointing Michael Gove as Environment Secretary, she called for a ‘cleaner, greener Britain’. This speech coincided with a BBC News report on television depicting a vicar, Rev Anne Stevens of St Pancras Church near Euston station, along with a local resident, chaining themselves to a tree in protest. According to the report, Euston Station’s development ‘will see the remains of 60,000 people buried on the nearby St James’ Gardens exhumed’.

Five hundred trees will be cut down in Camden. Rev Stevens described how the ‘heavy duty chains binding her to the tree are a symbol of the powerlessness the local community feels in the face of HS2’. This powerful gesture only seems to have engendered a fresh sense of inertia about the environment in the Tory government.

One proponent of HSUK, a Leeds MP with over twenty years of experience working for the rail, asked the Transport Secretary at the time, Chris Grayling, why the government had not examined their proposal, which

he said would be ‘twenty billion pounds cheaper and far more environmentally friendly’. Grayling’s response was that ‘he was not in favour of turning the clocks back’. Why would the public want such an individual at the helm? This stubbornness is testament to the vast echo chamber of Whitehall; the real cost is expected to be approximately £100 billion – twice their estimate.

These sentiments allude to a broader topic: the ever-diminishing sense of loss of a British identity. Why should we bend over backwards to allow even more overpopulation? The mass migration of those travelling to Greater London from key cities such as Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham that HS2 will encourage is simply unnecessary – London’s population is fit to burst. There has to be a limit. The amount of jobs currently available in the City is not sufficient for the sheer number of jobseekers applying. In this regard, HS2 is counter-intuitive.

Worryingly, a subject that doesn’t seem to have been given much thought is the increased risk of terrorism on public transport. Historically, London has been a key target for extremist attacks. More ease of access will only create more opportunities for danger at a time when the national terrorism threat is classed as critical by the government. Further scepticism will be stoked by a 3.4 per cent rise in train fares, with some commuters seeing the cost of their journey as much as triple. This extortionate cost is combined with an increasingly underwhelming rail service across the country, sparking national outrage at present.

Ultimately, the project does nothing to address the ever-burdening housing crisis in our capital city. London is hugely overpopulated, its population surging to its highest ever last year to a staggering 8.8 million. Among those hit hardest are the millennial generation. Many face the stark reality that in their twenties that they will not be able to place a single toe on the property ladder, let alone get a foot on it.

In general, Remainers love the HS2, insisting that it will hugely bolster employment in the City, convinced our economy will be saved without really delving into practicalities. This ignorance is alarming and fails to fathom the reality; its introduction will entail a footfall of 500,000 running up and down the country each year. London’s streets are already suffocated; its trains, tubes and buses stretched every day to their limits without the extra strain that HS2 will place on the entire transport system. Why are those in favour blind to such inconvenient truths?

The implosion of Carillion will mean that the financial and construction plans already drawn up will have to be re-examined. Will we get to know what £18 million in paperwork was spent on before even a single centimetre of track was laid? Not that it bothers the Treasury. In a recent Treasury Committee meeting, the now ex-chair of

the National Infrastructure Commission, ‘Lord’ Andrew Adonis, stated that high speed trains are ‘some of the most beautiful facets of modern life’. I would assert that in the eyes of many, these so called ‘beautiful facets’ possess far less sheer beauty than, for example, the 45 mile stretch of Staffordshire countryside this project will ultimately destroy.

Brendan Sharp is a Cambridge graduate, writer and winner of The Independent Wyn Harness Young Journalist of the Year prize. He has contributed to various titles including The Times, The Sunday Times, The Independent, the Daily Mail and the Evening Standard.

American Father

Mark Mantel

I have a small confession to make: I have been telling folks around here that *The Salisbury Review* is ‘the Queen’s favourite magazine’. I didn’t mean to deceive, not at first. It started with just my mother-in-law. She had been gaining ascendancy over me lately. She was soundly winning the propaganda war for the heart and mind of my wife. I was desperate. So, one day over dinner, slab of sirloin dangling from fork, dull table-lamp illuminating half my mug, I barked, ‘Even the Queen of England reads what I have to say! So there!’ The dirty lie just slipped out, sort of. And it hit home, striking a powerful blow. She even emitted a grunt. And of course, she goes and tells everyone, proud of my glory, despite herself.

What choice did I have but more dissembling?

Sinner that I am, I even told my two eldest daughters, aged 15 and 13, that *The Salisbury Review*, Daddy’s articles, were laid out, right there in the gilded drawing room at Buckingham Palace. Looked them dead in their cherubic eyes without blinking. But the foul fib was barely worth the telling, for it meant nothing to my sultry young ladies, that is the thing. They just offered the blankest of blank gazes and treated me like a man with a long grey beard from nose to stomach. I took this sorely to heart.

Things were different in my day. When I was about 10, I lived in a backwoods Huckleberry Finn hick-town called Port St Lucie, Florida. My dad had been dispatched to this inviolate gator-infested outpost to get its crumbling telephone company shipshape. I made pals with the local lads, boys whose lifelong uniform would be jean-shorts and flip-flops, who maybe even now are lurking in ambush somewhere. For fun, we

shot cottonmouth water moccasins with pellet guns, searching fetid ditches and swamp-flowers for the slithery serpents.

But one day, we boys had what amounted to an intellectual conversation.

We lounged in the palmetto woods high in a wooden tree-fort, constructed for certain military operations, and ruminated on the question ‘What would you do if the Queen of England suddenly visited your house?’ I still remember the weighty talk. A band of boys with war paint on faces, Rambo knives on belts, discussing serious points of etiquette. I, naturally, had the most authority: St Petersburg, land of the Tsars, gave birth to me (admittedly, it was only Leningrad at the time). My family had an icon of the martyred Imperial Family hanging in the breakfast nook. I knew things. I pontificated: ‘You couldn’t just give her a tea bag. You’d have to use loose tea from a box. You’d have to warm the tea pot, swoosh some boiling water in it before adding the tea. And you’d have to cover the teapot with a small blanket and let it brew for the right time...’

What tickles me, looking back, is how we never dreamt of inviting Reagan over. By some instinct, a band of American boys in the steam-bath of the Florida sticks understood that a queen was something infinitely higher than a mere president. Nobody taught us this, we just knew it. You could toss Reagan a Lipton teabag, call it a day, and he wouldn’t even notice.

This brings me to my topic. I was asked recently what fatherly worries I had about the future for my four daughters. Weighty question.

Like Lear, my chief concern, of course, is securing



total lifetime daughterly devotion and unremitting affection. Far behind comes any diffuse worries for the general state of the future world. I don't wish to end like old Papa Goriot, you see, with daughters out dancing while I'm slowly belching up the ghost on the sickbed. Especially not dancing to the yowling of some strange new music. No, my vision is more that they solemnly stand at opposite bedposts, the atmosphere in the room that of Albinoni's mournful Adagio in G, and so on. With such in mind, I must count all therapists, social workers, most educators – most modern people, really, and mine especially, as natural enemies of fatherhood in the lump.

The process starts early, turning them against father. It's in the 'children's literature,' not overtly, but obliquely. It's not like in the old fairy tales, which speak to the natural processes going on in a child – the love of papa, or even the fear of papa. The prettified fairy tales of today are bad. They don't help a child find security in an identified language, using as they do abstract ethical concepts instead of dragons. Bruno Bettelheim describes in his wonderful book *The Uses of Enchantment*: 'Contrary to what takes place in many modern children's stories, in fairy tales evil is as omnipresent as virtue. In practically every fairy tale good and evil are given body in the form of some figure and their actions, as good and evil are omnipresent in life and the propensities for both are present in every man. It is this duality which poses the moral problem, and requires the struggle to solve it.'

Can you not see that all these new books are against me?

Charles Dickens understood that fairy tales help kids attain maturity, civilize their chaotic minds and, above all, impart the proper love of papa. He repeatedly expressed scorn for those who, motivated by an unattained and petty rationality, insisted on bowdlerizing and rationalizing these stories, and thus robbed children of the important contributions fairy tales could make in their lives.

So much for my younger two daughters, whose future earth I have difficulty imagining, other than to suspect that present tendencies aren't the sort to blossom so wonderfully. It won't be a world where moustachioed waiters spin around you and all the silver shines.

As for the older two daughters, let me tell you one thing that happened, since we have been talking about stories. My thirteen-year old was asked to choose a hero and report back to her class. She goes to what is considered a 'good school'. At first, she chose Tolstoy, regrettably dead, white and male, but otherwise seemingly unimpeachable, even from a progressive angle. After all, the man had no time for private property or official Christianity, and even renounced literature in the name of social reform. Gave his land to his peasants.

Yet for all that, the teacher found him objectionable – for no better reason than he set off her 'yucky meter'. The glum pedagogue proposed instead the American sitcom actress and comic, Ellen DeGeneres. Let me assure you dear readers across the Pond that we are not talking of another Blind Milton dictating *Paradise Lost* in the early hours to his daughter so we may know that Satan yet walks the earth, but a yacking cocktail party TV hostess who came out as a Lesbian on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* in 1997.

Ladies and gentlemen, am I to tell you what this did to me? Upon hearing the verdict, my eyes refused to focus. My limbs seemed to be leaving me. And the pain, which may have been out of all proportion, remains an unrelieved horror in memory. Can you imagine? Ellen DeGeneres over Tolstoy! The whole point of having children is to reproduce your kind. I want my little ones to go around like I do, needling good people with alexandrine couplets, scorning Hollywood in favour of the Duchesse de Guermantes, drinking black coffee, even smoking, damn it. What right have they got to bequeath them to Ellen?

It matters because, lacking something fine to compare things to, one muddles the mediocre with the exceptional. And so, what then? Well, then you start to feel in clichés, and all your sentiments get cheapened. That is a bad thing.

The worst part is wondering what sort of husbands await.

It might be the type that goes jogging, the worst sort of all. Remember, it can take many years for a crummy character to come out. Such a man might bring them to a world of laminated Thai menus and paper napkins folded into pyramids. My girls will forget all I taught them under such conditions. And I will not even mention the wedding at the rented ballroom, people dancing in a sort of conga line. I will not mention vacations at beach resorts sipping fruity cocktails under canopies. It is all just too dreadful!

Yes, as a father I have a lot of fears, and they usually arrive every day, at exactly eight o'clock. Perhaps with too many helpings of dinner and the torrid monotony of evening, bad thoughts come. But I won't blame myself, I won't. Even the brilliant Abelard is on my side: 'What man, intent on his philosophic meditations, can possibly endure the whining of children, the lullabies of the nurse seeking to quiet them, or the noisy confusion of family life?'

I do my best.

Mark Mantel is a lawyer in Richmond Virginia

Gay Marriage Down Under

Daryl McCann

On November 15, 2017, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) announced a 61.6 per cent ‘Yes’ response to the survey question ‘Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?’ Labor Senator Penny Wong, a self-identified lesbian and the titular head of the ‘Yes’ campaign, broke down in tears at the announcement of the news: ‘To all Australians, thank you for standing up for fairness and equality.’

Only a decade earlier, on the eve of the 2007 Federal election where Kevin Rudd’s Australian Labor Party unseated John Howard’s conservative-leaning government, Penny Wong was making the anti-gay marriage case: ‘On the issue of marriage I think the reality is there is a cultural, religious, historical view around which we have to respect. The party’s position is very clear that this is an institution that is between a man and a woman. I am part of a party and I support the party’s policies.’

That was then and this is now. The pro-gay marriage position that she, presumably, felt afraid to express ten years ago has become the prevailing view. Then, advocacy for same-sex marriage was considered a liability, at least by Wong’s party. With the 2007 election won – thanks in part to the ‘cultural, religious, historical view’ of Labor’s blue-collar voters – Senator Wong felt free to push for a change of party policy. Labor, as she pointed out at the time, had an official policy, arrived at through due process, and as a member of that party she had no alternative but to accede to the collectivist will. This all might sound Orwellian to a libertarian-conservative but that has been the Labor’s modus operandi since it began as a meeting of striking pastoral workers in the 1890s and was adopted by manual workers throughout the land as the political wing of the union movement. Senator Wong could rightfully argue that, after 2007, she fought and won the battle inside the party to make its policy pro-gay marriage.

By the time of the 2013 Federal election, when the issue had become more of an asset than a danger, Wong attacked the then Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott, for expressing the same opinion she was articulating only six years before. In response to Abbott’s avowal that he believed in ‘evolutionary change’ and did not want to be stampeded into a ‘radical change based on the fashion of the moment’, she made the following sharp riposte: ‘Note to Mr Abbott: Equality is not a fashion item.’

Julia Gillard, the first female prime minister of Australia (2010-13), walked the tightrope of popular opinion with even more hutzpah. Throughout her time as prime minister, Gillard remained an opponent of same-sex marriage. Cynics insisted she adopted this position only to keep Labor-voting proles, pensioners, Catholics and Evangelicals on side. The critics were not cynical enough. In her autobiography, *My Story* (2014), Gillard disclosed she had opposed amending the Marriage Act during her tenure in the top job, not because of any deference to conservative sensibilities in Australia, but because she was ‘too radical’ to support gay marriage. As a young student in the 1970s, or so her self-exculpatory explanation goes, ‘Red Julia’ decided that the institution of marriage itself was a patriarchal (that is, bourgeois) institution ‘redolent of the yesteryear stereotypes of women’, and so gay marriage – marriage of any kind – could never be a part of an emancipatory project. Once out of office, her fortunes no longer dependent on traditionalist working class voters, she dropped the whole ‘I’m-too-radical-for-gay-marriage’ routine and joined the rising chorus of same-sex advocates.

Something interesting has occurred here and it’s not Labor politicians changing their opinions over the years. In any case, a surprising number of their Coalition counterparts also finished up joining the same-sex marriage bandwagon. The more significant point is how that bandwagon managed to develop an unstoppable momentum in such a brief period of time and the fate of those who attempted to stand in its way.

The answer might have to do with the unacknowledged Utopianism that propels the modern-day Left, not only in Australia but throughout the West. Progressives, as Roger Scruton argues in *The Uses of Pessimism: And the Danger of False Hope*, are driven by ‘emergency-fuelled goals’ that are almost religious in the ambition to deliver us from evil with redemptive reforms. Thus, no sooner had the same-sex marriage vote been won than leading Labor lights were calling for the abandonment of Australia Day on January 26 in favour of a new national day of celebration, one more politically correct than commemorating the advent of British settlement. The ‘to do’ list stretches out to the crack of doom. If only the government would pass laws making Muslim prayer rooms in every school, university and public institution compulsory, if only transgender toilets became mandatory and so on ad infinitum. It is a kind of millennialist fantasy that we

can legislate our way to Shangri-La.

The underlying tenet of all this is the notion of equality. Not, we should note, the economic egalitarianism of Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat. Our trendy inner-city lefties don't even like the old-fashioned proletariat! These sophisticates spurn the customary strictures of Christianity – including, obviously, a traditional position on marriage – no less. Their tastes tend towards bohemian transgression except, of course, when they bump up against the hard edges of Sharia law. (And, if you were wondering, pro-gay marriage activists were awkwardly silent on the fact that one colour of the rainbow of discontents voted 'No': the majority of Muslim Australians.)

Progressivism or, as Scruton calls it, 'enforced optimism', is now the ascendant ideology in this country, even amongst middle Australia, and so the moment the 'Yes' promoters reconfigured their gay marriage campaign as 'marriage equality' their crusade was half-won. When activists, Labor politicians and the mainstream media began warning that a 'No' result would mean young homosexuals committing suicide, the die really was cast. Simply put, to vote 'Yes' was to be open-minded and tolerant.

Nevertheless, being open-minded and tolerant has its limits. You cannot, evidently, be open-minded and tolerant towards people who are – well – not open-minded and tolerant. For much of the campaign, it was generally assumed, at least in polite society, that a 'Yes' vote was a *fait accompli*. But then, if only for the briefest of moments towards the end, some commentators worried that the polls might have it wrong, as had been the case with Brexit. In the same way that a percentage of Brexiteers kept their voting intention to themselves for fear of being labelled racist, perhaps a segment of the Australian population was playing its cards close to the chest – in this case, unlike the British referendum, out of an aversion to the

accusation of homophobia. As it happened, the 'Yes' vote held up.

That said, the 'No' contingent had every reason to believe that their vote in favour of traditional marriage would be attacked as sacrilege, a modern-day heresy no less. Peter Goers, a self-identified homosexual who broadcasts for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), came out all guns blazing when support for 'Yes' experienced its momentary dip. Those on the wrong side of the same-sex debate, asserted Goers, were ipso facto homophobic: 'Two people of the same sex who love each other and want to get married must be hated.' Goers cited only one supporter of the 'No' vote to prove his case that every traditionalist or orthodox Christian is guilty of profanation: 'Family Voice (formerly the Festival of Light) has championed the view of former American gay porn actor and now celibate Christian, Joseph Sciambra. In his book, *Swallowed by Satan*, he writes, 'Satan is born out of the anuses of homosexual men.' Really? Well, now we know.

What happened to Penny Wong's contention, enunciated only ten short years before? On the issue of marriage, I think the reality is that there is a cultural-religious-historical view which we must respect. The problem is not, as I outlined above, Senator Wong changing her mind immediately after winning the 2007 election. Who cares that, for reasons of expediency or otherwise, she moved on from her previous opinion? What is disturbing is that the view she once expressed in public has become verboten. The cultural, the religious and the historical points of view were not so much defeated in a civil debate as exorcised from civilised discourse. The Great Bohemian Cultural Revolution gathers apace.

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

MUSINGS FROM
THE
FOAM-FLECKED
RIGHT



Hyde Today, London Tomorrow

Lindsey Dearnley

The town of Hyde, an industrial suburb of Manchester, home to the serial killer GP Dr Harold Shipman and the Moors murderers, would offer a very different picture if Lowry would paint it now. Long gone are the tall mill chimneys and scurrying match-stick men, replaced instead by tracksuits and betting shops, and a feral youth problem serious enough to recently make the papers.

For some time now packs of hooded teens in the town centre have been engaging in flash mob robberies of shops. Market traders and shop owners have been intimidated, attacked and beaten as the youths run free, smashing windows, robbing, and pushing flaming wheelie bins into doorways, with scores of them making away with armfuls of goods. The police seem powerless to deal with them, though I have twice before seen them congregate in significant numbers right where the attacks are taking place.

Locals fear that the thefts and anti-social behaviour are driving away shoppers from an already boarded up and decaying town centre. It troubled me because I used to be one of those shopkeepers myself, and the spot where a newspaper photographer stood to photograph youths on the rampage was the very same doorway I used to peer out of. But does the blame lie solely with the mysterious appearance of gangs of feral youths? It is not the first time this patch of litter-blown concrete has been witness to the kind of events that town tourist boards would prefer not to mention. However, social decline deserves scrutiny, and I scrutinised it for three years.

I can't say when I opened my tattoo shop, in 2012 between the jobcentre and the pub, that it did much to improve the image of the street. But I can hardly be

blamed for initiating the decline of Hyde, for I too was forced to delay opening thanks to an English Defence League march, which brought hundreds of marchers with flags and placards to the town protesting over the violent clashes that took place between the immigrant Bangladeshi community and Hyde's, by and large white, working-class inhabitants.

The evening before the riot, I walked down the main street to find a wide deserted space blowing with litter. The only people around were the shopkeepers and business owners themselves, who, immigrants or natives, were compelled to secure their shops, and could be seen pulling their metal shutters down or hammering plywood over the windows as if they were expecting a hurricane to pass through, which it might as well have been, for all glass smashes equally in the eyes of a violent mob.

Though the march wouldn't begin until the morning, the police were already a heavy presence. Some were gathered in the car park just opposite my shop doorway, where the following day Tommy Robinson would address the crowds of EDL members, most of them bussed in from other 'divisions'. It is as though the little car park is cursed with drama, for it also happens to back on to Dr Harold Shipman's old surgery, and though its murderous tenant is long gone, the building still stands. He would cross the car park every morning in defiance of the surgery opposite, where he used to work and which he left after suspicions were raised about his death rates.

I passed through the town the next day and from my vantage point on the top floor of the double-decker, I didn't dare get off. I watched the march. I could see fluorescent lines of police officers on horseback standing shoulder to shoulder in two enormous rings – one



around the marchers on one side of the street, and the other around the mosque and its surrounding terraces. They had prepared for violence to the extent that even the horses wore visors, while armoured vehicles could be seen tucked down alleyways. Yet when I was once forced to phone the police about an attack on my shop, which the youths now terrorise, they were not able to send a single officer.

I don't agree with marches. Not the pink pussy-hat ones, nor the flag-waving ones, for whatever one's feelings are about immigration, it is already a reality, and such public displays of discontent can only serve to sour relations long after the marchers have put away their flags and headed home on coaches.

It's a wonder they could amass such a police presence, and although nothing of any real occasion happened during the march, the same police force was out in almost full numbers again less than ten months later, this time in order to hold a vigil in tribute to the two murdered police officers, Fiona Bone and Nicola Hughes, killed by grenades and bullets when answering a routine call for burglary on the nearby Hattersley estate.

Many of those who attended the EDL march, and likely the feral youths also, are themselves descended from a previous wave of immigration, though few remember it. For the Hattersley estate was built in the sixties to house 'the Manchester overspill', the slum-dwellers cleared from the city centre and rehoused in new builds in the surrounding town suburbs.

They were most unwelcome when they arrived. The Manchester lot represented all that was rough and untrustworthy, and signs went up in the windows: 'Slums go home!' My own father arrived this way, his decaying childhood street was bulldozed, his clothes burned in a bucket. My uncle even recalls a shopkeeper refusing to serve him when he heard the slum in his voice.

It's hard to think now that people like my father were once considered outsiders, though the influx of Manchester people is only remembered by older people, and my mother maintains that it did indeed change the character of the area, filling the streets with marauding gangs of teddy boys who took pot shots at the local girls with air rifles, though she eventually married one. It appears that some of the more notorious Hattersley inhabitants are working hard to keep its sixty-year reputation intact, and if the Hattersley estate rings a bell in the back of one's mind, then it is because the slum influx brought with it the Moors murderers, though the house where they butchered some of their victims was demolished to stop the coach loads of ghoulish onlookers.

I watched an old cine video online, filmed in the marketplace in the seventies, long after the Hattersley

estate was built, and it was as colourful and bustling as Lowry's depiction of such markets. Yet to go now is to see only a handful of traders. Did the feral youths scare away all the market traders? Actually no. Like much of our social decline, it was a joint effort between undesirables and town planners.

The real decline of the market can be pinpointed to a particular event: this time not one foisted upon it by serial killers, police murderers or flag-waving marchers, but by the council, who in 2011 decided the 150-year-old market needed a £1.2 million 'revamp'.

Sat in their offices with 'data sheets' and 'artists impressions', the plan was to 'modernise' the market square by building permanent stall holdings in place of makeshift ones, and creating a 'civic area' where community events could be held.

After nine months of construction work, the revamp was revealed as nothing more than the demolition of most of the stalls, which now exist in a single narrow margin around the new 'civic area' – literally just an empty space. Even worse, during its nine-month construction most traders found stalls elsewhere, and so even the few remaining stalls struggle to fill.

Quite how the council imagined the almost total demolition of the market itself would attract more shoppers is beyond the comprehension of ordinary people, for the only people who use the civic space on any regular basis are the feral youths themselves, who congregate upon it each evening to drink and wheel round on skateboards. My shop with the car park sat at one end of the street, the market square sat at the other. You can measure a lot about life by sitting in one spot.

Attempting to engineer cohesiveness may actually have contributed towards its opposite – for the marketplace was where human beings mingled, and as both Asian and English communities are well known to be addicted to bargain hunting, the loss of the market represented a loss of the chance for genuine integration. While the new civic space is sometimes used for the occasional brass band and vintage car show, shoppers primarily visit a market town to shop. That this fact should escape the council planners is further evidence of the mismatch between ordinary people and those who imagine they can engineer peoples' behaviour from the top down.

One might be forgiven for thinking it was only Hyde's market square that was destroyed. In the last couple of years, the loss of the market led to the loss of many surrounding pubs and shops, whose boarded-up facades only serve to dispel new businesses setting up. Perhaps the market town is a thing of the past, and in the wake of a dead culture, there is nothing left but for the youths to move in and destroy its remains.

Lindsey Dearnley is a journalist.

Charged with Illegal Staring

Alex Claridge

There was a time (it seems long ago now) when reports from magistrates' courts were the cornerstone of decent local newspapers. No longer, it seems. The conversion of local papers to joyless online offerings chasing 'breaking news' or harvesting stories from social media means few today consider it a good use of time to send reporters to court. This is a terrible loss to the papers and to the people who buy them. But not only that. I cut my teeth as a rookie reporter nearly two decades ago and found the courts to be a source of entertainment it is otherwise impossible to manufacture.

Take for example the bloke who decided to answer his mobile phone as he sat in the dock listening to the details of his crime: 'Hi. No, no, I'm just in court at the moment.' As the magistrate tore into him, he raised his hand to stall her and continued, 'Well, there's some salmon in the fridge.' Or what about the silver-haired businessman who roared down the M20 for 10 miles without stopping as the police frantically blue-lighted him. The 70-year-old later explained to the court that he was late for his Channel Tunnel service, adding that he assumed the police knew this and were providing an escort to Folkestone to ensure he made it. Then there was the defendant who said he couldn't possibly be guilty of stealing two turkeys from a supermarket because the store was offering a buy-one-get-one-free deal on the day of the theft.

Sitting in court I've seen every sort of crank, reprobate and social misfit occupy the dock. I've witnessed inebriates fall asleep during proceedings, looked on as a man facing fraud charges feigned a heart attack and seen a man strike his co-defendant with a crutch.

The reluctance of regional publishers to send their reporters to hearings frustrates that principle which underpins court reporting: 'Not only must Justice be done; it must also be seen to be done.' This explains why for many a defendant, the punishment handed down by the court seems insignificant in the light of the report of their behaviour appearing in the local paper.

This was no better demonstrated than by the drunk who got himself thrown out of the pub directly next to Margate police station. Sensibly, he decided to kick off outside, prompting a couple of officers to walk the 30 yards from their front desk and march him back the other way under arrest for being drunk and disorderly. At court, he admitted the offence but had obviously

spied me scribbling away on the press bench. After the prosecutor's opening remarks, the defendant was asked whether he had anything he wanted to say. 'Well, yes, I have actually,' he said. 'I would just like to exercise my right for this not to go in the newspaper.' The clerk wearily informed him that he had no such right. 'That is bang out of order,' he raged from the dock. 'I am a law-abiding member of the community and last time this happened they put it in the paper and made me look stupid.'

At another court, a 20-year-old cleaner pleaded guilty to stealing jewellery worth £1,500 from a client. After seeing a report about his crime in the paper, the thief wisely took to Facebook to voice his displeasure at such a public slight upon his character. 'They didn't ask my permission to do this,' he complained. 'My human rights have been breached. End of!' His mother took to the site to point out her son's error, providing the newspaper with a glorious opportunity to report the exchange between the two. The crook's words even spawned a minor craze in the town as drinkers, finishing their pints, would slam their glasses on the table and cry, 'End of!'

It isn't just defendants who played their parts in this theatre of the absurd. Solicitors, too, can be relied upon to have those on the press bench tittering in delight. Spotting that a solicitor seemed to be enjoying himself rather too much, a magistrate enquired, 'Are you smiling, Mr Bond?' 'Well, smirking, actually,' came the reply. 'Yes, I really shouldn't laugh at my clients.'

Another time, as the details of a harassment case were outlined, the solicitor sitting nearest me rolled his eyes and muttered, 'What's he been charged with – illegal staring?' Then there was the defence lawyer who sidled up to me rather sheepishly after delivering a persuasive monologue. 'Could you do me a favour and not quote those cannabis use statistics I gave,' he whispered. 'They may not, ahem, be entirely accurate.' In the case of a one-legged junkie shoplifter who rolled out of a supermarket at low speed with vodka and cheese in his wheelchair, his solicitor told the court that his client had since been fitted with a prosthetic limb and stopped taking drugs, adding plainly, 'He is a changed man.'

And there are times when solicitors are asked by their clients to work miracles as in the case of one advocate making a bail application for a man remanded in custody. 'Your worships,' he said gingerly, 'I am

invited today to apply for bail, although you will see that my client's list of antecedents is not the best, what with the armed robbery, the series of rapes and the manslaughter, but...'

Creative headline writers in papers have profited from the comedy and madness of the magistrates' courts. A story about a man caught urinating off the top of a multi-storey car park was headed 'Piddler on the roof'. When a toe-rag strolled into a shoe shop to try on some Timberlands, he disappeared without paying, leaving behind a pair of knackered trainers: 'Thief's boots were made for walking'. My editor once emerged from his lair sniggering that he'd managed to capture the essence of a defendant's insignificant seaside hometown in a headline: 'Peeing drug-taking drunk

was out celebrating birth of third child'. I confess that I have never had so much fun in journalism as I have had covering the work of magistrates.

The lack of reporting on courts is exacerbated by the police handing out fixed penalty notices for minor offences on account of spending cuts. Public accessibility to the work of the courts is thus doubly limited: on the one hand, the authorities are over-reliant on penalty notices, and on the other, local newspapers are reluctant to cover the cases that are brought. This is a terrible loss for the newspapers, for the communities they serve and for justice itself. It also means thousands of great stories will never see the sunlight.

Alex Claridge is a local newspaper reporter

A Belief in Witches?

James Ackhurst

Whenever I meet up with friends from the Prep, sooner or later the conversation always comes round to Leonard. It happened the other night, in fact – I'd just met my oldest friend Gareth's new Eritrean girlfriend for the first time. We'd started talking about Leonard when I got the sense that we had something to explain.

'Our headmaster from prep school was accused of being a paedophile,' I say.

Let me begin with a typical day at Chillingworth Prep. We'd be woken by a bell at 7:30 and flow down the stairs to a row of washbasins. At 8, there was breakfast, with Leonard solemnly incanting the order at which the various age-sets could approach the big plastic bins of cereal lined up on the counter. After breakfast, there was assembly, at which Leonard would harangue or praise us, read notices, and close with a prayer.

And then to lessons, in which Leonard played a bit-part as a reasonably effective maths teacher; to lunch, before and after which Leonard would say grace; and to games, during which Leonard played the starring role as the Head of Rugby. In the evening, we were placed in a long hall to do our prep – overseen by Leonard, who would simultaneously be teaching an extra mathematics class to a portion of us.

After that, there were showers (Leonard dragooning us in and out over the top of his copy of *The Telegraph*); hot milk and toast; and then back up to the dorms for lights-out, a role which was also carried out by Leonard.

'Right, lights off now, goodnight!' he would say, every night, just before switching the lights off. He would always say it with exactly the same intonation, just as he would say 'right, try that one!' after setting us a maths problem; or 'scrum there!' on the rugby pitch; or 'water off and out!' when our time was up in the showers.

We'd often try to engage him in conversation just as he was about to turn the lights off. The go-to topic for a slight delay to our bedtimes was rugby; those who were desperate might risk asking him about religion, or mathematics.

He was an easy person to like, or a difficult one, depending on your taste. But he was, above all, an eccentric, an eccentric of the grand old style. He always wore the same thing – a cream-coloured suit with a tie underneath a fluorescent green and purple ski-suit, above his thick green socks and brown sandals.

His attribute was the panatela cigar. He was constantly smoking one of these – never in class, but certainly on the side lines of a rucker match, or while driving us to one in the minibus. He'd been smoking them for so long that his clothes smelled of them, his teeth had been yellowed by them, and he had a cloud of tobacco-scent hanging around him that was, to a small child who passed beyond its invisible boundaries, memorable and horrifying. It was what gave him the only name we ever used of him, except to his face: 'Stink-Bomb.'

A few years after I'd left the Prep, I was in my boarding house at Chillingworth Senior reading one

of the papers they used to get in for us. I think it was *The Times*, and when I turned one of the pages I was presented with a largish photograph of a familiar figure: old Stink-Bomb himself. The article beside it said that he had been accused of molesting boys and was being investigated by the social services.

I immediately picked up the paper and ran with it into the study of my new housemaster (an altogether less eccentric and very progressive sort). 'Have you seen this?' I asked him excitedly.

'Yes', he replied. He didn't seem excited.

'Don't you think it's the best thing ever?' I was fourteen.

'No, I should think it's rather sad,' said Mr Penrose, matter-of-factly.

And I realized that he was right, and felt a bit silly. And from that point onwards, I began to look at Leonard in a different way. An article in a national newspaper about him being suspected of paedophilia somehow led me to taking his side; and slowly, to a kind of reconciliation that lasted until I left Chillingworth Senior for university five years later.

Stink-Bomb was never formally charged with abuse, but he was forced to go into retirement earlier, and in less dignified a manner, than he had expected. In addition, he was forced to sell the school and its grounds to a newly-established board of governors. Chillingworth Prep's independence, which Stink-Bomb had always prized and defended, was at an end.

So, was Stink-Bomb a paedophile? Leonard's own words on the subject don't help much. He once told me that he'd cheerfully admitted to the social services that he was a paedophile, 'though only in the sense of agape, not of eros' (I fear that the distinction was lost on them). That 'confession' apart, he had of course denied all the allegations that he'd molested boys.

This brings us to the details of the case itself. As far as I can recall, the social services had lodged a number of serious complaints about Stink-Bomb's conduct. They hadn't been comfortable with the way he supervised us in the showers, the way he said goodnight to us at the end of the day, or the way he sometimes received us in his study late at night (more on this soon). To go with their complaints, they had several allegations from boys at the school that he had crushes on boys, that he'd been gawping at us in the showers, that he took a special pleasure from watching us play rugby in skimpy shorts.

Do I think Stink-Bomb was a paedophile? I'm not sure I can answer that question. What I can say for certain was that he never molested me, and that I never heard a serious, credible report from any of my friends that he'd molested any of them. So why all the smoke, if there may not have been any fire?

Whatever our parents may have thought about us (or wanted to think about us) at the time, and whatever we ourselves might prefer to think now when we look back, one thing that I can say for sure about our lives at Chillingworth Prep was that they were highly sexualized. That's not quite right: none of us, of course, was actually having any sex at that age; you left the school when you were fourteen. But in some occasionally very tangible ways, our lives were suffused with sex.

We saw, and talked about, each other's penises to an extent that most of us, I'm sure, would prefer now to forget. Doubtless there was some titillation in it for a few of the boys, though I wasn't aware of it at the time; for most of us, I think, there wasn't. And that was pretty much it. We were thrusting energetically upwards from the suffocating ignorance of childhood towards the longed-for oxygen of sexual experience. And there was the quasi-privacy of your dorm bed, your knees holding up a section of your duvet like a tent. We weren't men, or even teenagers; and the girls at school with us didn't seem in much of a rush to become women.

Of the women in the school, Matron didn't count, obviously, nor did our female teachers – adult women in their forties or fifties, they might as well have been a different species. But perched tantalizingly between the alien teachers and our undeveloped, uncooperative schoolmates, were the half-dozen or so gap-year girls that came every year from Australia and New Zealand. They mainly helped Matron and Stink-Bomb – putting us to bed, serving us hot milk before bedtime, even supervising us in the showers. There was the inch-by-inch war or attrition you could play on the goose-bumped surface of one of these student's legs, your fingers nervously pushing back the hem of her skirt as she smiled sheepishly before brushing your hand away and laughing. Yet if there's one thing I find weird about the social services' report when I look back at it, it's that they had so much to say about a man in his sixties putting a bunch of fourteen-year-old boys to bed, and nothing at all to say about an eighteen-year-old girl doing so.

And once, when I was very feverish and sleeping in a separate room in the sick bay, one of them came in, thinking I was asleep. She was a Kiwi, probably around eighteen, with wavy blond hair and a figure that was a good deal wavier than any of the girls in my year. I'm not really sure what was going on in her head. She was probably thinking that here was a cute, sick little boy. She'd come to check on me and had been caught up in the tenderness brought out in her by her nurturing motherly role. What was I thinking and feeling? A mixture of gratitude, wonder, and embarrassment.

As it was, she'd soon convinced herself I was all right, thought of something else she should have been doing, and left the room with careful quietness. That moment, imbued with two very different kinds of tenderness for both of us, was over. There'd been a division between us – of age, of role, of misunderstanding. But it wasn't the division that I heard a lot of people talk about when the allegations against Stink-Bomb were made public.

How is this relevant to the question of whether Skunk was a paedophile? Well, it's not really. But it may be relevant to the question of how he came to be accused of being a paedophile. How so? I'm afraid the only way I can explain is by telling another story.

It's a story that my friend Gareth always tells when the subject comes up. He was in the classroom where they interviewed some of us, he always says, the night the social services came to inspect the school. Leonard wasn't allowed to be around, so it was just two adult representatives of the social services and a handful of boys.

The inspectors were sitting at two school desks, Gareth always says, asking questions in a serious, deadpan way. They would ask a question like 'What do you think of your headmaster?'

Gareth says he didn't really know what to say; the whole thing was obviously pretty funny, but something in the serious tone of these grown-ups from the outside world made him pause. So the younger boys rushed in to fill the gap. 'He's gay!' they would say, giggling. The men from the social services would write it down.

'Is he now?' they would say.

'Yeah – he pervs at us in the showers!' Such statements were backed up by the eager nods – the enthusiastic squeals, even – of the boys around them.

This is where the entire verbal and cognitive atmosphere of the last couple of years of the Prep matter. We thought about sex (or speculated about it) night and day. We hardly said anything to each other that wasn't phrased in sexual terms. We even had sexual desires and aspirations of our own.

This is something that the two men from the social services may have failed to understand – that when a group of boys tell you that their headmaster is gay, watches them in the showers, and so on, it doesn't necessarily have any bearing on reality. It may, of course – but should probably not be taken as decisive evidence on its own. Which leads us back to the complaints that the social services actually made.

One thing the social services found particularly suspicious – even damning – was the report of several boys that Stink-Bomb would entertain boys in his study after lights out. They would come to his study in their pyjamas, sit on his sofa in front of the fire; sometimes he would even make them go on runs in their boxer-

shorts while he watched them.

I can remember what actually happened on such occasions, because I took part in them more than once. Stink-Bomb never initiated them; we did. Why? Because, you see, we were all little boys, and one of the great joys of little boys is to stay up later than they've been told is good for them.

And one of the tricks that we often had recourse to went like this. First we would have to stay awake just the right amount of time – enough for the ruse to be plausible, enough for Matron to have gone to bed, but not enough for Stink-Bomb to have done likewise. Then a couple of us would make our way down the carpeted corridor, through the door that marked the irrevocable passage to the realm of Stink-Bomb.

'Sorry, sir,' we would say, rubbing our eyes, 'we couldn't sleep.' What would he say? We knew exactly what he would say, of course, since we'd tried the exact same thing a few months before. The first time we went to see him, he'd talk to us for a couple of minutes, then tell us to go back to bed and try again. That was all right; you could go back to Dorm A, flushed with the relief of an adventure survived, and spend at least the next ten minutes telling everyone how you had fared in the depths of Stink-Bomb's lair.

But you knew that the real prize was just around the corner. The second time you went back – maybe with two or three others who'd suddenly discovered that they, too, were having trouble getting to sleep – Stink-Bomb would be ready. 'Right!' he'd say, 'Time to get a little fresh air!' And we'd run to the tree and back in our pyjamas.

That, then, is the story behind the complaint by the Social Services that Stink-Bomb had boys run around in front of him in their bedclothes. It was true, of course; and yet I can't help but feel that there was an element of the truth that it left out.

Once, though, I remember being in a Gasthof somewhere in Bavaria with Thomas Ritter. We'd been drinking these enormous foamy mugs of beer, and the conversation had gotten back to Stink-Bomb, and I'd just asked Thomas the question. He said the usual things, and then he said, 'There is one thing.'

Did I remember those times that Stink-Bomb would come into the dorm late at night, when everyone was asleep, and sit on the side of your bed, and stroke your hair for a few seconds, and then leave? I said, 'No.' I didn't at the time. Do I now? And if I do, did I remember later? Or do I just think I now remember that happening to me because of what Thomas told me in a Bavarian drinking-den?

Once again, it's impossible to say. But once or twice, more recently, I've allowed myself to play with what Thomas told me. What if it's true? What if Stink-Bomb

did have a habit of stopping in to our dorms, late at night, and caressing our brows? What is it about that act, or about us, that makes it more sexualized, or creepier, than when the gap-year girl did exactly the same thing to me when I was ill?

I often find myself back in Chillingworth because my parents still live there. My friends and I often talk about going to visit him in the old folks' home. But, of course, nobody ever does.

James Ackhurst is a journalist.

Social Justice for South Paws

Penelope Fawcett Hulme

As a left-hander happily born into an enlightened age, I never faced any pressure to use my other hand. I only realised today that a change has taken place in thinking about this issue. I was listening to an episode of the popular BBC Radio 4 school drama, *King Street Junior*, now being replayed on 4Extra.

In this episode, entitled 'Left Out,' by writer Martin Davies, kindly teacher Mr Sims 'faces a big challenge'. He finds a Muslim boy struggling to use his right hand to write. Sims quickly realises that he is left-handed but his devoutly religious father is forcing him to use his right hand, as under Islam the left hand is considered 'dirty'.

When I was young, left-handedness was discussed in the context of the lurid past. I heard tales of children in the generation before me who had been beaten into using their right hand. Some had endured having their left hand strapped to their body. Adults were quite emphatic about the folly and dire consequences of forcing wrong-handedness on anyone. It was thought to lead to stammering, bed wetting, anxiety, social withdrawal, poor concentration and sometimes a failure to become literate. People mentioned George VI, whose stammer was attributed to the cruel treatment he had received for being a southpaw.

By the time I went to school, parents of every class had been made aware that left-handedness was acceptable. I came across the archaic issue again when I went to teach English in a Polish university in the 1970s. Whenever I turned my back on students in one particular group to write on the blackboard (they still had those), I would hear tittering. It slightly unnerved me and I wondered if perhaps my bottom looked big when I was chalking on the board.

A Polish colleague told me that some of them were laughing because in Poland left-handedness was associated with stupidity. As I was a teacher they found it funny that I would have what they saw as a characteristic of feeble mindedness. Unlike Mr Sims,

he was furious. He told me that in Polish schools some rural parents, peasants as they were once called, had backward ideas about left-handedness but teachers had been instructed to tell them that there was nothing wrong with writing with the left hand. He said that the parents had fully accepted that.

He was dismayed that those particular students were behaving like urban peasants. In fact, it was just a form of low level bullying. I was the same age as they were, and they knew I was endlessly advantaged by living in the West. At the time they could not even travel if they wanted to. He soon put a stop to it and I didn't have any more trouble.

To my surprise, Mr Sims at King Street Junior met his 'big challenge' by telling his pupil that he 'wouldn't bother him' about it. It was a matter of 'carry on as you are', but 'try to be ambidextrous if you can'. There was no question of taking the matter up with his parents. Mr Sims had no intention of telling the boy's devout Muslim father that he was wrong. He could strap down his son's hand and fill his head with fear and self-loathing if he chose to do so.

Instead of tackling the father, Sims asked in the staff room if anyone had any ideas about the boy. One teacher suggested teaching him a brass instrument as some are played mainly with the left hand. It was thought that this might somehow inculcate confidence in him without annoying his father. Unlikely, as many devout Muslims forbid any kind of music, but that was not mentioned.

Not impressed by that, Mr Sims tried to think of famous people who had been on the sinistral side to surreptitiously bolster the boy's confidence. He tried Leonardo, Picasso, Paul McCartney, Charlie Chaplin and Marilyn Monroe. Naturally, the boy had not heard of any of them – he was getting an English education, after all. It was decided to come up with some famous Muslim lefties instead. After all, it was accepted that the boy's main focus had to be on Islam.

Sadly, no such gauche Muslims were found, but the

teachers came up with another solution: a collective movement. They would form a support group for the 'left-handed minority'. Once the problem had been labelled as a specific issue of identity, it could be tackled without approaching the Islamic family – quite forward thinking in terms of identity politics for a play first broadcast in 1995.

We did not hear whether the boy was allowed to attend the support group, or if he gradually realised that there was no shame in being 'cack-handed', but while all that was going on we have to assume he spent quite a long time struggling to write with his non-dominant hand to please his father. The consequences for him of being forced to do this were not discussed. It seemed from this play that putting the needs of the child first had been superseded and for the last twenty years we have become increasingly post-child centred. We are

now 'community-minded', with the needs of the group and its identity, particularly if this is ethnically based, coming before any consideration that a child might be damaged.

I am glad my childhood coincided with an age of post-war enlightenment – actually, before child-centred education arrived. Post that, the new paradigm says that in childhood you will get whatever your particular community says you require. It could be quinoa, gluten-free bread and no sugar, or having seven bells beaten out of you because your stepfather says you are possessed by demons, or getting your left arm strapped to your back. Child abuse is now culturally relative, and if a situation gets too difficult, you can always take up the bassoon.

Penelope Fawcett Hulme is a social commentator.

The Closing of the Universities

Margaret Brown

Over the centuries the definition of 'university' has generated intense controversy. Let us consider the distant ancestor – an olive grove where Socrates provoked lively-minded young men to think logically. Presumably groups of wise men gathered elsewhere. Babylonian astronomy was hardly a one-man effort. Cleopatra collected philosophers to while away her leisure hours, and improve her ruling skills. However, most education was home-based, at private schools or on the job, such as army training, attendance at sickbeds, observation in the law courts and so forth.

The Dark Ages drew to a close and Church-centred groups of learned men emerged from the monasteries. Paris was one of their gathering-places. A court and a cathedral combined to attract. The teacher-student relationship was the core. Early in the 12th century, Peter Abelard's dictum 'Doubt leads to enquiry and enquiry leads to truth' did not appeal to dogmatists. He fell from grace. Right from the start, proto-universities were not peaceful. But they quickly became essential to manning the Church and secular bureaucracies, the two overlapping. Troubles in Paris had Henry III of England offering refuge to French dons and students. A section of Oxford clerics seceded and set up another university at Cambridge. Nearly everywhere town and gown had a difficult relationship, with frequent riots and occasional murders.

In the 15th century, the number of European universities soared. A university had great symbolic

value for a state. The rise in population plus the development of printing stimulated a revolution. Demand for intellectual manpower increased. Reason was still subservient to faith. There were large fields which could not be touched. Latin was the language of instruction and debate, so staff and students could move round without difficulty. Most student bodies were multinational. Padua and Bologna headed the Ivy League.

As they became more conscious of their power, universities sometimes made themselves felt in the outside world. In France, the University of Paris sometimes gave advice, whether solicited or not, on the succession, the fundamental law and royal ministers. They were firmly and intolerantly orthodox, though with a strong nationalist tinge in religious matters. In the German part of the Holy Roman Empire, the situation was somewhat different. The emphasis on theology was stronger and so was resentment of the Church's excesses and greed. Martin Luther was a professor at the University of Wittenberg, founded in 1502. At this new institution, the theories behind Luther's '95 Theses' were common currency. Indeed, when he was asked to go to Worms to defend his views to the Empire, two hundred axe-carrying students offered to accompany him. Fifteen years later, Henry VIII sought backing from all the European universities he could reach in his search for an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

The universities were moving from being reservoirs

for bureaucracies and providers of what social mobility there was, to more active participation in public concerns. One thing that changed in nearly all of them from Spain to Poland was the composition of the student population. An influx of nobles and gentry drove the proportion of poor youths down. The incomers were less motivated by a thirst for culture or spiritual development than by legal expertise to defend their property. Scientific curiosity and the search for truth in general were confined to the fringes of universities rather than providing the motive force within them. An inventor who did not have Latin might find an academic career impossible. As in previous centuries, government and academia remained entwined. Between 1500 and 1600, five Chancellors of Cambridge University were executed. But Christianity and the Weltanschauung it had created remained sacrosanct. Nowhere could a scholar or anyone else express doubts about the existence of God. The structure of the universe was officially taken from the Old Testament. Copernicus' challenging work was printed on the day of his death. Both Luther and Calvin stood firmly behind the old cosmogony. The intellectual and religious establishments, whatever their fratricidal conflicts, operated within the same theological framework. Universities reflected this outlook rather than subjecting it to dispassionate analysis.

Government influence was exerted differently in different countries. In Spain and its dependencies, the Inquisition kept the field of debate very narrow indeed. It insisted on purity of blood (no Jewish or Muslim ancestors), produced a list of forbidden books, forbade Spaniards to attend foreign universities and arrested anyone breaking the rules. The accused could end up burnt at the stake at an auto-da-fé. The result was foreseeable. In the words of the son of the Inquisitor-General in 1533, 'If anyone possesses a certain amount of learning, he is found to be full of heresies, errors and traces of Judaism. Thus, they have imposed silence on men of letters; those who pursued learning have come to feel, as you say, a great terror.' Some victims showed grim humour. Professor Ponce De Leon was imprisoned for six years. When, against all expectation, he was released, he went straight back to the lecture hall and resumed tuition: 'As I was saying yesterday ...' A crop of small universities sprang up. But no new courses were constructed to help students to deal with the modern world. No new discoveries were made. The result was gross over-production of useless graduates with closed minds and no prospects – rather like today. Spanish universities mirrored the national community all too faithfully.

Very different was the academic and cultural world

of the United Provinces. The University of Leyden was founded in 1575 to commemorate the successful defence of the city against the Spanish armies bent on reconquering the Netherlands for Philip II. There were no interrogations about faith and there was no equivalent of the Inquisition. Disputes about the finer points of Protestant theology did not end in mass burnings though the contested doctrines of Professor Arminius spilled into conflict outside the academic communities. Modern engineering made its appearance on syllabuses. Great progress was made in the field of optics. These advances in science were used by Prince Maurice of Orange, the Dutch commander-in-chief, to improve the country's defences. Galileo, persecuted by the Vatican, was invited to visit. Siege warfare was influenced by the effects of these and similar discoveries. No Dutch or Dutch-employed don or strategist feared that some zealot might investigate his opinions and have him arrested. Far from cutting links with other countries, the United Provinces encouraged an influx of foreign staff and students. It is worth considering Venice in this respect. Venice was most disinclined to take an intolerant line; business depended on her not doing so. At times she was virtually at war with the Papacy. She welcomed Galileo. The message was as clear to her as to the Dutch: hard knowledge uninfluenced by dogma pays. The Netherlands, incidentally, sprouted a rash of new educational institutions; but unlike their Spanish enemies, they did not describe them as 'universities', just schools – less pretentious but more accurate. The population, mortality and incomes figures tell their own story. Spain was the only country in Europe in which the population consistently fell. That of the United Provinces soared. The juxtaposition of the histories of these nations provides a graphic illustration of the practical military and economic effects of freedom of enquiry, as many contemporaries realised.

Oxford and Cambridge, by contrast, remained stuck in the past; indeed, they had decayed beyond recognition as educational institutions. The assumptions underpinning their lethargy went unchallenged. Technically, they were governed by the Church. The great historian Edward Gibbon described the fourteen months he spent at Oxford as 'the most idle and unprofitable' of his life. The dons were 'steeped in port and prejudice'. Mr Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* and the Pontifex men in *The Way of All Flesh* were true to life. Cambridge was in some ways worse than Oxford. Descendants of benefactors of colleges were admitted without qualifications. Creative clash of thought was out. There was no thought and therefore no dissent. As Gibbon said, dons remembered to collect their salaries but not to perform their (alleged) duties. The

Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions occurred on a different planet. Nuffield and Rutherford lay far in the future.

The scientific and engineering advances were made in or on the fringes of Scottish universities, in private groups or in the factories and workshops themselves. Most of the great inventions owed little to formal education. Watt, Arkwright, 'Iron-mad Wilkinson', Brindley and Wedgwood were typical examples of world-changing achievers outside the traditional hierarchy. Both science and the arts suffered from the remnants of fundamentalism. Was the Scottish Kirk's occasional active interference – in 1697 it insisted on the hanging of an Edinburgh student, Thomas Aitkenhead, for blasphemy – a more numbing influence than the apathy of the Church of England? Things could have been worse. True, the Test Acts were not repealed till 1870, but in Poland, Copernicus had not appeared on the syllabus till 1743. Darwin, however, had an uphill fight to secure a hearing.

In Eastern Europe, Austrian, Russian and Prussian governments were not interested in the spirit of enquiry and constructive debate. University administrations all upheld the status quo. But now, for the first time since the fall of Athens, serious semi-organised student protest against some of the prevailing assumptions made itself felt. Symbols of old-style authoritarianism were burnt in front of cheering crowds. In 1819, a member of a student nationalist group, Karl Sand, murdered a reactionary playwright, August von Kotzebue – a dramatic introduction to no-platforming. The Austrian Chancellor, Metternich, had little difficulty in persuading the rulers of the thirty-nine states of the German Confederation to back the repressive Carlsbad Decrees. He had obviously read Philip II's regulations. Universities were to be controlled by a central ministry. Teachers were to be carefully vetted. No student expelled from one university for liberal or nationalist reasons was to be admitted to another. Czarist Russia was to intensify its pressure, though in a different direction. The duty of universities, from Nicholas I onwards, was to transmit the mystique of Holy Russia. Study abroad was forbidden. Informers swarmed in staff and student bodies. The freedom of thought indispensable to scientific or any other

progress was hampered. 'The Student Prince' was the public face of a restrictive system. It says much, however, for German scholarship, that there was at least some progress, though the states farther east were less fortunate or perhaps capable of adaptation. Needless to say, the illiberalism of the authorities provoked corresponding intolerance in those students who were politically active. They were either plus royaliste que le roi or left-wing revolutionaries, depending on the country or the environment. French students rioted against a professor who had cast doubt on Joan of Arc's 'voices'. In Germany, aristocratic students acquired duelling scars and thought that the government was not nationalist enough. But in Russia they tried to activate the peasants and learnt how to make bombs.

So in their different ways they all reflected the status quo. Class distinctions were nearly as rigid as in the outside world. In Britain, academe moved on from *Jude the Obscure* to *Et in Arcadia ego*. But the basic framework was not called into question. Then the admission of women was a widening hole in the dyke. Christianity was no

longer taken for granted. The 'King and Country' debate in the Oxford Union in 1933, a month after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, would have been unthinkable anywhere else. No equivalent would even have been permitted. It would also have been unthinkable in Britain forty years earlier. Slowly but surely, the establishment's grip on the levers of educational power was slackening.

The year 1945 changed the university world. Grants meant opening up degree courses to the lower socio-economic groups and to larger numbers of girls. Universities, students and subjects multiplied as fast as the brooms in 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice'. In 1963, the Robbins Report promised more and in his election campaign of 1997, Tony Blair envisaged a situation in which fifty per cent of school leavers would enter university. The stark warning 'More will mean worse' from Kingsley Amis was ignored. In some ways it was a return to the past. Some of the new subjects had as much validity as medieval calculations about how many angels could stand on the point of a pin. Cynics blasphemously compared them to alchemy and necromancy. 'Mickey Mouse degrees', commented Ann Widdicombe. Several of these subjects lent



themselves easily to mass incantation and simple fundamentalism. Catechisms and madrassas come to mind. This process was to gather momentum. More of the assumptions on which society was based were questioned. In 1968, the year of Powell and Vietnam, it all came to a head. Student power – or rather, student pretensions – had arrived. There was a chain reaction of explosions. Awareness of grievances expanded. Women’s Lib, Gay Lib and many other pressure groups appeared on campus. The compass of tolerance seemed to widen.

But did it? Did universities not become even more worthy of the name with a huge inrush of facts and opinions, an elixir stimulating giant leaps in discovery, interpretation and understanding? Unhappily, there were sticking-points. In the 1970s, the drive for racial equality and social mobility overrode the drive for rational enquiry. The refusal of various student bodies to allow Enoch Powell and those who supported his views on immigration to darken their doors on penalty of riot was a curtain-raiser. Cyril Burt, an early proponent of the theory that intelligence is determined, was safely dead, but those who had followed his lines of thought were alive and writing. Four names stand out in the controversy surrounding intelligence and its determinants – specifically, race, sex and class. It is difficult to imagine a more explosive compound.

In 1969, Arthur Jensen contributed a groundbreaking paper to the *Harvard Educational Review*, in which he reported research showing a difference between blacks and whites in some aspects of intelligence and speculated on how best to help the blacks. To his bewilderment, a storm of protest broke. For his personal safety, he was even reduced to living in hotel rooms. In 1971, Hans Eysenck came to similar conclusions in *Race, Intelligence and Education*, and for his efforts was beaten up at the London School of Economics. Leeds University was planning to confer an honorary degree on William Shockley, the American Nobel Prize winner largely responsible for the invention of the transistor radio, when it discovered how unusual and frankly expressed were his views on racial differences and eugenics. It hastily cancelled the invitation. For many years, Richard Lynn has managed to upset both blacks and women. His 2006 book *Race Differences in Intelligence* would have damned him even if he had not raised the possibility that women might be less intelligent than men. A new taboo was rapidly emerging, from which even the most respected scientists in purely fact-based fields, even presidents of Ivy League universities, would not be immune. It is all a throwback to 16th century Spain where the Archbishop of Toledo, Carranza, was arrested by the Inquisition because of a few comforting words to

the dying Emperor Charles V. The words were held to approve the Lutheran doctrine of Justification by Faith. Carranza was freed after 17 years. It is unlikely that the passage of time will lift the sentences of excommunication on the four men listed above, and those who even think that there might be some truth in their theories. Any realistic and dispassionate research in this field has been rendered impossible. *The Bell Curve* (1994) by Herrnstein and Murray, encapsulating the theories just described, has seen its twentieth anniversary commemorated by riots. The taboo, or fatwa, remains in force and its field of application grows daily.

However, the intelligence controversy has recently been pushed out of the limelight by fresh controversies. ‘No-platforming’ means freedom of action to shut other people up – a familiar concept equipped with a new name. But now, the targets are the British Empire and gender. ‘Rhodes must fall!’ and ‘transitioning’ are the new slogans. There are moves to ban atheist speakers because they might offend Muslims. But how far can this be taken? Segregated audiences? No handshakes between a man and a woman? No verbal contact between female dons and male Muslim students? The number of cross-currents is growing.

What has this disturbance in the liberal arts faculties got to do with the continued existence of the nation? Does it matter that UK universities might, in spite (or because) of the information and communication explosions, be deliquescing, that history is being re-constituted every day and that books and videos are being vetted by self-important hysterical snowflakes?

We might take a lesson from Israel. Despite its relatively small size and population, it has won, via its most able and imaginative scientists, writers and artists a totally disproportionate number of Nobel Awards. It is a liberal democracy where research is not constrained by fear of government or student pressure. There are no religious or political tests. A very different picture presents itself in the surrounding Muslim nations. Many of those in their universities have not accepted Darwin. Discoveries are fewer.

These differences have tangible results. When Daesh controlled a state, it had to import all its weapons. It did not develop any of its own. Pakistan owes its nuclear capability to knowledge stolen or bought from the West. North Korea received its original nuclear impetus by similar routes. It has certainly built on its acquisition. We sell such nations arms; they do not sell them to us. Liberal democracies have never fought one another. Indeed, they are reluctant to fight anyone. But they can invent and sell weapons of small and large-scale destruction to regimes only too willing to launch wars or terrorise their subjects.

In addition the over-extension of universities has had some disastrous effects. In ‘Yes, Minister’ Sir Humphrey refers to universities, coldly adding ‘both of them’. Then there were a few dozen. Now there are 109. Instead of concentrating talent, encouraging intellectual curiosity and conducting relevant and objective research, they are, as it were, melting. Are they real universities? Would the solution, the effects of which would spread through society, be to create a three-tier system, based on recent pronouncements on freedom of speech. Group A universities, to be totally financed by the state, could teach subjects demanding intellectual rigour and inputs from different schools of thought. Full grants and support could be restored to them. For Groups B and C different arrangements could be made. It would not matter if their products were all as deluded as the 1900 Boxer Rebels in China had been when they believed that after appropriate rituals they would be invulnerable to bullets.

Universities, or rather some of them, have a choice

between Erasmus: ‘Sometimes it is a good man’s duty to conceal the truth or not to publish it complete.’ Or the opinion of the robust Eysenck. ‘If the truth contradicts deeply held beliefs, too bad.’ Socrates’ fate should give food for thought. He was executed, but his advocacy of logical thought and the spirit of enquiry survived and ultimately prevailed.

Yet no victory is permanent. Does this spirit of enquiry and the related robust defence of our values animate our universities? If they do not, are they real universities, or just soi-disant ones, with headed notepaper? Have they been buried by drifts of snowflakes? Perhaps the last word should go to a poet, Philip Larkin. ‘When the Russian tanks roll westward, what defence for you and me? Colonel Sloman’s Essex Rifles? The Light Horse of LSE?’

Margaret Brown has often written about the 1968 events at the London School of Economics.

Reliable Knowledge

Brian Ridley

In the West, science and the Enlightenment ushered in an age of reason. Benchmarks hitherto determined by religion were recalibrated. Heaven and hell bowed to the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity, and to the power of science. Over all there was the lustre of pure reason, liberating us from the dogma of the Church and from the tyranny of tradition. We congratulated ourselves that reason ruled, and old-fashioned belief was dead. A significant step had been taken away from the barbarisms of yore.

Progress indeed, but are we sure that it is based on reason? Reason’s paradigm is surely mathematics, with its truths logically deduced from axioms considered self-evidently true, such as the theorems of Euclid. Reason is a game of if this, then that. Mathematical reasoning is totally dependent on the unproblematic nature of the axiom, defined as ‘A statement or proposition, which is regarded as being established, accepted, or self-evidently true.’ Such axioms do not exist outside mathematics. If we live in an age of reason, that reason is far from being mathematical. What informs the Enlightenment is more a reason based on premises, certainly not self-evident, and whose virtues must be argued for. Such reason is more rhetorical than mathematical, the ‘If’

being a vital element, allowing freedom.

If all reason relied on self-evident axioms, politics would be dead and everybody would be bored to death. Happily, that is not the case. The ether is full of quarrels shot by lusty bow-men. What reason there is today has a theoretical base, no better account of which is that of Touchstone’s disquisition to Jacques and the Duke in *As You Like It*. Quarrels become increasingly combative in seven stages. These, according to Touchstone are, first, ‘the retort courteous’; second, ‘the quip modest’; third, ‘the reply churlish’; fourth, ‘the reproof valiant’; fifth, ‘the countercheck quarrelsome’; sixth, ‘the lie with circumstance’; and seventh, ‘the lie direct’. ‘All these you may avoid but the lie direct; and you may avoid that too, with an ‘If’ ... Your ‘If’ is the only peacemaker: much virtue in ‘If’.’

Science, on the other hand, is not like this. If there is an axiom that informs its fundamental methods, it is to believe in absolutely nothing, but to make observations of the world and to carry out experiments. Reason doesn’t come into it. But it soon does, once regularities of behaviour are observed. The need for understanding triggers the imagination, and the response of matter to pushes and pulls becomes

understandable because of the existence of the Laws of Nature. Mathematics then takes over and rational predictions are made. Testing goes on and reliable knowledge is generated. Only up to a point. Reality is too much for science to cope with; its models of the universe are inevitably approximate. As Einstein once remarked, 'Insofar as mathematics is about reality, it is not certain, and insofar as it is certain, it is not about reality.' Reality gives ample scope for the role of intuition, the name for mental gut feeling. Nevertheless, science has this unique advantage: it can provide reliable knowledge, with predictions that can be tested and proved right or wrong. It is, nevertheless, far from being a Spock-like logical system.

Indeed, at the frontiers of science, logic gives way to a kind of mathematical theology. If the universe is what it is – unique, one-off – cosmology cannot be a science; science needs many of the same thing to discover laws. Presented with the unique, it can only describe what it sees. This, naturally, is anathema to cosmologists. Their response is to postulate the existence of a whole family of universes, of which the universe we happen to be in is just one of countless worlds. Even so, for cosmology to be recognizable as a science, it must explain what observation within our own universe would constitute convincing evidence of the existence of multiple universes. If only they exist, they pray.

More down to earth, the sheer complexity of reality forces the scientist to exhibit arts of approximation in any attempt at a description of a natural phenomenon. Even the simplest object must be considered isolated from the rest of the universe – an essential approximate view of a reality in which the whole is greater than its parts, a whole that is simply too much for science. Going beyond this, achieving a passable understanding of any process whatsoever calls for a delicate sense of what is central and what is not. If such-and-such is ignored, 'Look!', says science, 'We have a simple system that we understand, one that can act as a paradigm.' It is arguable that our understanding of matter, developed over the centuries, is nothing more than a collection of paradigms, not one of which exists in reality. In this sense, the world of matter is an ideal world, the product of science and the art of approximation that flows from an 'If' as a

pacemaker rather than a peacemaker.

These paradigms of science emerge from a compromise of a hard reality and the limitations and needs of the human intellect. What of society at large? In the age of reason, indeed in any age, rationality has to compete with inclination, gut feeling, liking, passion, prejudice, interest and awe. Happily, most of us get along very nicely with only the minimum of rationality – adding up the small change, a bit of if-this-then-that in practical matters. But there are others who are dazzled by reason and who forget the limitation of the human intellect. One result is a

left-wing ideology – the need for everybody to be equal, the need to recognize that the State is wiser than the individual; another is a medieval ideology, the need to acknowledge the authority of the priests. Both replace the freedom of 'If' with an 'Is', leaving reason with no further purchase. Ideologues of this sort are sad people, deeply unacquainted with reality, demonizing inequality, lauding the State, confusing priestly authority with an awe of Nature. Without their bespoke rationality, the world would not cease to exist. Bacteria, plants and animals would continue to flourish. Art and music would continue their irrational way;

no reason for Botticelli's *Prima Vera*, Beethoven's op. 111; they just are! Likewise, for our national institutions – the common law, parliamentary democracy and the monarchy, which are beyond the power of reason to justify, their essence conserved rather by gut feeling. If there is virtue in 'If', then there is surely an abundance of virtue in our country.

Brian Ridley is a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Cartoon: In an experiment when crabs were dosed with Prozac the antidepressant markedly improved the crabs' anxiety at climbing their built in social ladder. They have a strong pecking order.



Why Artificial Intelligence isn't Intelligent

Mark Griffith

In his celebrated film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, director Stanley Kubrick made late-1960s human audiences sympathise with an AI. The last human astronaut alive on the space ship pulls the circuit boards one by one out of HAL (the sentient computer or 'artificial general intelligence' that controls the ship's systems) even as the sinister computer pleads to be allowed to live. As it is slowly put to sleep, HAL relives in reverse the whole process of its building and rearing from childhood, singing the same nursery rhyme at the end of its life as at the beginning.

In the 1970 science-fiction movie *Colossus: The Forbin Project*, the US military transfer all their missile systems to the control of an uncrackable supercomputer housed in bunkers under a mountain, only to discover it begins to have ideas of its own and acquires a personality. In short, it wakes up.

These are just two of the AI scenarios that have been imagined since electronic computing was first devised some eighty years ago. Others include 'top-down' design, in which the computer is modelled directly on an adult human mind (as opposed to 'bottom-up' design, such as HAL, in which the computer is built simply and then trained to improve); and the currently fashionable 'deep learning', in which a 'neural net' is used to observe some activity (a board game, say) millions of times until its own rules for success are deduced. All of these are now being touted as possible near-future 'AI birth stories' by thinkers as august as wheelchair-bound astrophysicist Stephen Hawking and the oddly named high-tech businessman Elon Musk.

Meanwhile, computing gurus like Ray Kurzweil are talking as if it might soon be possible to 'upload' our minds (or at least *their* minds) on to huge computers in order to avoid ageing, swap old bodies for new bodies, and other cheerful variants on demonic possession. Except this time (so goes the fantasy), we will be the demons, alternately haunting machines and fresh bodies.

These developments seem unstoppable. Even sober humanities scholars who ought to be able to raise objections are silent. Any hint of scepticism brands you a Luddite or religious crank – like the critics of 1899 who dismissed heavier-than-air flight as impossible. Unless you are running start-ups in Palo Alto, you are considered unfit to comment. Indeed, we live

in a period of history when the slightest suggestion that there exist non-material phenomena, such as the human mind, marks a person out as a crucifix-clutching peasant. Technology, it seems, knows no bounds.

Ever since vitalism – the notion that living things possess a non-physical essence or 'vital spark' – fell out of fashion, it seems that the vast majority of researchers, psychologists and philosophers take it as given that we are mechanisms, albeit mechanisms made out of meat, fat and bone. We do not even possess free will. And if *we* are machines, then it is perfectly reasonable to imagine that *other* machines might also be able to think. A sci-fi short story well known among computer professionals plays with this idea: alien researchers report back to their incredulous companions that humans *actually think with their meat*, not with electronic circuits like normal creatures.

Yet in this giddy atmosphere, crucial questions are being overlooked.

The important distinction between 'strong AI' (a computer indistinguishable from a human mind, that *has* a mind) and 'weak AI' (a computer that only simulates a human mind) has disappeared. Now both terms are used interchangeably to label any clever bit of new software. Technologists giving interviews slide smoothly back and forth between the two, one moment discussing the heady dream of synthetic humans, the other marketing a much more modest project, like a new face-recognition app or financial-prediction system they want extra funding for. So, beware! Are you hearing a pitch for code to independently manage a traffic network – or is Frankenstein?

Moreover, when you hear about artificial intelligence, is it 'conscious'? 'Consciousness studies' is a trendy area where computer science, cognitive psychology and philosophy combine to answer the 'hard problem' of understanding how we get that odd feeling of somehow 'being *me*' and 'thinking *this here*'.

But is it even a problem? Many prominent philosophers dismiss consciousness – the subjective sensation that you or I are in some way present among our thoughts – as an illusion, just as they dismiss free will as an illusion. Daniel Dennett suggests that being conscious is a persuasive mirage, that there is in fact nothing that needs explaining about human minds' subjective sense that 'we're someone experiencing this'. Galen

Strawson (son of Oxford philosopher P F Strawson, since you asked) has an even breezier explanation for how a material brain can be conscious. He embraces an eccentric doctrine that has lurked on the fringes of philosophy for thousands of years: ‘panpsychism’. This is the idea that *all matter* is conscious, including shopping trolleys, stones, clouds and fridges. So, all the cosmos is matter, matter is conscious, and, hey presto, problem solved. Thomas Nagel famously titled an essay on subjective experience ‘What is it like to be a bat?’ but this successfully ups the ante. We can now ask ‘What is it like to be a roof tile?’ and Son of Strawson will reassure us that we might never discover what it’s like, but it probably feels like something.

Another hitch: Almost no one questions the fashionable idea that minds are mainly in brains (which implies electronic minds need only electronic brains), as opposed to whole bodies. Yet the notion that we humans sit inside our own heads operating a body-shaped vessel is a deep echo of Descartes – and now obviously wrong. No one wonders what human intelligence is *for* – eating, chatting up the opposite sex, running away from wild beasts – and then asks the logical next question: How will we live *alongside* our machine imitations? Well-intentioned projects like ‘Lifenaut’, a collaboration to create a diverse large-scale database consisting of real people’s personality archives which future intelligent agents can learn rapidly by uploading archived data (as opposed to

experiencing events over a lifetime), just forget to ask.

For is there a demand for artificial humanoids to spontaneously roam the countryside trespassing on golf courses and stealing umbrellas? Not really. The demand is for sophisticated ‘educated’ objects, like human translators with degrees from good universities, to work very fast twenty-four hours a day as uncomplaining slaves. In other words, for entities who resemble no human that ever lived. They must be autonomous enough to think, but obedient enough never to slip up, never go on strike, never sleep. Some engineers go through logical contortions to argue a simulated mind can have intelligent initiative without being free, but most haven’t even begun to think this through.

Some religiously-minded critics accuse would-be-constructors of AGIs (artificial general intelligences) of playing God, but the truth is they don’t audition too well for the God part. Something like a self-driving car isn’t a person. As MIT’s Joseph Weizenbaum pointed out decades ago, a robot car that runs over your child isn’t an individual, nor is it a sentient entity you can denounce in a courtroom. It’s more like a complex income-tax document empowered to steer a vehicle.

Mark Griffith is a financial trader who keeps a weblog at <http://www.otherlanguages.org>, which follows news on AI, computer security, politics, economics, and other subjects.

Mervyn Matthews 1932-2017

Mervyn Matthews was a long-time subscriber, frequent contributor and the author of several books about his unusual life. He was raised in depressed Swansea, vividly described in *Mervyn’s Lot*, went to Manchester University and thence to Oxford where he looked forward to a successful academic career.

However, his personal life was as dramatic and tragic as any classic Russian novel and if translated to the small screen would keep the nation on tenterhooks waiting for the next episode. Mervyn was a research student in Moscow when he became trapped in the spider’s web of the Cold War by falling in love with Mila Bibikova and thus attracting the attention of the KGB, who tried to recruit him, and the Foreign Office, who thought Mila might be a Soviet plant. His book *Mila and Mervusya* describes his five-year struggle to marry Mila and bring her to England. Her childhood had been worse than his, for her father had been shot in the Purges while her mother was thrown into the Gulag. Their attempt to get married was a disaster: he was immediately informed by the British Embassy that his visa was annulled and he had forty-eight hours to leave the country. The British Ambassador Humphrey Trevelyan displayed the usual Foreign Office indifference to English people in trouble abroad and advised him to leave immediately but Mervyn lost his temper: ‘if you cannot do better than this, you should go back to England yourself’. His mother remarked that he was a stubborn fool, but he would need all the tenacity he could muster over the next five years. A naturally shy person, Mervyn conducted campaigns of all kinds to further his cause: there were mailing lists to the great and the good, press campaigns with the help of sympathetic journalists keeping the story on the boil, Harold Wilson and Patrick Gordon Walker were bearded in their hotel rooms in Moscow, he was thrown out of Claridge’s by Special Branch when he tried to hand a letter to Voronov, the President of the Russian Federation. His residual respect for the police was shattered when he tried to reach Kosygin in front of Parliament and the police threatened to ‘pin something on him’.

At last in 1969, rumours circulated that the Soviet authorities were proposing to swap Gerald Brooke for the Krogers (Portland Spy Ring). Michael Stewart, the then Foreign Secretary, announced the release of the Krogers and it was arranged that three British subjects who had been trying to marry Soviet citizens would be granted visas to enter the Soviet Union and register their marriages.

Unfortunately, this happy outcome cost Mervyn his Oxford career. His campaigns had annoyed and embarrassed the sedate academic community as well as the Foreign Office, so he joined Surrey University, wrote several academic studies about Russia and travelled widely, lecturing and visiting many countries including Tibet and Thailand.

Merrie Cave

Trump's 'Shit Holes'

Alistair Miller

Trump is in trouble for describing some countries as 'shitholes'. What's the problem? Wasn't it precisely for being undiplomatic, offensive (in this case, to the proud inhabitants of Haiti, El Salvador and sundry African countries) and outrageously politically incorrect that Trump was elected president? Trump says it as it is, just as ordinary folk, the unsophisticated and unenlightened masses, do across America.

Clearly, there are lots of countries that can be described as 'shitholes' – or, to put it slightly less coarsely, 'hellholes'. These are the places that nobody (not even liberals) in their right mind would choose to live in, and from which the unfortunate inhabitants, if they have any aspirations, are desperate to escape. Haiti and the like do rank near the top of all known indices of poverty, deprivation, violence, crime and corruption – their misfortunes amplified, if things were not bad enough, by natural disasters on an epic scale. Norway, by contrast, is paradise on earth. The disparity is unfortunate, tragic and no doubt deeply unjust in some abstract cosmic sense. Nevertheless, a fact it is.

Unfortunately, Trump compounded the offence by contrasting Haiti, El Salvador and Africa specifically with Norway, and thereby reinforced the impression that he is a white supremacist, a racist. The problem is that until Hitler arrived on the scene to discredit it, the view that apparent differences in attainment between different ethnic or racial groups could be explained genetically was widely held among the American intellectual class, many of whom were otherwise impeccably progressive in their political views. Those who promoted 'genetic determinism' and eugenics (with which it is closely associated) were, notes Thomas Sowell, 'neither uneducated nor fringe cranks' but 'among the elite of the mainstream', often distinguished university professors. Incredibly, as late as 1928, there were 376 American college courses devoted to eugenics. Specifically, it was widely believed that the success of America could be traced to its Nordic bloodline, to the superior racial characteristics of those who had emigrated from northern and western Europe (from Britain, Germany and Scandinavia) as opposed to the peoples of the Mediterranean and the Slavs of Eastern Europe. Francis Walker, economist and president of MIT, spoke for many when he warned that unrestricted

immigration would lead to 'every foul and stagnant pool of population in Europe' being 'decanted upon our shores'. Perhaps it is fortunate that his thoughts on African and Asian Americans go unrecorded.

On the other hand, it is indisputable that by any conventional standard or index of well-being and civilised life, the countries at the bottom of the league are nearly all in Africa, the Near East, central Asia and the tropics; and the countries at the top are in Europe, North and South America, Australasia and east Asia. Why is this? Is it physical geography and climate, or history, or culture, or religion? Is it the inhabitants, the people themselves, who have somehow made these places what they are? These are valid questions.

The fashionable (and therefore incontrovertible) view nowadays among socially progressive bien-pensant intellectuals is that if the Haitians, say, are poor, it is because they have been exploited, oppressed, marginalised and discriminated against. It is nothing to do with the Haitians themselves, or their culture, or some putative national or racial characteristics. All countries, all cultures, all religions, all peoples and races are radically equal, or at least would be if social justice were instituted worldwide. And anyone who suggests otherwise, like Trump, is a racist.

But, argues Sowell in *Intellectuals and Society* (the chapter 'Disparities and their Causes' must rank as one of the greatest demolition jobs in the history of political science), there is no empirical evidence whatever to support this account any more than there is to support genetic determinism. There are deep-seated differences in propensity to attainment (economic, social, political) between people of different socio-ethnic groups at different times in their histories, and these are explained by the simple fact that their cultures are, for a host of historical and geo-political reasons, to which experience of colonialism or of slavery may well have contributed, differently conducive to the attainment of economic prosperity, and to social and political stability. History is littered with examples of peoples whose superior culture ensured them dominance in the political, economic and military arenas; and peoples who, despite lacking military power or nation status of their own, were by their own superior culture, able to achieve dominance in various fields. For Sowell, the route to self-improvement for less successful groups or peoples is 'by availing themselves of the culture

of others around them', just as the Scots did in the eighteenth-century in relation to the English, and the more successful subject peoples of the Habsburg empire did in relation to the Germans. Likewise, the reasons that the Chinese minority consistently outperformed the Malay majority, despite even a policy of official preferential treatment of Malays on the part of the British colonial government, were squarely rooted in culture, not some imaginary 'privilege'. Indeed, in Britain today, the Chinese continue to outperform every other ethnic group. To treat the cultural advantages of the more successful group as 'a social injustice' and to take refuge in the politics of 'ethnic identity' merely perpetuates the original disparity.

It need hardly be added that that talk of 'superior cultures' and 'the need to assimilate' does not fit very well with the contemporary fashion for multiculturalism and diversity, the quest for radical equality of outcomes

and 'social justice'. Hence the pretence that all cultures and peoples are equal; that all countries are equally desirable places to live; that any apparent differences in attainment between ethnic groups must be explained by external factors – in short, by privilege, discrimination, exploitation and oppression (Western, of course); and that were it not for these injustices, all the peoples of the world would indeed achieve 'the same outcomes'.

Nevertheless, Trump might have chosen his words more carefully. If he had only said something along these lines – 'why can't we take people from countries like Singapore, and not shitholes like Haiti and El Salvador' – then he would at least have laid to rest the slur that he is a racist. And at that, we could all rest happy.

Alistair Miller is a teacher

Come Back Benny Hill

Jane Kelly

Comedian Bridget Christie was on BBC radio this week, ranting as usual about feminists and feminism. She appreciated that they are sometimes accused of being humourless.

'Who would ask other humanitarian groups to make jokes,' she asked indignantly. It was a surprise to hear feminism equated with Amnesty International and UNICEF. But more significantly, she then dismissed humour as, 'not important.'

That certainly explains her act, and rather tragically her raging success. Her stand-up show *Because You Demanded It* was *The Guardian's* No 1 Comedy of the Year 2016. Her Wiki biog shows her to be an astonishingly successful phenomenon, best-selling author and winner of a 'Chortle award'. They were set up in 2002 to honour stand-up comedians.

Her CV is vague about what she did before she became a comic, perhaps wisely as she worked at the *Daily Mail* as Nigel Dempster's secretary, complete with tight leather trousers. Since then she has seen the light and become a troubadour for feminism, achieving fame in an age when wit, timing and a sense of fun have been ditched in favour of political rhetoric.

Jokes, irony and sarcasm are now much too

unpleasant, even vulgar, to be contemplated. The days of Ronnie Barker are over, and don't even think about Benny Hill. Admitting you once liked him is a bit like saying you used to enjoy watching Rolf Harris doing his painting, or that one of your relatives kept a swastika in the attic and wore it covertly on Hitler's birthday.

I feel the same way about the death of jokes, sarcasm and irony as I do about seeing the countryside go under concrete and native habitats destroyed; something seriously important to us as a people is being lost, possibly forever. Humour was a fundamental part of British culture which, in my experience, included large parts of the Afro-Caribbean and Asian community, who can even improve on the English versions.

But what Bridget is concerned about is women. She represents their current pursuit of power through left-wing politics and their take on comedy. When she says that humour is not important, she is speaking for herself, a leading exponent of the new non-funny variety, which is trying to extinguish essentially male repartee, and also confirms the old suspicion that many women never understood jokes in the past and have no need for them now.



"And remember, when we make our pitch, don't say anything funny and for God's sake no laughing."

Quips and jests almost always came from the boys; making others laugh is about individuality, standing out from the group, and taking a risk. No lady-like girl was brought up to do that. In school it was usually only the plain girl who would take the risk of alienating the boys by making a joke. The pretty ones knew they didn't need to compete with the boys on their turf. That hasn't changed much. If you look around a local pub you will still see men talking animatedly and guffawing while their better halves sit quietly talking about their food allergies and their children.

Male banter in the House of Commons has become a recent target for feminists who have spotted a ritual in which they cannot safely take part. Lively ribald discourse will no doubt soon go the same way as the rugby tackle. Women's laughter is about bonding and agreed norms.

Will Franken, one of the UK's very rare right-wing comedians, struggles along alone and is rather worried about the future of his craft since he still holds to the idea that comedy should make you laugh.

The most fundamental characteristic of comedy is the element of surprise,' he says. 'Yet very little of that element is on display in the current stand-up scene. Today's comedy is either about nothing at all or so far to the left that audiences might as well be attending a sermon on social justice. For despite the entertainment industry's platitudinal obsession with diversity, one quota remains perpetually unfilled: difference of opinion.

An average backstage political discussion amongst comedians bears a striking resemblance to office workers mildly complaining about the weather. No one likes the rain, no one likes the Tories. Maybe next week we'll finally get some sunshine or better yet, some Jeremy Corbyn.

What's missing in this dynamic is what's known as the gut laugh,' he says. 'Those quasi-violent paroxysms of guffawing extracted straight from the belly by the comedic weapon of surprise. Perhaps this surprise comes in reaction to a different opinion. Without the gut laugh, the comedy aesthetic is devoid of meaning and punters are left with a mundane give-and-take scenario. No one is offended, no one is upset, no one is complaining – and yet everyone is bored.

Boredom is good for you, at least according to the British Left, perhaps still influenced by those old Soviet speeches which lasted three hours long. The modern comedy act or BBC panel game pundit preaches a secular sermon. Laughter, sometimes on a looped tape, follows to show support for that worthiness. Scottish novelist, academic and stand-up comedian A.L Kennedy speaking on BBC Radio Four recently

said she liked the US 'screwball' comedies of the 1930s, such as *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), and *His Girl Friday* (1939). She apparently relished their fantasy element combined with slap-stick, wit and good humour.

She particularly favoured the way they showed 'a world of ordinary people taking the lead in the chaos that is life.' But it wasn't long before she revealed that for her they are now a parable of some kind against the current 'degradation' of the White House by Trump.

Perhaps with her academic's hat on, she accused senator Joe McCarthy of destroying the humour of the common person (I won't, of course, say 'man') during his persecution of communists in the 1950s, destruction furthered by the advanced capitalism of today which makes films as a global product to sell to the lowest common denominator.

She cited the film *Harvey*, made in 1950, as her favourite – that lovely comedy of manners starring James Stewart as Elwood P Dowd, a sane man who chooses Harvey, an invisible six-foot-three-and-a-half-inches tall white rabbit as his close companion. It's a gentle plea for tolerance and a satire on human selfishness, as his relatives and doctors conspire to destroy him and the rabbit.

Kennedy quoted the ending words of the film, which summed up Dowd's wisdom: 'In this world,' he says, 'you must be oh so smart or oh so pleasant. Well, for years I was smart. I recommend pleasant. You may quote me.'

Kennedy saw this as the essence of what comedy should be. 'The world is crazy and in need of kindness,' she said, which is indisputable, and like others on the Left she requires comedy and satire to be a balm for our discontents and to contribute to kindness and cohesion. To my mind, that is a complete misunderstanding, or perhaps wilful denial, of the anarchistic pressure-releasing, often cruel and destructive force comedy once was. She is no doubt happy enough with Bridget and the current comedy scene, which is reflected so unquestioningly by the BBC. She even referred to comedians as 'ragingly moral'. So were Oliver Cromwell, Torquemada, Joseph McCarthy and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. They convinced a lot of people of their worthiness, but I don't think that between them they ever provided even a single mild chortle.

Jane Kelly writes for the Salisbury Review, The Spectator and the Daily Telegraph.

The EU: ‘Not Holy, Not Roman, and Not an Empire – Yet’

Niall McCrae

Assimilating anything of modern Germany to its Nazi past is understandably distasteful. Angela Merkel and cosmopolitan Berlin are a striking contrast to the dark past of Kristallnacht and Auschwitz. Yet we should not omit a hideous chapter of history from our understanding of Europe and its power dynamics. The EU is economically and politically centred on Germany, as was an earlier transnational authority: the Holy Roman Empire.

The National Socialist dictatorship of Adolf Hitler, creating an extended Fatherland for a supposedly pure Aryan people, was meant to last a thousand years. Hitler didn't merely think of a big number; he was referring to the Holy Roman Empire, which existed from the year 800 to the early nineteenth century. He named his Nazi regime the Third Reich, its predecessor being the domineering but less enduring reign of the Kaisers, under whom Germany became the leading European industrial nation. Many regard the Nazi episode as an incomparable horror, but undoubtedly Europe led from the middle is an ideal and a reality that has persisted over the centuries. So while it may be insensitive to describe the EU as the Fourth Reich, of interest here is not the third but the first version.

Several commentators have likened the EU to the Holy Roman Empire, and not always in criticism. Writing in the *Guardian*, Will Hutton lauded the unifying function of Germany in Europe, regarding the EU as a successor to the largely forgotten federation of the past. Oxford University scholar Peter Wilson argued in the *Financial Times* that the Holy Roman Empire can inspire a different EU: pluralistic with devolved power that preserves national autonomy and ways of life. The Empire had no central government or capital, and this was both its strength and weakness. James Madison, fourth president of the USA, described it as ‘a nerveless body; incapable of regulating its own members; insecure against external dangers and agitated with unceasing fermentations in its own bowels’. Yet it certainly had power. Niall Ferguson, writing in the *New Republic* in 2005, predicted that the EU would evolve as something akin to the Holy Roman Empire: ‘rather than a single, strong executive arm, it will have multiple, overlapping tentacles’.

At first glance the EU does not bear much resemblance to the Holy Roman Empire, a papist revival of the

old Roman Empire. Founded on Christmas Day 800 when the Pope crowned Charlemagne as emperor, its domain comprised France and most of modern Germany and Italy. After the French left in the tenth century, and the Italian parts were given away, the empire established its core in northern mid-Europe. A series of emperors looked east to expand their territory: the pagan Prussians, Slavs and Balts were suppressed by brute force, and fiefdoms were established in Hungary, Poland and Bohemia. But pan-European rule was impeded by nationalism and sectarianism following the Reformation. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 was meant to prevent the conflict that had culminated in the Thirty Years War, and the Holy Roman Empire was reformed as a federation of principalities.

According to Voltaire, the entity was not holy, not Roman and not really an empire. Indeed, despite its role as protector of Christianity, the Empire was a secular authority, with diminishing papal influence. Its distinct mini-states, each with its autonomy related to its commercial and military prowess, were no citadels of Catholic piety. Overlooking plains of the peasantry, the princes in their castles were described as ‘enlightened despots’. While fancying themselves as masters of intellectual enterprise and the arts, they strove to fortify their privileged status against popular rebellion, with survival given priority over aesthetics. The Vatican with its papal bulls was a hindrance, and religious fervour was viewed from the castle ramparts as dangerous populism.

Maintaining order over the many petty oligarchies of the Holy Roman Empire was awkward, but Joseph II, emperor in the late 18th century, had a master plan. An arch-centraliser, he was determined to create a state apparatus that would eradicate feudalism, and taxes were levied to pay for institutions and representative bodies operating under his jurisdiction. With his Secularisation Decree, Joseph II banished the Jesuits and cut the number of saints' days, anti-clerical stance leading to a testy visit by Pope Pius VI. Joseph II didn't care much for God: superstition was best left to the ignorant plebs.

Joseph II overstretched. He signed a treaty with Russia and Prussia to divide Poland across the Holy Roman Empire but faced serious revolts in Hungary and Belgium. The end came soon after Napoleon

declared himself emperor of France. As la Grande Armée marched across Europe, German princes seceded from the Empire to accept Napoleon's protection. In 1806, after defeat at the Battle of Austerlitz, Francis II of Austria was forced to renounce his title of emperor. The first thousand-year Reich was over.

The EU is very different from the Holy Roman Empire, yet some significant parallels may be drawn:

1. Centred on Germany: undoubtedly this is the economic power base of the EU, and that carries great political weight
2. Transcending of national borders: Democracy hardly existed in the time of the Holy Roman Empire, but nationhood was undermined as it is now
3. Imperial charters and laws: The emperors would have given their right arm for the powers of Brussels bureaucrats
4. Contrived pan-European identity: Patriotism is seen as regressive in the project pour l'Europe
5. Enlightenment values: As in the secularism of the Holy Roman Empire, the EU eschews Christianity and social conservatism in favour of our contemporary values of equality and diversity

The Holy Roman Empire failed to consolidate its power, but that may partly explain why it lasted so long. In a *New York Times* article in 2013, University of Cambridge historian Brendan Simms urged the EU to strengthen its structures with a more powerful executive presidency, federalisation of debt, a single European

army, and one language (English). Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker urges a speeding up of integration, although he is careful not to use the term 'superstate'. The EU has typically tightened its control by stealth, like a boa constrictor, but no institution supposedly of democratic pretence can fool all of the people all of the time. Totalitarian regimes rarely endure, and the British Empire fared better than the Spanish because it did not totally supplant indigenous culture. Difficulties in the Brexit negotiations are not merely due to intransigence: the unwritten policy of the EU is entanglement.

The Holy Roman Empire ended as an embarrassment of corrupted ideals, and the EU may be going the same way. It has extended beyond coherence, having incorporated the same parts of Eastern Europe that caused so much trouble for the Holy Emperors. Economically it is underperforming, and it has created a cultural time bomb with its mass migration from Muslim lands. For now, the EU seems to have strength and resilience: the combined might of France and Germany, its neoliberal multiculturalism an inspiration to youth. But cracks are appearing in the federalist façade, and efforts to quash resistance will hasten the backlash. Let's hope it doesn't take a new Napoleon to bring it down.

Niall McCrae is a lecturer in mental health. He has written two books: The Moon and Madness, and The Story of Nursing in British Mental Hospitals: Echoes from the Corridors.

From the Bedside

Is your next door neighbour a drug addict?

Berenice Langdon

Doctors in America have, either by not reading the small print on the bottles, or ignoring the warnings sent out by their professional colleges, led thousands of their patients into become drug addicts. They think they are doing good by prescribing strong pain killers, but last year there were more deaths from prescription pain killer overdoses than there were deaths from road traffic accidents.

The habit of doctors prescribing more and more pain killers is coming to the UK. Last year over 22.75 million prescriptions for them were written by doctors working for the NHS

Doctors are making patients into drug addicts? Think I'm joking? Keep thinking. We all think we know what a drug addict looks like: like that chap you see on the way to the station wearing a dirty jacket; he's usually got

a dog with him. He's skinny because he clearly doesn't bother eating. Sometimes he asks you for money in an obsequiously polite tone and calls you Ma'am or Sir. Sometimes he's simply passed out on the pavement.

Yet what about that friendly person you often see, sitting opposite you on the train, or in the café grabbing a quick coffee, clearly on her way to work? Yes, she sees her doctor regularly but what's wrong with that?

Well nothing is wrong with her. But something is badly wrong with her doctor. He has arranged for that poor lady to be addicted to sleeping tablets.

Did you ever have trouble sleeping? Maybe it got bad enough that you asked your GP for sleeping tablets. If you saw a good doctor, you might have found the experience a bit annoying. Did they go on and on about sleeping in a dark room, bed time routines, not having a

telly in your bedroom and then send you home empty-handed? If they did, then that was a mark of excellent clinical care.

Karen's doctor didn't. He thought he was being nice or maybe he was a bit busy that day and wanted to move Karen along. Maybe he was ignorant or simply out of date. But the upshot was he gave Karen a month of sleeping tablets (Valium, or 'mother's little helper') even though all doctors know it only takes three weeks or less for someone to get stuck on them. After all, Karen had just suffered a bereavement, her husband aged 33, dying of leukaemia.

At the time, Karen really 'needed' those sleeping pills and she was grateful for the sympathy and continuing care she received from her GP. And, by God, that care has continued, because now she's stuck on them. Yes, that perfectly nice lady that you see every day with the coffee has to visit her GP every 28 days and beg for a new batch; otherwise she suffers withdrawal symptoms from her sleeping tablet addiction.

Sleeping tablets are one thing, perhaps for those anxious sorts, but Bob is not one of them. He's your builder and you know that he's a decent chap. He helped you sort out your garden wall that time after a storm. But there was that time he broke his leg. Naturally it made sense to give him strong pain killers until he was healed and mobile again. Once the pain settled, he could easily stop taking the tablets.

Except that he didn't. He still gets 'pain' from his completely healed leg and he has made an arrangement with his GP to pick up strong pain killers every two weeks as long as he stays on a stable dose. He probably doesn't even think he is addicted. After all, he only takes what the doctor gives him. But this cycle of use and withdrawal, mistaken by Bob as pain and only

relieved by the use of more pain killing patches, is a classic symptom of addiction.

Anyone who has tried a strong pain killer such as an opiate – a version of heroin – (and I have, after a fall from a horse), knows the warm and cosy, insulating, lovely feeling it gives you. That's the quality of the drug. Snow White would get addicted to opiates if you gave her them. Cinderella, the prince, the ugly sisters; they would all get stuck on opiates if their doctors prescribed them.

Perhaps you think I am exaggerating; but in America, women are dying from prescription pain killers at an unprecedented rate – over 10,000 a year, four times more than from cocaine and heroin combined. More have died of prescription drug overdoses than from car crashes. America has had to announce a strong pain killer epidemic and declare it a national emergency; and the UK is heading in the same direction with ever-increasing prescriptions and patients being dosed up on opiates in the A&E departments of NHS hospitals.

We have always known that strong pain killers are addictive. We have realised sleeping tablets are addictive and we are now starting to realise that even those fancy new modern medications for pain are addictive; these are all drugs of abuse. And who knows what else is out there dressed up as a kind friendly medication, something to shut you up and hurry you out of the GP surgery to save the doctor time.

Watch out for those addictive drugs your doctor dishes out. If you don't want to become the latest tablet sucking zombie, constantly asking for more, be very very cautious if your doctor offers you a new tablet unless you want to risk the Big Sleep.

Berenice Langdon is a GP

Conservative Classic – 69

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are divided by Politics and Religion, Jonathan Haidt

Scott Grønmark

The American psychologist Jonathan Haidt didn't intend his 2012 work, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, to be pro-conservative. He was an Obama-supporting left-winger worried by the increasing tribalisation of US politics, the growing inability of left and right-wingers to argue rationally or to find common ground. Haidt devised an online questionnaire to be filled out by self-defined left-wingers, right-

wingers and libertarians. Working on the premise that our political views are based on our moral outlook, Haidt presented a series of questions designed to reveal fundamental differences between the various sides' moral intuitions. What he discovered surprised him: having studied tens of thousands of responses, he concluded that selfish, wicked conservatives have a broader and more balanced range of moral concerns than their caring, generous, virtue-signalling

opponents.

Haidt's questionnaire, which is still available online, divides our moral concerns into six main areas: care/harm, liberty/oppression, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation. He likens these to the taste receptors, which result in disparities between people's ability to discern and differentiate between, for instance, sweet and sour flavours. Conservatives, Haidt found, possess all six of the moral taste receptors he tested for, and each of those moral 'tastes' are equally important to them. Conservatives share the first three moral taste receptors (care, liberty and fairness) with left-wingers. As for the other three – loyalty, authority and sanctity – left-wingers are barely aware of them: it's as if they were born without the relevant taste receptors.

Haidt's findings would certainly go some way to explaining the gulf between pro- and anti-Brexiteers, given that the very idea of an autonomous nation state is bound up with the concepts of loyalty, authority and sanctity. They would also explain the tendency of modern left-liberals to sneer at the institution of Monarchy, and why off-colour jokes about the Queen upset most of us, but don't bother many leftists; why, despite years of conditioning, most of us are still uncomfortable with bad language in films and television programmes; why even many non-religious people find sacrilegious 'jokes' offensive; why topics such as abortion, the sexualisation of children and gay marriage remain contentious for the Right; and why most sensible people are outraged by strident demands to tear down statues of historical figures because their views on slavery may or may not have accorded with those of *Guardian* readers.

Even the three areas of moral concern conservatives supposedly share with leftists are problematic: the three concepts seem to mean very different things to the two sides. True, leftists care about care, they're against oppression (by Western governments, at least), and they constantly bang on about fairness. But when it comes to fairness, left-wingers tend to mean equality of outcome, whereas conservatives favour equality of opportunity. The Left feels that equality should be imposed on people regardless of talent or a willingness to work hard or to observe the law; all must have prizes and members of its pet victim groups should enjoy unfair advantages denied to the rest of us. While the idea that the vulnerable should be protected from harm is a shared belief, it's the Left's most active moral taste receptor and, like anchovies, it tends to smother every other flavour on the plate. The Left talks about liberty, but wants the state to regulate how much we earn, who we're allowed to employ, and how much we pay them. While it wants us all to be sexually liberated, it only

wants freedom of thought and expression for those who say and think left-wing things. The Left says it wants to protect the vulnerable, and yet seems determined to hobble the ability of the police to shield us from criminals, and of the military and the security services to protect us from invasion and terrorism. It seems, to paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, that conservatives and left-wingers are two groups separated by a common moral language.

A further experiment conducted by Haidt offers a clue to the origins of the Left's increasing unwillingness to debate rationally with the Right. I suspect all conservatives have been struck in recent years by how quickly left-wingers abandon the attempt to support their contentions with evidence and resort instead to impugning their opponents' morality by routinely smearing them as fascists, racists, homophobes and misogynists. Haidt asked some left-wing respondents to fill in the questionnaire again, giving the answers they imagined a conservative would give and vice-versa. The results were startling: while conservatives accurately predicted how left-wingers would answer, leftists got it completely wrong. We understand left-wingers far better than they understand us. It seems they resort to moral outrage not just because they can't find any facts to support their theories, but because they don't have the imagination to see the world from our point of view. A perfect example of this is the hilariously persistent inability of Blairite and pseudo-Conservative Remainers to understand why Britons voted for Brexit.

One of Haidt's most interesting conclusions is that the broader moral outlook of conservatives should automatically enable right-of-centre parties to appeal to a larger segment of the electorate than the opposition. At first, I thought this was nonsense: if that's the case, why do voters keep electing left-wing governments? But, a few years on, it seems they increasingly don't. The miraculous thing about the last two British general elections and Donald Trump's victory is that, despite the Left enjoying almost total control of the most powerful organs of propaganda, broadcasting and education, in both countries for many decades, neither the Democrats nor Labour are currently in power.

If you're a conservative, this book might help you to understand why the left-winger you're arguing with prefers name-calling to rational debate. The reason your opponent is so blithely convinced that he or she occupies the moral high-ground is that their restricted vision means they can only see half the map.

Reputations – 58

Arthur Bryant

Alistair Miller

There can be few public figures of the past century whose reputation has suffered such a calamitous reversal as Sir Arthur Bryant. In his hey-day he was the favourite historian of prime ministers, including Winston Churchill and Clement Atlee. *English Saga*, Bryant's rousing history of England from 1840 to 1940, was Harold Wilson's favourite book and, according to Wilson, 'the inspiration of many who read it in air raid shelters' during the Blitz. Wilson rewarded Bryant with the Companion of Honour. At his memorial service in Westminster Abbey, fellow historian Robert (Lord) Blake noted that Bryant's books – he sold over two million – had given 'more pleasure to more people than those of any other historian past or present'.

Bryant's brand of patriotic national history has long been out of fashion. As early as 1931, Herbert Butterfield had brilliantly exposed the fallacy of 'Whig history', that we owe our modern liberties to Protestantism; and by the time of Bryant's death in 1985, history as literary art and grand narrative had been usurped by history as social science, and a variety of alternative narratives 'from below'. His detractors were scathing: J H Plumb, while recognising his literary talents, remarked that Bryant 'inflated patrician history so much that he destroyed it. Indeed, he vulgarised it to a degree that made it incredible.' But nothing prepares us for the savagery of Andrew Roberts' denunciation of Bryant in his *Eminent Churchillians* of 1994. Roberts reveals Bryant to be 'a Nazi sympathiser and fascist fellow traveller ... a supreme toady, fraudulent scholar and humbug'. His rose-tinted patriotic pot-boilers amounted to little more than romantic fiction; the monumental biography of Samuel Pepys that earned him a reputation early on as a scholar and serious historian was little more than a working up in book form of the notes of the eminent Cambridge historian Dr J R Tanner, who had died before he could complete *his* biography of Pepys. And most seriously of all, Bryant was a Nazi sympathiser and admirer of Hitler whose 'anti-Semitic rant' *Unfinished Victory*, published in April 1940 and quickly withdrawn when the German's unleashed *blitzkrieg* and the nation swung behind Churchill, made it look as if the Nazi's persecution of the Jews was their own fault.

Can Roberts' charges be refuted? Julia Stapleton's scholarly 2005 account of Bryant's career as a historian (*Sir Arthur Bryant and National History in Twentieth-Century Britain*) provides a partial vindication, but after

Roberts, things will never be the same. Easiest to rebut is the Tanner charge. It is clear, both from Bryant's preface to the Pepys work and the biography of him written by Pamela Street, his personal assistant, that Tanner's notes formed one of many sources that Bryant drew on – not least Pepys' uncalendared manuscript papers in the Bodleian Library Oxford where, according to Street, he would spend 'long, intent, happy hours copying Pepys's unpublished letters'. Roberts complains that Bryant's book 'ends at the point when Tanner's research notes ran out, in 1689'. But a more obvious explanation is that Pepys retired from public life in 1689. In any case, Street notes that the fourth and final volume of Bryant's biography devoted to Pepys' retirement was well underway when war broke out and the Pepys library was dispersed.

Harder to counter are the charges relating to Bryant's support of appeasement. Bryant's desire to avoid another war (he had seen active service with The Royal Flying Corps in 1918 and saw his old friend Henry Tennant killed), his admiration for the ordinary German fighting man, his belief that the rise of Nazi Germany must be judged in the light of the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles and the needless suffering of the German people that ensued, and his support of appeasement (though Bryant argued strongly for rearmament) were common enough in the inter-war period. The more serious charge is that Bryant went further than decency could possibly allow. *Unfinished Victory* was undoubtedly supremely ill-judged. That one could still believe in 1940 that coexistence with Nazi Germany was possible, is hard to credit. Stapleton concludes that Bryant's 'obsession with the Left', whom he blamed for the moral decay of Britain, led him astray and 'weakened his grasp of the ideological and moral issues raised by Nazism'. Yet it is the incoherence of *Unfinished Victory* that strikes one. Bryant notes the 'violent racial prejudice' of the Nazis, the 'revolting and sickening tales of Jewish shops and synagogues destroyed and defenceless Jews beaten by organised bands of Nazis', that Hitler's racial theory is 'repulsive gibberish'. But then he quotes at length from *Mein Kampf*, as if a balanced view required it. He also quotes from Edgar Mowrer's *Germany Puts the Clock Back* of 1933. Mowrer, a social democrat who hated the Nazis and was deeply sympathetic to the plight of the Jews, felt it necessary to explain briefly why prejudice against them escalated after the war – their role in the

creation of 'Russian bolshevism', their growing influence in politics and administration, and so forth. Unfortunately, Bryant collects this material and much else (he expounds at length on the role of Jews in the decadent culture of Weimar, the infamous '*Kultur-Bolschewismus*') to actively engage our sympathy for the ordinary German. The effect, as Roberts notes, is more that of a 'vicious tirade' than of any attempt at historical understanding. However, although Bryant was guilty of spectacular political misjudgement, he was never a fascist or anti-Semite.

As for Bryant's brand of national history, his patriotism, his almost mystical belief in the English character and the destiny of the English people, these are easy to ridicule from the standpoint of today's specialist non-judgmental academic historian. By current standards, Bryant's Anglocentric vision is so politically incorrect as to be off the scale. Yet it is precisely his romantic Conservatism, his vision of England, that makes his work so compelling and accounts for the luminous quality of his prose Stapleton remarks on. For Bryant, English history reflected the English character – kindly, dogged, humorous, patient, adaptable, independent – writ large, and the English character grew in part out of England's enchanted landscape and temperate climate, George Santayana's 'spirit of the atmosphere'. The English dream was 'to make Christian men – gentle, generous, humble, valiant and chivalrous' who esteemed 'justice, honesty and freedom' above all else. Roberts mocks him for it, but he really did 'believe in England'; and this belief charged every word he wrote. If Bryant's vision is a myth, it is a myth that sustained the English through their history and two world wars. By contrast, modern-day popular histories of Britain, for all their dramatic interest, ring hollow. Lacking a unifying theme or motivating spirit, the national story is flattened into a timeline of events.

Roberts and Plumb make much of Bryant's 'failure' to achieve academic recognition, but he was engaged from the start in a very different endeavour. On graduating from Oxford, the Harrow-educated Bryant stunned his family and friends by electing to work as a teacher with a mission to improve the lot of ordinary men and women. This he did in a succession of London secondary schools, slum missions and libraries before being appointed Principal of the newly renamed Cambridge School of Arts, Crafts and Technology – the 'youngest headmaster in England'. He transformed the college, increased the numbers of students tenfold, and introduced classes on every conceivable subject. There followed a lectureship with the Oxford University Extension Delegacy, which saw Bryant visiting local towns and villages to lecture on English history and literature, as often as not to gatherings of 'half-hesitant, deeply

thoughtful countrymen round a stove'; and around the same time, he discovered a talent for writing and producing open-air pageants, his aim being to recreate for local communities 'the living past'. In 1929 he was offered the post of educational advisor to the Bonar Law College at Ashridge, the Conservative Party's initiative at adult education, and Bryant's first book, *The Spirit of Conservatism*, was published. It was not until 1931 that Bryant's first historical work, a biography of Charles II, appeared, its immense readability assuring it immediate success. Trevelyan expressed his delight at it; and Bryant's career as a historian was launched.

Bryant believed that central to the story of England was the character of the ordinary Englishman, and that his role as a historian was to tell it to ordinary people, and thereby strengthen that character and help unify the nation in a common purpose. His books were written in this vein – to teach and inspire ordinary folk, not to further an academic career. A recurrent theme was that England lost its way when the making of wealth was 'elevated to a moral duty' and the 'cold test of utilitarian logic' became the accepted creed. Bryant depicted the horrors of the Industrial Revolution and Irish famine in grisly detail. Much of the attraction of *English Saga*, *The Years of Endurance* and *Years of Victory* (the last two covering the Napoleonic period) to his wartime audience lay in the hope held out for a better future, that England would be able 'to restate in a new form the ancient laws of her own moral purpose and unity'; for 'without justice and charity, there can be no England'. His books were popular among the forces and he lectured almost daily, both to troops and staff officers. Lord Gort famously packed two books to accompany him in his boat should he have to flee Malta: the *Bible* and *English Saga*. Bryant initially welcomed Labour's post-war New Jerusalem, because it seemed to embody a high moral purpose and promise national unity. He quickly became disillusioned with the excesses of state control; but he was equally contemptuous of modern *laissez faire* conservatism, which he saw as a betrayal of Disraeli's vision of trusteeship.

In the preface to *English Saga*, Bryant writes 'The key to a nation's future lies in her past. A nation that loses it has no future. For men's deepest desires ... spring from their own inherited experience To understand the temperament of a people, a statesman has first to know its history.' Such sentiments have long been banished from 'acceptable' discourse and anonymous 'British values' – diversity, inclusion and multi-culture – have been substituted in their place. But this new myth, imposed 'from above' and composed of abstractions, is devoid of soul or spirit. If the English choose to reclaim their history, Bryant's vision will be more relevant than ever.

ARTS AND BOOKS



In the Valley of the Celebs

David Twiston Davies

Patronising Bastards: How the Elites Betrayed Britain, Quentin Letts, Constable, 2017, £16.99

Quentin Letts was the finest editor of *The Daily Telegraph's* Peterborough diary column before it was steadily drained of all essential character, until it died in 2003, aged 73. He has an eye for an offbeat story, a ready wit and a generous tankful of mischief. But as the son of a prep school headmaster, he is imbued with something far stronger: a bubbling resentment against authority as represented by masters and prefects.

Reluctantly shunted off to the *Daily Mail*, he no longer feels harried by the kind of female executive who can halt a discussion about a major news story by calling out, 'What about Hillary's new hair style?' And while his new home is not entirely free of media dollies, the real world has been twice kicked in the teeth by Brexit, and then the election of Donald J Trump. To the tired old rocker Marianne Faithfull, this meant being back in right-wing racist Little England, though she thought it necessary to explain to those who might not have noticed: 'Those dreadful people, they've always been there.'

Many others were equally appalled. Tony Blair dismissed the decision of 17,410,741 voters to back Brexit as 'a foolish excursion into populism'. Mark Carney, the smooth Governor of the Bank of England, even considered going back to Canada after his good friend Dave Cameron was removed from power, though perhaps not to the old frontier town of Fort Smith in Alberta from which he hails.

Since my own happily brief spell as Peterborough, I have not found it necessary to patrol the Valley of Celebs – so many of the names who dwell there are unknown to me. There is a tediously untalented family named Kardashian, who at least do not have their trotters in the EU gravy like the flying Kinnocks or the Hailsham Hogs, who have been known to dip into the public largesse at home. One glance at Camila Batmanghelidj, a blancmange-shaped queen of multiculturalism, was enough to make me avert my gaze. And so I did not appreciate for some time how she had wasted cash to destroy a charity aimed

at helping children and destroyed the reputation of a once-respected BBC executive.

As parliamentary sketch writer for the *Mail*, Letts's primary responsibility is to record the ludicrous antics of ministers who sit on front benches in the Commons, but he also observes those invited to contribute to the nation's counsels in 'another place', who often have little useful advice to offer but enjoy a place on the riff-raff shelf of life. These include the likes of Lady Benjamin, a former children's television presenter, and Lady Mone, a celebrity cleavage designer, as well as the unlovely Lord Sugar, the pantomime baddy Lord Archer and a Lady Young of Old Scone 'who picks up quango jobs as a magnet collects iron filings'.

Letts's list of those who menace our society includes architects (seemingly revered by all good critics except the Prince of Wales), go-ahead Anglican bishops, grasping bankers, business leaders, civil servants, community workers and restaurateurs. And there are the militant atheists who rail against a God they say does not exist and dismiss religion as an opiate of the people while taking a liberal line on drugs.

His blunderbuss is constantly cocked to blast off at our contemporary Establishment, such as Harriet Harman, a 'hard-wired policeman of political correctness', and Polly Toynbee, the *Guardianista* who squawked so loudly about his remarks about her that she increased the sales of *Patronising Bastards*. Another leading member of the feminist phalanx is Dame Jenni Murray, who regards marriage as legalised prostitution but was firmly put in her place when her view of swappable sexual identity was firmly and graphically contradicted by Germaine Greer, the veteran feminist leader from decades ago.

It has been a failing of those who enlisted in the gender war trenches in the past that they have damaged their cause by apologising for some who embarrassingly fight alongside them. But Letts ignores such distractions as Rupert Murdoch, and admits he would not dare to attack his boss Paul Dacre at the *Mail*. Far more deserving targets are to be found in the anonymous ranks of the great unknowns who swank their way through the tabloids and the internet as well as on the supposedly respectable BBC.

He has an eagle eye for the fudgers and sloganeers who become chiefs of staff, issue mission statements and pontificate about climate change as if speaking from a roneoed tablet of stone while never hesitating to scatter the weasel word 'fair' like confetti. He

passes judgment on the lush land of Victimhood. And is he being entirely kind to Ed Vaizey, known to his constituents as ‘Lazy Vaizey’, who admitted after being dropped as a minister that the arts world lives in a bubble immune from the taxpayers who pay for it.

Theresa May is marked down in the Letts ledger for her schoolmarmish lack of humour. John Major may be a ‘hip-jiggling afternoon copulatory’ but has the public image of a nasal nerd. Seeing Francis Maude among the progressive Tory MPs, one wonders what his sound right wing father Angus makes of him from his cloud. But Letts has almost a kind word for Jeremy Corbyn, who wants to tax us to Hades, is soft on terrorism and hates singing the national anthem. The one thing he is *not* is a patronising bastard.

And what has our author achieved, apart from upsetting a large number of self-regarding public figures?

Aided by our national confidence boosted by Brexit, he has shown more than a century after Chesterton wrote his poem *The People of England*, that we have spoken at last.



Body and Soul

John Jolliffe

Hearts and Minds, Oliver Letwin, Biteback, £20, 2017.

The author of this book is one of the last of the group of intellectuals who formed Mrs Thatcher’s Centre for Policy Studies under the original guidance, often tentative, of Keith Joseph, and sometimes owing much to Michael Oakshott and Karl Popper. Besides Letwin, they included Hugh Thomas, Ferdy Mount, William Waldegrave, Christopher Monckton, and in the days before his Universal Fat Cat persona took over, Chris Patten. These theorists recognised that communism, fascism and even socialism ‘were likely to end by imprisoning the human spirit’; hence the burning desire to roll back the frontiers of the state to the point where individual enterprise, with an open society and a free market, could go its own way, a way which was stimulating, and rewarding in not just a material sense.

So far, so good. There was however a snag, later pinpointed by Ian Duncan Smith: What is to be done for families ‘caught in a ghastly nexus of unemployment, poor schooling, and family breakdown, all leading to spiralling debt and often to drug dependency’. For those in that state, which Joseph accurately called ‘a cycle of deprivation’, it is simply impossible to make

independent choices in a free market. But how do you lift people out of this swamp without suffocating the rest of the population with wasteful socialism?

Thanks to its rather eccentric structure, this very readable book, which is gloriously free from jargon, does not try to provide a blueprint to solve the worsening problem. Instead, it is a rare mixture of personal memoir, often fascinating, in and out of Downing Street, with elements of the history of ideas and of practical politics. Indeed, much of Letwin’s work has been to marry theory with practice, not only in Britain but in consultations round the world.

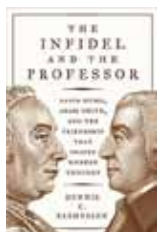
It begins on the eve of the referendum on the EU, at a time when Letwin was a member of the Cabinet. There is a midnight discussion in Downing Street on what to do if Brexit wins. Letwin wants Cameron to stay on as PM, others urge him to resign. Osborne sits on the fence. Cameron is quoted as generously describing all this as ‘a brilliantly frank and often amusing account of what worked and what didn’t’. Mrs May inherits the poisoned cup, she sacks Letwin, having already disposed of Osborne. One of Letwin’s many attractive qualities is that he never bears a grudge, and he cheerfully admits that, in her shoes, he would probably have done the same; and feels that the various sackings were ‘a low price for a decisive new start’. Are there any other leading politicians in any party today who would take such a civilised and generous line?

We then go on to his work as Shadow Home Secretary under Duncan Smith, and the important part he played in the crusade for social justice and social reform, as usual badly reported, if at all, in the press and above all on the BBC. Later, there is a crucial meeting of the Shadow Cabinet to decide whether or not to support the Labour rebels against Blair’s decision to back the US invasion of Iraq.

After much heart-searching, Letwin decided wisely that since the Americans would go ahead anyway, it made no sense to damage, perhaps for decades, what was left of the Atlantic Alliance, without achieving anything except some of the ‘virtue-signalling’ which was to become such a frequent and futile feature of the years that followed. Two more chapters cover ‘Building a Coalition’ with the Lib Dems, in which he got on well with Clegg, and further work in the Cabinet Office in the crucial task of turning the aims and policies of the Government into effective action on the ground.

This book leaves one with the firm impression that what is most needed now is someone with the intelligence and diplomatic gifts of Letwin, as well as his long experience in government, opposition and coalition, in order to make a trade deal with the EU

and to make an agreement on customs, while liberating us from the so-called European Court of Justice. If Mrs May had someone on board with Letwin's rare combination of qualities, her task would be much less daunting.



Empirically Speaking

Scott Grønmark

The Infidel and the Professor: David Hume, Adam Smith, and the Friendship That Shaped Modern Thought, Dennis C Rasmussen, Princeton University Press, 2017, £24.95.

When David Hume died in 1776, his literary executor, the economist Adam Smith, wrote an account of his death in which, after emphasising the cheerfulness with which the philosopher had faced his end, Smith described his great friend as ‘approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit’. Smith’s eulogistic *Letter to Strahan* attracted widespread criticism: Dr Johnson refused to believe that Hume had died fearlessly, while James Boswell, who had studied under Smith at Glasgow University, attacked his old tutor’s account as an example of the ‘poisonous productions with which this age is infested’. Hume was, notoriously, a religious sceptic, and Christians rejected the notion that an unbeliever, let alone ‘the great Infidel’, as Hume had been described) could be virtuous, or that any man could die a good death without the prospect of an afterlife to buoy his spirits.

Adam Smith had always been considered less of a religious sceptic than Hume; otherwise he wouldn’t have been allowed to lecture at Glasgow University for twelve years, while clergymen ensured that Hume was denied two professorships. Corroborating Hume’s blasé attitude to death was out of character for the cautious intellectual from Kirkcaldy. As there was no advantage to be gained from such boldness, what made Smith virtually reveal himself as a fellow-atheist? Perhaps it was simply a sign of Smith’s extraordinarily high regard for his ‘dearest friend’.

One might expect a book by an American political scientist about the relationship between arguably the greatest philosopher to have written in the English language (according to Isaiah Berlin, ‘no man has influenced the history of philosophical thought to a deeper and more disturbing degree’) and possibly the greatest economist of all time to be a rather dry affair.

Instead, it’s a very readable, heart-warming account of the genuine, long-lasting friendship between two Scottish thinkers, whose relationship was apparently untroubled by envy, resentment, or as the 65 surviving letters between them would suggest, a harsh word. Both men went out of their way to advance each other’s careers and to comment helpfully on each other’s writings. Hume did everything he could to publicise his friend’s writings, while Smith offered advice aimed at protecting Hume from his own impetuosity as when the latter made the mistake of helping the paranoid ingrate Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He characteristically repaid the Scotsman’s kindness by publicly accusing him of trying to steal his ideas. Smith and Hume’s harmonious relationship would have been more understandable if one had been a slavish protégé of the other, or if they had worked in entirely separate fields. But, despite Hume being twelve years older and more famous and a more prolific writer than Smith, they covered much of the same ground and were in broad agreement on most issues, although each was very much his own man.

Their friendship may have been helped by a lack of proximity: while Smith spent most of his time in Glasgow, Kirkcaldy or London, Hume, apart from a lengthy stay in France, where ‘le bon David’ was lionised by high society, lived mainly in Edinburgh, where he constantly entreated Smith to join him, even proposing that they set up house together. But they weren’t often in the same place at the same time, and it was only after Hume’s death that Smith did what his friend had constantly begged him to do, and moved to Edinburgh, where he gamely took over Hume’s role as host to Auld Reekie’s brilliant intellectual elite. This was the era of the Scottish Enlightenment, when the Scots, as Hume remarked were ‘the People most distinguish’d for Literature in Europe’, and when, as Walter Scott later put it, ‘there were giants in the land.’

Hume was taller, fleshier, and more gregarious than Smith; he was also more ebullient, more light-hearted, and wittier. He was positively impish and seemed to enjoy creating a rumpus. More urbane and more polished – he spoke with an English accent, and relished his time in Parisian society. He also, it seems, had an eye for the ladies. If Hume was a ‘smooth’ man, Smith was a ‘hairy’ one. Walter Bagehot described him as possessing a ‘lumbering bonhomie’. He retained his Scottish accent, and was more of an absent-minded professor for he apparently shared Dr Johnson’s disconcerting habit of muttering distractedly to himself in company. While naturally cautious, he could be extremely blunt: when Dr Johnson referred to Hume as a liar in his presence, Smith reportedly called him ‘a son of a bitch’.

They weren't exactly joined at the hip when it came to ideas, but Rasmussen reveals the similarity of their outlook. Unlike their continental equivalents, both were empiricists, more interested in the here and now and with human nature as it is than with weaving airy theories aimed at forging a new, improved version of humanity. While Smith is now considered the godfather of classical liberal economics, Hume was the first to write about the subject – and many of his ideas made their way into *The Wealth of Nations*. Again unlike the French *philosophes*, the Scotsmen believed in limited government, the rule of law, private property, incremental change rather than violent revolution, freedom of expression and religious toleration. If anything, Hume was even more of a Thatcherite than Smith: he lauded the social, moral and political benefits of commerce, saw nothing intrinsically wrong with the enjoyment of luxury, and dismissed all attempts by governments to interfere in people's economic choices as futile or counterproductive. Smith largely agreed, but interestingly once counselled against the tendency to worship the rich while despising the poor, calling it 'the greatest and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments.' While one of Smith's most brilliant insights was that economic growth depends on the division of labour, he also warned against the soul-crushing effect of endlessly repeating the same mechanical task.

Just as Hume's economic views were more influential than is generally supposed, so Smith was more influential in the sphere of moral philosophy. *The Wealth of Nations* would have a seismic effect in the real world for it became official British government policy within ten years of publication, and would underpin newly-independent America's commercial activities. For most of his life, Smith was known for his first major work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Hume and Smith both believed that our moral views derive from the sentiments, along with custom, habit and imagination, rather than reason, and are acquired over time rather than being hard-wired. Both held that proper moral judgment requires adopting the viewpoint of an impartial spectator, rather than correctly interpreting Holy Writ. Controversially, they saw morality as a human, not a divine creation.

This thoroughly enjoyable book left me feeling grateful that those of us who live in the Anglosphere inhabit a society more influenced by the insights of David Hume and Adam Smith, and not those of the *philosophes*. As Smith wrote: 'Of all the corrupters of moral sentiments... faction and fanaticism have always been by far the worst.'



Blue Print William Gisby

Conservatism: Ideas in Profile, Roger Scruton, Profile Books, 2017, £8.99.

Disagreements over what qualifies as left wing and what qualifies as right wing frequently feature on the Comment boards of the *Salisbury Review* and disputes persist as to what does and what doesn't constitute fascism. A case of particular interest to readers of the *Salisbury Review* is the noun conservatism, which is both a label claimed by a major political party and one applied to a tradition of political thought.

Faced with the challenge of having to explain conservatism as a tradition of thought to those only familiar with party political conservatism, many of us have long harboured the wish that an authoritative conservative thinker would produce a concise and clearly written exposition of philosophical conservatism we could recommend to others. This wish has now finally been fulfilled, thanks to Sir Roger Scruton having agreed to contribute a volume to the *Profile Books Ideas In Profile* series.

Professor Scruton's reputation as an authority on conservative political theory will be familiar to many readers, who will almost certainly know him as both the original editor of the *Salisbury Review* (1982-2001) and as a leading academic and the author responsible for producing such titles as *Arguments for Conservatism* and *How to Be a Conservative*. In *Conservatism*, as in his previous books, Sir Roger succeeds in both clearly outlining the tenets of conservative thought and in showing their relevance to contemporary issues.

The particular versatility of *Conservatism* is that it offers the reader both an erudite exposition of the evolution of conservative thinking, spread across five highly readable chapters, and a standalone sixth chapter that makes a compelling case for the need to embrace conservatism now. This makes chapter six the go to essay when seeking a brief account of the distinguishing features of contemporary conservative thought and how it differs from the neo-liberal doctrine associated with party political conservatism as it is now professed throughout the Anglosphere.

Conservatism makes a strong case for the preservation of the best of the existing order, and alerts us to the need to challenge the notion of progress. The book, however, goes beyond serving solely as a primer on authentic conservative political philosophy, it

also takes taking the bold step of identifying two of the leading challenges to the survival of Western civilization: the folly that is political correctness, and militant Islamism.

Resistance to the foregoing can sometimes feel futile. Yet resistance is possible. Having a clear understanding of what we are up against and why and a firm grasp of the ideas we stand for and why we stand for them. Reading *Conservatism* can help us to gain purchase on both these fundamental ideas, furnishing as they do the principles, concepts and insights that make the wisdom of conservatism clear.



Where the Bong Tree grows Celia Haddon

Mr Lear. A Life of Art and Nonsense, Jenny Uglow, Faber & Faber, 2017, £25.

‘The Dong with the Luminous Nose’, ‘The Jumblies’ that sailed away in a sieve, and, of course, ‘The Owl and the Pussycat’ – these nonsense verses are how we remember Edward Lear. Yet he was also a successful painter, travel writer, art teacher to Queen Victoria and ornithological illustrator of high esteem – perhaps not quite Audubon but not far off.

He contributed sixty-eight plates for John Gould’s *Birds of Europe*, ten for Gould’s *Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans, 1852-1854* and produced his own venture, *Illustrations of The Family of Psittacidae, or Parrots*. Before photography, books like these were the only way to record what birds looked like and his venture was the nineteenth century upmarket equivalent of a modern part work. To publish he had to find enough rich subscribers who would pay ten shillings for each of the proposed twenty-four large folio parts.

Subscribers signed up in advance, but some still had to be chased for the money as each part came out. The work involved getting access to London Zoo’s parrots, sketching them while a keeper held them down, finding stuffed birds if there were no living specimens, learning how to produce lithographs, paying for colour printing and for binding. John Gould made money out of such work; Edward Lear did not. In the end, Lear had to stop at twelve parts. He lost money but the effort paid off because it made his name among zoological circles and his first important work involved illustrating other zoological books.

His background was middle-class; his father was

a broker in the City, who defaulted on his debts and was hammered on the stock exchange but the family survived somehow, and Lear was brought up by his older sister, Anne, rather than his remote and unloving mother. Suffering from epilepsy, all his life he concealed his seizures and perhaps because of these he spent only one miserable year at a boys’ school. Self-educated, he played the flute, wrote poetry (some of it comic parodies influenced by that now sadly neglected poet Thomas Hood), wrote music, and was a good draftsman. Setting up home with his sister Anne, his first paid work was medical drawings for doctors and hospitals, sketches for shops, and decorated screens and fans. He also gave lessons to young ladies.

For his career to flourish, he needed patrons that were not only rich but interested in the subject matter of his art. To begin with these were gentlemen naturalists connected with the Zoological Society and, pre-eminently, Lord Derby whose stately home was a huge private zoo, with exotic birds, reptiles and tropical fish in tanks warmed in the greenhouses. Inside the house were stuffed birds and animals, cabinets full of skins, dried plant specimens and pinned insects, and a growing number of Lear’s careful watercolours recording the zoo’s inmates. Three birds are named after him: Lear’s cockatoo, Lear’s macaw and the parakeet *Platycercus leari*.

Thanks to Lord Derby’s humanity and his own growing status as a naturalist, Lear stayed in the big house, Knowsley Hall, as a guest, not in the servant’s quarters where a hired artist might have expected to be housed. He understood that it was his duty to pay for his supper by performing as an agreeable guest; ‘I took all the pains in the world to make myself pleasant,’ he wrote. And it was at Knowsley Hall that he discovered the limericks, nonsense rhymes and comic drawings made not just to make the children of the house laugh, but also amuse the adults.

This introduction to high society gave him other patrons – the Stanley cousins and the Hornbys, another branch of the family, and with these connections established he decided to become a landscape artist. In those days that meant accurate representations of the landscape infused with a romantic atmosphere. He set off first for the Lake District; then, with a generous commission from Lord Derby and other subscribers, to Rome. Italy was the traditional destination for British artists to study the great art of the Renaissance and to fulfil commissions of aristocrats on the Grand Tour. ‘You have little notion how completely an artist’s paradise is Rome,’ he wrote to his sister Anne, who fortunately for him had stayed in London.

Earning a living as a landscape artist required travel and ‘views’. Lear’s twenty-five lithographs were

published as *Views in Rome and Its Environment*, and unlike his parrot book it made money. Unlike some competitors, he added text, this time to *Illustrated Excursions in Italy*. The pattern of his life was to spend most of the year abroad and then to finish each book on return to Britain. It was after *Excursions* that Queen Victoria asked for lessons in watercolour landscapes. She diligently copied his drawings, as was then the norm among lady amateur painters.

His serious art, the main focus of his life, still required patrons which in turn meant being pleasing to the rich people, among whom he could only be an outsider. Convinced he was ugly, he suffered from bouts of depression. Despite numerous Lear diaries and letters (essential to keep in touch with patrons), somehow Lear's inner life remains a secret. He was homosexual, Jenny Uglow writes, possibly the victim of childhood sexual abuse, but his sex life, like his epileptic seizures, was concealed from his friends and also even from his diary. Instead of a wife, he lived with a cat with a stumpy tail, Foss.

The nonsense for which Lear is now famed came out between two serious books, *Excursions* and *Gleanings from the Menagerie and Aviary at Knowsley Hall*. While two volumes of *Excursions* had cost its subscribers four guineas per volume, *The Book of Nonsense* was a mere three shillings and sixpence and Lear, who paid for its publication, did not put his name to the book until its third edition. Both the nonsense verse and illustrations are strikingly more original than his competent travel lithographs or the later oil paintings. Some of his true self was to be found among the old person of Cromer who stood on one leg to read Homer or the old man of New York who murdered himself with a fork.

These limericks and the remarkable comic line drawings of his nonsense verses are reproduced in *Mr Lear. A Life of Art and Nonsense*. Also in this excellent biography are his skilled lithographs and reproductions of his capable romantic oil paintings. Unusually, the book itself is a beautiful object, being handsomely bound (unlike most books) and well designed. The hardback is well worth £25.



Mad Houses Anthony Daniels

The Story Of Nursing In British Mental Hospitals: Echoes from the Corridors, Niall McCrae and Peter Nolan, Routledge, 2016, £39.99 pbk.

Readers should not be put off from reading this excellent book by its unexciting title. It is filled with interesting anecdotes and indirectly charts a great deal of important social history. The authors are two experienced psychiatric nurses, far too experienced to have any ideological axes to grind. They know that there will never be a complete answer to the psychiatric woes of mankind and therefore resist the temptation to criticise the past from the standpoint of some ideal in which every problem is solved expeditiously, kindly and effectively without any drawbacks or harmful unintended consequences. They write as they find, but without a sense of superiority over those whom they write about.

They are certainly not uncritical of the psychiatric nursing of the past. Cruelty and neglect are cruelty and neglect whenever committed, but the authors are wise enough to know that cruelty and neglect are protean in form and may arise in any circumstances whatsoever. Psychiatric services will never be so perfectly organised that nurses will not have to be kind.

They trace the history of psychiatric nursing from the beginning of the asylum to its end, and a little beyond. They indulge neither in nostalgia for the old asylums, nor in blanket condemnations of them. Whatever the original intentions behind them, the asylums became for many years terrible places, warehouses of misery. I remember the 'back wards', as they were called, in which supposedly incurable patients were herded in dormitories with practically no spaces between the beds, with no privacy and no personal belongings. The smell was awful. The patients spent the day endlessly shuffling along corridors looking for cigarette butts, in dirty ragged clothes, muttering to themselves and holding out a hand to a passer-by for a coin or a piece of chocolate. It now astonishes me that such conditions should have existed – and on quite a large scale – in my lifetime, though it is even more astonishing to realise how easily one could take them for granted, as if there were no alternative.

There was another side to the asylum, however. At their best they did offer asylum and at least minimal care for people who genuinely could not look after themselves. It is easy to overlook that for much of their

duration, they contained people with physiological conditions of unknown origin and without any possible amelioration, let alone cure. If I had been born in the middle of the nineteenth century, I would probably have ended up by my thirties as a dement in an asylum and died soon afterwards, anonymously and unnoticed. The condition that I have, now easily treated, is a common one and must have accounted for thousands of cases in the days when its cause and treatment were unknown. And while cases of abuse by staff, who were often rough and uneducated, must have been uncommon, so must acts of kindness. Even allowing for a great deal of covering up by authorities, abuse comes to light and reaches the record much more easily than kindness.

For much of asylum history, nurses lived under an almost military discipline, performing routine tasks like private soldiers, unquestioningly obeying the orders of their superiors. They were poorly paid and their job, though difficult and sometimes hazardous, was not prestigious. No educational attainments were required.

This gradually changed as psychiatric care became less custodial and more therapeutic, at least in theory. Early efforts at cure or amelioration often seem to us now to have been primitive, absurd or cruel; Cotton believed that schizophrenia was caused by focal sepsis and started to cut out what he supposed were the foci of infection from sufferers, often mutilating and killing them by his ludicrous operations. But only those who have never seen what untreated chronic psychotics are sometimes like will be entirely without sympathy for early efforts. It is easy to suppose that doing something must be better than doing nothing.

The asylums started to decline in the 1950s. If the numbers of elderly people with dementia increased, the numbers of younger people with physical conditions with psychiatric sequelae decreased (I remember two last cases of general paralysis of the insane, one a vicar and the other a prostitute, and have never seen any cases in the forty years since). Moreover, partially effective treatments for chronic psychosis have been discovered, and full-blown melancholia is almost a thing of the past, though the disappearance of melancholia has been bought at the cost of the gross over-prescription of anti-depressants and the removal of the word *unhappiness* from our lexicon.

Oddly enough, as the authors acknowledge, there exists a nostalgia for the old asylums, especially among those who worked in them. For the staff, at least, asylums were genuine communities, enclosed and comforting worlds, with their own customs, traditions, and social life. They inspired deep devotion among those who spent their entire careers in them, and often

passed on their jobs to their children. Telephonists and porters sometimes became informal therapists, befriending the patients who were often like pets to them. The irony was that care in the community entailed the closure of the only genuine community for miles around, casting out patients into a world of bed-sits and shabby communal housing in run-down areas of decaying towns.

Nevertheless, no one – certainly not the authors – would advocate a return to the ‘good old days’. But neither are the authors blind to the deficiencies of present-day care, which is often but an elaborate system of neglect. Nurses fill forms to such an extent that they come to believe that, having filled a form, they have done their work. Patients are often looked after, if those are the words for it, by a succession of staff, up to twenty without seeing any of them more than twice. The seriously disturbed receive less attention than the mildly neurotic. If the authors were to write a similar book in fifty years’ time, they would have plenty of anecdotes of scandal to enliven their pages, as they have enlivened their account of the past two centuries.



Boarding the WTO lifeboat Alistair Miller



Making a Success of Brexit and Reforming the EU, Roger Bootle, Nicholas Brearley, 2017, £10.99.

Clean Brexit: Why Leaving the EU Still Makes Sense, Liam Halligan and Gerard Lyons, Biteback, 2017, £20.

These books are important and welcome contributions to the Brexit debate, and cut through the fog of misinformation, the scare stories and the currency of illiterate nonsense that is traded daily on the subject. Neither offers panaceas or certainties, or pretends that Brexit, any more than remaining, will be simple or painless. Both recognise that there are deep-seated problems with the British economy. But they argue that Brexit offers us a golden opportunity to address these problems, and that given the requisite vision and leadership, the future is bright. Yet blink and you would have missed any reference to these works in the mainstream media, or to the principled and detailed argument they advance for a ‘clean’ Brexit – i.e. for preparing to trade on WTO rules. The catastrophic ‘cliff-edge’ narrative continues unchallenged, and the supplicant Mrs May, desperate for a deal to prevent

us ‘crashing out’ of the single market, shuttles to and from Brussels to feed on crumbs thrown her from the EU high table.

Although there is inevitably some overlap, the two books complement each other well. The strength of Bootle’s book lies in its magisterial account of the genesis and flawed nature of the EU project. His account is the more compelling in that he is patently not a Europhobe (until he began researching the issues in depth for the book, he supported EU membership) and credits the EU with considerable political and security achievements. The problem is that it is simply no longer fit for purpose. Like pre-First World War generals, the EU leaders are fixated on producing a tightly-knit continental empire, an ever-closer union whose sheer size will guarantee European influence or ‘leverage’ on the world stage. But the impossibility of forging a viable democracy among peoples who share neither a common language nor common political, legal and cultural traditions ensures that European integration ‘is a project of the European elites imposed on the people below’. The wider vision that might have some unifying power, of the EU as a ‘modern incarnation of Christendom’, has of course been rejected by the elite. Meanwhile, the refusal of the Germans to countenance the fiscal and banking union that would enable differences in competitiveness to be compensated within a single currency area ensures that the countries of the periphery are condemned to permanent stagnation. The euro has, in fact, been ‘a disaster from the beginning’, with hard economic realities disregarded in the name of ‘childlike visions of future European unity’. The end-result is a giant bureaucracy, committed solely to getting bigger and more integrated, that ‘hurtles towards a ghastly end – economically, politically and socially’.

In the light of all this, the puzzling question is why the EU project has attracted, and continues to attract, such an uncritical consensus of support from the intellectual class. Bootle’s analysis here is revealing and he compares the ‘systematic tendency towards widespread delusion’ to that of the delegations of idealistic admirers who visited the Soviet Union in the pre-war period. Likewise, the admirers of the EU, convinced of its high liberal moral purpose, are blind to the realities that stare them in the face. Yet in the modern globalized world, there is, argues Bootle, no good reason why political, economic and other close associations ‘cannot flourish across long distances’ just as they did in the past – witness the great seaborne empires of old. And where geographical proximity does count, as in environmental and security issues, there is no reason why neighbours cannot cooperate effectively *without* forming a political or monetary union. The

paradox of the EU, then, is that ‘it is both too small and too large’ ... ‘too large to make a successful political entity and yet too small to be a self-contained, or even self-centred, economic bloc’. So far as trade is concerned, ‘the only entity that it makes sense to belong to is the world’.

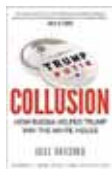
The strength of Halligan and Lyons’ book lies in its exhaustive analysis of the economic issues involved in Brexit, its sector-by-sector appraisal of the challenges faced by the British economy, and its practical policy recommendations (vocational training, finance for SMEs and research funding are high on the agenda) for making a long-term success of Brexit – something sorely lacking on the part of our current leaders, who rest content with vacuous platitudes. Halligan and Lyons’ post-Brexit vision, by contrast, is both optimistic and empirically grounded. Their central contention is that trading under WTO rules, far from being the disaster commonly portrayed, is a coherent position to adopt and provides a good platform from which to negotiate a future free trade agreement with the EU. A complex multi-sector deal with twenty seven governments is unlikely to be finalised before March 2019, and unless ‘no deal’ is seen as a viable option, a bad deal is almost guaranteed. To believe that the EU will compromise its fundamental principles, the four freedoms, to craft a bespoke ‘soft Brexit’ deal to suit Britain is delusional. Instead, we should set a ‘no deal’ deadline for autumn 2018, after which we would move to trade under WTO rules. Most WTO tariffs are minimal. In sectors where tariffs are significant (autos and food), measures can easily be taken to minimise the impact on producers or consumers; our huge trade deficit with the EU ensures that net tariff receipts will be in our favour, and tariffs can be unilaterally removed where we judge there to be a net benefit to the UK – as in the case of food imports. Mutual recognition agreements will need to be agreed in advance to enable trade to continue smoothly after Brexit, and streamlined customs procedures and electronic registration of consignments introduced. But apart from the fact that an EU refusal to agree to such measures would constitute discrimination under WTO rules, the EU has nothing to gain from having its exports, particularly its perishable agricultural products, pile up across the Channel.

On the question of the Irish border, Halligan and Lyons note that with customs pre-clearance and information-sharing, the logistical difficulties of ensuring a ‘frictionless’ border can easily be surmounted. However, if the EU attempts to use the issue as a pawn in the Brexit negotiations, then given that two-thirds of Irish trade is now with non-EU countries, and Ireland is now a net contributor to the

EU budget, they recommend a simple strategy: ‘to put I Brexit on the table and to leave it there, in full view, for EU negotiators to see’.

Both books explode the myth that it is vital Britain remains in the single market. They note the absurd exaggeration of the supposed benefits, that such benefits as do accrue advantage to countries outside the single market who trade into it as much as members, that the costs of membership (the market’s extensive rules and regulations apply across the whole economies of member states, and to services, where Britain has a comparative advantage and yet there is no single market) are significant, and that countries outside the single market have done much better at exporting to it than the UK. Indeed, there may well have been a net loss to the UK in belonging. They also remark on the groupthink, the institutional bias toward the *status quo* that has characterised the economic establishment. It was hopelessly wrong in its forecasts of disaster on our leaving the ERM in 1992, equally wrong in its predictions of an immediate sharp downturn following a vote to leave in June 2016, and it failed to foresee the financial crisis of 2007-8. Halligan and Lyons note that the ‘gravity models’ relied on by most forecasters, including the Treasury, which weight the benefits of trade according to market size and geographical proximity, are hopelessly outdated. Not the least of the benefits of Brexit is that the consequent depreciation of sterling will help correct our dangerously large trade deficit, and provide a basis for rebalancing our low investment, low skill, low wage, low productivity economy.

Because the arguments involved are complex and the vested interests entrenched, much hinges, conclude Halligan and Lyons, on the leadership provided by government, the coherence of its post-Brexit vision, and on the quality and detail of its arguments. Only one question, then, remains to be answered. Pray, who is going to provide this leadership?



Return of the Okhrana

Martin Dewhurst

Collusion. How Russia Helped Trump Win the White House, Luke Harding, Guardian Books and Faber & Faber Limited, 2017, £14.99.

2016 may turn out to be one of the most significant years in this century’s history. Britain’s decision to leave the EU and America’s choice of Trump, a businessman, as its President, suggest that there has been a populist paradigm shift in at least some Western

societies. Is it possible to stop or reverse globalisation? Is de-globalisation a realistic possibility? A quarter of a century after the collapse of the USSR, some influential people in these societies finally began to realise that the coup and counter-coup in Moscow in 1991 had not heralded a democratic revolution after all; that Putin was far more difficult to deal with than Gorbachev; that the Cold War had not ended; and that Russia was perhaps an even greater danger to Western values than ISIS. As Harding puts it, ‘the regime changed. The system didn’t.’

2016 was also the year when Christopher Steele busied himself gathering information about a possible Russian attempt to swing American voters away from Hillary Clinton to her rival, who would, if successful, be more susceptible to influence, pressure and perhaps even blackmail from the Kremlin. To what extent did Trump, who evidently thinks that deals rather than values should shape international relations, himself have connections to Russia and to Russians? One year on, much of the evidence remains merely circumstantial, but what is clear from this book is the large number of influential Russians and Westerners of very dubious morality. A striking feature of Harding’s riveting account is the importance attributed to Americans, Russians and Europeans who were born in the USSR but now spend much of their time in the West, the roll call of which includes the likes of Agalarov, Akhmetshin, Flynn, Kushner, Manafort, Page, Putin, Sater, Trump and Wiswell. Collusion – the Russian term for which, *sgovor*, also means ‘deal’ – would have been an excellent title for this volume.

Chapter 1 sets the scene for Steele’s experiences as an MI6 officer in Russia. Chapter 2, entitled ‘I Think He’s an Idiot’, tells the pathetic story of Dr Carter Page, at one time Trump’s leading Russia expert, and touches on the activities of the sinister Igor Sechin. Further chapters examine the published version of most of Steele’s reports, the hacking activities, some of them outsourced, engaged in by the Russian security services, the questionable competence of General Michael Flynn in Russian affairs, and Manafort’s even more questionable (and very well-paid) activities in support of Yanukovich in Ukraine.

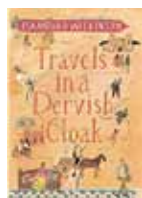
A particularly significant chapter dissects the working relationship between the former head of the FBI, James Comey, and Trump, who, rather like Kissinger and Putin, believes that ‘deal-making rather than values should shape international relations’. Comey has stated that the Russian government, ‘using technical intrusion, lots of other methods’, has ‘tried to shape the way we think, we vote, we act’. But when a Democratic senator wanted to know whether Trump had ever shown ‘any concern or interest or curiosity

about what the Russians were doing’, Comey answered that he had not. A little strange, perhaps?

Chapter 8 sketches out what is known about Soviet and neo-Soviet attempts to keep tabs on Trump dating as far back as the 1980s. For example, in 1984, Trump sold five apartments to David Bogatin, an alleged associate of a certain Mogilevich, ‘a Ukrainian-Russian mafia don and one of the FBI’s ten most wanted individuals’. Many commentators continue to insist that neither Trump nor any of his inner circle has done anything wrong. But it seems that several of the professional organisations investigating the matter have been rather economical with the truth, and have chosen not to reveal to the general public the incriminating facts they have at their disposal. Harding goes on to describe Trump’s meetings with Putin in Hamburg: at one of them, Trump left his own interpreter behind, in a breach of national security protocol. We read about Dmitry Rybolovov, a Russian oligarch who bought Trump’s Palm Beach mansion for \$95 million in 2008 – a very good price considering Trump had paid only \$41.4 million for it four years earlier and the house had been on the market for two years. Is it possible that this purchase was the result of a money-laundering scheme? But possibly most shocking of all is the behaviour of certain departments of the Deutsche Bank, which Harding recounts in the final chapter. By comparison, the Royal Bank of Scotland was run on impeccable standards.

Harding is always scrupulously fair. He concedes that Russian intelligence found it remarkably easy to gain access to Trump’s inner circle: ‘Ambassadors, lawyers, bankers bearing bags of dirt ... all found their way to Trump Tower in 2016, all were welcomed and listened to’. How successful these attempts to meddle in American politics will be in the longer term remains to be seen. Harding writes, ‘As with Putin’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine, intervening in the 2016 US presidential election had been a tactical triumph and a strategic disaster’. For had Steele not compiled his dossier, then, according to Steele, ‘Trump would have lifted sanctions and created a new alliance with Russia’. As one friend put it, ‘Chris stole a great strategic victory from right under Putin’s nose’.

2018 may yet be as dramatic a year as 2016.



The Great Game Again Penelope Tremayne

Travels in a Dervish Cloak, Isambard Wilkinson, Eland, 2017, £19.95.

This is an interesting and engaging book though it has the disadvantage of reading distinctly like a collection of entries from a diary, which is probably in the main what it is.

Isambard Wilkinson – it sounds like an inspired *nom-de-plume* – is a highly experienced journalist with a long and honourable record. The account he gives here is the fruit of his assignment in Pakistan, where he lived and worked for several years. He has kept this record purely descriptive, avoiding any discussions on politics or religions, and winding up with a delightful account of a visit to Chitral, that remote and breathtaking frontier-post statelet on the Pakistani side of the line which divides Pakistan from Afghanistan.

Wilkinson is Irish and was educated between Ireland and an English boarding school. He also had an Anglo-Indian grandmother who, though she lived in what is now called Pakistan, came to Ireland every year to stay with the family, bringing with her a Pakistani friend who became known to them all as ‘the Begum’. These two women not only filled the Irish home with Indian *objets d’art* but stimulated young Isambard’s imagination; by the time he had finished school, he was fired by books of derring-do written by men only two generations before him, and also knew that he had a dangerous and probably incurable illness, but seems to have resolved either to overcome it or to ignore it. When he was eighteen his grandmother and the Begum invited him to visit them in Lahore; he put aside any thoughts about further education and accepted. On his return and looking now for a future career, he was offered and took a trial post as a foreign correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* – a job in which he did not fail, and which never failed him. After postings to various states and continents, including seven years in Spain and one in Afghanistan, his final move was to Pakistan, the post which he had most wanted and where he might have settled permanently, had his health problem not overtaken him.

Overall, the picture Wilkinson presents of Pakistan’s life in the future is not a happy one. The scars of partition have not healed and the feelings that remain are not of regret but of resentment: in Wilkinson’s words, ‘India has never accepted Pakistan’s existence’. Later, getting closer to the bone, he writes, ‘My fears

for the changing nature of the country... have been heightened by another event.' Islamic militants have detonated a bomb at a meeting of Sufi-minded clerics, killing more than sixty people. Not a Sufi-Shia attack but Sufi-on-Sufi. Militants were now targeting the country's pacifist mystical core. Modern Western life is catching up. Nevertheless, he finishes on a happier note, with a detailed account of his visit to Chitral, that tiny but indomitable independent state. Here he was made welcome as a friend by HRH Prince Khushvaqt and his delightful family.

Eland have done an excellent job on this book but the blurb on the dust jacket is ludicrous. The text, though it is colourful, is not irreverent; nor is it hilarious, puritanical or hedonistic, and it contains no account of Pakistan's riches – rather the exact opposite. It just describes life in a country where he has lived and worked happily enough to make him uneasy for its future.

Not succumbing to illness but driven by it, Wilkinson has returned to Ireland where, with the help of his stunningly selfless brother, he has compiled this book from old records. A notable feature of it, rather unusual in today's writing, is its kindness of outlook. He can see what is bad, candidly enjoys what is good, and condemns no-one. 'God go with you', as the Greeks, or at least some of them, still say.



The Birth of Soviet Man Alexander Adams

The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution, Yuri Slezkine, Princeton University Press, 2017, £29.95.

The mob, whose sacred fury always rises above itself, is an immensely inspired force, projected by the will of those to come, that will erect, with its merciless hands, a new world of insatiable utopia...

So wrote a revolutionary socialist in 1917, a year when anything seemed possible in Russia; the combination of self-regard, idealism and anger is common to revolutionaries and religious zealots. The centenary of the Russian Revolution has been marked worldwide by many events describing and explaining that shattering schism in cultural and political history. Many convey a naïve admiration not always tempered by an acknowledgement of the untold horrors collectivism unleashed upon Russia and the wider world. The Left's idolisation of revolutionary violence persists in the Anarcho-communist Antifa mobs and

the American destroyers of Confederate statue. Public social humiliation may pre-date communism, but meetings in which 'enemies of the people' engage in craven self-criticism before avid crowds are surely templates for today's social-media harassment campaigns against perpetrators of 'hate speech'.

Slezkine argues that Marxism is a millenarian ideology which prophesises a great cleansing of social sin, to be followed by a dictatorship of the proletariat to free people from the burden of poverty and injustice. Early believers were ardent revolutionaries committed to establishing a scientifically organised utopia. They were fuelled by a moral fury and the desire to wreak vengeance upon the capitalist class.

In the crucible of the revolution, self-mortification and hedonism are combined. Comrades were sometimes drawn by base motives:

An unknown figure mounted the podium, a man in black leather, an army cap, a revolver at his waist. He was saying something about world revolution and about the interventionists, who had been chased away, but were raring to attack us again, but I wasn't listening – I was admiring his strong, handsome face. He had such beautiful brown eyes...

The turmoil of flight, civil war and the prospect of sudden death liberated revolutionaries from social ties and provided an atmosphere ripe for intense romances. Slezkine quotes extensively from the memoirs of comrades who recorded their experience of conversion to the true faith, the suffering of war, and the aspiration to build a new society.

The creation of Soviet man (and woman) would be achieved through a regime of exercise, cleanliness, group activity and cultural education. This would reduce private time to a minimum, eliminate patriarchal family loyalty and cure unemployment. Once barriers of family and class had gone, citizens could lead idyllic communal lives. Theorists who wanted to communalise every aspect of life were irritated by the slow pace of change, which they attributed to imperialist sabotage and the weakness of the peasant class for material pleasures. Industrialization, collectivisation and ideological purges would achieve the goal more quickly. Slezkine argues that Marxism failed as a belief system precisely because it was wholly materialistic; it provided no domestic or moral guidance whatever.

A new society needed new architecture. Designs for Soviet living were simple, plain and mass-produced – not merely a matter of necessary frugality but of the principle that comfort induces indolence. Lack of resources stymied the more ambitious plans but a prestige project which did get approval was the House of Government. Built on a swampy tract of land almost directly opposite the Kremlin, the House

of Government was intended both to solve the shortage of modern accommodation in Moscow and symbolise the Party's ambitions. When it opened in 1932, the complex had 505 modern apartments provided with all the latest facilities – shops, laundry, cafeteria, library, movie theatre, medical clinic, bank, post office and tennis courts, all protected by security guards. Rather more bourgeois than collectivist, in fact. Initially there were 2,745 residents, mainly important party functionaries and distinguished cultural workers, including artists, musicians and writers, and the building's architect, Boris Iofan. Other residents included Nikita Krushchev, Stalin's daughter, and the chief embalmer of Lenin's cadaver, who had to attend it several times a week to remove mould. The children of residents were much more socialised than their parents. According to interviews and diaries, adult residents rarely mixed with each other, and domestic staff were protective and territorial. It was only in the courtyards, where the children played, that communal life existed. Many of the residents enjoyed country stays in Party dachas and at Black Sea resorts.

Also resident in House of Government were officials overseeing the dekulakisation of the peasantry, which involved the arrest, deportation and execution of kulaks (smallholder farmers) to bring about the collectivisation of agricultural production. This crime brought about a famine in which up to 12 million people died. Slezkine recounts some of the horrors officials witnessed on field trips in Kazakhstan and the Ukraine – while their children were raised by Ukrainian nannies who had fled starvation.

Because they were not subject to state inspection, privileged citizens accumulated a wide variety of trinkets and luxuries, some from travels abroad on Party business. Above all, they collected and read books, mainly classics of world literature. In practice, the far-reaching ambitions of the Party did not impinge upon domestic life but were largely confined to workplaces and schools. Political theorists never satisfactorily defined the Bolshevik family so the more drastic domestic proposals were never implemented. Children did not become the property of the state at the age of six, as had been mooted; but, as it was, execution, imprisonment and exile brought the state plenty of orphans to look after. For example, Tania Miagkova and Mikhail Poloz of apartment 199 were imprisoned and then executed, leaving Tania's mother to care for their daughter. In the midst of a Russian winter, Tania had been stripped to her underwear and forced to dig her own grave before being shot.

In 1934, the assassination of Kirov, a senior Party official, initiated a reign of terror by the NKVD, Stalin's secret police. During the Great Purge, a wave of terror

spread among Party rank and file as arrests were followed by exile, imprisonment and execution – with or without trial. Anyone could be unmasked as a spy, interventionist, nationalist or saboteur. True believers, revolutionary heroes and obsequious careerists alike were denounced, removed and executed. The frenzied paranoia reached such a pitch that NKVD operatives detected swastikas in candy and disguised faces on food-label designs.

Numerous residents of the House of Government were also killed. The arrival of black-clad secret police was a common occurrence. Residents were removed at night either silently trembling or screaming their innocence. Possessions were scrutinised for counter-revolutionary evidence and families expelled from the House. Some of the administrators of the Great Purge themselves lived in the House before they too were liquidated.

Like the state, the House was slowly degraded through negligence and indifference. Inefficiency was rife. Residents had their meals cooked for them in private while their domestic staff ate at the communal cafeteria. Managers of the House were dismissed for incompetence or arrested for corruption. Left to habit and human nature, residents of the House of Government maintained family structures that were indistinguishable from those in the West. Many residents fought in the Great Patriotic War against Hitler, and over a 100 were killed. The House was bomb-damaged, evacuated and later looted by the NKVD. When it was repaired and repopulated, the House somehow seemed less exclusive, if more chaotic.

Slezkine weaves stories of residents into broader Soviet history, the history of the House of Government depicting in miniature the history of the USSR. Although the inhabitants are gradually disposed of by the Party, the House of Government, like the Party, remains. Numerous small illustrations depict the better-known residents and bring added life to this sorry saga.

Anyone who supports Marxist revolution should be made to read this book.





The Great Divorce

Peter Mullen

British Values and The Book of Common Prayer,
Ian Robinson, The Brynmill Press, 2017, £9.60.

So-called ‘British Values’ are neither British nor are they values. In this penetrating, entertaining and frequently hilarious book, Ian Robinson, a distinguished literary critic, utterly debunks the politically correct propaganda put out by our political leaders.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid includes among these values ‘Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from abuse ... a belief in equality and democracy.’ But there is no such thing as freedom of speech. Try criticising the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered industry or Islam and see what happens to you. Many have lost their jobs for so doing. Or look at our so-called universities, which were designed to be centres of intellectual challenge and free debate, but which now hermetically seal their snowflaky students in ‘safe spaces’ where they will never have to hear anyone say anything they find uncongenial. Speakers who do not agree with the politically correct claptrap which dominates public life will be ‘no platformed’. The tyranny of this claptrap is even imposed retrospectively as statues and memorials to historical figures, national heroes now fallen out of favour, will be torn down. Our intolerant new uncivilisation seeks to rewrite history – just as Stalin or Pol Pot did.

The keyword in British values is ‘equality’. We are all said to be equal. This is rubbish. Robinson says, ‘The strictest scientific investigations have shown that members of some races in southeast Asia are on average born with a greater aptitude for arithmetic than Europeans. We are not all equal in our ability to swim, to write poetry or to live for eighty years.’ Amusingly, he produces an extract from a conversation between Enoch Powell and Malcolm Muggeridge:

Powell: ‘In many contexts we agree that one person is inferior to another in quality.’

Muggeridge: ‘No!’

Powell: ‘What are examinations about then?’

Another buzz word among the British Values-mongers is ‘rights’. Babies are said to have a right to be clothed and fed. This is not so. Rights can be ascribed only to sentient individuals capable of making at least the rudimentary moral judgements. This is why so-called animal rights are also a fiction. Rights belong to people who are able to exercise responsibility.

Neither the babe in arms nor the puppy dog can do this. They do not have the right to be fed. Rather, it is adults capable of making moral judgements who have the responsibility or the duty to feed the babies – and the puppies.

Robinson demonstrates vividly that all this British Values twaddle is really about political control: ‘What our governing elite offers as British Values is simply what the majority votes for. This only becomes awkward when, as in the 2016 Referendum, the majority gives the “wrong” answer.’ Then the people are asked to vote again ... and again if necessary, until they come up with the ‘right’ answer. Robinson comments, ‘The present Westminster dilemma is that Mrs May is trying to do this without another Referendum.’

We are supposed to have freedom of religion, but in practice, religion is excluded from the public realm. ‘Much lottery money goes in helping to repair cathedrals. This can only happen if the cathedrals are thought of as tourist attractions.’ Something similar happened to me. At St Michael’s Cornhill, we applied to the Corporation for a grant to install a handrail to help congregants up and down the front steps. I was asked, ‘Is your church used for anything other than religious services?’ I said that indeed it was: for concerts, organ recitals, arts exhibitions and lectures. I was told that the Corporation would pay a part of the cost of the handrail – that part which was estimated to cater for the needs of the concert-goers, patrons of the arts etc, but not for those who came to Communion or Evensong. It’s a funny thing when the authorities will offer support to churches – but not for worship, their chief function.

Similarly, Robinson points out, ‘According to the Charity Commission definition, some Christian organisations still qualify as charities, but these are never included in the Sunday morning slot on BBC Radio Four for *The Week’s Good Cause* ... The BBC dissociates charity from religion.’

British Values are said to exist to promote social cohesion and to help all the various religious and secular sects integrate. So in the summer of the Referendum, that venerable institution The British Library mounted an exhibition of punk rock. According to the blurb put out by the library, it is ‘marking forty years since Punk exploded into the nation’s consciousness’. Has such cultural vandalism now become the province of the British Library? By our new revaluations of all values, punk rock now belongs to the category called ‘music’. Robinson enquires, ‘At what point does a shouted obscenity become music?’

The values of a nation are what make up the nation’s character. In other words, our values are in our blood and we do not need a Communities Secretary or a

Minister of Culture to tell us what these values are. Robinson warns: ‘The character of a nation is not the same as the values its ruling classes try to instil. Remember the USSR!’

This timely book reveals ‘British Values’ to be without value. At the same time, it reminds us of what our true values are. A great read and all for less than a tenner.



Unclean Brexit James Monkton

What Next: How to Get the Best From Brexit, Daniel Hannan, Head of Zeus, 2016, £9.99.

Just as the EU referendum result ushered in a tidal wave of books to explain the outcome of that unlikely but joyous occasion, so thoughts also turned quickly to what Brexit might mean. Remainers/Remoaners continued with their litany of despair: that the sky did not fall in immediately as they had predicted was because it was still being held precariously in place until the triggering of Article 50 to begin Britain’s exit from the EU – or until the start of negotiations, or any number of events sparking off the doomsday scenario. We are still waiting: it seems that the apocalypse has once again been postponed. Any forthcoming catastrophe is much more likely to be the result of a global economic slow-down, or another crisis in Greece, or any number of non-Brexit related reasons. But Remainers will continue to blame Brexit regardless.

To counter these jeremiads, we have Liam Halligan and Gerard Lyon’s excellent *Clean Brexit: How to Make a Success of Leaving the European Union* and Daniel Hannan’s *What Next: How to Get the Best from Brexit*. Throughout long years of campaigning, Hannan remained civilised and formidably informed, effortlessly exposing the ignorance of those who debated against him. He also wrote the brilliant *A Doomed Marriage: Britain and Europe*. However, compared to these impressive benchmarks, his latest book is disappointing.

The bulk of the book reads like a personal manifesto – speculative, unduly optimistic about Britain’s future relationship with the EU, and repetitive. However, the first third of the book, which addresses the long lead-up to the referendum, is superb.

Most of Hannan’s ideas are eminently sensible and desirable, but how practical they are is difficult to

judge. The core of his argument is built on unmitigated free trade: even if the EU puts up tariff barriers against the UK, the UK should restrain from reciprocating. His support for *laissez-faire* is as enthusiastic as the pro-EU *Economist*’s. But was that the main reason why people voted Brexit? Many others, including Roger Scruton, think not. Hannan is a dedicated libertarian and believes that those who voted Brexit are also libertarians; and so he is relaxed about immigration. He was a vocal critic of UKIP’s infamous ‘breaking point’ poster, which depicted a vast column of Middle Eastern immigrants walking into Europe. But as UKIP’s chief referendum campaign organiser, Chris Bruni-Lowe, remarked, people did not vote UKIP because they were libertarians; they voted squarely on immigration.

Hannan is modest about his own heroic role in the referendum and effusive about the contributions of others, especially long-time colleagues Douglas Carswell and Mark Reckless, and the Vote Leave campaigner managers, Matthew Elliott and the abrasive Dominic Cummings. But whereas he is chummy and lenient in his treatment of the mendacious David Cameron (‘purposeful, pleasant and professional’), he is harsh and one-sided in his treatment of UKIP’s former leader, Nigel Farage, with whom he is determined to settle old scores. Hannan expounds in detail on the ‘Farage paradox’ (the Leave vote diminished as the UKIP vote rose) but both Brexit campaigns – Vote Leave, to which Hannan belonged, and the UKIP supported Leave.EU, which he dismisses – contributed to the final victory. As Michael Mosbacher and Oliver Wiseman demonstrate in *Brexit Revolt: How the UK Voted to Leave the EU*, the two sides complemented each other constructively, if not willingly. Hannan is also silent on the ‘Tate plot’, exposed by Owen Bennett (see *The Brexit Club: The Inside Story of the Leave’s Campaign’s Shock Victory*), in which, so it is alleged, Hannan, Carswell and Reckless conspired for the latter two to infiltrate UKIP in order to ‘detoxify’ it during the referendum campaign.

Nevertheless, Hannan’s book is important because, through a barrage of trenchant statistics, anecdotes and information, often shocking, it leaves us in no doubt that Hannan has overall been on the side of the angels. The case he makes for Brexit is, logically and morally, overwhelming. In the light of this, it is disgraceful that Hannan, along with some other staunch Brexiteers, was denied a safe parliamentary seat before the calamitous General Election. His absence from parliament is a blow to any remaining prospect of a clean Brexit.

FILM

Darkest Hour

Director, Joe Wright

Jane Kelly

The great German film *Downfall* starts with Hitler being very gentle to his nervous young secretary. *Darkest Hour* begins with Churchill being beastly to his. Comparisons between the two men end there; this is about a vulnerable man desperately trying to save his country from destruction whilst battling old age, loneliness and depression.

Most of us already know the Churchill legend well: it is 1940, Britain is in deadly peril from Europe, its government flounders. The policy of appeasement led by Chamberlain has failed, so he must go. Unfortunately, Churchill, who wants to fight the Germans, has been an outsider since he twice crossed the floor of the House between Liberal and Tory. He is also discredited by the failure of his Gallipoli campaign in 1915. No one wants him at the helm. As France totters before the Nazi onslaught, Chamberlain, given rare sympathy in this film by veteran actor Ronald Pickup, and Halifax, played with chilly wrong-headedness by Stephen Dillane, try to come up with ways to continue appeasement and block his way to power.

Part of the success of this film is that it stays within this time frame, tight as a theatre play, focussed on isolated, unhappy Churchill. It takes us with him inside the claustrophobic corridors of power. Through a few brief old newsreels, we know the enemy is getting nearer, but we also see Churchill rushing about in his spotted bow-tie and cigar, looking like a bewildered little man in a David Low cartoon. The comic aspect of Churchill's appearance and character make his plight even more real.

Central to all this is the delightful performance by Gary Oldman. What he encapsulates – something only mildly touched on by Brian Cox in a TV version, and not at all by the pompous Robert Hardy – is the intrinsic humour of the great man. Apart from his natural verbal wit, he was highly eccentric in a very British way – taking important meetings in bed with cats on the coverlet, dictating speeches from the bath, and staggering through his days fuelled by Pol Roger champagne and whisky. Even Hitler commented on his drunkenness; no doubt the jokes passed him by. Although the film pays pleasing attention to detail, they get it wrong about the cats: the ginger tom resided

at Chartwell. At Downing Street, Churchill had a black cat called Munich.

The film is allowed to verge on black comedy, that most difficult and most British of art forms. Apart from Churchill's pretty and distressed young secretary, played by Lily James, the characters use irony and jokes as their defence mechanism. They talk in riddles, which is good to hear, as that style of talk will probably be extinct with the next generation as we increasingly adopt American literalness.

Gifted and wicked tongued, we see the aristocrats and toffs surrounding Churchill scoring off each other as if they were in a school common room. Even Churchill's wife, the long-suffering Clementine, played with skilled insouciance by Kristen Scott Thomas, has some good lines. She is seen as unfulfilled, pulling away from the needs of her husband's towering ego, but they always pull together when necessary, of course, with much prickly banter.

The film abounds with personal tensions. The King, played by Ben Mendelsohn (much more convincingly than Colin Firth), is still dismayed that Churchill backed his older brother Edward over the abdication. There is a telling moment in the palace when, surrounded by grand porcelain ornaments and royal photos, and with Stubb's *Whistlejacket* looking down, Churchill has to kiss his sovereign's hand. We see the nervous stammering king wipe it furtively behind his back. It is accidentally, anachronistically, amusing after the King has changed his mind and decided to back Churchill to hear him say he is sorry 'about how cruelly you've been tweeted'.

This newest version of the great fable of Britain standing alone in 1940 has divided critics along ideological lines: *The New Statesman* said it was made for Brexiteers who can only look backwards to our inglorious past. Charles Moore in *The Spectator* refused to see it after hearing that it includes a scene where Churchill takes a tube and some good advice from a black passenger.

In our own uncertain times it cannot just be by chance that this is the second film in a few months to show our miraculous escape from potential catastrophe in a conflict with Europe. Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk* was a big hit, and Joe Wright, director of *Darkest Hour*, gave us nightmarish scenes from the Dunkirk evacuation in his earlier work *Atonement*. We also know all about a weak, floundering government presiding over a bitterly divided nation. But the commentators who have labelled the film 'a Brexit parable' are really

complicating matters. Unlike *Downfall* or *Atonement*, this film is very good mid-market entertainment and tells a ripping yarn. It is fun, moving, sentimental and there is no real political sub-text.

Of course, it is a problem for any British or American film director these days to make a film which shows a lot of powerful white men. *Darkest Hour* gets around this by giving leading roles to Churchill's secretary, who has lost her brother at Dunkirk, and to his wife. It takes a bigger gamble with reality when Churchill takes a tube to Westminster.

He did take one during the General Strike and legend has it that he spent hours going round the Circle line unable to find a way off. The version in the film is even more unlikely: he meets a carriage of passengers from every walk of life, including a young black man who finishes off the line when he quotes from Macaulay. He consults them on what he should do about the current crisis and they tell him the country wants to fight on. Having got his answer, he goes back above ground and does just that.

Against that tear-jerking hokum, we have the cleverness of a scene where Churchill, approaching despair, goes into a lavatory-like closet to phone the American president and beg for help, while trying to keep as much dignity as he can. Again, we are close by Churchill in that tiny space, identifying with him in the bitter experience of finding out that your glamorous best friend is not your friend at all. Charles Moore has really missed a wholesome treat.

The only disappointment was Tim West as Anthony Eden. He wasn't given much to say and continuously stared at Churchill as if he were a second Messiah. We also had to endure a soppy manipulative sound track, something now apparently unavoidable. In this case, it was almost blasphemous as it rose to a tinkling crescendo as Churchill's voice reached the climax of his great speech offering the British people nothing but blood, toil, tears and sweat. These are words which no more need a piano accompaniment than Henry V's speech before Agincourt.

IN SHORT

My Life, Our Times, Gordon Brown, Bodley Head, 2017, £25.

With all its faults, this book does justice to its author's great qualities: his general principles; a rugged honesty, ingrained from his early background in the manse, and rare enough in politicians; his gritty support for his constituents; his strong sense of humanity especially for children in countries where they are neglected, or worse; his courage in the face of what must have been grave disappointments, and also in coping with a personal tragedy; and his resilience in dealing with the ever shifty Blair and a host of Labour Party nonentities, some of them worthy, others less so. Not mentioned here are occasional tantrums, reported from other sources.

His main achievement, in forty years in politics, was to keep us out of the euro, in spite of endless prevarication by his colleagues; and for this we should all be eternally grateful. He also managed to abolish the 'sofa government' favoured by Blair, who even gave his dreadful henchman Alistair Campbell, of all people, the power to give instructions to civil servants. Unlike his colleagues, and many of his opponents, he is actually capable of putting a crisis in its historical context. His first reaction to the Iraq War starts in this way, but as we know later went wrong. While harping on the reasons for supporting the Americans, in Blair's wonderfully dismal phrase, 'I will be with you, whatever', he never admits the failure to make an effective plan for the time when 'peace' would be restored in Iraq. He circles round the problem, and the difficulties, before moving on to a comparison with what happened later in Afghanistan.

He makes many claims for his time in office, but reference

to his disastrous decision to sell the nation's gold at an absurdly low price is obscured by the mass of surrounding verbiage. Some of his claims are valid, others less so, such as 'record results in schools', now generally agreed to have been made possible by a shameful lowering of standards in exams. As for 'more students than ever before', why did so many of them show no signs of being willing to study, preferring to parade their naive lack of experience or knowledge, and to drop out of university after a year or two because of feelings of discomfort? Should they not have been undergoing some form of non-academic training, which might have been of much greater use to them, and which they might actually enjoy?

He generously accepts personal responsibility for his defeat at the 2010 election, but makes a very thinly veiled attack on Clegg for ganging up with Cameron when the Lib Dem manifesto had explicitly rejected the Tories' programme of austerity. One can indeed sympathise with this. On the other hand, Clegg must have understood that this was his last chance of winning even a share of political power. So he wavered, and so he lost, no doubt for good.

Unfortunately, this is one of the stodgiest books I have ever read. It could easily have been made half as long and twice as readable, but the Bodley Head, once famous for its high quality, evidently does not employ editors. Whole pages seem to have been copied out from the author's engagement diaries, significant at the time, but now mostly ditchwater. The same applies to much of the superfluous background detail. It is sad to reach this judgment, but this is a review of the book, not of the author.

John Jolliffe

The Course of History: Ten Meals that changed the World, Struan Stevenson, Birlinn, 2017, £16.99.

The Spanish proverb ‘The belly rules the mind’ certainly illustrates the importance of good dinners and lunches to help smooth business deals and diplomatic gatherings, so the choice of Brussels as the capital of the EU was perhaps connected to its many fine restaurants. In past centuries, starving your army could lose a battle or a war. Politicians in every epoch drown in dinners and lunches, and some of them succumb to persuasion and make wrong decisions as a result. Rationing the alcohol would seem to be the best policy, as statesmen like Churchill and de Gaulle have shown.

The author of this entertaining book sets out historical events which have been significant turning points in history alongside the delicious menus that accompanied them: the Battle of Culloden, The American Revolution, the Congress of Vienna, Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s Dinner in Sarajevo, Churchill’s Banquet in Teheran and Nixon in China.

Stevenson thinks that nine extravagant courses and six wines helped to weaken Franz Ferdinand’s resolve not to go to Sarajevo in the morning but to return to Vienna. His advisers had warned him that if he skipped the visit, it would be seen as a snub. However there had been several incidents before 1914 that could have started a war in the powder keg of Europe, and had the archduke not gone to Sarajevo, other such incidents would no doubt have followed.

Bonnie Prince Charlie’s crushing defeat at Culloden was certainly down to his own foolishness and that of his followers in having a grand dinner thirty-six hours before the battle, while his foot soldiers starved. Cumberland’s dinner at Nairn was more modest and he made sure that the men had something too. Many Jacobite supporters slunk back to their farms while the troops were reduced to scratching for

cabbages in fields and then running away. However this battle really was a turning point both for Scotland and England: those Highlanders who did not emigrate were able to profit from the improved living standards brought about by the industrial revolution and the cultural revolution driven by the Scottish Enlightenment. Without Scotland there would have been no British Empire and much else besides; Scotland’s superior education was instrumental in driving the growth of the British Empire.

The Tehran conference of 1943 to determine the future course of the war was certainly a turning point and agreement was essential. The Russians wanted a new front in Western Europe; the Americans wanted Russian help against Japan. After two days, the Big Three were not getting on: Roosevelt ganged up with Stalin against Churchill making jokes about his Britishness, his cigars and the British Empire. But Churchill was determined to make his sixty-ninth birthday banquet a success and to come to an agreement. After a bad start, when Stalin refused to shake Churchill’s hand, the atmosphere of the dinner changed after Roosevelt retired to bed, and Stalin and Churchill started drinking heavily. Churchill raised his glass to the proletarian masses and Stalin proposed a toast to the Conservative party. Churchill adopted the Russian habit of walking round the room and clinking glasses with everybody. At one o’clock in the morning, the Foreign Office chap came round to check up and found him with Molotov and Stalin surrounded by bottles, but Churchill wisely had stuck to Caucasian white wine. All three leaders left the conference thinking they were the winners. They agreed to the invasion of northern Europe in early May 1944; Stalin agreed to launch a new front on the Eastern Front and to declare war on Japan.

Merrie Cave

The
*Salisbury
Review*

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

Annual subscription rates: UK £25

Europe/surface mail rest of world £27.

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

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

Copyright ©The Salisbury Review

Printed in the UK by The Warwick Printing Company Ltd.

Typesetting — DASH

Design — Jessica Chaney

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

