

The

# Salisbury Review

*The quarterly magazine of conservative thought*



## **Yemeni Raid**

*Camilla  
Molyneux*

## **American Snobs**

*Mark Mantel*

## **Gallic**

**Lycanthropy**  
*Theodore Dalrymple*

## **This Sceptered Isle**

*James Monteith*

## **The Fake History of Mary Seacole**

*Lynn McDonald*

## **Xi Jinping's China**

*Leonardo Palma*

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## The *Salisbury Review*

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**G**reta Thunberg appeals to the Nordic fantasies of the rich middle classes in Britain; a world of operating room cleanliness, leggy blondes anxious to discuss Marx over an ice-cool shot of aquavit, followed by an atmosphere-burning flight to the Maldives to wail over the absence of marine life, and a contract to write about it in the *Guardian*.

The talk this April on Waterloo Bridge was of excess carbon in the atmosphere, yet it's not the climate that will give way – CO<sub>2</sub> is a distraction – but the earth on which we stand. You don't have to be an incense-sniffing follower of Gaia to realise that the planet is a creature like any other, with a respiratory system; forests, vegetation and atmosphere; a circulation; rivers and oceans, as well as a digestive system; the soil into which nutrients flow to feed its organs; trees, grasses, flowers, animals, birds, bacteria and insects.

Humans are its greatest enemy. We have grown from a population of around 5 million 10,000 years ago to a vermin species today of 7.6 billion and counting. Every smiling baby born brings a destructive capacity which has in the last 40 years brought a 68 per cent loss of wildlife.

Our life as vermin began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the discovery of vaccines. These wonderfully effective and safe antidotes to the spread of infectious disease meant a free pass for us from the strict accounting of life and death. Things began slowly at the start, but the following centuries saw the discovery of the principles of sanitation, antibiotics, safe surgery, more vaccines and lately the prospect of doubling life expectancy by anti-ageing drugs. The planet will not survive these later discoveries.

Yet we still regard medicine as beneficial. A few months ago a news item welcomed the prospect of an anti-malarial vaccine. Such a vaccine would add tens of millions of children to the planet, each with a reproduction potential of four or five more children. From the earth's point of view 'welcome' is not a word

that it would use if it could speak.

We fear death, a fear engendered by advances in medicine which offer us the Tantalus fruit of everlasting life. True, young people do not die within 24 hours of the sweating sickness of Tudor times, or by being carried off by cholera in six hours but we pay for it now at the other end of life with the horrendous torture of life-prolonging technology applied to the old.

Death was swifter and arguably better in the past. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, few people survived cancer for more than a few weeks, complicating infections took care of that. You fell ill, perhaps cancer blocked a lung, pneumonia followed, the priest was called, just enough time to say farewell to your family and ask theirs and God's forgiveness and within a week you were gone in a haze of fever. Pneumonia was known as the old man's friend.

Yes, there were the chronic afflictions that did not immediately kill; the running sores, the graveyard cough of TB, kidney stones, the madness of the syphilitic, the blind and the lame. But over the centuries survival of the fittest was working its magic. The human race adapted, growing stronger and only slightly more numerous.

Now, as gene engineers take tentative steps to bypass Darwin and produce a standard disease-free human, we aim for life without end. Given time they will succeed, my guess would be in fifty years, and they need to be stopped. Meanwhile we can look forward to a Darwinian struggle between the world's nations for food, water and living space. We have the means of mass extinction now and as pressure grows we will employ them.

The planet has its weapons too. Remember Ebola? The disease that not only killed its victim in 24 hours but killed the doctors and nurses as well? We got a vaccine out in time to stop it, but like Arnold Schwarzenegger as The Terminator in the film of the same name said: 'I'll be back.'

# The Salisbury Review's Future?

I will not mince words, the *Salisbury Review* is running out of money. If we are not able to raise extra funds in the coming weeks, we will have to consider closing the magazine after another couple of print runs.

How much do we need? If every subscriber were to donate £15 we will be able to carry on, expand our readership (which is essential for financial survival) and ensure that in a few years the magazine is handed on to young, equally enthusiastic hands.

We don't waste money. Thanks to a small legacy and subscriptions and donations from loyal readers we have been able to manage for the last five years. But where other magazines operate out of large offices on big advertising and distribution budgets, there are only four of us; working from home, writing, hiring journalists and artists, setting the magazine, travelling to interviews, doing the accounts and keeping the web page up to date and in digital repair.

If you donate you will, in these least of conservative times, be paying for a political morale booster and an entertaining read, as well as helping to keep free speech alive. The *Salisbury Review* is well known for its outspokenness and nothing would please our left wing critics, who are enraged by our continued presence, than to hear its voice had fallen silent.

Myles Harris  
Editor  
The Salisbury Review

## The True Voice of Conservatism

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ALISTAIR MILLER

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In the aftermath of the sacking of Sir Roger Scruton – our greatest living conservative philosopher and the founder Editor of this magazine – by a conservative government for expressing conservative views, it was heart-warming to see him get a standing ovation from an audience of over a thousand at London's Emmanuel Centre. The sell-out event, organised by *The Spectator*, saw him in conversation with his friend Douglas Murray on 'the future of conservatism'.

Sir Roger reminded us that because conservatism is founded on the instinct to preserve what we value, to preserve our sense of belonging and of home, by way of personal attachments and affections – on love as opposed to resentment – it is harder to express as a political idea, even less reduce to slogans. Listening to him, one is struck above all by the gentleness of his manner, by a profound humanity, which is reflected in his political outlook. There is also the humour, usually self-deprecating but caustic when the occasion demands. He said of those who rushed to condemn him based on the evidence of their Twitter feeds that they had neither the patience nor the ability to read any of his works, perhaps not even the capacity to formulate a complete sentence.

Yet there was much in the conservatism that Scruton espoused that ought to make the global liberals of *The Spectator* and the *Telegraph* take note. Although conservatives prefer free markets and individual enterprise where possible, for Scruton the heart of conservatism lies in 'belonging to a community'; while globalised forms of free markets are destructive precisely of local communities and their interests – just as the unrestrained profit motive, often serving vested interests in the Conservative Party, has wrought destruction on so much of our country's town and cityscape. The contrast with France is striking. 'You cannot defend communities simply by letting the market loose on them.'

Asked about finding common ground with the 'Blue Labour' movement, which seeks to put the reciprocal relationships of 'work, family and community' at the heart of Labour politics, Scruton expressed admiration. He knew the work of Labour peer Maurice Glasman, its founder, and was impressed. That the Labour leadership hates this movement suggested to him that 'Blue Labour' is on the right track. It is difficult to imagine the global liberals sharing these sympathies or concerns.

One of the biggest rounds of applause of the evening

greeted the question ‘Does the future of conservatism now lie outside the Conservative Party?’ Though it must have been on everyone’s lips, the question never got to being addressed directly, perhaps, as it were, out of some residual respect for a former friend suffering from a terminal illness. But the thoughts of Scruton and Murray were clear enough. The party carries on apparently oblivious that there is any problem – beyond, that is, the purely technical one of getting May’s Withdrawal Agreement ‘over the line’ and ‘delivering on Brexit’. Scruton remarked that he was hard-pressed to think of a single conservative policy or thought that distinguished the current government – indeed, it seemed to devote its time and effort to avoiding conservative policies whenever it could.

Is it fear that prevents Conservative politicians from espousing conservative views? Is it fear that prevented them from raising so much as a murmur in support of Scruton when the Left accused him of causing offence for expressing conservative views, indeed, that caused them to join in the chorus of vicarious outrage? The Left has so monopolised the language of politics that the utterance of ‘the wrong word’, taken in or out of context, is enough to finish one’s career; conversely, one’s career is furthered by signalling one’s virtue in the approved manner. As Scruton remarked, people have become expert at ‘taking offence even when offence has not been given’.

Or is it that beyond singing the praises of markets (and lining their own pockets), modern Conservative politicians have no idea what it means to be a

conservative, and so they sign up to whatever passes for fashionable orthodoxy; to ‘social justice’, ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘identity politics’. For the likes of Hannan, Johnson and Rees-Mogg, and those who determine the editorial tone of *The Spectator* and the *Telegraph*, conservatism reduces to ‘global liberalism’, to markets unleashed on a world scale, and Britain is reduced to a business park. As for England, or the English, or for local traditions and ways of life – you can forget them. *The Spectator* has led a principled campaign for free speech, which is laudable. But so far as it is concerned, the rest of conservatism – the conservatism Scruton defends – can be relegated to the realm of ‘national populism’. Mass immigration is good for profits – and that is that.

On Christianity and its role in our national life, Scruton remarked that we are now in the same situation as ‘the Christians in the catacombs’. But Christianity survived. Our task, then, is ‘to keep the light burning’. He was hopeful that so long as people have the freedom to preserve institutions and create new ones to affirm their sense of belonging, conservatism will survive and flourish. The danger, he added, is that this very freedom will be, and is being, taken away.

Conservative politicians were conspicuous by their absence from yesterday evening’s gathering, all of five-minutes-walk from the Houses of Parliament. I wonder why.

*Alistair Miller is a teacher*

## An Hour of Violence, a Lifetime Struggle: the Navy SEAL Raid on Adhlan

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CAMILLA MOLYNEUX

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23 May 2017, Yemen. It is one hour past midnight and the Adhal family are fast asleep. Their house is perched on the slope of a sandy hill in the Maribi desert. Inside, the air is warm and dense. Struggling to sleep, nine-year-old Othman has decided to try his luck outside. Silence reigns across the small village.

Shattering the heavy desert silence, military aircraft thunder across the sky, descending onto Adhlan

village. Moments earlier, unbeknownst to the sleeping residents, about fifty US marine commandos (SEALS) had taken up position on a nearby hillside overlooking the village. They charge at the houses, automatic weapons in hand, dogs at their feet. The family is ripped out of their sleep by barking dogs, shouting, helicopters and intense gun fire.

The family lost three members in an hour. A year later in August 2018, a grandmother, Jida, tells me that

I am the only foreigner to have visited since the raid. Recalling that terrible night, she looks into the distance and says, 'the dogs were the worst'.

The SEALs took control of the village and the surrounding area. Nasser, a seventy-two year old man on his way to the mosque, was the first and oldest victim; partially blind, he mistook the soldiers for visitors and was shot whilst approaching to greet them. Similarly of those villagers who stepped out of their houses, seeking to speak to the SEALs, five were seriously injured and four killed: Al-Ghader, Saleh, Yasser and Shebreen. Al-Ghader was a soldier in Yemeni army, a part of the US-supported coalition fighting the Houthis.

As machine-gun fire rained down on the village and into homes, children and women scattered into the night. Jida ran barefoot in her pajamas down the hill with her grandchildren in tow, their bare feet digging into the heavy, cold sand as machine gun fire danced around the children from a pursuing helicopter. This was what it meant to run for your life. Abdullah, a fifteen-year-old boy, was shot dead as he ran away from the violence.

Othman was sleeping outside when the soldiers attacked. 'It was hot', he remembers. The sound of the approaching helicopters and planes scared the nine-year-old. As he ran toward the house in search of his mother, an American soldier appeared. 'I screamed', Othman says. He was shot twice and lost consciousness. Othman loves football and is among the brightest students in his class. He rolls up the sleeves of his blue thobe, revealing the scarring from two gunshot wounds. His eyes are wide open; the pain from that night is still painted across his face. An hour after the SEALs arrival, the shooting subsided and Othman found his mother. She was holding the bodies of his two older brothers, weeping.

The people left behind struggle with visible and invisible scars. Two of the Adhal brothers will live out the rest of their lives as cripples. One, his left leg is amputated at the knee, picks two casings up from the ground and urges me to take a closer look; a young man, he is visibly frustrated by his family's predicament and his inability to provide for them. His brother is in Cairo for treatment. An elder pulls out a picture of the latter, lying in a hospital bed, connected to multiple machines, bandages tightly wrapped around his head, legs and arms. In a second photo, taken months later, he is in a wheelchair with a metal brace and pins inserted into his right leg. He now lives in a small flat with a dozen injured Yemenis. Accommodation and food alone comes to US\$600 (approximately £465) a month. 'At the end of each month we have about 25 Saudi Arabian Riyal (£5.2) to put toward his treatment.

Every month we take up a new loan.' Now doctors in Cairo insist he must be treated in India. They say, 'Something about an organ transplantation.'

Two hours into my stay, a man with a young boy no more than ten years old climbs up the hill. Without letting go of the tight grip on his father's clothing, he takes a big step onto the stone wall and jumps down on the other side. '*Hal turid alshshay*', the father yells at his son. The boy is deaf and his father is asking him if he wants tea. The immense noise from the military raid destroyed his hearing. The boy sits quietly on the ground, sifting sand through his fingers. Without being able to sign he is unable to barely able to communicate with his family, and instead is left to ponder his memories of that night alone. One woman witnessed her husband die beside her in their bed. Now, the only room in the house she will set foot in is the kitchen. Six women miscarried the night of the Navy SEAL raid.

The raid has had a significant impact on the Adhal children's mental health, causing them to suffer from insomnia, depression and anxiety. One boy, the family says, is nearly unrecognisable. Following his father's death, this once outgoing child who loved school is silent and worried, and refuses to leave the house. His younger sister, about 9 years old, is dutifully refilling our teacups or cradling her baby sister. Following her father's death she has had to grow up fast.

There are visible signs of the raid everywhere. Only a few inches from my head, the wall is littered with bullet holes. All the windows have been replaced. A few feet to my right, a blown up pickup stands on its head. A child has retrieved a big plastic bag from the house. He dumps its content onto the sand in front of me. Bullet casings, water bottles from the UAE, a military ladder and rucksack, weapon manuals and a Flash-Bang grenade tumble out. This is what the Navy SEALs left behind. 'I hate this house', Jida says, tears running down her face. 'Every evening I walk ten minutes into the desert to sleep under a tree. I cannot bear to sleep here anymore.'

The presence of American drones is not new to Marib and since Trump became president, they have become a daily occurrence. The drones are a stark reminder that another raid, or drone strike, could hit any time. 'At night, they are so loud it is hard to sleep,' one child tells me. 'They are so loud it is impossible to hear the TV', adds another.

An older man remarks, 'The drone has been behaving strangely over the past few days.' Others chime in in agreement. 'It has been surveilling the uninhabited mountains, filming', he says matter-of-factly. Only yesterday, a drone strike a few miles away reportedly killed two people. Minutes later, as if invited, we hear the distinct buzzing-sound of a drone. As it grows

louder my thoughts turn to what, from the safety of their cockpit-container in the Nevada desert, the drone operators make of us. We have been outside for hours, a group of about fifteen people: children, women and men. There are weapons, but this is no surprise: the high weapon-to-human-ratio in Yemen is second only to that of the USA. If the drone operators clocked our arrival, four people in a unfamiliar car, have they tagged us as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ guys?

The vast majority of drone strikes in the region are ‘signature’ strikes: attacks on men that fit a pattern of behaviour which suggests they may be involved in terrorist activities. This is a dangerously vague definition. A popular Department of Defense joke, reported in by the *New York Times* in 2012, focuses on this nightmare: if the CIA saw ‘three guys doing jumping jacks’ (jumping up and down, arms and legs spread wide and clapping) the agency would believe it was a terrorist training camp. The Obama Administration withdrew the CIA’s permission to conduct drone strikes, a decision that has been reversed by the current president. Whilst the Department of Defense have continued to conduct strikes, it is unclear whether the CIA has resumed its activities. Regardless, the risk to civilian lives has increased significantly as Trump took steps to weaken the Obama-era safeguards only months after his inauguration.

The US has no intention of retiring its drone programme in Yemen. For the foreseeable future, the Adhal family will have to listen to the buzzing of the drones, live beneath drones, without knowing when or where they might strike next. In one hour, the Navy

SEALs left five dead, four homes destroyed, and a significant number of livestock killed. Left behind are grieving mothers and children, Othman, who was shot twice, lost three family members and his deaf friend. This May marked the two-year anniversary of the raid. The Adhal family have received no redress, apology or remedy. Yet, they hold no hate for the US, saying, ‘We do not want terrorists here.’ They want to assist in the efforts to apprehend terrorists, they say repeatedly. The buzzing from the drone continues overhead. I get into the car and wrap my hijab tightly around my head. It feels like an added layer of protection that I desperately seek: the past six hours in Adhlan, anxiously anticipating and then hearing the drone, have been the most terrifying of my life.

### Post script

Following the Navy SEAL raid on the village, Reprieve, a London-based human rights organisation, found the family was mistakenly targeted. The Intercept and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism both report that five civilians were killed. The Pentagon is undertaking an investigation. Despite comprehensive evidence, the US continues to dispute claims of civilian casualties.

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## How Dare They?

JAMES MONTEITH

In the 1950s, Dirk Bogarde and Denholm Elliott starred in a film entitled *They Who Dare*, depicting a commando operation in the Eastern Mediterranean. Although based on a real wartime story, the film’s shortcomings quickly led to it being dubbed ‘How Dare They!’ by the critics. Sixty years on, these words perfectly encapsulate our attitude toward the antics of Mrs May, her advisers, her spineless cabinet, her dysfunctional government, and the apparatchiks of the Conservative Party hierarchy.

For it is not merely the duplicity, the lack of honour or principle; politics, we might concede, is a dirty business; it is the shameless effrontery of it all, the assumption that people are so credulous and stupid

that they can be fobbed off with any old cobblers so long as it is dressed up in platitudinous managerial speak. Broken promises count for nothing so long as one is still ‘focused’, ‘committed’, or otherwise engaged in ‘delivering’ things. So, May’s statement ‘We will be leaving the EU on 29 March’, repeated over one hundred times, and taken at face value by millions, can be quietly forgotten because May is still ‘focused’ on the job. Does not matter that, after having committed to bringing it down to the tens of thousands, immigration continues to run at near record levels, because the government is ‘focused’ on bringing it down. Of course, the people’s mistrust and sense of betrayal are further heightened by the suspicion that

those who govern them never intended to ‘deliver’ on these promises in the first place; that membership of the EU and mass immigration serve the interests of a privileged class who gain all the benefits but bear none of the costs.

But not content with betraying the people’s will over Brexit, humiliating our country on the international stage, emasculating our police force, presiding over the continued destruction of our national culture and social cohesion through mass immigration, instituting forced diversity quotas in the name of ‘social justice’, and destroying the Conservative Party, Mrs May has, according to leaked reports of proceedings at the National Security Agency (which she chairs), put our national security at risk by deciding to allow the Chinese Telecom firm Huawei help build Britain’s new ‘5G’ network – the next generation of mobile networks. How dare she?

GCHQ has the gravest concerns. So does the National Cyber Security Centre. So do her defence secretary, foreign secretary and home secretary. So do the Conservative chairmen of the defence and foreign affairs committees. And, critically, so do our ‘Five Eyes’ intelligence-sharing allies America and Australia who have banned Huawei from involvement in their own 5G networks. But Mrs May knows better. She has preferred to heed the advice of the small coterie of loyalists who form her ‘kitchen cabinet’. Her trusted colleague and fellow Remainer Philip Hammond, the Chancellor, has advised that Huawei is ‘cheaper’; and her loyal deputy Remainer David Liddington has reassured us that, ‘legally speaking’, Huawei is ‘a private company’.

At least Hammond is honest. Value for money and flogging off our national assets (‘foreign investment’) is his legitimate concern. I would not be surprised if the Chinese had even made us ‘a special offer’ – something on the lines of ‘we’ll throw in a free nuclear power station and some tracking systems for your submarines’. But no-one with the remotest acquaintance with China’s totalitarian state believes for a moment that Chinese firms are ‘private’ in the Western sense – that they are bound by Western-style legal obligations or the semblance of an ethical code. That Chinese firms are required *by law* to assist the Chinese government in its intelligence gathering ought to give us a clue. That the majority stake in

Huawei is controlled by representatives of the Chinese Communist Party ought to give us another. That key Western interests have been under ‘cybersiege’ from Chinese hackers for years ought to give us yet another. This is before we even consider the use to which the Chinese are putting this new technology against their own people. As Tom Tugendhat remarked in *The Telegraph*, they are ‘fine-tuning the most effective, data-driven police state the world has ever seen’. The new surveillance tools are being put to particularly effective use in Xinjiang province, where potentially subversive elements of the minority Muslim Uighur population are being identified for transportation to concentration camps.

So, what was the point of Liddington’s observation? If he had said that we need Chinese investment ‘because we are bankrupt, we have neither the will nor resources to do it ourselves, and national security is a

luxury we can no longer afford’, then we could at least have taken him at his word. But to insult our intelligence with some rubbish about Huawei being ‘a private company’: How dare he?

There are countless other examples. The case of Asia Bibi, the persecuted Pakistani Christian seeking asylum, particularly sticks in the craw. Numerous groups pleaded her cause, and even the home secretary recommended she should be granted asylum. But Mrs May was advised that it might upset ‘community relations’ – ie the sensibilities of Muslims who

think Asia Bibi should be punished for blasphemy – and so she refused. A churchgoing Conservative prime minister cannot stand up for a persecuted Christian woman, and yet is happy to allow into the country countless thousands of conservative Muslims who would happily see her prosecuted. How dare she?

Then there is the surge in knife crime and anti-social behaviour, which we are told has nothing to do with the police cuts Mrs May implemented, or the grotesque misallocation of police time and resources consequent on the advent of ‘hate crime’ which she has championed in the name of ‘social justice’. According to Mrs May, there is ‘no direct correlation’. Technically true, but if there were no correlation between police numbers and criminal activity, there would be no point having a police force. The evasion of responsibility is shameless; the insult to our intelligence is gratuitous. How dare she?

Then there is the case of Sir Roger Scruton, sacked



from his government post for expressing conservative thoughts about the dangers of radical Islam, mass immigration and homosexuality. The questioning of the prevalent liberal orthodoxy by our greatest conservative philosopher provoked Mrs May and communities' secretary James Brokenshire – two people who have never had a conservative thought in their lives – to condemn Scruton's remarks as 'unacceptable'. How dare they!

Underlying the lies and deceptions, the broken promises, the evasions, there is a deeper betrayal. The current Conservative Party has ditched the core principles of conservatism and put in their place those of liberalism. Conservatism is not just about tax cuts and free trade – though Mrs May has 'delivered' neither; it is about preserving (and strengthening) the values, traditions, attachments and loyalties that revolve around family, community, nation, and nation-state. Conservatives differ from liberals in believing that liberty is not the prerogative of atomised individuals cut loose from social norms, but is rooted in those very norms, traditions and practices. However, unlike modern liberals who have sacrificed free speech, that precious legacy of the Enlightenment, on the altar of 'social justice', conservatives – *true* conservatives – regard free speech, the right to cause offence, the right to utter heresies, as the very embodiment of liberty. For,

as John Stuart Mill noted in *On Liberty*, no authority possesses the infallibility, the *absolute* certainty, that might justify the suppression of an opinion and deny others the means of judging it. As for 'social' justice, the great conservative philosopher Michael Oakeshott observed that putting 'social' in front of 'justice' merely equates 'unselfishness with egalitarianism'. Justice is reduced to a tool of ideology, human conduct to behaviour, and self-conscious human beings to functionaries of a system. But try explaining that to Mrs May and her colleagues.

Not the least of the failings of the modern Conservative Party is the abject failure of its politicians to defend this precious inheritance – either because they are scared to offend the liberal orthodoxy, or because they actively subscribe to it. It is a moot point which of these is the more reprehensible. After his sacking, Sir Roger remarked that if conservative values are not defended by the Conservative Party, these values will cease to have any part in the political process. He might have added that the Conservative Party will cease to fulfil any useful purpose.

There is every indication as I write that traditional Conservative voters are going to make this point forcefully in the forthcoming elections.

*James Monteith is a writer living in London.*

## This Sceptered Isle

DYLAN STEVENSON

In 1588, faced with the largest and most powerful force since Caesar's legions landed on British shores, Queen Elizabeth I ordered her nation to stand defiant against the overwhelming power of Habsburg Spain and the Grand Armada of Philip II. It would have been easier for England to capitulate and fall into the ranks of the Spanish Empire, and undoubtedly the odds of victory were slim. But Elizabeth and her people understood that any benefit brought by Spanish arms and gold would be hollow, for they would be a vassal to a European power. They would not be free. They would not be sovereign. When the Armada came into view, Elizabeth declared: 'I have the stomach of a King, and a King of England too; and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain or any Prince of Europe should dare invade the borders of my realm' and roused her people to adopt the mantle of David against the continent's Goliath.

Napoleon in 1798 stood master of Europe, and

prepared his Grande Armée of 100,000 men at Boulogne to cross the channel and subjugate those Britons whose independence had been a thorn in his side for years. Napoleon declared to the French Directory that, 'France must destroy the English monarchy...let us concentrate all our efforts on the navy and annihilate England. That done, Europe is at our feet'. When facing the army that had vanquished all of Europe, William Pitt the Younger addressed parliament: 'I am sure there is not a heart that palpitates in a British bosom that will not rouse for the common cause, and cordially join the defence of the country...[in] glory to live under its auspices, or die in its defence.' This was not a partisan issue then, even the stridently anti-war MP, Charles James Fox, joined him: 'a great mass of armed citizens, fighting for the preservation of their country, their families, and everything that is dear to them in life...bound by every feeling and by every tie to defend that country to the last drop of their blood,

before they give way to [Napoleon] and his invading forces.’ War or anti-war didn’t matter; the defence of the sovereignty of the realm took precedence over partisan bickering.

Of course, no more famous a stand in the face of continental power exists than that of Churchill. Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Yugoslavia, and France had fallen to Germany. Finland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Italy joined their side. Sweden and Spain were neutral, but the former was coerced into co-operation and the latter was an ideological companion. The Soviet Union still held an uneasy peace, and America wanted no part in another European War. As Hitler prepared to launch Operation Sea Lion, and as the blitz rained bombs over London, many MPs wanted to negotiate. After all, who could blame them? Perhaps they believed a sick inversion of Tacitus’s lesson. Perhaps they believed that a bad peace was better than war, especially when it seemed like a war where defeat was inevitable. Churchill set them straight:

*I have full confidence that if all do their duty... we shall prove able to ride out the storm of war; and outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone...even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen, or may fall, into the grip of the Gestapo and the odious apparatus of the Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end...we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be.*

It was argued by contemporaries at the time of each of these examples that Britain would have been better off bending the knee to the power of the continent, and that her people would have suffered less by choosing the path of least resistance. Many argued that the price of freedom was too great and that it was outweighed by the benefits of security offered by subservience. The argument over this dichotomy of freedom versus security is playing out now, subconsciously, in the national row on the subject of Britain’s exit from the European Union.

After all, the European Union purportedly offers the security of the status quo: an accessible market, easy travel, and (supposed) representation in a continental body that holds more international clout than a small island off its coast. Brexit offers no such security; the loss of access to the single market is no small thing, and the concern that Britain will be a small fish in a very large pond is legitimate. Brexit only offers the converse: Britain would have to once more determine her own laws, be governed by her own will, and choose her own path in the world. These are notable challenges, and the incompetence of Theresa May doesn’t inspire much confidence that they can be met.

However, no great nation was made by cowering in the face of challenge.

One could consider the choice between the Continental and Atlantic premises as similar to that choice faced by Hamlet: whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them. The Continental premise indicates the former, the ‘outrageous fortune’ of staving off the concerns that come with freedom, but the price that must be paid are the ‘slings and arrows’ of the perpetual undermining of Britain’s national sovereignty and to watch helpless as the locus of power continues the slow walk away from the great many people, to the few ‘leaders’ of Europe. The Atlantic premise shows the opposite, that it is only through embracing the reality of Benjamin Franklin, that a people that put security before liberty will deserve neither and lose both, that a nation can stand as free and independent, and see the offer of Continental security as the lie it is ‘and by opposing, end [it]’.

On June 23rd 2016 I watched one of the great victories for democracy, freedom, and national sovereignty take place as I, and more than 17 million others, voted to leave the European Union (as both an American and British citizen I was in New York watching the votes tallied from abroad). The British people decided to take back control of their laws, of their borders, of their foreign policy, and of their future, seeking to wrest it from the grip of the now-illegitimate and unelected power of Europe. On the evening of June 23rd 2016, I watched the results come in, and despite millions of pounds spent by the government on ‘project fear’, despite constant news coverage saying a win by Remain was inevitable, despite the chattering classes constant verbal assault on those who wanted to leave as delusional (deplorable?) bigots, and despite the European Union’s constant denigration of Great Britain, the British people chose to blaze their own path, and reject the slow centralisation of power beneath the European Union’s banner. Fifty-two per cent of Britons, and 63 per cent of parliamentary constituencies, voted to Leave. In as clear-cut a manner as one can imagine, Leave defeated Remain, and freedom was victorious over security.

Parliament was tasked with one job: to make Brexit a reality. At every step of the way, they have worked to undermine the democratic will of their own voters, overturn the result of a free and fair election, and side with a foreign power hell bent on usurping the sovereignty of the country they were elected to represent. Instead of simply parting from Europe, they return from backroom meetings like Chamberlain declaring peace in our time. The deal presented was

rightly described by Jacob Rees-Mogg as ‘vassalage’ and by Yanis Varoufakis as ‘the kind [of deal] a nation signs after defeat in war’. Their reasons for doing so are based on that dichotomy, while the British people chose freedom, their elected leaders prefer security, and will reject the former to preserve the latter.

Gone are Queen Elizabeth I, William Pitt the Younger, and Winston Churchill. In their place stand a cohort of weak and cowardly individuals: the lesser sons of greater sires.

This is the great betrayal: Members of Parliament shackling Britain into European vassalage with a new Versailles. Members of Parliament who will relinquish sovereignty and freedom so that the country might enjoy whatever trinkets Juncker and his ilk deign to throw Britain’s way via members of Parliament cowed in fear of living beyond the golden bars of a European cage.

Brexit showed a people willing to strike at the managed decline of the West and the concentration of power into an Empire of the Elite. The British

people decided that their freedom and sovereignty were worth more than the promise of security. It was meant to be a victory for the small against the large, for the many against the few, for the free against the powerful. If the European Union, or the government of Theresa May expect that the more than 17 million who voted to Leave will roll over and let the great betrayal continue, then once again the ballot box will be sure to deliver a nasty surprise, until such time as either the will of the people or the cessation of votes is made manifest. Brexit demonstrated that Thomas Jefferson’s fundamental, pithy summary of the people’s will still held true:

*I would rather have a dangerous liberty than a peaceful slavery.*

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## Death Around Every Corner

JANE KELLY

Slipping coffee on what was once Prinz-Albrecht Strasse, I had a good view; piles of tidied rubble and empty space. I stared for ages. This was where Gestapo HQ once stood and flourished in its only task: murder.

When the Berlin authorities hid the sight of Hitler’s grave and redesigned the Reichstag in the 1990s, it seemed that they might be about to bury their history. But the new centre of Berlin shows the opposite; it’s now a vast memorial to the horrors of the past.

Almost every street seems to be named after someone who was strangled or shot. I walked to my hotel along Rudi Dutschke Strasse, (shot in the head). Close by were streets named for Rosa Luxemborg (shot in the head, dumped in the canal), Karl Liebknecht (tortured, shot in the back), Walter Rathenau, (sub-machine gunned), Hans and Sophie Scholl (guillotined), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (hanged on piano wire). There’s also a Matthias Erzberger (shot) building on the Unter Den Linden, and an Ernst Thalmann Park (shot with his wife in Buchenwald).

It’s as if all the streets in central London were suddenly named after Medieval and Reformation martyrs, commendable but also morbidly depressing.

Berlin has fifty-five Stolpersteine or ‘stumbling stones’, 3.9 inch concrete cubes with brass plates inscribed with the names and dates of victims exterminated by the Nazi through terror, euthanasia, eugenics or deportation.

Tired of tripping over Nazi blood-lust? There are also lumps in the pavement to mark 140 people who perished trying to get over the Berlin Wall. You can visit a building commemorating Soviet victims in East Germany, 1945-51, which was a Stasi remand prison until 1989.

By the time I reached the Gestapo exhibition, I’d already visited the Stolperstein Jewish Memorial, and the Jewish Museum, designed by Daniel Libeskind to give you vertigo and exhaustion from climbing stairs which lead nowhere, and pushing open heavy doors – rather odd, as who would struggle to get *into* a gas chamber?

In the Gestapo exhibition there was a photo of Himmler laughing uproariously, his pale, reptilian throat undulating (not something you'd want on a post-card) and suddenly, like a child at a circus seeing clowns, it was all too much. I wanted to scream and rushed outside to the Tiergarten for some tranquility and fresh air.

The path was dedicated, with audio-guide, to members of the Red Orchestra, Germans who spied against the Nazis, (beheaded with hatchets, families shot) and a Stolperstein for Karl Behrens (hanged).

In modern Berlin it seemed, terror and death are around every corner. It's always best to go with the flow on holiday, even if it comes from someone's neck, so I left the park for Stauffenberg Strasse.

'Is there a monument?' I asked a passing cyclist.

'Of course,' he called, 'Big one.'

The Benderblock, once Wehrmacht HQ, is where the aristocratic leaders of the July 1944

plot against Hitler were shot. Beforehand, sandbags were placed in a line, now marked by a dark, thin memorial. A wreath on a wall shows the spot where Stauffenberg was executed, illuminated by lights from a staff-officer's car.

This was History at last, less harrowing than the other memorials because those involved were adult men who'd made a deliberate political decision, not innocent victims swept away by bestial acts. There was nothing lurid about it. Perhaps that's why there were very few tourists there.

It would be disgraceful for Germany, like Russia and Japan, to deny rather than explore their past, but in places like the Gestapo museum you have to ask, why were we tourists drawn to such a place?

Although the German authorities are sincere in their remorse, even the Gallery of Modern Art has a poster showing a photo of the Reichstag burned to a crisp, all this self-flagellation suggests not just anxiety about falling into chaos and cruelty again, but that the famous German 'Liebestod' is still alive, and

may have unintentionally become part of its lucrative new manifestation; 'dark tourism.'

Well-meaning Berlin many soon be part of the trail which includes Auschwitz, (hardly visited when I lived nearby in the 1970s) and the genocide museum in Cambodia. We are in an age of intense voyeurism where people find entertainment in the immediacy of violence, even from the past. For some the Second World War is endlessly sexy.

Berlin's architecture of perpetual mourning is also undermined by Left-wing relativism. When I mentioned my trip on coming home to England, I was told, 'We were just as bad. There is no difference between the

Swastika and the Union Jack.'

'Our monuments celebrate victory; we don't face up to the evils of our past as they do.'

One woman even told me that the Germans were not guilty of anything because they had been, 'invaded by the Nazis'.

That deliberate skewing of history is part of a new ideology now

deeply rooted in education. When I was training to be a teacher in adult-education, we were shown a cartoon representing national stereotypes, the sort once popular in TV sitcoms such as 'It Ain't Half Hot, Mum.' We were told that stereotypes like that had led directly to Auschwitz. I was startled by that lack of historical knowledge. Later, seeing a GCSE History book, boasting that its language was 'deliberately inclusive' I was shocked again.

Teenagers, who often know very little history, are now forced to trudge around the concentration camps of Europe, not to acquire more learning, or empathy, but to be inculcated with the doctrine of diversity and inclusivity. They'd do better to lie on a beach in Benidorm, enjoy their youth and one day possibly a few might pick up a history book and start reading.

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



# Mao's Delusion. A Journey into Xi Jinping's China

LEONARDO PALMA

I have spent a month travelling around inner China, from the skyscrapers clouded in a perennial cape of smog to the endless ghost-towns, from small villages near the slopes of the mountains to Chinese-shanty towns with open sewers. I have been blinded by the colours of Xi'an, suffocated by pollution in Beijing, excited by the terracotta soldiers, frightened by the huge immensity of those wonderful lands, cradled in the melancholy of the suburban and alienated life of the metropolis.

The Chinese are both a simple but complex people. Their cultural unity is only a well-constructed facade, but ready to crack. Perhaps that is why Confucianism has been well endured by communism. The role, the status, the individual is always sublimated to the community. One can understand what strength a State has when its people renounce their individuality for the sake of social harmony. But where does the man end up? I believe that Maoism, the Chinese way to socialism, is just a veil of appearance, a layer of dust that cannot have eradicated millennial roots. Yet today the Party is recovering that fascination for doctrine, for re-education, for a thought that takes on the value of a Platonic idea. However, I see a pragmatic motive. Moreover, no ideology is pure; all fanatics are always concealing secret doubts. Opening, for China, has meant development, but opening too much can mean discovering oneself, and once the king is naked, the fear is that a revealed lie can undermine the internal cohesion of the country. It is the Party membership card, after all, that is the glue that fixes the terracotta of the manifold Chinese variety.

I am writing these reflections while waiting for a train at Beijing West Station. A week in Beijing is enough to confirm that the best perspective to understand the parable of the Empires is in the periphery, and not the centre. To understand the fall of Rome it is necessary to study its provinces, not the Senate. Beijing is smog, a conglomeration of cement and construction sites where in the summer, due to humidity and pollution, you never see the sky. How can you live without the stars? The alternation between offices and popular buildings with grates on the windows is sharp, they never seem to end, extending like tentacles under a

sad and perennial smog. We are far from the sparkling lights of Shanghai; in some ways some districts are reminiscent of the melancholy photographs of East Berlin. Feelings towards Westerners are a mixture of indifference and curiosity. No advertising is done by Westerners, everything is Chinese, even Coca-Cola and McDonald's: the West exists, but it is in another room. I cannot decide if the Chinese people have accepted the condition of this living as inescapable or with deep awareness that this is the right way for them to live. I would like to know what the quality standard in the yardstick of one's life is.

I had the feeling that behind the restaurants, the alleys with the telephone cables uncovered, behind the doors with the red signs, is concealed in full view the core of cultural resistance to any external friction, typical of Asian civilizations. But then what is the real Chinese? The young university student with a smartphone, headphones and a Harvard shirt, or the elderly man who eats pao at the end of the street; the dull cop with the party-pin or the overweight teenage waitress who seems to have come out of one of those TV series about bullying in high school? Maybe none of them, or maybe all of them. Everyone with his own troubles, living in the cold eye of a pervasive Big Brother that is everywhere. Cameras, identification cards, policemen, audio recorders, metal detectors, internet and social media, Orwell's fruitful imagination could not have done better. Yet I find myself admitting that after a few days I almost got used to it, it only took a few hours to numb me to a continuous violation of my privacy in the name of security. And all in all, it suited me well. Because this is the perverse trap of totalitarianism, it offers you a warm lie called security at the price of a cold truth called freedom. Freedom requires too much effort, too much sweat, too much struggle.

I was intrigued by their sense of body. No problems to burp in public, no one puts his hand in front of his mouth when he sneezes, they spit on the ground, none of this leaves a vague sense of disgust in the onlookers. Body and all that is connected to it is experienced as a simple natural manifestation; the individual here is not a monad, he is such in his consociational dimension, as a member of the community.

The train to Hua-Shan continues to delay: the dynamics of a journey is waiting. Travelling is staying still. Waiting at the airport, at the subway, at the ticket office, at the train, at the museum, and in such a big country this feeling of perennial interval, of suspension, which sometimes becomes anxiety, apprehension, is amplified. The distances then also have the strength to deform what happens at home: everything comes to me as a voiceless and distant echo, things end up being background noise, and the problems appear for what they really are: damn little stories. I was thinking about it during the six-hour journey on the train that took me from Beijing to the Shaanxi in the night. You should always travel by train, because it is the vehicle that in its rhythmic cradle puts you in touch with reality outside the tourist guides, especially when the train is an old coach like those of the post-war period. On my seat we are at least in four, with a space that is barely enough for two. The stench of spices, food, dirty socks is overwhelming. The sky is missing, that perennial cape that doesn't want to leave stretches out over rice fields, buildings, rivers and factories as big as football fields. While the mother in front of me prepares noodles with heated water, outside the window I see building sites inside an alienating megalopolis, followed by third-world shacks and entire neighbourhoods of buildings that have become ghost towns. If the Chinese government is trying to win the battle between centre and periphery then it has found the recipe to lose. Eradicating is never the solution. There are no churches, then. Not even in the larger cities. In Xi'an, I visited a large Muslim community and a wonderful mosque, one of the oldest in China. A very old imam is sitting outside the hall, reading the Qur'an, with such a dignified pose that it reminds me those poetic medieval engravings. He smiles, welcoming. Muslims are kept under strict surveillance by the regime, in some cases brutally repressed. The Uyghur minority, 22 million people living in the Xinjiang region, has always aroused apprehension in Beijing, even more after having suffered the vertigo of the fundamentalist message of al-Qaeda. But the Christian Church, on the other hand, is almost invisible. The split between illegal and national is so sharp that in some provinces it seems that the communist party is more afraid of Christ than of capitalism, more frightened by the Holy See than the United States.

I arrived at Hua-Shan at midnight. A desert station, neon lights, advertising, a wet road and bright, almost liquid colours, like certain shots of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, welcomed me. Vaguely disturbing, with taxi drivers approaching like honey bees. To tell the truth, as always, there is a police patrol nearby and hundreds of rotating cameras. Hua-Shan is a small town on the

slopes of the mountain of the same name, small and sleepy. The taxi driver takes me to the centre, among buildings illuminated with multicoloured neon lights, a Croisette that disappears at the entrance of the old city which, on closer inspection, reminds one of some village in Pakistan or Afghanistan. In the hotel I am welcomed by a delightful Han family who in the following days treated me with such loving care that I became fond of them. On this occasion I met Ludovico, a Chinese boy whom I gave this name after giving up learning his. He studies at the Police College in Xi'an, shy, simple, curious about my presence in an area with mainly local tourism. He speaks little English, and when I tell him that I also have attended a military academy after the high school, he melts a little.

The following days I dedicated to the ascent of the Hua mountain. One of the five sacred peaks of the country linked to a minor episode of the Long March and the civil war. It took almost four hours to reach the North Peak. It is an extraordinary place; I have rarely seen such a powerful nature. Her indifferent silence seems to speak the language of the time, stories that emerge from her crests, from her forests, from her small Confucian temples where monks in prayer or absorbed in reading barely tolerate mass tourism. I feel them. During these long excursions, I was struck by a conversation with Ludovico; he made me understand how to envy and admire at the same time my freedom to travel and see the world. In 2018 alone, 22 million people were denied an exit visa, based on their score on the Social Credit System, a sort of Big Brother in points managed by the government. If you lose points, if you are not a good citizen, you will be punished. And your life suddenly becomes a collection-point race like those in the supermarkets.

After leaving Hua-Shan, I arrived in Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi Province. It is the advertising face of China, the showcase of its successes: skyscrapers, parks, clubs, western brands like Valentino and Gucci. An urban agglomeration composed of middle class, rich entrepreneurs and western tourists. But the feeling is that it is precisely this and little more: a gigantic advertisement. From Xi'an, I took a coach to reach the archaeological area of the Terracotta Army; that immense expanse of enamelled clay men, each one different from the other, standing immobile to guard the eternal sleep of the Emperor Qin. As a tourist I felt myself, for a moment, a foreign body, as if I had come to disturb their mission. 'Hey stranger!' they seem to say, 'don't you feel guilty about this crime of yours? Disturbing the Emperor who rests his weary bones after watching over the Middle Empire?' If they could talk, I'm sure that's what they would say to us.

My next stop is Jiaozuo, in Hunan. I am going further

south, long passages on foot and equally long journeys on old couriers where I sit for hours. I haven't seen any other Westerners in weeks, and this industrial town near the park of the same name left me with a vague sense of unease. To reach the park I wanted to visit, you must go through a shantytown with open sewers. An enchanted valley in the middle of an expanse of smog, factories, wind turbines, nuclear power plants and posters with the friendly face of President Xi-Jinping. I have had the posters translated; they say: 'The Xi-Thought'. It was from the time of Mao that the General Secretary of the Party was not at the same time President of the Republic and President of the Central Military Committee. No man has ever had so much power since the times of the Cultural Revolution, neither Deng Xiao-Ping nor Jiang Zeimin and even less Hu Jintao. Xi also broke the pact, the same that Khrushchev did after the death of Stalin, that Deng had made with the bureaucracy: we don't kill each other. According to IFRI, 300,000 bureaucrats had been purged under Xi's leadership, with direct trials in which, as at the time of the Revolution, the defendants had been prevented from dyeing their hair. Maximum humiliation for a Chinese. If you want to make an Asian man bleed, you only need to make him lose his face. While Deng had overturned Mao's ideology without affecting his memory, Xi recovered its fundamental assumptions – first and foremost that power comes from the gun barrel, so whoever is party leader must also oversee the military committee – relegating the Great Helmsman to the memory of a distant time. Those who are nostalgic for the Cultural Revolution, those who believe that at

that time 'we were poor, but we were all the same', are now kept under strict control and the party works hard so that Mao remains buried in his mausoleum. Mao's delusion of becoming the Eternal Helmsman in death, clashes with the unwanted son of his own ideology: pragmatism. The party must survive so that China can survive, and the memory of a mythical past is not considered useful, but a brake. China in fact is no longer that of twenty years ago, it is sick, of a disease that its money and its industry will be unlikely to cure.

The danger from China will not come from its growth, but from its crisis. An economic crisis or, worse, a political crisis is a risk that we cannot accept lightly. Containment of the country's military expansion must be balanced by support for the regime, because the collapse of the party would mean the end of a unified China and the beginning of a civil conflict with unpredictable results.

When I arrive in Zhangjiajie, in Hunan, I decide to lose myself for a few hours in the spectacular city park, famous for having inspired James Cameron's Avatar. The air has become breathable again, the clouds have thinned out, the sky is seen again in the Middle Empire. Despite everything, in those acres of silent lands, in the mystery beneath the shadow of a bulaemic industrial society, in the shining colours of the advertising, there are still corners where China, and its dignified people, jealously protect the mystery of their eternal beauty.

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# In the Clash of Civilisations, Individualism will be the Saviour of Western Society

NIALL MCCRAE

No book has been cited by political and social observers more than George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This dystopia is materialising in the creep of state surveillance, the manipulation of language to mask the truth, and the puritanical control of normal human behaviour such as humour or courtship. Yet one aspect of Orwell's prophecy has been relatively overlooked.

Orwell's story was set in London, part of Airstrip One in the federation of Oceania. In a permanent state of war, the enemy alternates between Eurasia and Eastasia, and the other world powers. Comprising the former USA, UK, Australasia and other English-speaking areas, Oceania seems mighty, yet it can no longer survive without strategic alliance.

From a current perspective, a triumvirate is indeed emerging. For Oceania read the West: as well as the English-speaking parts this includes the European nations, which have tried to consolidate in the form of the EU. Eurasia may be understood as the ascendant Umma, principally based in the areas of established Muslim majorities in north Africa, the Middle-East and southern Asia, but transcending these boundaries due to mass migration to Europe. This huge diaspora could bolster or undermine its Western hosts. Representing Eastasia is China: its fiefdom expanding across the Orient and Pacific to its dependencies in Latin America and the southern half of Africa.

The West is already threatened by these two forces. Infused with the Judaeo-Christian principle of free will, our liberal Enlightenment values contrast starkly with the submissive absolutism of the Mohammedan creed, with its laws and rituals governing every aspect of people's lives. An uneasy coexistence is maintained as polite society ignores problems such as the widespread sexual abuse of working-class schoolgirls – crimes arising from warped messages about the impurity of infidels. Terrorism has become a constant, from lone slayers shouting *Allahu akhbar* to carefully planned attacks on shopping centres, churches or nightclubs.

Against the threat of devastating internal strife, appeasement will remain the response of Western

governments, as demands of an increasingly assertive Muslim populace gain special rights and protection. Inevitably, elements of *Sharia* law will be granted for the sake of community relations. More people will be jailed for Islamophobia than for Islamist attacks on the remnants of liberal democratic culture.

China, meanwhile, is determined to become the supreme superpower. It too has the people, but with the advantages of a rationalised political system and technological prowess. The West is belatedly waking up to the threat of state-sponsored infiltration by Chinese corporations such as Huawei, which governments naively allowed to gain a foothold in communication and security systems. Hacking of vital networks is a very serious threat, with nations potentially held to ransom. How long can we survive without electricity? Is recognising Taiwan really that important?

While the threats to the West are constantly written about, there has been a limited discussion of the coming clash between its two rival powers.

China is treating its Muslims badly. Islam is the one religion that poses a threat to the atheist communist regime. Unlike the international outrage against the oppression of the Muslim minority in Myanmar, Beijing seems to have a free pass. Imagine this happening in Britain: the authorities decide that Muslims are becoming too much of a nuisance, so domes and minarets are destroyed, Arabic script erased, the *Koran* removed from open sale, and those who complain incarcerated in re-education camps. This is exactly what China is doing with the Uyghurs and the Hui. Officially there is religious freedom, but in reality a cultural eradication programme against the worship of *Allah*.

Can the Muslim world stand up to China? The *Umma*, despite its numerical strength, is held back by anti-modernity. However, it has plenty of riches. Having played the Monopoly board with the profits from oil, the Arabs own great swaths of the commerce and real estate of Western countries. With their combination of financial clout and scriptural authority, the Saudis can summon hundreds of millions of

Somalis, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indonesians as foot soldiers. Salafism is instilled throughout the West, eclipsing more moderate forms of Islam. A perpetual problem for the *Umma* is the schism of Sunni and Shiite, but the old arguments may be set aside to fight a common cause.

The West no longer masters of their own destiny, European and American governments are realising that 'soft power' really is soft. The individualism of Western culture has degenerated from the rugged determination that built the United States of America, to narcissistic fragility. Once unashamedly boasting of its strengths, the West now obsesses over a 'mental health crisis' in its rootless younger generations.

Yet individual freedom is the greatest human achievement of the West, and this may be more appreciated as it is challenged by the collectivist forces of China and Islam. While many Muslims came to Europe for economic reasons, they also enjoy the relief from the strictures of Islamic culture. Western democracy is increasingly influenced by Muslims, and while there are signs of regression, a growing proportion of this populace have tasted too much freedom to accept medieval literalism. The relative educational and occupational success of Hindu and Sikh communities suggests that Britain is a land of opportunity, and that the grievance culture and cultural segregation of some Muslim areas is self-defeating.

Instead of the clumsy and counter-productive policies of integration, such as the banal 'British values' produced by bureaucrats, the West should promote questioning minds and give Muslim citizens confidence in the principles of freedom of speech and equality

before the law. Universal rights must be defended with muscle against the religious fundamentalists.

For the Chinese too, individualism will be attractive, despite all the efforts of the communist administrators and educators. At a mass demonstration in Tiananmen Square in 1960, *Globe and Mail* reporter Frederick Nossal observed artificial support for the regime. Given a day off work to protest against American imperialism, a million swarmed into the vast space, but few paid attention to the amplified slogans:

*Having seen thousands of laughing, sleeping, card-playing, reading Chinese demonstrators (hidden from the eyes of the leaders by protective walls of young Communist zealots) I feel that individualism will win through in the end. To me, the rallies were proof that total indoctrination of a population is a near-impossible task.*

Could the same be said of the massive and ethnically diverse Muslim world?

The key to survival of the West is in the philosophical status of the individual human being. As John Stuart Mill argued, the state has no business in interfering with the private sphere. How can we find meaning in life, if that meaning is always imposed by others? Faith or political allegiance must be voluntary. When liberty is lost to grand design, members of society become little more than ants or automatons. Everywhere man is in chains, but we in Western society know a better way. Do we have the confidence to extol the virtue of the free spirit?

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## The Fake History of Mary Seacole

LYNN McDONALD

Lies, damned lies and statistics' has nothing on the campaign (overwhelmingly successful) to depict Jamaican businesswoman and Crimean War celebrity Mary Seacole as a medal-winning, daredevil battlefield nurse, who built a hotel, or a clinic, or a combined hotel and clinic, to nurse wounded soldiers (from battles she never saw) and later went on to become the pioneer nurse practitioner and invent modern nursing; claims made in a nursing journal article and a biography, respectively.

The perpetrators of such misinformation are well meaning: Nursing leaders, NHS officials, the Royal College of Nursing, the Department of Education, the

National Portrait Gallery, National Science Museum, National Army Museum and teachers from KS-1 and KS-2 to GCSE teachers and examiners. Their goals are to teach racial equality and provide a model for black minority ethnic nurses, pupils and people generally. Laudable objects, but the problem is that Mary Seacole did not do most of the things attributed to her – while some of them Florence Nightingale did do.

Moreover Seacole never claimed any of these feats in her highly readable memoir, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*, 1857, available in many editions with grossly inaccurate introductions. That book gives, after briefly describing her early

life in Jamaica, her truly wonderful adventures in the Caribbean and Panama. She took over the running of her mother's elite boarding house (a small hotel) in Kingston, and operated a small hotel in Panama for men travelling across the isthmus (pre-Canal) to join the California Gold Rush. Her father was a Scottish soldier, her mother Creole and her husband (who died young) British. Seacole travelled with two black servants, a maid and a porter. She called herself 'yellow' to indicate her light complexion: she was one quarter white and had a white clientele in all her businesses.

Some accounts blame Nightingale's associates – not her – for Seacole's rejection as a Crimean War nurse, and some blame the British government, again with varying numbers of rejection, from one to four. The difficulty here is that Seacole never applied for a nurse's job at all. She went to England in September 1854 to look into her failing gold stocks, by coincidence arriving just after the first battle of the Crimean War. By the time she gave up on her gold stocks (she had invested while in Panama), not only had Nightingale and her team left, but so had a second team. Seacole described dropping into various offices informally and asking for a position. She never submitted the required application with references (they are at the National Archives, Kew), nor had she the required hospital experience.

Seacole, in fact, never nursed a day in any hospital before or after the Crimean War. She made her own 'herbal' preparations, for sale to walk-in customers. Their success, too, has been boosted from remedies for tummy aches to cures for cholera and yellow fever – again, claims she never made. Indeed, she acknowledged that she had made 'lamentable blunders' on cholera, which she shuddered to think about. And so she might, given that she added substances that dehydrate the body when rehydration is needed. She was in this respect, no worse than many doctors of the time, but mercury and lead do not cure cholera or yellow fever. Her mustard poultices (to cause sweating), emetics and purging through the bowels are all known (now) to be harmful.

Seacole gave a whole chapter in her memoir to a yellow fever epidemic in Kingston. She courageously and kindly stayed up all night with the dying victims, putting screens around them, giving comfort until all died. This surely deserves great commendation, but the mythmakers turn her into a miracle worker who saved them.

The NHS, as the major employer of BAME staff in Britain, has reason to seek a black model to celebrate. But they did not look carefully. They ignored an outstanding Nigerian nurse, Kofoworola Abeni Pratt

(1915-92), the first BAME nurse in the NHS. Pratt came to London to train at the Nightingale School, seeing Nightingale as a model. It was her husband, a Nigerian pharmacist who had begun medical training in London, at Bart's, who made the approach to the matron on her behalf. Mrs. Pratt was accepted and started training in 1946.

Pratt was on duty at St Thomas' Hospital when the NHS officially opened in June 1948. She was an outstanding student (the documentation is available at the London Metropolitan Archives). She passed with honours, took extra certificates (midwifery, tropical diseases, administration) and passed the final state examinations in 1949.

British nursing leaders encouraged her to go back to (pre-independence) Nigeria to assist in founding the nursing profession there. This she did, and went on to give leadership in international organizations. None of this, apparently, is known to the NHS or British nursing leaders.

Nor do NHS leaders, especially the ill-named NHS 'Leadership Academy', seem to know that it was Nightingale who articulated the vision of the NHS – quality care for all, regardless of ability to pay – and the integration of health promotion and disease prevention with treatment. Nightingale called for this in 1866, and worked mightily over the next decades to effect the first steps, notably by getting trained nurses into the workhouse infirmaries, and, for some infirmaries, better, safer buildings. It is inconceivable that the NHS could have come into being in 1948, as it did, without those earlier, gradual, reforms, for when she started at least 80 per cent of hospital patients were in workhouse infirmaries, not the regular hospitals. Workhouse infirmaries then had no trained nurses, only an occasional medical attendance, and bed sharing was still common.

Yet it is Seacole's massive statue that is located on the grounds of St Thomas' Hospital, home of the first nurse training school in the world, not Nightingale's. The statue faces the Houses of Parliament, although it was Nightingale who lobbied Cabinet ministers, prime ministers and MPs for improvements in health care. A peer, Lord Crisp, former chief executive of the NHS, called for Seacole to be added to the 2020 Bicentenary in honour of Nightingale's birth. Asked what Seacole had done for the NHS or health care, he had no reply.

How many schools teach the Seacole propaganda is not known for, although both Nightingale and Seacole are in the National Curriculum, there is no requirement that they be taught, either separately or together. Typically, from an examination of school websites, the two are taught together and the contrast between them made. Schools that teach misinformation range from

regular state schools to Roman Catholic and Church of England schools and fee-paying schools.

In a world of 'fake facts,' do we need more? Should students writing GCSE examinations in History be required to regurgitate misinformation about Seacole? Should books for school children portray her as a battlefield nurse, complete with blue-and-white nurse's uniform (although she never wore one)? Should she be depicted in battle scenes of battles she never saw? Such books do exist, and indeed you can purchase a flagrant example at the Florence Nightingale Museum at St Thomas' Hospital.

Not the least harm done by avid Seacole supporters in denigrating Nightingale is losing her as a model, for she was not only the founder of nursing, but an effective political activist (she got laws changed) and researcher (the first woman Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society). Are politically effective, mathematically adept women so thick on the ground as to dispense with her?

*Lynn McDonald, PhD, LLD (hon), professor emerita, is the author of Mary Seacole: The Making of the Myth, Iguana Books, 2014.*

## North and South

LINDSEY DEARNLEY

My father, now 78, lived in the end terrace of a Manchester slum earmarked for demolition. There was no toilet, just a bucket on the stairs that leaked and seeped down into the pantry. The bath was one of the old tin ones, hanging on a hook in the yard. His earliest memory is of following his mother Jessie along the road to heaps of discarded slag and holding out a grated dustpan for her to shovel it up and sift for bits of coal. He was four.

Eventually, the property, indeed the entire slum, was condemned. The house was pulled down, the family were de-loused, had their clothes burned in a bucket, and were resettled three miles away in the far more genteel suburb of Hyde: Immigration writ small.

They came with few possessions; a radio, a banjo, and a musty suitcase of letters, photographs and death certificates, amounting to the family history of the last four generations. My aunt kept the suitcase, and adding to it, eventually completed a long scroll of a family tree. I have seen it, all coal miners and cotton weavers stretching back in time to disappear into the fog of the industrial revolution and the illiteracy of Irish farmhands.

There is a photograph of my great grandparents, taken not as was the custom then in a photographer's studio standing stock still in clothes rented off a rail just out of shot, but standing outside their cobble fronted hovel, man and wife, in ragged overalls and apron, dirty and dishevelled with clogs on their feet.

It would be easy to imagine them brutish, and given over to crime because of their circumstances, which was Myra Hindley's defence (she was part of the same Gorton clearances) but my father and his aunt maintained that people just didn't see poverty the same

way back then. They didn't pity themselves, or subvert their moral standards to alleviate it. Their childhood was happy and people were upright and decent. The suitcase contains a love letter from my grandfather Firth, written in perfect copper plate, to Jessie, whom he would marry.

*Dear Jessie*

*.....I have enjoyed every minute of your company even if I have never had the chance to tell you, hence this letter: Let us presume you are very fond of me. I fail to see what the devil you see in me, girls as a rule, look for the material things in life, a tall man, with sleek hair, good togs, a fine set of teeth and a debonair manner. I am the opposite, short stature, rough neglected hair, and no good suit and owing to my rough schooling in life, I cannot even boast of good teeth. The next thing a girl looks for is finance, has he a good job, how much can he spend on her. I have had a good job but I lost it by not giving in to an irate foreman, because I and two other rebels tried to fight for better working conditions and fair play and I don't regret either, I wouldn't stand with the other weak kneed mates: so you see, can you blame me for worrying?*

*I have no alternative other than to admire you, a woman like you deserves more beautiful things in life than what I could provide. I should hate to bring you down to my level, please don't think I am trying to frighten you off Jessie, I am just pointing out the material facts. I pride myself on being candid. I have good principle, and my naval training has given me grit. I look forward to having a good chat this Xmas. If your interest is no more than casual please don't treat this letter flippantly, but destroy it. I wish*

*to give my best respects to your parents for raising such a woman. Furthermore, I have no friends, my only enjoyment is what I get at Denton, and I am in need of a good pal.*

*I remain yours sincerely.*

*F Dearnley.*

Jessie, accepted the life of poverty on offer, even though it was her own parents in the photograph in the rags. They were grateful for the new life given to them by the council, and even though they were decent and upright people, they were, nonetheless, met with hostility. Slum dwellers were not welcome. They would bring crime and a lowering of standards.

The coming of ‘the Manchester Lot’ in the nineteen forties is still well remembered by the old working class even now, sixty-five years on. My mother maintains they ruined the area with their ‘Manchester ways’ and later by gangs of roving teddy boys, even though she was to marry one. Signs went up in the windows ‘Slums go home’ and my uncle recalls a shopkeeper refusing to serve him after he heard his Manchester

accent, for despite the two towns being within walking distance, Manchester talk was distinct – it was harsher, the vowels were wrong, and there was the hint of an Irish brogue, for the Mancunian poor had themselves been subject to an earlier wave of immigration from an even poorer people.

I love my grandfather’s letter, not least because I wouldn’t exist had Firth faltered and not sent it, but because it illuminates the entire world of these most impoverished people, and gives proof of their intelligence and sensitivity. It also pays tribute to working class education then, marked as it is by its literacy. The letter survived the war years in a damp, decaying house, survived the burning bucket, and years later, its perfect handwriting is still in pristine condition. Would a contemporary slum ‘school’ its entrance guarded by an airport style weapons detector gate, violent, uncontrollable children, corridors perfumed by the smell of skunk, even more violent parents, produce such a letter today?

*Lindsey Dearnley is a cartoonist, artist and journalist.*

## American Class

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MARK MANTEL

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**A**bout a year ago, I shared a train compartment with a seemingly reticent Canadian fellow, a man heavily shielded by a newspaper, and I doubted I’d catch a syllable from the stolid moose. But after gobbling a handsome steak sandwich with yellow dressing and downing a pint, he eased into a happier frame of mind. And after another pint, and some small talk, he really softened and even got greedy for some proprietary information about my country: ‘Do you guys have some true old families over there or is just all celebrities now?’ he asked, in a sniffy sort of way, but not without a touch of good-natured asperity.

I really didn’t have a ready answer, and was certain to lose caste by admitting ignorance, not even to be saved by my cordovan shoes and perfectly disheveled bowtie. But what could I do? Feeling like a human jellyfish, I answered simply and squarely: ‘I don’t know,’ I said, ‘and I’m not sure anyone else does.’

Well, by some miracle, my reply seemed to please the Canadian, as if I’d contrived a witty getaway or something. But the whole rest of the ride, I brooded and pondered the matter, and was plunged in thought about it all the next day.

Do we still have old families who, say, keep up the expiring art of good talk? Does America have a proud class of people somehow connected with each other? If so, where does it stand in relation to the utilitarian habits of our age? Can it muster some disdain for the tastes and opinions of the time? Or have Democracy and Plutocracy swallowed them all up, not even bothering to heave a few sighs?

I know there certainly was a gilded stretch when America had a veritable nest of gentry of its own. It is well documented in the novels of Edith Wharton and Henry James and in old cartoons that taught children what crowded dinner tables and moonlight strolls were all about. Movies from Hollywood’s Golden Age never tired of exhibiting the old regime, probably adding a measure of *gaucherie*, but otherwise doing a decent job baring the lives of those who prayed to an Episcopalian deity.

I also know that in the years following the Civil War, there was a big change in personnel in our higher orders. It wasn’t anything so dramatic as when the Norman barons displaced the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy, men like Cedric in *Ivanhoe*, but it left a lot of hurt feelings

all the same. In New York, for example, once lofty families like the Van Cortlandts, De Peysters and Van Burents gave way to the Gilded Age fortunes of Astors and Vanderbilts. The same devastation happened to the First Families of Philadelphia, Baltimore, etc. In Boston, I think, some families like the Hancocks and Otises managed not to topple from their perches for a while, but I'm not certain.

The First Families were markedly different from the arrivistes. They were often Doctors of Divinity or 'Merchant Princes' or even 'Elders.' They kept up a rather paternalistic civic-mindedness and considered themselves 'Stewards of the Community.' And they were not smitten with Conspicuous Consumption, not even a little. I'm not exactly sure what happened to them, maybe they withered away in the dusty halls of local preservationist societies as they fell off the Social Register.

(For those interested, the Social Register is a semi-annual publication that indexes what we regard as patrician families. According to the Robb Report, inclusion in the Social Register 'bespeaks old money, Ivy League, trust funds, privileges of birth, fox hunting, debutante balls, yachting, polo, distinguished forebears, family compounds in the Adirondacks, and a pedigree studded with 19th-century robber barons'. The President of the United States and Vice-President of the United States are, by custom, always added. Trump was not on it before but is now. This, like him or not, was maybe his biggest exploit ever.)

Anyways, the progeny of the Big Industrialists made up our High Society until about the middle of the last century. They also gave to our land a genuine Leisure Class, which was a good thing for all people, because it gave everyone to understand that the only point of tireless toil was the prospect of relaxing forever. Until the early eighties, limousines lined Wall Street at 3:00 pm on Fridays to take the bankers off to the Hamptons. (Today, black town-cars start rolling up around 8 pm, and keep coming till midnight, to ferry the beat stockjobbers home to bed).

But even in our finest hour, when we had fancy-dress balls and a real 'servant problem,' there has never been anything here to match the social pageantry painstakingly constructed in England over long centuries, withstanding the World Wars, Soviet infiltration of Oxford and Cambridge, the Reform Bill of 1832, and more recent socialistic legislation. In Edward St Aubyn's 'Patrick Melrose Novels,' it was said of

Patrick's sadistic father that he 'could have been Prime Minister' and that in his world, 'could have been' was far better than being Prime Minister, which might betray a vulgar ambition. In America, it would be a Herculean labor to explain such a foggy notion to people, and you'd end up beholding the flabby pink of many lolling and bewildered tongues if you tried. Nobody has ever dwelt here who 'could have' been President!

Now we come to the present day.

Some scholars say that the concept of class is meaningless now. Everything is too jumbled. Before, professionals were reliably conservative, and these days they are usually progressive. There are Bo-Bo people (Bourgeois-Bohemians) who further turn everything upside down. Former classes have become so assorted, differing in politics, tastes and outlooks, that they have ceased being classes at all. And you can't tell anyone apart anymore. A woman marketing manager may save her pennies and buy a Gucci purse and stop looking like a woman marketing manager at all. Meanwhile, laborers

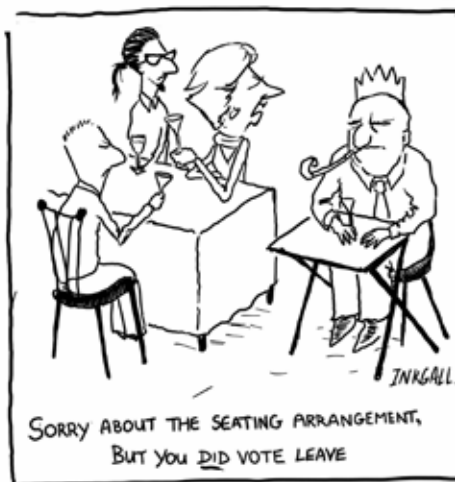
who used to be Democratic to the fingertips, have gone Republican over various social issues like gay-rights and other 'Bourgeois Vices'. (This is how Trump got elected.)

Other scholars scoff at these simpletons, sneering that class is thriving better than ever. These brush aside that the *homme moyen sensuel* today lives far fatter than a well-to-do fellow did 50 years ago. (He may even have an organic free-range chicken in his pot.) If you try and debate with these scholars, they will just repeat, again and again, something about

the 'top half of one percent' owning everything. The basic idea is that rich people send their children to better schools, do this and that for them, so that they stay rich, while thwarting less blessed souls their fighting chance. Meritocracy is a mere cloak to veil who is doing what to whom.

My own opinion is that America has no upper-class today. What we have are Elites. An upper-class, through its families, transmits a broader culture from generation to generation, with the nourishing power of continuity. It passes along some manners, some aesthetic sensibilities, or the 'unbought grace of life,' as Burke called it. University schooling can form Elites, but it cannot make a class. Class is cultivated in the home.

Elites are specialized and often isolated from each other and cannot transmit culture over generations. In America, politics is done in Washington. The worlds of fashion and finance are in New York. The techies



are in Seattle or Silicon Valley. The celebrities are in Hollywood. There is little cross-pollination between groups, partly because we lack a central city like London or Paris or Vienna. Elites may indeed pass enormous financial and educational benefits to their children, and even some civic sense, but their criterion for excellence is limited to tasks prized in a tiny corner of the universe. Technicians, even if billionaires, will usually be hostile to what was once called high culture.

Yet there is one place where ultra-monarchism really does thrive in America. In England, the manufacturer of a bogus coat of arms, by ancient law, would be docked an ear. But our armigerous hungers entirely disregard the London College of Heralds. You can, without leaving America's shores, buy a Lordship of the Manor of the village of Tufton Bufton where the only thing left of the manor is a pile of stones and Tufton Bufton lies underneath a municipal car park.

Notwithstanding it being the most unspeakable social gaffe to claim such a title in England, everywhere one turns in America someone is descended from some Welsh marcher-lord or Scottish kingleet, and to whom crests are raised without shame. As such, many of our tourists returning from London should really be with one ear, not two. As late as 1957, an English Court of Chivalry fined the City of Manchester 100 Pounds for wrongfully using a coat of arms in an amusement park, despite not having sat for 220 years. Yet the Court of Chivalry has done nothing to stop our eager feudalists from proliferating mighty coats of arms, left and right. If all these gentry were found and fined, the United Kingdom would be so opulent, the whole Brexit debate would soon be superfluous.

*Mark Mantel is a lawyer from Richmond, Virginia.*

## Australia's Dreyfus?

DARYL McCANN

Cardinal George Pell, until recently the Vatican's Treasurer, is the most senior official of the Catholic Church ever to be convicted of child sex abuse. On December 11, 2018, a jury found him guilty of sexual misconduct involving two thirteen-year-olds, pseudonymously 'The Kid' and 'The Choirboy'. On March 13, 2019, Pell was sentenced by the judge to six years in prison. Many Australians, not all of them progressives, believe the unanimous 12-0 jury decision against Pell is something to celebrate. Hetty Johnston, chair of *Bravehearts*, an organisation she founded following her young daughter's sexual assault in 1997, was greatly encouraged: 'Nobody gets to harm a child because they're richer or more famous than everybody else. So, to all survivors everywhere: don't be frightened of the person who has done this to you. Take your complaints to the police, and justice will be served.' But has justice, in the case of Cardinal Pell, been served?

George Pell's alleged crime was to sexually assault two choirboys in the sacristy of Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral after Mass one Sunday morning in 1997. We have not been provided with the details of the assault given in court by the surviving claimant, but Louise Milligan's *Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of George Pell* (2017, revised edition 2019) contains

some of the address to the jury by the Victorian Crown Prosecutor. The accusation is that the two choirboys left the procession at the end of the morning's Mass and detoured to the sacristy, a small open room at the back of the cathedral, to help themselves to some communion wine. They were, according to claimant, discovered by the archbishop, who warned them they were in serious trouble if they did not comply with his desires. George Pell ordered them to kneel and then exposed his erect penis. He commanded The Kid to perform fellatio, directing him through the process until ejaculation was achieved after two minutes. The Choirboy, perhaps too startled to raise the alarm, mutely observed the whole disagreeable spectacle, until instructed to pull down his trousers and underpants so that Archbishop Pell might fondle his genitals.

This unverified story has a certain implausibility even from a technical perspective. The sacristy, for instance, is an open room and any number of people could have found their way in there unannounced. The recently appointed Archbishop of Melbourne, with likely ambitions to rise even higher in the Church, behaved not only criminally and malevolently that Sunday immediately after Mass, but with a recklessness and imprudence that seems absolutely out of character for

such a disciplined and aspiring high-flier. Milligan, unable to make any psychological sense of it, weakly describes the encounter as Pell's 'last slip-up'. There is also the problem that a Church dignitary in Pell's position that morning would not have been left unattended by the auxiliary clergy before, during or after Mass. Additionally, throughout the period of the assault, Archbishop Pell claims he was, as usual, at the other end of the Cathedral – that is, the building's entrance – seeing out the congregation. There is, besides, the practical matter of George Pell not being able to perform his misdeed, as reported, in full archiepiscopal garb. Finally, communion wine at St Patrick's is always locked.

New evidence has emerged since the sentencing

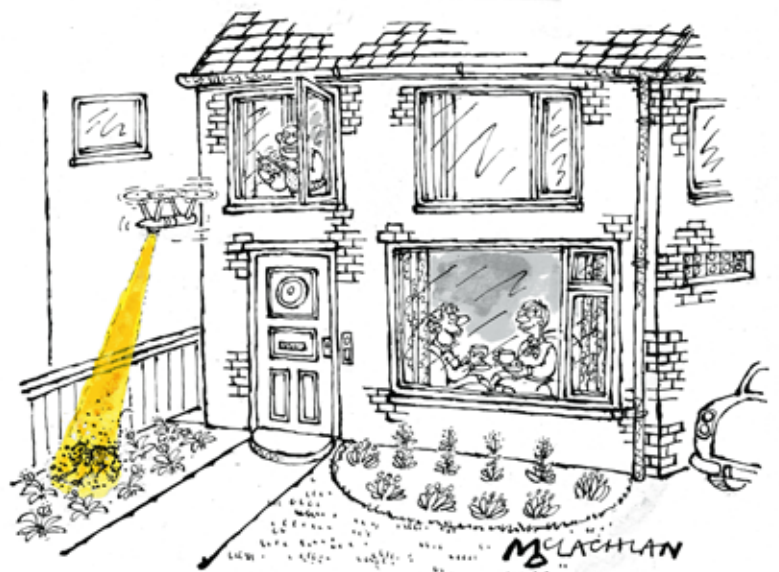
alleging that the narrative told by the claimant was in fact borrowed from an American account of abuse in the September 15, 2011, edition of *Rolling Stone* magazine. Keith Windschuttle, writing in *Quadrant* magazine, refers to an article that contains an almost undistinguishable storyline, including two young victims caught drinking communion wine in the sacristy after

Sunday Mass, kneeling before the priest, sexual abuse in the sacristy, fellatio, fondling of genitals, and no corroborating witnesses. The Victorian Police, according to their own testimony, had been searching for crimes committed by Cardinal Pell for two full years before The Kid and The Choirboy came forward with their story in June 2015. Their tale, according to Windschuttle, is 'so close to being identical' with the American one in *Rolling Stone*, that the notion of the Australian version being original is 'most implausible'. The Choirboy died in 2014, although not before disavowing his accusation against Pell.

Nevertheless, the claimant's unsupported testimony, from the general public's point of view and obviously from the jury's deliberations, remains within the realms of possibility. This could have something to do with some Catholic priests, along with other religious and non-religious societal leaders, being identified as abusers in the landmark 2017 Royal Commission into

Child Sexual Abuse within Australian Institutions. Paradoxically, perhaps, Pell's criminality occurred in the same time frame as he was initiating 'Melbourne Response', a world-first initiative to report sexual abuse of minors. We should also mention that at the launch of the Royal Commission, in 2012, Cardinal Pell himself was under no suspicion of having committed sexual crimes and welcomed a wide-ranging investigation into the abuse of minors. The Royal Commission was the catalyst for a storm of previously unheard accusations against religious leaders from the past and, in the case of the 77-year-old Cardinal Pell, former archbishop of Melbourne and later Sydney, the Vatican's Treasurer between 2014-19 and a member of the Council of Cardinal Advisers, 2013-18, not to mention a

possible successor to Pope Francis, was an Australian religious figure without rival. Louise Milligan's *Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of George Pell* touched on other rumours and hearsay about George Pell's past, but it was the horror story of the two choirboys that attracted the public's attention and resulted in Cardinal Pell being summoned back from Rome to stand trial.



"I understand your husband, a highly skilled electronics engineer, has devised a way to keep cats off his flower beds."

The November 2018 guilty verdict, for many of those who have experienced the consequences of sexual abuse, was a godsend. Hetty Johnston, of *Bravehearts*, was greatly encouraged: 'The message that it sends is that nobody is out of reach of the law.' She requested the sentencing judge jail Cardinal Pell for a lengthy period: 'When these offenders are found guilty and not punished appropriately, it just lets everybody down, including this generation of children.' Sydney academic Dan Dixon, as example of our leftist professoriate, concurred with Johnston, although his retributory theme is informed less by justice than crypto-Marxist social justice. Any argument in support of Cardinal Pell's innocence, insists Dixon, is an attempt to 'secure the power structures as they are' and maintain 'a world in which old white men can dine with one another in peace, safe from resentment and safe from the law.' Putting Cardinal Pell in jail for six years was proof that 'very occasionally' the 'armour

of privilege does not provide total immunity’.

At the risk of safeguarding power structures and promoting white male supremacy, it strikes me, and many a sceptic, that the jury’s verdict is dubious at best. As John Silvester, an investigative crime writer and columnist with *The Age* newspaper, wrote: ‘Pell was found guilty beyond reasonable doubt on the uncorroborated evidence of one witness, without forensic evidence, a pattern of behaviour or a confession. It is a matter of public record that it is rare to run a case on the word of one witness, let alone gain a conviction.’ Cardinal Pell, then, has ample reason to believe he will win his appeal against the guilty verdict.

Pell would not be the first Australian archbishop of late to have a conviction overturned. In August 2018, Adelaide’s Archbishop Philip Wilson was found guilty of not passing on allegations of sexual abuse against the priest Jim Fletcher. Fletcher, charged with committing sexual assault on a New South Wales boy in the 1990s, died in prison in 2006 with the reputation of a notorious paedophile. There were, without doubt, Catholic and other authorities who did not respond as they should have done morally to complaints about sexual abuse. Hetty Johnston’s *Bravehearts* organisation did not come into existence without cause. Nonetheless, the charge against Archbishop Wilson seemed more like a case of scapegoating, considering that he was a junior priest, still in his twenties, when a claim was made to him about ‘Father Jim’. This was 1976, a world away

from what we today call ‘mandatory reporting’. Philip Wilson made a wrong call, as many did in those days, but only through the prism of hindsight and present-day rules and sensibilities, did he deserve to be jailed over forty years later. Wilson won his appeal, but not before his health and life were ruined and he resigned from the priesthood in disgrace.

Philip Wilson, like George Pell, garnered a reputation as a reformer in the field of addressing and preventing child abuse. That is some of the irony in the persecution of these two men. They have not been the beneficiaries of the ‘armour of privilege’ – quite the opposite. A scourge of sexual abuse descended upon the children and adolescents of Australia, mostly between the years 1960-80, but that is no reason to incriminate innocent men. Some Catholic priests were guilty of unspeakable crimes, and yet it just adds one injustice to another injustice and serves no good purpose to engage in collective condemnation. Something to be said for their Catholic faith, however, is that sacrifice and suffering have always been part of the long game. On Easter Sunday, to their great surprise, Pell’s visitors at the Melbourne Remand Centre found him in good spirits and determined to cheer them up by reflecting on the Christian significance of the day.

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

## ‘So Tell Me What You Want, What You Really, Really Want?’

BERENICE LANGDON

**T**he man stares rudely at me as if I don’t know my job. ‘But my ears and my throat are painful so I need antibiotics.’

Patently, I explain that his ear drums both look normal. His throat and glands are fine too, that his multiple symptoms fit with a viral infection, so antibiotics wouldn’t help. In any case he’s already had 5 days of antibiotics (given to him by some dodgy walk-over walk-in GP service).

‘But I’m going on holiday tomorrow so I need them for the flight.’

Again, I explain that antibiotics won’t make a difference and try to move the conversation onto the possible risk of flying and how to manage a sore throat and ear pain during takeoff and landing.

‘But they’re painful. So, I need an antibiotic to treat the pain.’

He now has the manner of customer at Sainsbury’s who had found the organic tomatoes were not to his liking. I am the floor manager.

My heart is starting to pound with aggravation. I try to relax because I am just not going to give this patient antibiotics. This time instead of another placatory remark I (unfortunately) say, ‘Your ear and throat pain is not a trump card.’

‘What’s Trump got to do with it? He frowns and raises his voice. ‘Look I’ve got stuff to do so can we sort this out?’

It’s all consumer rights these days. A colleague was threatened with the GMC for not taking his shoes off

when entering a patient's house. They had new carpets you see.

'Your ears and throat need time to get better and heal up. Your own body will do this but it will take time to do it.'

And then eventually, as he starts shouting, I say simply, 'No.'

I have been a GP for 15 years and have had the 'Antibiotics are not the right treatment for you because this is a viral infection' conversation 3-4 times a day throughout this time. This cuts no ice with my patient, he demands to see the practice manager and the partners because they, 'Can give him what he wants'; like the song, 'So tell me what you want, what you really, really want'.

I stand up. The consultation is terminated as far as I am concerned. I open the door as a suggestion that he should leave. He storms off.

Now I know exactly what you are thinking, how could I be so sure I was right? And the answer is, 'I just am.' I can't sit down and explain the whole of medicine to you or to him or to pass on all the patient examinations I have done in a quick download. But in case I am wrong, I (and all other GPs) give 'just in case' advice, for example, 'If I am wrong and your ears get worse, see a doctor in Barbados.'

I know your next question too; 'Why didn't you just give him a 'delayed prescription' of antibiotics'? (Some tablets to have in his wallet just in case).

Because that option is a fudge. It's for a doctor who lacks commitment to his own diagnosis. Sometimes I do use that option but the other way around; 'I think you need them but let's wait 24 hours to see if it settles with this alternative strategy first.'

And I know your last question too – did he get them? Yes, of course he did, because no practice wants to have to handle a formal complaint when they can nip it in the bud by giving a patient what they want.

How do I feel about all of this? I would like to give the adult answer; that I am resigned to the situation, but really that's not true. I am burning with annoyance and indignation. I feel slighted, my medical experience not taken seriously, critical that the practice is unable to hold its ground against demands like this and baffled that doctors are not giving the same message about antibiotics and avoiding prescriptions. Our first duty is not to make things worse by sticking our oars in. We make an oath to do no harm. So how much harm are we doing?

Just step back from this fly-on-the-wall view of a patient consultation for a moment. There are 5 other GPs at my practice simultaneously having the same conversation. Step back further and see all the practices in the city and then all the doctors in the UK (250 000

of them) and think how much antibiotics are being dished out inappropriately right now.

It's not a cost issue which, by the way, my patient accused me of in passing. A course of antibiotics costs the government less than £2. The issue here is antibiotic resistance. The more we use them, the more resistant bacteria survive and grow.

The most worrying sort are 'carbapenem resistant bacteria'. These are bacteria that are resistant to multiple antibiotics including the last resort antibiotic; carbapenem.

I trained in a happy golden age of antibiotics and medicine. As a medical student I met GPs who were practicing when penicillin was first available. One intramuscular shot was all it took back then to cure a patient with an infection. The advent of antibiotics has meant all sorts of surgery, chemotherapy, leukaemia treatments and bone marrow transplants have been possible.

But now antibiotic resistance means that children and adults, especially in intensive care units, simply die of resistant infections. This situation is particularly severe in Greece where up to 67 per cent of *Klebsiella* bacteria are carbapenem resistant (compared to 1.3 per cent in the UK, although it used to be zero). In fact, rates of resistance of all bacteria in Greece are the highest in Europe. Greece gives us a useful preview of how things will be here in a few years' time. All of their hospital admissions are complicated, their patients have multiple resistances and the risk of dying from a usually treatable infection is greatly increased.

Why are some countries more affected? Because they use more antibiotics, either because they are available simply to buy without seeing a doctor first or because the doctors over-prescribe. France is famously culpable; its doctors prescribing (and patients demanding) three times more antibiotics than the European average. The tagline that they try to use is, 'Antibiotiques c'est pas automatique' which seems to imply that until very recently they were. In countries which have antibiotics available over the counter such as Greece, of course they are over used, and antibiotic resistance is rife. Globally, the sale of antibiotics over-the-counter is widespread, but it is rare that countries track resistance to the drugs,

We can pat ourselves on the back in the UK because our antibiotic prescribing rates are near the bottom of the table (along with Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark) at about 600 prescriptions per 1000 patients per year (836 in USA). But even so doctors in the same practice have prescribing rates that vary widely. In some NHS practices one doctor may see exactly the same sort of patients and yet prescribe 3 times more antibiotics than his or her colleague.

But even assuming our antibiotic prescribing rates were perfect, GP prescribing rates uniformly low and patients never argued, does that mean we would be safe from infections? Would antibiotics continue to work for us?

The short answer is no. Antibiotic resistant bacteria are spreading. Carbapenem resistant bacteria were first noticed in the world in 1993, (the first USA case in 2001 and the first in the UK in 2003). The spread can be tracked like a black ink stain moving from Greece and Italy through Europe. In the UK the map is marked with spreading black spots representing the fact that it is found in medical centres but not yet generally throughout the community.

I have treated patients who have imported resistant toxin-producing bacteria from India and elsewhere and then seen the same illness again in other local patients. If we travel to countries with a high prevalence of resistant bacteria and end up in the hospital system, the chances are high that we will be colonized by resistant bacteria to bring back to the UK.

Avoiding antibiotics makes sense since we mainly don't need them. We understand using antibiotics encourages the resistant bacteria to thrive. Avoiding antibiotics is the only thing we can do to avoid resistant bacteria.

Antibiotic resistance is not a new phenomenon. It was recognised the moment antibiotics were invented when Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin, warned of it in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1945. But for our generation, a world without effective antibiotics is a new phenomenon indeed.

In the future we may see our children and grandchildren die of infections in a way that we have never seen. My great-aunt died, following childbirth, of puerperal infection in 1942 leaving her baby to be given away to another family. If we all continue to argue that we need antibiotics for viral infections, perhaps stories like this will once again become common in our lifetimes.

In the meantime, should I learn from my encounter with my ear-throat patient to compromise with future patients on antibiotic prescriptions and avoid aggressive confrontations like this one? Or should I hold the line, try to keep the UK prescription rate down and maybe delay, for a while, the development of complete antibiotic resistance?

Of course I will hold the line. Hippocrates said: 'First do no harm.' Complete antibiotic resistance would be Armageddon.

*Berenice Langdon is a GP*

## An Essay in Gallic Lycanthropy

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'IT'S NOT THE PALE MOON THAT EXCITES ME'

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THEODORE DALRYMPLE

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**W**olves have returned to the neighbourhood in which I have my house in France. It borders the *département* in which the so-called Beast of Gévaudun, presumably a wolf, a pair or a pack of wolves, terrified the population in the middle years of the eighteenth century, killing perhaps a hundred people. Three miles from my house, local people have painted a slogan across the road: *Morts aux loups*, death to wolves. Feelings run high.

Differing attitudes to the return of the wolves in France are emblematic of the social divisions in the country revealed by the Yellow Vests. The metropolitan elite is in favour of wolves and re-wilding. They point out (correctly) that the reintroduction of wolves into the Yosemite National Park in the United States was followed by a remarkable increase in biodiversity: top predators are essential for the ecological health

of an environment. Moreover, Spain has a population of wolves seven or eight times the size of France's, and local economies have not collapsed. The last documented wolf attacks on humans in Spain that I have been able to find occurred in 1974, when a wolf attacked and killed a young child and a baby. Bulls kill more than wolves in Spain.

But to those who live in the countryside, the elite's lupophilia smacks of the same kind of airy condescension as President Macron's tax on diesel, designed to save the world from global warming at the expense of *les ploucs*, the relatively impoverished bumpkins who needed their diesel vehicles to get around with reasonable economy and have no choice but to drive long distances. The elite would not, of course, have to live with the practical consequences of their desire to see wolves prosper and multiply: at

base, theirs was an aesthetic approach to the whole question. They liked the *idea* of wolves rather than the reality of meeting them in the flesh, and ideas for them are what count.

Wolves are not yet present on my land, at least as far as I know, but their spread seems inevitable. Would I welcome it? There are not many sheep around, and when my distant neighbour decided to keep some free-range goats I should have been glad of a few wolves to keep them in order. They were terrible: only death deterred them from eating everything in sight and climbing on our roofs.

In a review in the *Spectator* for 23 February on a book about wolves, we read the following

*Every educated person today knows that wolves don't eat people, [the author] Radinger writes (I didn't know this, and a statistically insignificant poll among my reasonably educated friends returned a range of responses, including the conviction that wolves are baying for our blood).*

Whether wolves actually *eat* people is not the question, however: it is whether wolves attack and kill or injure them. It seems that of latter years there has been the same kind of effort to downplay the dangerousness of wolves as that which went into persuading us that cannibalism was a myth and had never really existed. Wolves are friendly, wolves are nice, wolves tell us something about how we ought to live.

This is not the traditional view, of course. When the last wolf in France was killed in 1922, it was a cause of rejoicing, not of ecological lamentation. An ancient enemy was defeated once and for all. Scholars think that about 3000 people were killed in France by wolves over the three centuries before their extirpation: not a major cause of mortality, but not testimony to their innocuousness either.

Now the wolves are back, this time as undocumented immigrants from Italy. They are fanning outwards through the country, and it is thought that there are now about 360 of them (11,000 is the figure I have seen quoted for their apogee in the three centuries aforementioned), and that they are increasing in number at a rate of 10-20 per cent per year.

France has not only de-industrialised, it has de-agriculturalised, at least in areas of intrinsically low agricultural productivity (the more productive areas are fast going over to agribusiness). The land is returning to nature, with a large increase in deer and boar populations, ready prey for wolves. The boar, by the way, are more often than not *cochongliers*, a cross between domestic pigs (*cochons*) and boar (*sangliers*), sometimes deliberately bred for the benefit of hunters because the fecundity of *cochongliers* is so much

greater. They are a menace for gardeners.

But wolves prey on sheep as well as on wild animals, and this rather obvious fact has opened a breach between those who welcome their return to France as a sign of beneficent re-wilding and biodiversity, and those small farmers who are trying to wrest their livelihood on parcels of infertile land by means of sheep-raising. The wolves now kill 10,000 sheep or more a year France (about 0.2 per cent of the sheep population), but because of the fear that their presence induces, a flock's productivity after a wolf attack declines dramatically. The losses are, of course, concentrated in the areas where the wolves live, and may be so catastrophic for the farmers, who are never very far above the subsistence level, that they decide to throw in the towel. Sheep farmers in wolf-infested areas have to protect their flocks from wolves by means of fences and shelters, or by the keeping of a special breed of dog, all of which is expensive even though subsidised to an extent by the government. Permission is given to farmers in special circumstances to cull the wolves, about 40 a year, provided they can show that the wolves have caused damage that cannot be prevented any other way than by killing them; but the penalty for an unauthorised killing of a wolf is up to a year in prison and a fine of 15,000 Euros.

There are many, perhaps most, offences against human beings that are treated far more leniently by the law. Man may be a wolf to man, but not a wolf to Wolf.

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





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# Did a Black Man Discover the First Black Hole?

BRIAN RIDLEY

There is no doubt that black holes are weird. You wouldn't know it from the pretty picture of one that appeared recently in the press, a colourful halo surrounding it, what else? A black hole. Astronomers don't believe that black holes are rare in our universe. Stars don't go on forever: some collapse into enormously dense blobs, so much so that anything that gets too close can never escape their gravitational pull, even light. None of this is particularly weird. Those of us who chose science at school will know there is such a thing as an escape velocity associated with the earth. Throw a stone upwards, it will return to earth. If you throw it upwards with sufficient velocity (say on top of a rocket) it will escape into space. Light needs no acceleration – it is the fastest thing we know. When the gravitational attraction of an object such as a collapsed star is so strong that even light can't escape, the result is a black hole. Time goes slowly in a gravitational field, so if you were in the near vicinity of a black hole you might have one thought a fortnight.

We all know it has something to do with Einstein and his General Theory of Relativity, but forget about all that, and think Newton instead. Which is what a country parson, one John Michell (feminists will be delighted to know his mother was called Obedience) did way back in the eighteenth century.

Newton conceived a beam of light to be a stream of particles which, if each particle had a mass, would be influenced by gravitation. As it passed by a massive body it could be slowed up or accelerated or even captured. Except for the change of speed, the Newtonian picture is exactly what happens in reality.

It was Michell and that, following Newton's ideas, who, in a paper for the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, read on 27 November 1783, first put forward the idea that there were such things as black holes, which he called 'dark stars'. Michell believed that astronomers one day would be able to detect a black hole by observing the behaviour of a star circling it and attracted by its enormous gravitational pull.

*If there should really exist in nature any bodies,*

*whose density is not less than that of the sun, and whose diameters are more than 500 times the diameter of the sun, since their light could not arrive at us; or if there should exist any other bodies of a somewhat smaller size, which are not naturally luminous; of the existence of bodies under either of these circumstances, we could have no information from sight; yet, if any other luminous bodies should happen to revolve about them we might still perhaps from the motions of these revolving bodies infer the existence of the central ones with some degree of probability, as this might afford a clue to some of the apparent irregularities of the revolving bodies, which would not be easily explicable on any other hypothesis; but as the consequences of such a supposition are very obvious, and the consideration of them somewhat beside my present purpose, I shall not prosecute them any further.*

*John Michell, 1784*

Michell's ideas were brilliant, but he didn't push it, and at the time (1755) they were too speculative to command serious attention. 'He died in quiet obscurity', states the American Physical Society, 'and his notion of a 'dark star' was forgotten until his writings re-surfaced in the 1970s.' Nevertheless, it is interesting that the existence of black holes was entertained three centuries before Einstein. It turns out that Newtonian cosmology is remarkably successful in describing the broad outlines of the universe that agree with General Relativity. But Newton's concept of time did not survive into modern times. It has been replaced by a space-time formalism of elegant sophistication, the General Theory of Relativity. Be that as it may, the really weird thing about a black hole is the appearance of a physical boundary that divides the world we can know from the world, the interior of a black hole, which we can never know. Yet both worlds exist in our universe. The General Theory defines its own limitation.

Michell lived in a century and a country which were both unique in their enthusiasm for science. Anybody at that time with a university degree, and even some of those without one, could not fail to

notice the intellectual ferment centred around how the universe worked – a ferment arguably more revolutionary in its consequences than Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, the birth of the United States or the French Revolution. Moreover, as it was extremely dangerous to meddle in politics in those times, many intelligent men turned to science, considered a ‘harmless’ preoccupation by the authorities.

As a result, and coinciding with the restoration of the monarchy, the Royal Society was formed in 1662 by a group of talented men. It successfully flourished under Robert Hooke (Hooke’s Law of elasticity) until his death in 1703 and under the presidency of Isaac Newton until his death in 1727. It was no surprise that Michell was elected in 1760 on the strength of his studies in geology, magnetism and astronomy. But not because of his idea of a black hole!

By then, science was set to underpin our notions of the material world. Newton’s gravity was seen to be universal throughout the universe, light had a definite, if enormous, velocity, alchemy under Robert Boyle had become chemistry, Edmond Halley (he of the comet) had revealed the immensity of space. Science attracted the attention of philosophers – Leibniz, John Locke, David Hume; mathematics was developed across the Channel by Joseph Lagrange and Pierre Laplace. Towards the end of this remarkable century the Industrial Revolution was presaged by the steam engine of Thomas Watt. The earth was weighed by Henry Cavendish using a device invented by Michell. And on top of all this but

after Michell’s death, Darwin published his *Origin of Species*.

It is true that other wonders were to come: electromagnetism, quantum phenomena, relativity, nuclear power, antibiotics, advances in our understanding of the physical world which have been more mathematical and abstract in nature. They have not had the immediacy of comprehension, such as the idea of weighing the earth, or being descended from apes, which was the case in Michell’s time, when crazy but rational ideas, such as the idea of a black hole, could be considered. Today, crazy but rational ideas will continue, doubtless, to be advanced, but only by mathematicians, certainly not by semi-amateurs. That is, as long as such ideas do not cause offence.

Finally, was the discoverer of black holes black himself? Jonathan Swift described Michell as, ‘a tall, thin, very black man, like a Spaniard or a Jew.’ However it is unlikely, the sources say, that Michell was of African or Caribbean descent. At that time the term black was used to describe anybody from the Mediterranean or Jewish. Moreover, The Royal Society refused to elect the Jamaican scientist Francis Williams (1702 – 1770) ‘on account of his countenance’ so it would definitely not have elected a black man as early as 1760. That came nearly a century later.

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

## National Self-Loathing

MARY SIDNEY

At the beginning of his great TV series *Civilisation*, Sir Kenneth Clark asked, ‘What is civilisation?’ He didn’t know, but turning towards Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris he said he knew it when he saw it as an example of 850 years of civilised culture.

The whole western world now seems to be in mourning the loss of Notre Dame, that symbol of French Christian culture. Parisians watching the fire called the cathedral, ‘Part of our history, our culture, our literature.’ Unlike the UK, *La Belle France* is indivisible, and throughout the land *Le Catastrophe* is considered a tragedy and a scandal.

One wonders what would happen if a similar catastrophe happened here. Perhaps looking at the current situation of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square might give us an inkling.

It was still a shock on a recent visit to London to find I could no longer enter the National Gallery through the usual entrance. The great portico at the top of its splendid double stairway is now closed to the public. Its famous façade now looks neglected, as if the place has been boarded up pending demolition.

The gallery’s 2,300 paintings are still inside but you can only reach them by pushing through tourists bullied into huge circles by licensed beggars doing

tricks or accompanying blaring music speakers, to reach the inauspicious Sainsbury wing down the road.

I was told this was ‘for security’. People poured in through the grand entrance during the worst days of the Blitz. Clark organised regular exhibitions, shown throughout the war, seen by 10,518 visitors. He also organised daily lunchtime classical music recitals for the public.

They raised public morale with music, when every concert hall in London was closed. An unexploded bomb went off during one of the concerts, but Dame Myra Hess played on, not missing a note.

Art critic Herbert Read called the National Gallery, ‘A defiant outpost of culture right in the middle of a bombed and shattered metropolis.’ Now it’s easier and safer to check bags in a banal modern building than in a grand old one.

Times have changed; the British public no longer flock to classical music concerts and probably wouldn’t know a Raphael if it fell on them, and looking through the Corinthian columns of the old portico, once a world-famous view past Nelson’s column down Whitehall, now also reveals the squalor of today’s Trafalgar Square.

In 2003 the square, owned by the Greater London Authority and Grade I listed, was pedestrianised but rather than becoming a pleasant piazza where civilised people might walk while their children feed the famous pigeons (banned by Ken in 2003) it is now a place for loud music, litter and beggars with mental health ‘issues’ in grotesque costumes. The view from the National Gallery now begs questions about national identity which the French never seem to have to ask, such as whether our culture even exists anymore.

Unlike the French, Britain is in the grip of a bout of national self-loathing. While French plutocrats are vying to fund the restoration of Notre Dame and Macron boasts it will be done in five years, pundits on the BBC and in newspapers suggest that the cathedral, and with it other old buildings, should never be restored. Two years ago, black journalist Afua Hirsch, wrote in *The Guardian*, ‘It is figures like Nelson who immediately spring to mind when I hear the latest news of Confederate statues being pulled down in the US.’

Nelson is still there on his column but Afua Hirsch’s message is still a powerful theme in our universities and schools. In the UK we don’t need fire to destroy our precious assets, local councils and teachers will do it for us. Plans for further radical

change of the area are underway. Behind the National Gallery, in what used to be a quiet corner, sits the National Portrait gallery, once providing a pleasing chronological meander through British history from the earliest portraits of our rulers to contemporary paintings of the *literati*.

The Portrait Gallery is going to be expanded so that more emphasis can go to popular and contemporary exhibitions; their last big show was a commemoration of singer and paedophile Michael Jackson.

The project’s architect, Jamie Fobert, says that current entrance is too small as a result of an important Victorian donor insisting that it be placed as close to Trafalgar Square as possible. On no account was it to face the squalor of Soho. From 2023 it is going to do just that. In the interest of our national obsession with inclusivity, faceless metropolitans are planning to trash the whole area, In Clark’s day people went to galleries to look at pictures, now they go to look at themselves, on selfies.

The Portrait Gallery Director, Nicholas Cullinan said in January: ‘The most common question that visitors ask is, ‘Why does nobody here look like me?’”

Old buildings and works of art cannot possibly reflect the multicultural crowds now swarming ten-deep around our them, from rich Beijing tourists to Romanian beggars, and our masters in the liberal elite do not value that part of our culture which reaches back eight hundred and fifty years or more. Unlike the French we are no longer happy when a building or monument says, ‘This is what we once were.’

Last year it was agreed by the BBC that Clark’s ‘Civilisation’ could never be made in today’s UK. Clark was called ‘outrageously’ committed to the ‘great man approach to history’ and the non-egalitarian idea of individual genius. Above all his critics detested his belief that Europe ever had anything special to offer the world, or could be seen as a paramount civilisation.

Perhaps the destruction of Notre Dame and the response of the French may shame us into questioning these attitudes at last. One thing is certain, when Notre Dame is rebuilt French national pride will be restored and probably enhanced with the new cathedral roof – a hearty ‘Chapeaux bas!’ to them.

*Mary Sidney is a social commentator.*

# From Across the Danube

SLAVOMIR JAKABCIN

I am perplexed by all this sneering and arrogant lampooning of British democracy, the British constitution and the political situation of Brexit Britain. What with the referendum results being so close and the nation being so evenly split, there is no easy choice for the British. I must admit that I strongly sympathise with the Brexiteers because I'm an enthusiastic admirer of British political and cultural – dare I say civilisational – achievements, while being highly sceptical of any such achievements by the EU. Moreover I am convinced that Britain's institutions and its people (at least half of them) would again be able to prosper, as so many other sovereign and independent nations do, outside such a behemoth as Europe.

It's good to see that this self-belief is not completely lost on the British. However can either of these two Disraelian nations, Brexiteers and Remainers, be dismissed out of hand? No, they cannot. This is the only bone I have to pick with the no-deal Brexiteers – the referendum simply does not give them a strong enough mandate *politically* for a hard Brexit. It would amount to a revolution.

Having read political science at university and being a voracious reader of English letters, I've been an admirer of Albion's particularly practical strand of conservatism. It therefore strikes me as odd that so many conservatives are such radical Brexiteers. The evolutionary not the revolutionary way seems to me the foundational British conservative principle. Why such a headlong rush towards a full Brexit? Shouldn't the evolutionary principle apply in this case as well? In my opinion it should and seemingly, to everyone's surprise, it *is* being applied.

Calling Brexit a mess, a chaos or even a *shit show* as one German Minister declared, is demeaning and cosmically arrogant. Granted, the current British PM doesn't seem to be the most competent, but how would other European democracies on the continent cope with such a deadlocked referendum result? Leaving such alternative reality thoughts aside, it shouldn't be a surprise that the question of whether to leave or to remain in the EU came to be asked by you, Europe's oldest parliamentary democracy. The answer the people gave, however, is the worst you could have got; in political terms, a draw.

Faced with such a dilemma, you Britons should stick to what you do best – keep cool and compromise with an eye on the long game. It is what made Britain great in the past and it is the only approach that can make it great again; not radicalism.

By being constantly tested by new creative ideas, some of which are good, most of which are infantile, harmful and even extremely dangerous, Conservatism is a bulwark against human folly. Yet we live in an age when originality is praised above all else. To be constantly original one must be constantly forgetful and so must the society around one, and therefore uneducated about its past. I have a feeling that is what has been happening in the classrooms of many, if not all, western countries. The European Union strives to be such an original project. Original at any price, with all that entails: newspeak, messing with the economy, social engineering, ploughing up centuries of local and national traditions, trying to create new ones or pouring money on those that serve its political agenda. The subversion is manifold.

It has happened before; many times, in many countries. I come from a small country that is now a part of the European Union, formerly a part of the Eastern Bloc, formerly part of Czechoslovakia (twice), formerly part of Hungary of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Slovakia's history is demonstrably complicated and is always under threat of either oversimplification or forgetfulness. With the addition of lies, both of which were policies of the Slovak and the Czechoslovak Communist Parties.

Not knowing the past or understanding it gave rise to such slogans as: *With the Soviet Union for all time and never different!* Its crisp naivety is perhaps lost a little in translation; anyone care to substitute *Soviet* with *European* in that line? Certainly, nothing is forever, but we may strive for a semblance of permanence and stability based on experience and careful experimentation; the quintessentially Burkean approach.

Our individual and collective pasts make us who we are. What would we be if we couldn't remember our childhood, the hard blows life dealt us, the mistakes we made, the successes we achieved? We would be empty vessels without a past and without a future. In

short, the ideal Euro Citizen. I am old enough to have been born in and partly grown up in such a society and all of us here in Slovakia have to live with its heritage. The task before us is to claw back our collective past from under thick layers of lies and propaganda, left and right wing, past and present. I suspect you Britons have to do the same. Or rather both our nations have to acknowledge the need to do so.

A conservative needs to be a caretaker of all that has proved to be good in the past, constantly confronting the onslaught of new (or seemingly new) ideas. Yet just like a truly original person, a conservative cannot be ignorant of history. To adapt British conservatism and British society in order to safeguard their future,

you must remember that the English break with Rome neither began nor ended with Henry VIII, that Brexit did not begin nor will it end with Theresa May.

Nor should it. Decades of integration (newspeak for power-grabbing centralisation) cannot be rolled back with a radical cut, especially when the government doesn't have a clear majority of the people and therefore of the parliament behind it. That is not the English way. Or have you forgotten?

*Slavomir Jakabcin is a Slovak civil servant who has published articles in Polish and Slovak scholarly journals on the history of political thought and geopolitics.*

## The War on Christian Civilisation

PETER MULLEN

*There is a creeping war against everything that symbolises Christianity: attacks on mountain-summit crosses, on sacred statues by the wayside, on churches and recently also on cemeteries.*

That is the conclusion of a comprehensive report by *PI-News* a German press agency which has gathered its information from scores of Catholic and Protestant churches, their priests and pastors. Many hundreds from their congregations were interviewed and they revealed shocking stories of abuse, vandalism, desecration and arson; crucifixes smashed and sacred vestments defecated upon. All these accounts have received independent verification.

In France, two churches are desecrated every day on average. *PI-News* documented 1,063 attacks on Christian churches in 2018 alone. This is a 17 per cent increase over 2017, when 'only' 878 attacks were registered.

Here is a selection from the countless incidents contained in the official report:

In February, vandals desecrated and smashed crosses and statues at Saint-Alain Cathedral in Lavaur, France, and mangled the arms of a statue of the crucified Christ. An altar cloth was burned.

In March, vandals plundered Notre-Dame des Enfants Church in Nîmes and daubed a cross in human excrement on the floor of the chancel. Consecrated bread was stolen from the tabernacle and thrown into the dustbin.

Saint-Nicolas Church in Houilles was attacked on three separate occasions in February. A 19th century statue of the Virgin Mary, classed as 'irreplaceable,' was 'completely pulverised,' said the parish priest, 'and a hanging cross was thrown to the floor.'

Arsonists torched the Church of St Sulpice in Paris soon after midday Mass on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March.

Similar reports are coming out of Germany where four churches were vandalised or torched in March.

Do the authorities know who is responsible for these continuing and increasingly fierce attacks on churches in Europe? 'Yes,' said an official spokesman: 'when crosses are broken, altars smashed, Bibles set on fire and baptismal fonts overturned, the church doors are often smeared with Islamic expressions such as *Allahu Akbar*.'

It has been going on for a long time. Another German news report from 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017 reported that, in the Alps and Bavaria alone, around 200 churches were attacked and many crosses were broken: 'Police are currently dealing with church desecrations over and over again. The perpetrators are often immigrants, mainly militant Young Islamists.'

Frequently in European regions with large Muslim populations, there is a concomitant rise in attacks on churches and Christian symbols. Before Christmas 2016, in the North Rhine-Westphalia region of Germany, where more than a million Muslims reside, over fifty statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary were

wilfully damaged or destroyed.

Also in 2016, following the arrival in Germany of another million mostly Muslim migrants, a local newspaper reported that in the town of Dülmen, ‘Not a day goes by without attacks on religious statues – and that in a town of fewer than 50,000 people.’

In France it is the same story: where the number of Muslim migrants increases, so do attacks on churches. In January 2017 a study showed that, ‘Muslim extremist attacks on Christians in France rose by 38 per cent from 273 attacks in 2015 to 376 in 2016; the majority occurred during the Christmas season.’

A typical example: in 2014, a Muslim man committed massive acts of vandalism inside a historic Catholic church in Thonon-les-Bains. According to a contemporary newspaper report, ‘He overturned and broke two altars, the candelabras and lecterns, destroyed statues, tore down a tabernacle, twisted a massive bronze cross beyond recognition, smashed in a sacristy door and even broke some stained-glass windows. For good measure, he also trampled on the Eucharistic elements.’

So how do the police and the courts respond? In virtually every instance of attacks on churches, they hide the identity of the vandals. In those rare instances when the Muslim – or, euphemistically, ‘migrant’ identity of the destroyers is leaked, the perpetrators are presented as ‘suffering from mental health issues.’

Indeed they are, and there is a name for this particular mental issue: the effect of a fundamentalist medieval doctrine on deranged 20<sup>th</sup> century minds.

On 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, *PI-News* commented, ‘Hardly anyone writes and speaks about the increasing attacks on Christian symbols. There is an eloquent silence in both France and Germany about the scandal of the desecrations and the origin of the perpetrators. Not a word, not even the slightest hint that could in any way lead to the suspicion falling on migrants. It is not the perpetrators who are in danger of being ostracised, but those who dare to associate the desecration of Christian symbols with immigrant imports. These truth-tellers are accused of hatred, hate speech and racism.’

Are Muslims being falsely accused and scapegoated? Decide for yourself. Bear in mind the fact that these monstrous sacrileges never used to happen before the current massive Muslim influx. Neither German neopagans nor French leftie secularists go around shouting ‘*Allahu Akbar!*’ Meanwhile, in pursuit of their social and sexual agenda, they wish for nothing except the extirpation of what remains of European Christianity.

So they make all possible excuses for the outrages perpetrated by Muslim fanatics.

*Peter Mullen is a retired Church of England Priest and a writer.*

## Pied Piper

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ANDREW TETTENBORN

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Three years ago a group of eighteen people, none of them British or resident here, told the British government to bring in big changes in the law relating to children in the United Kingdom. They insisted, among other things, on the severing of all effective links between schools and the armed forces, including recruitment as part of careers advice; abortion effectively on demand for all ages throughout the UK, including Northern Ireland (coupled, interestingly, with a prohibition on marriage under 18); the immediate imposition of state-regulated LGBT-friendly sex education on all, with no exceptions or opt-outs allowed; and the complete cessation of all detention of child asylum-seekers (and severe limits on age assessments on those of indeterminate age). To these were added requirements for children’s involvement in drawing up national and local play policies, and for the setting up of youth parliaments; abolition of the 11-plus everywhere;

compulsory inclusion of children’s rights in all school curriculums; and an absolute prohibition on corporal punishment within the family.

Nothing wrong with this, you might think. In a democracy anyone can ask for anything, even if it could form the text of a typical *Guardian* op-ed or something out of the 1960s *Little Red School Book*. Unfortunately, it’s not so simple. These demands were couched, not as suggestions to elected representatives, but peremptorily: as legal requirements which the UK had signed up to and was bound to adopt as a matter of international law, whatever its electors or their representatives might think. The people making them came from a body of UN apparatchiks known as the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The source of their claim to make these demands was a curious and pernicious UN instrument known as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or CRC for short, which the UK ratified in 1991. The

whole affair tells us a good deal about the failure of governments to think through the consequences of their actions.

The CRC, a 20-page document, dates from 1989. Its main provisions, set out in 40 shortish articles drafted in fairly imprecise terms, are varied. But they require such things as protection for children's right to life; mechanisms against neglect, trafficking or exploitation; protection for privacy, family, home and correspondence; protection for health and some sort of minimal standard of living; protection from violence and drugs; and a requirement of some opportunity for young people to make their views known and taken into account when decisions were made affecting their interests.

Put in terms as general as these, this convention looks pretty unobjectionable: significant in parts of the third world, perhaps, but nothing serious to worry about in the first. John Major's administration certainly took this view: it ratified the CRC almost on the nod, in common with most other states (though not all – more of this below), with honeyed words in Parliament to the effect that HM Government, like everyone else, was doing its bit for the world's young.

The air of sweetness and light has not lasted. Rather like the European Convention on Human Rights, membership of the CRC has increasingly become a spanner in the works of good government and a licence for interference by unelected officials in the UK's internal affairs.

How so? The give-away, which ought to have been obvious from the start, was the CRC's very imprecision. What to government looks innocuous and non-committal, to a rights activist suggests an invitation to read in any radical meaning he likes. And hardly surprisingly, it is radical interpretations of the CRC that have caught on. With government connivance, the process has been egged on by an ever-voracious rights industry, ranging from UNICEF (which now boasts that 1.5 million UK children go to 'rights respecting schools' that undertake to teach them to love the CRC), through the Equality and Human Rights Commission, to Scottish Children's Commissioner Bruce Adamson, who last year went so far as to propose giving Scots courts the power to overrule democratically-agreed legislation if they saw it as incompatible with the CRC.

Examples are numerous. Article 3, saying that 'in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration' was stated last year in the Supreme Court to mean that, whatever the law said, widowed parent's allowances had to be paid to unmarried non-widows (it

would be in the interests of their children, you see); the same provision is currently being pressed into service this year to back an argument that the two-child limit on child tax credits is illegal. Again last year, Amnesty International argued, apparently seriously, that the requirement in Article 12 that a child's views be 'given due weight' in matters affecting it meant that minors had to be freely allowed to change their gender with no questions asked or objections made. And so on.

It goes further than this. This Committee on the Rights of the Child, which we encountered above, is a CRC-sponsored body of 18 'experts' (for which read reliable human rights activists) appointed as a kind of UN Red Guard to prevent national backsliding.

This it does in two ways. First, it sporadically issues, alone or in concert with other UN bodies, 'general comments' stating its views on what it thinks the CRC ought to mean. Such comments (24 so far) are, not surprisingly, expansive and aching progressive. The right to education, for example, is said to imply that all education must be child-centred, whatever that means; must faithfully teach about racism as practised historically; and must 'link issues of environment and sustainable development with socio-economic, socio-cultural and demographic issues'. The right to respect for children's economic, social and cultural rights apparently requires a kind of one-way budgetary ratchet. Any cuts in public money used for their benefit must be temporary only and restored as soon as possible. Children's rights to express themselves and have weight given to their views are said to require children's participation in (though not apparently contribution to) public budgets. The list goes on.

Secondly, all signatories, including the UK, have to report five-yearly to this hardly dispassionate body on their zeal for the CRC and to receive in return 'suggestions and recommendations', invariably in the form of a statement that it ought to be doing more. It is the latest of these, in 2016, that was summarised at the head of this article.

It's not difficult to see what is wrong here. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the Committee's interpretations of the CRC are authoritative. (In fact the matter is controversial: it is perfectly possible to argue that states signed up to the Convention, not to whatever glosses a body of UN apparatchiks might later put on it.) If this is so, then some of the requirements of the CRC are plain dotty: banning testing and detention of soi-disant child migrants makes any effective immigration policy unworkable. But quite apart from that, the degree of interference and micromanagement in the UK's internal affairs that the Committee regards as its business is staggering. Whether the CRC should be allowed in schools, or youth parliaments set up by

law, or what the age of marriage or the contents of the school curriculum should be, are all matters that should be nothing to do with the UN. Eric Forth MP, one of the few CRC sceptics, and cordially hated by children's rights activists until he died in 2006, hit the nail on the head in the House of Commons some 18 years ago, on one of the few occasions when the CRC encountered anything other than parliamentary adulation:

*For goodness sake, what do people in the United Nations know about the problems that parents in Chislehurst, Rother Valley or any other constituency face? Absolutely nothing whatever. Most of the people in the United Nations are not only foreigners but diplomats. If there is one combination that is utterly irrelevant to our daily lives, it is the combination of foreigners and diplomats. Let us put aside United Nations and European Council conventions right from the outset. Let us accept that they have no relevance whatever to parents and children in the United Kingdom.*

Even more serious, however, is the contribution all this makes to the corrosion of the political process. The assumption behind this interference from the UN authorities, welcomed by the rights industry, is that matters such as selective education, the age of marriage or the availability of abortion are too important to be left to the political process, and need to be left to an educated cosmopolitan elite that knows better. They could not be more wrong. It is precisely because matters of this

kind do involve serious questions of social policy that they need to be left up to decision by the democratic process rather than left to a self-selecting and politically-homogeneous coterie who have never had to stand for election to anything.

It is true that the UK is not alone in finding itself in this predicament. Almost every nation on earth, foolishly enough, has become party to the CRC for much the same reason that we did. But not quite all: there is one noticeable exception. When the treaty appeared, US senators, more prescient than other lawmakers, saw in it the potential for attacks on parental rights and the school curriculum, among other things. They made it clear that they would not wear it: and to this day the US has not ratified it. The UK cannot follow that lesson: we are now a party whether we like it or not. On the other hand, it is worth remembering that nothing is permanent in such matters. Read the small print, and you will see that under Article 52 we can renounce them on a year's notice. When it comes to the argument that Britain should break free of intrusive foreign control, there is a strong argument for putting the CRC on the agenda just as soon as we have finished with the Treaty of Rome.

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## A Short History of Harpies

MICHAEL MCMANUS

Death threats and obscene abuse directed at women, feminists or not, who question the ability of men to make themselves female by filling in a form has ancient roots in dread of the female sex. The earliest western literature is packed with monstrous female characters. Medea revenged herself on her philandering husband by killing her own children. Medusa turned those who looked at her to stone. Circe kept Odysseus on her island and delayed his journey home by seven years. Our sympathy wanes a little when we learn that the two of them spent most of that time in bed satisfying Circe's voracious lust. As one of the two honorary titles was Sacker of Cities, maybe she was doing the world a favour.

The Sphinx was a female who devoured Thebans who could not answer her riddle. Six-headed Scylla, who fed on Odysseus' crew, was female too, as was

the Hydra, at least in some accounts. The Sirens drew music-loving men to their deaths. The Furies, winged goddesses with snakes in their hair and whips in their hands, were so terrifying that in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* their depiction on stage made members of the audience faint. The Harpies were female monsters who flew through the air like thunder flashes and snatched people away before anyone noticed. In a notorious scene depicted on pottery they tormented poor old Phineus by stealing most of his food and leaving a foul stench on what was left. Clytemnestra was also a popular ceramic decoration: she was usually shown on her way to making herself Agamemnon's widow with a two-headed axe. Even Hera, Mrs Zeus herself, spent much of her time revenging herself on her husband's hapless rape victims: there were more than 140 by one count, so it was a fulltime job.

Wives were generally presented as unreliable. The 50 daughters of Danaus stabbed their 50 husbands to death on their wedding night. The women of Lemnos, tired of their men who spent most of their time away from home fighting and fornicating, killed the lot, along with the floozies. To avoid what they had done getting out, they killed their fathers as well. An older woman, in a meeting that followed the bloodshed, pointed out that now they would have no one to look after them when they were her age. Not to worry, Jason happened to be off shore with a boatload of heroes who obligingly landed and stuck around for a couple of years to repopulate the island. Gentlemen all. Greek children learned early in life that women were to be feared. Parents threatened that Mormo, a terrifying female monster, would come and bite them if they did not behave.

It's hard to believe that the civilised Greeks believed all this mythological hokum, but it's likely that it formed a background to the patriarchal indifference to women's rights and needs that we find in the epics. Homer seems to have understood the psychology of those who saw enemies everywhere. In the opening

pages of the *Odyssey* he makes Zeus complain about the way mortals attribute all their faults to the gods, 'When it is their own wrongdoings that bring them misery.' There seems to be something fragile in the male psyche that needs to project its fearfulness and insecurities on to a screen where they can be safely attacked: women often seem to be the first screen to hand. The nastiness of some transitioning males towards women who question their right to dominate female spaces and sports is part of a long tradition, and probably too deeply rooted ever to be eradicated. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition all women are daughters of errant Eve. For insecure and weak men, men who have no self-understanding, they are all daughters of Pandora who mythically inflicted sorrows, diseases and relentless toil on the world. As St Paul said, we struggle not against flesh and blood but against the rulers of the darkness of this world.

*Michael McManus is a former university teacher and author of Troublesome Behaviour in the Classroom (Routledge).*

## Cyber Police

MYLES HARRIS

Such is the power of the Internet that although sex is necessary to species survival we have invented a machine that is putting a stop to it. It's called social media. Twenty years ago the young spent their waking hours planning how to get into bed with each other, now they prefer to be on the net. According to the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (2014) fewer than half of Britons aged 16 to 44 have sex at least once a week, and here has been a marked decline in those under 25. Why? Apart from the addictive nature of social media, and the distracting nature of our over stimulated lives, there is another reason. Sex with real people these days is a risky business. In consequence many young men prefer to watch porn. Nobody has been accused of raping a porn star on his mobile. Besides

what young man wants to be intimate with the present generation of young women brought up like Estella in *Great Expectations* to wage war on men?

I only describe the above to show the formidable of power of the internet, the bizarre nature of modern manners and how the two can interact to create a nightmare, not just over sex but talk as well. People can spend up to a third of their waking hours chatting on social media, and governments, who now can listen to everything we say, don't like some of the things they are hearing. When taxed with this invasion of our privacy they say, 'Who wants fraudsters, pimps, paedophiles and terrorists spreading their message? We have to protect the public, especially our children.'

Governments have another target, 'far right'

politics; nationalism, loose talk about freedom of speech or immigration; all three of which are inimical to the market. What our rulers want is for us to be happy little consumers singing advertising jingles, not obsessing about why many people are so near the edge of poverty due to our out of control capitalist society, a £100 parking fine can make a family homeless. In the last month swathes of right wing journalists, often with working class followings of hundreds of thousands, even millions, have had their YouTube platforms and messaging apps shut down. They are now voiceless.

Who decides who has been harmed? This is left to shadowy, self-appointed censors, such as ‘Hope not Hate’, and Mermaids. Mermaids is a transgender pressure group that denounces you for saying things about the transgender movement they object to. It received half a million pounds from the Lottery last year. Hope not Hate, who have also received government funds, concentrates on racism, trawling Twitter looking for ‘wrong’ racial views. If you are of any importance it alerts the press. All the targets seem to be on the right. But then how could you offend it you are a left winger?

Judgement is extra judicial. There is no defence, no legal process, no appeal. You will be briefly paraded on the web as an enemy of society then cast into electronic outer darkness; denied as in ancient Athens; fire, shelter, food and water. It was why Stalin was fond of saying, ‘It is only necessary to persecute the innocent for the guilty to fear us.’ Which is why you have that voice in the back of your head whispering, ‘Don’t make that joke.’ I would not write that, ‘What about your mortgage?’

And what if we did not know that we were being censored? It is possible to employ sophisticated forms of censorship using algorithms to ‘clean’ the net without anybody being aware of it. This is what the Internet giants are trying to do. A ‘bot’, a line of code, can be programmed to search for specific words and then drill down to trace the entire conversation. Quietly, ‘wrong’ ideas would gradually disappear and a new history would be born.

In the meantime these self appointed police justify their accusations on the grounds that such opinions cause hurt – one notices almost always to ‘designated’ minorities, defined and cultivated by the left. ‘Hurt’ is different from physical or financial damage, both of which are covered by the criminal and civil law. Not so long ago it was not crime to give offence to somebody for holding a political view or acting in way you did not approve of. Now, depending on your politics, it can be.

Witness recent attempts to make any criticism of Islam (Islamophobia) an offence. Hostile statements about Islam, any reference to its violent history would, if the bill got through, be banned. Critical books on Islam, newspaper articles on it, scholarly papers would vanish. The bill was only thrown out because the police would risk prosecution if they referred to anybody as an Islamic terrorist or implied Islam had a relationship with terror groups. The idea of course that there is such a thing as Islamophobia, an irrational fear of Islam, is ludicrous. People did not become IRA phobic during the latter’s bombing campaign in eighties Britain. We were frightened and with good reason. Never the less a new Islamophobia bill will in due course return to the House of Commons. No wonder we have only contempt for it these days.

George Orwell wrote. ‘The purpose of journalism it to publish something that somebody does not want to see in print – the rest is public relations.’ We are seeing a huge public relations exercise by the left to cover setting themselves up as the final arbitrators of free speech. If free speech is arbitrated it isn’t free. Without it nations inevitably descend into political chaos, poverty, exploitation, slavery – and often war.

*Myles Harris is our Editor*

# Conservative Classic – 74

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## BLEAK HOUSE, CHARLES DICKENS

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ANTHONY DANIELS

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Most people, perhaps, would not think of Charles Dickens as a conservative. Many might even think that he was a radical. He was, after all, a vigorous campaigner for reforms of many kinds, as his immense correspondence testifies. He excoriated abuses wherever he found them.

Nevertheless, he always saw the world in moral terms and would never have believed that society could be made so perfect by means of legislation or administration that no one would have to be good, kind or generous, or that good and evil are merely mechanical expressions of social forces. He did not believe, either, that everything must be changed before anything could be changed, and his conception of the good life was one of the enjoyment of happiness in private.

Two characters in *Bleak House*, published in 1853, are of peculiar modern relevance, indeed almost prophetically so, being at the opposite ends of the spectrum of egotism. The first, of course, is Mrs Jellyby, the Telescopic Philanthropist. Mrs Jellyby concerns herself deeply with what in effect is an abstraction, the condition of the natives of Borriboola-Gha, on the left bank of the Niger, while failing utterly in her concrete duties to those in her immediate surroundings for whom she is personally responsible. The world now seems full of Mrs Jellybys, who are more concerned with appearing to do good, and with their own inner conviction that they are doing good, than with any actual consequences, including of the consequences of omission, of their conduct.

Mrs Jellyby's house is in disorder, her children ignored, neglected and prone to accident, while 'The African project at present employs [her] whole time.' The project means that she hopes in a year to 'have from a hundred and fifty to two hundred healthy families cultivating coffee and educating the natives...'

At the time, of course, before the commercial production of quinine, that part of Africa was a death trap for the white race whom she wanted to settle there (the wishes of the natives in the matter didn't come into it):

*Beware, beware, the bight of Benin,  
For few come out where many go in!*

But Mrs Jellyby exclaims airily, 'The finest climate in the world!' An expression of disbelief causes her to continue: 'Certainly. With precaution. You may go into Holborn, without precaution, and be run over. You may go into Holborn, with precaution, and never be run over. Just so with Africa.'

Mrs Jellyby, who glows with righteousness, feels a responsibility towards the natives of Borriboola-Gha that she certainly does not feel for her children or household. For her, moral concern increases, so to speak, as the square of the distance from her, Africa being so much larger than the house in which she lives.

The second character, Harold Skimpole, on the other hand, feels responsibility to only to himself. He only asks, as he famously puts it, to be free. 'The butterflies are free. Mankind will surely not deny to Harold Skimpole what it concedes to the butterflies!'

Of course, Skimpole is a ruthless parasite, utterly determined to be dependent on other people's efforts while pretending not to notice either his own determination or the dependence that imposes liabilities on those around him. His seeming simplicity is false, completely bogus. When he is arrested for debt (and as usual applies to others to pay it for him), he asks the debt-collector whether he did not think, before he arrives, 'Harold Skimpole loves to see the sun shine; loves to hear the wind blow; loves to watch the changing lights and shadows; loves to hear the birds, those choristers in Nature's great cathedral. And does it seem to me that I am about to deprive Harold Skimpole of his share in such possessions, which are his only birthright? You thought nothing to that effect.'

It is hardly surprising that Skimpole has also completely neglected his own children. He is the kind of man who, in the cant phrase of a modern man abandoning his children to their mother, 'needed my own space.'

In the modern moral economy, it seems to me, we have a tendency to swing between the utmost moral grandiosity and complete moral solipsism, as if there were no intervening level of moral concern between that for the whole planet on the one hand and the Facebook self on the other. In other words, we veer between Mrs Jellyby and Harold Skimpole.

The Jellybys of the world allow themselves immense licence to inconvenience others because their concerns are so transcendently important and they themselves are so virtuous. The more distant and problematic their end (such as saving the planet), the more certain and even ruthless they are in pursuing it. What minor inconvenience of others could compare in importance with saving the planet, even if the connection between the action taken and the inconvenience of others is absolutely certain and the connection between the action taken and saving the planet is extremely uncertain?

The fact is that large abstract causes are fun and interesting in a way that performing one's duty in small matters is not. Tying yourself to railings or gluing your hands to the pavement in a blaze (or at least the hope) of publicity is much more gratifying than, say, collecting the litter from a grass verge. Mrs Jellyby is

much better entertained by her correspondence with various committees concerning philanthropy in Africa than she would be by ensuring her children are cleaned, dressed, taught and fed properly.

As for the Skimpoles, they desire a costless world in which they are able to live just as they please while disregarding the fact that they can do so only at the expense of others. An example of this at the lower end of the social scale is those single mothers who regard independence as independence from the progenitors of their children but complete dependence on the state, that is to say taxpayers.

Clearly there are various levels of proper moral concern. No man is an island but no continent is a person. There needs to be common sense, judgment and a sense of perspective, conservative virtues which are the enemies of and antidotes to ideology.

## Eternal Life



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### PSYCHOLOGY AND FAITH

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PETER MULLEN

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**P**psychology is a word derived from the Greek word *psyche* which means *soul*. Your soul is not some part of your person like your elbow or your liver. Your soul *is* your person. It is what makes you, you. Psychology then is the study of the person. So what does psychology have to say about persons – you and me?

Let's start with Freud. Freud has not been confined to the academy or the clinic: his name and his opinions have penetrated western thinking for a century. Freudian jargon has become part of everyday conversation. We speak of *complexes*, *ego and id*, *sublimation*, *repression*, *projection* and *phallic symbols*. And Freud's views have powerfully influenced – even dominated – the modern novel and certainly films. Alfred Hitchcock and Woody Allen are celluloid Freudians, apostles, you might say of the unconscious. Salvador Dali is psychoanalysis in pictures. Decadence chic. His views changed over his lifetime, but certain themes recur. He believed that the conscious mind is profoundly influenced – even controlled – by the unconscious mind. He thought

particularly that our adult behaviour is caused by events which happened to us when we were infants. When this behaviour causes us to suffer – when it is pathological – we need the Freudian psychiatrist to psychoanalyse us by using the techniques of hypnotism, free association or suggestion.

He taught that we all go through the same stages of development and in the same order: and he called these *oral*, *anal* and *genital*. This is his doctrine of *infantile sexuality* which so shocked the Edwardians. He coined the expression *Oedipus complex* which says that every little boy between six and eight fervently desires to kill his father and sleep with his mother. I do not myself recollect this urge. I seemed to prefer to escape my mother – because she was always giving me jobs to do – and go fishing with my Dad. Freud would suggest that adults who smoke are stuck in the infantile oral stage. He himself smoked like a chimney but denied his cigars were phallic symbols, claiming *Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar*.

The popular description of someone as *anally retentive* comes directly from Freud. I find it

mysterious that a man who was fixated on the last six inches of the alimentary canal should have the name Freud, which derives from the German for joy. But the mainspring of Freudian psychology is determinism. He was the third in the 19<sup>th</sup> century trio of determinists along with Darwin and Karl Marx. For Freud, freewill is an illusion. A couple of years ago there was a shocking case of a young man who murdered his parents, stole all their money and ran off to New York with his girlfriend. He was not convicted of murder because a psychiatrist described him as suffering from *Narcissistic Personality Disorder*. Non-Freudians might rather describe him as an evil little prat.

Freud was an atheist. He said that God is a projection of the human mind – an image of the Oedipal father figure. His psychology appealed to our age because it had the lurid attractiveness of a potent new myth which provided excuses for our sometimes unacceptable behaviour. If we are all the victims of unconscious processes, then we are not to blame for the things we get up to in daily life. That's a pretty destructive thought. But worse is what follows from it: if we are not to blame when we do wrong, we cannot logically be praised when we do right. So Freudianism does away with all morality. You can see why it had a certain appeal. But a world without right and wrong, without freewill, the possibility of actual choices and the reality of personal responsibility is not a human world. It contradicts our deepest presuppositions about human nature. It undermines all our promises and relationships.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century alternative to Freudianism was Behaviourism. This theory denied altogether the existence of the mind – conscious or unconscious. Human beings are merely bundles of *stimuli* and *responses*. So we get the language of *conditioned reflexes*, *operant conditioning*, *rewards and punishments* and *behavioural therapy*. Anyone can be conditioned to do anything. It began with Pavlov and his dogs and ended with a man called Skinner. (Skinner's initials were B F by the way). He conditioned pigeons to play table tennis and rats to respond to electric shocks. Arthur Koestler in his book *The Ghost in the Machine* described Behaviourism as follows:

*Now that we have lost our souls, gone out of our minds, and seem about to lose all consciousness, what is there left for psychology to study? Professor Skinner answers, RATS!*

Skinner actually invented a programme for the

abolition of the very concept of the human being and he wrote a book about it called *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*.

The Christian understanding of the human person is the antidote to both Freudian and Skinnerian determinism. Christian psychology begins with the dignity of the person. You could not put human dignity higher than say *God made man in his own image*. And in creating human beings, God gave us the gift and the responsibility of free moral choice. Determinism dehumanises the person. Christianity celebrates the person by paying him the highest compliment possible: we are like God, a little lower than the angels.

Christianity is not a theory. It is practical psychology. We *know* we have choices and we value ultimately our ability to make choices. We know also that we sometimes make wrong choices. The technical jargon for this is *sin*. The tendency to keep on making wrong choices is called *Original Sin*. But we're not left in our sins. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to cleanse us from all our sins*. We are not totally depraved. As St Irenaeus said, *Though we are mired in sin, the image of God burns brightly in each one of us*. Christianity saves us because it is not a fantasy. It is the reality principle which enables us to look at ourselves as we are: half-rotten but also half-glorious.

The cure is the grace of God to forgiven sinners. And that's another piece of technical jargon – that word *grace*. But grace is simply the gymnasium of the soul. Grace is God's gift which dignifies us with moral responsibility and enables us to work out our salvation in awe and wonder. And there is something even more wonderful. When our faith tells us we are made in the image of God, it means that the human soul, our psyche, our person, is the image of the Blessed Trinity. We exist. We know we exist. And we love our existence. Each one of us is being, intelligence and will. Made in the image of God

This is what St Augustine means when he says that you do not need to *go outside yourself* to find salvation – perfect fulfilment. For God has put the model of that fulfilment within you. Our own created nature in the gymnasium of God's grace is naturally inclined and impelled towards a deeper realisation of that Trinitarian image of God within us. God is simply calling you to become more fully what you really are. God wants to give you your true self. That is love. Love and nothing else.

# ARTS AND BOOKS



## The Man Who Came in from his Alottment

Brian Eassty

*Dangerous Hero*, Tom Bower, William Collins, 2018, £20.

Before 2015, the most high profile figure to have had his retirement plans ruined by a leadership election in a political party was Denis Thatcher when his wife's ambitions dragged him from the golf course for a decade as a political consort. Among the many ironies Tom Bower reveals about Jeremy Corbyn is that, when he was propelled into a much more exalted role by circumstances so propitious that he might even now be forgiven for waking up on the occasional morning wondering if it actually happened, he had been planning a retreat to a quieter life in his native Wiltshire keeping bees and growing vegetables.

It is a rare glimpse of what politicians proudly like to call a hinterland and ordinary people call interests in this most monomaniacal character. Bower finds it hard to find evidence of anything giving Corbyn pleasure apart from advancing the revolution. Even his first wife Jane Chapman, no lightweight when it came to activism herself, described by someone who worked with them both on Haringey Council as a 'classy but poisonous lady ... cold, extreme left', can be credibly portrayed and with sympathy as a political widow, struggling in vain to interest her husband in 'cinemas, restaurants, clubs, children' anything apart from politics. Her description of a disastrous holiday they had together touring Eastern Europe by motorcycle highlights the austere character of the anti-austerity campaigner of recent years. While she expected to be eating in restaurants, he preferred beans cooked on a Calor gas stove and the only time they slept in a hostel was when a rainstorm flooded their tent.

A man portrayed by those closest to him as having few material needs and little interest in luxury is obviously well able to cope with the inconveniences of a command economy. However it is odd that Corbyn's support seems to come in such large measure from millennials when they are probably the most consumerist generation ever, accustomed to getting what they want when they want, whether from Netflix or Uber, and likely to react badly if the state were not

able to respond to their needs as flexibly and waiting lists for services once more became the norm.

In other respects, though, Corbyn seems to be the right politician for this generation. He always revelled in being the likeable figure espousing a 'kinder politics' at the head of supporters willing to get their hands dirtier. He was editor of *Labour Briefing* at the time of the Brighton bomb when it taunted Norman Tebbit with comments such as 'Try riding your bike now Norman!' as the Cabinet minister recovered from being dragged from the rubble beside his permanently paralysed wife. Many, not least Labour's Jewish MPs, would recognise this treatment, meted out all day every day by the army of Momentum trolls on Twitter while Corbyn still maintains his innocence.

Also at home in an age when much political debate takes place in the vast echo chambers of social media where opinions are only ever reinforced is a politician who has never changed his mind about anything. That is a charge levelled against Corbyn yet in one respect is false. As Bower makes clear, becoming MP for the multicultural area of Islington changed Corbyn's priorities. The white working class were discarded like a threadbare teddy bear abandoned at the bottom of the toy box while its owner plays with more exciting toys from abroad. The effect of that was seen at the last election. While much was made of Labour winning Kensington, few noticed Corbyn's defeats in white majority areas like Mansfield, Walsall and Stoke, which had stayed red even during the Thatcher landslides.

But in other respects, particularly in foreign affairs, Corbyn's views are those he held on his return from his gap year teaching in Jamaica in 1969. Like a Scottish football fan whose 'other team' is 'anyone but England', his allegiance is to anyone but the West so he is unlikely to be moved by rational arguments about any international conflict. His disloyalty is tribal. When questioned about referring to one or other terrorist group as his 'friends' he is wont to say that you have to sit down with people you disagree with. But that is exactly what he does not do. There is no record of his having met with anyone from the Israeli government or the DUP. This is not a duty he could duck indefinitely if he were to find himself in Downing Street but at present he is inflexibly loyal to his principles.

Such strength of commitment to principles is of course nothing to be ashamed of if one subjects them to regular review and still finds them valid. But the suspicion is, after reading the evidence Bower has unearthed from people who know Corbyn well, that

his prime motive in keeping his views fixed for so long is that it would be too much trouble to change them. Val Veness, one of his oldest friends in the Labour Party and wife of his erstwhile election agent, is one of a number of close acquaintances who attest to his never reading books not even by the theorists whose ideas motivate his every political act. 'It was a waste of time talking to him about books' she says, and she is not the only one to wonder if he is unintellectual or simply lazy. It seems harsh to accuse someone who has devoted so much of his time to one cause of laziness. Perhaps a more accurate charge would be lack of curiosity. An excuse frequently used by Corbyn when he endorses something outrageous, particularly during the scandals over anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, is that he hadn't read it closely. After reading this book, one is inclined to take that excuse at face value though it is not one a politician hoping to be taken seriously would make. Time and again, allies despair of his lack of interest in things that one would expect to fascinate him. George Galloway recalls attending a meeting at a Venezuelan cultural centre in London when Corbyn asked who the statue was of outside. It was of Francisco de Miranda, the country's leader in its wars of independence. Corbyn had no idea who Miranda was despite walking past the statue dozens of times in attending events to supporting the Chavez regime.

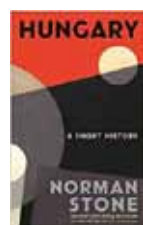
However an interest in history or any intellectual pursuit is not as essential in a politician as a commitment to public service. Both Corbyn and John McDonnell have held office in local government and Bower scrutinises the records to see what we might expect if they held power in Westminster. In both cases, it is a tale of public service subordinated to ideology. When Corbyn was a councillor in Haringey, council workers went on strike for a pay rise of 40 per cent and, in an appalling conflict of interest, as a NUPE union leader, he joined them on picket lines against his own council. McDonnell, for his part, hid the huge surplus that was in the GLC, money which could have benefited the people who elected him, because to admit that the council was well off would have damaged Labour's case against Thatcher.

Bower is to be praised for such extensive research. It is a pity that he is occasionally let down by sloppy editing. In a surreal touch the 1960s pop star Cat Stevens takes his place on the Labour front bench alongside MP Cat Smith. Elsewhere, Neil Kinnock's attack on Liverpool council for sending out redundancy notices in taxis is described as being 'on the eve of an election' when it was only just over two years into a parliament, possibly an attempt to ramp up the drama.

The real drama in this story though is that of two

almost incredible strokes of luck which have led Corbyn to where he is today. The first is the gullibility of moderate Labour MPs, wanting to indulge their self-indulgent notion of the party as a 'broad church', by putting him on the ballot paper, expecting him to gain around 7 per cent of the vote as Abbott previously had, but not noticing that the election rules had been changed in a way that favoured entryism in the cause of far-left candidates. Margaret Beckett has called herself a 'moron' for nominating him. It is not a harsh verdict. His second stroke of luck was to have as an opponent Theresa May who called a general election and then like a latter-day Coriolanus refused to engage with the electorate in scheduled televised debates.

If he is to be lucky a third time, it might be worth remembering why he was unable to swap Westminster anarchy for West Country apiary. His finances did not allow him to retire at the age of sixty-seven. Not for the first time, the man who would manage the country's money had been careless in managing his own.



## Trouble with the Neighbours

### Mark Griffith

*Short History of Hungary*, Norman Stone, Profile Books, 2018, £16.99.

Norman Stone moves through two centuries of political events in the troubled East European nation (or Central European, as many Hungarians insist) at a tidy pace. He picks up around the year 1800 and aims to bring the reader up to date with the often-bullied and invaded state (Hungary or Magyarország) over the last two centuries. The result is packed with detail, but also an enjoyable ride for those who want to see all the threads held together as the story moves forward.

While Stone doesn't make excuses for the Magyars, he never quite grasps the nettle of the Hungarians' role as co-dependent imperialists with the Austrians. Having negotiated themselves a co-ruler position of the empire with the Austrian Habsburgs in 1867, they came to enjoy ruling a large and difficult-to-defend amount of territory with linguistic minorities. As a result they backed the wrong side in both 20th-century world wars. Hungarian irredentists to this day seem unable to see that the pre-1920 'big Hungary', whose map outline you still see today on car bumpers, was indefensible against the tide of rising linguistic nationalism they themselves gave such strong support to up until the 1860s. The cutting away of two-thirds of the territory of

this big Hungary in the 1920 Versailles peace talks was certainly savage and vindictive. Yet many historians seem unwilling to discuss how much of that Habsburg-ruled territory Hungary could realistically have retained once the mid-19th-century ‘Springtime of Nations’ (a springtime Hungarians played a big role in starting) got serious momentum over the seven decades until 1918.

Perhaps wisely, Stone avoids this awkward debate and restricts himself to recounting how the main players and developments unfolded. This creates a blow-by-blow account which is gripping and detailed. Only occasionally does it become puzzling – as where we read that ‘This, before its reform, caused a cow to be more expensive than a student. After its reform a non-cow cost more than a student.’ Stone, an able linguist, refers with touching humility in a couple of places to his grapple with the Hungarian language, although his Magyar is good. The legend that he first got to grips with the language during a brief prison spell for trying to smuggle a girl out of communist Hungary in the boot of his car in the 1970s turns out to be true. As a historian, Stone is a Turkish specialist, having learned that language and worked a couple of decades researching history there. Although there are almost no words in common, the two languages have strong structural similarities since they are both of Central Asian origin.

This knowledge fits him well to understand Hungary’s complex relationship with Turkey, bitter enemy at first, yet later strangely often seen as friend and ally against Austria and Russia. He shows great restraint in not telling the story of the most recent two Magyar centuries from the Turkish perspective, as much as he could have done. Not least, this would have been a surprising emphasis to most unprepared European readers.

Although the two centuries are well balanced in terms of space and detail, the author is really giving the 19th-century background as a way of laying the foundations for narrating the extraordinary events of Hungary’s 20th century. There is a subdued sense of consolidation and completion as we approach the final years since 2000. It’s a wise balance to strike since Hungary’s 20th century certainly takes some explaining.

Reaching 1900 as an apparently equal partner in a seemingly stable and successful imperial entity called the Austro-Hungarian Empire, within two decades aristocrat-ruled Hungary had comprehensively lost World War One along with its Austrian partner, seen an early communist putsch (the short-lived Bela Kun government) inspired by Lenin’s coup in Russia, and been stripped of two-thirds of its land and people by the WWI Armistice negotiations. In the next two decades

it had a strange regime (anachronistically we might call it ‘Francoist’) where Admiral Horthy as regent, ruled a country, which no longer had a coastline or a sea-faring navy, replacing a monarch the country also no longer had. Horthy tried to fend off anti-Semitic demands from the rising power of Nazi Germany, but Hungary ended up being invaded by the German army, thereby being forced on to the side that then lost a Second World War. From this point, after a few years of flimsy democratic government in the late 1940s, the country was successfully subverted by the Soviets and absorbed into the Moscow-controlled Eastern Bloc. After this series of misunderstandings, Stone is very good on the details of how the often-unexplained 1956 uprising led to a second Soviet invasion in late 1956, followed by a slowly-thawing period of stability for 30 years. Hungary then became a very quiet economic exception within the communist bloc, surreptitiously setting up small free-market institutions within what was still nominally a planned economy. A century like that needs the extra hundred years of background the author gives it from 1800.

The book is enjoyable and feels like a complete and comprehensible picture of a complex period. It will become the standard English account of 1800 to 2010, certainly within what Hungarian nationalists still call the ‘small Hungary’. If the story doesn’t quite make sense, it’s not because Stone leaves anything out. Perhaps the logic of how a nation which was a linguistic minority constantly rebelling against Turkey (in the 17th and 18th centuries) and against Austrian occupiers (in the 18th and the 19th centuries) ended up losing two giant wars, both of which partly aimed to liberate linguistic minorities, takes some explaining. Stone probably faced a choice between at least clearly telling a potentially confusing narrative versus a deeper explanation of this country’s character and circumstances. Understandably, hesitant to give more of a psychological portrait of a very distinctive nation, he shrewdly chose to lead readers through as many facts in as much context as he could readably do in a short space. He does it very well.





## Nothing to declare but their fathers

Jane Kelly

*Mad, Bad, Dangerous to Know: The Fathers of Wilde, Yeats and Joyce*, Colm Tóibín, Penguin, 2018, £14.99.

These days writers have to be performers. In 2016, Colm Tóibín visited Reading gaol where Oscar Wilde was imprisoned in 1895, invited there by Artangel, a group which promotes art exhibitions in unusual places. He had agreed to be locked in Wilde's cell, C.3.3, on the third floor of block C, to read aloud the complete version of Wilde's poem *De Profundis*, which would take about five hours.

Like Wilde sitting in his cell, Tóibín had plenty of time for contemplation. Wilde wrote that bitter diatribe to his lover, Bosie, Lord Alfred Douglas, for the whole sad situation had come about because of a bitter struggle between Bosie and his father, the Marquess of Queensberry. Tóibín noticed the difference between the two families, the unhappy, tight-fisted English aristocrats who had inherited their position, against Dublin Protestants like the Wildes, who had nothing but their talents and vivacity to make of themselves whatever they wished.

From this experience Tóibín has extrapolated three brilliant little capsule biographies, of Sir William Wilde, John B Yeats and John Stanislaus Joyce, fathers from central Dublin – in those days the poor lived in the centre of cities while the rich inhabited spacious suburbs – who between them, in under thirty years, sired three of the greatest writers in the English language who changed the way we think. There is a bit of Sam Beckett in there as well.

In his cell in Reading, Tóibín had a problem working out how best to speak *De Profundis* out loud, and the book began as a series of lectures, given at Emory University, Georgia. It still has what writer Rachel Cooke calls, 'the mild sense of disorganisation one often finds when reading words that were written originally to be spoken aloud.' There is also a very personal quality to the work; the day he spent in the cell; the moment he saw John Yeats's self-portrait, reworked for years, hanging in a stairwell; a willingness to bring to life the major and minor figures of those three families.

Unlike well-born Bosie, Wilde adored his aspirational

parents. He had quite a Dad, certainly the best of the lot. Several pages are needed to describe William Wilde's myriad abilities; before he was knighted in 1864, for work on the Irish census, he was a prominent eye and ear surgeon in Dublin, the head of an ophthalmology hospital and, like his wife, a proud Irish nationalist. Together they navigated the highest levels of English society. Tóibín notes that, in their uncertain position, irony and inconstancy were political and social necessities. They even derived strength from 'the ambiguity of their position, ... their ability to draw power from two opposite sides without having fully to obey a set of rules to which either of these two sides adhered.'

Tóibín says that the relevance to their son's life and career, with its own ambiguities and slippery allegiances, is plain right from the start: 'In the soirees that his parents gave.' There is a problem for the writer though, in that Wilde hardly ever mentions his father. They had little in common. In contrast to Oscar's foppishness, Sir William was dishevelled and dirty. Tóibín tells a joke that W B Yeats remembered from Dublin: 'Why are Sir William Wilde's nails so black?' 'Because he has scratched himself.'

Oscar was closer to his eccentric mother Jane Elgee, the self-styled 'Speranza,' poet and activist who enjoyed outraging conventional Dublin society. Sir William does however provide dismal parallels with his son's life; he had illicit affairs and illegitimate children. When his status was at its highest a young woman patient accused him of raping her under chloroform. She sued Speranza for saying rude things about her, a highly publicised court case followed which presages Oscar's disastrous trial three decades later. Most people, including *The Times* of London, sided with the girl.

It is also darkly ironic, although the author doesn't mention it, that Wilde senior had an ear incision, 'Wilde's snare', named after him. He was the first to understand the importance of the middle-ear in infections. His son was to fall in prison badly damaging his ear. It never healed and led in 1900 to his death from a middle ear infection and meningitis.

The other writers were even more unlucky with the fathers given them by fate: 'A father is a necessary evil,' says Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's autobiographical character in *A Portrait of the Artist as A Young Man*. 'What links them in nature?' he wrote contemptuously. 'An instant of blind rut.' This was part of a discussion about Hamlet he was having in Dublin's public library. It leads the reader from Shakespeare to the tensions between Stephen and Simon Dedalus, and Tóibín to contemplate the issues between Joyce and his father, John Stanislaus Joyce. In 1903 one of W B Yeats's

sisters met Joyce in the street. She recalled that the young man told her that he thought, 'drink would soon end his father and then he would give his six little sisters to Archbishop Walsh to make nuns of.'

John Joyce resented having to support his ten children. An alcoholic who couldn't keep a job, he eventually abandoned them. Tóibín has used direct documentary material about this from diaries kept by James Joyce's brother Stanislaus. He wrote of their father as 'domineering and quarrelsome,' 'lying and hypocritical,' 'spiteful like all drunkards who are thwarted.' He also noted that James was chiefly attached to his father, creating what Tóibín calls the 'shivering ambiguities' of his work. Looking at Joyce's own writing he argues that the effort to understand and love his father provided an abiding source of Joyce's genius; 'James Joyce sought not only to memorialize his father but also to retrace his steps, enter his spirit, use what he needed from his father's life to nourish his own art.' In *Finnegans Wake*, he wrote: 'It's sad and weary I go back to you, my cold father, my cold mad father, my cold mad feary father.'

The poet W B Yeats also had a ne'er-do-well on his back. His father John Yeats was a trained lawyer who abandoned law to pursue his passion for painting. He achieved some renown as an artist but failed through his inability to finish anything. A stranger meeting W B Yeats and learning who his father was remarked, 'O, that is the painter who scrapes out every day what he painted the day before.'

Sadly, living before the days of abstract expressionism, he hardly sold anything and squandered a large inheritance before decamping to London, and then New York when he was nearly seventy. Living in a cheap boarding house, financially supported by his distant son, he continued to avoid painting and wrote fervent letters to his children and a lover called Rosa. He wrote to her not about the life he'd missed but, as Tóibín puts it, 'The life he imagined, and he gave that life a sense of lived reality, as though it were not only somehow possible, but almost present.' He obviously found intimacy easier at a distance and that pattern recurs throughout the book. 'In this world of sons,' he writes, 'Fathers become ghosts and shadows and fictions.'

Tóibín, who lives in Dublin, writes an almost gossipy portrait, with new letters, squibs, anecdotes, poems, memoirs, and his own experiences side by side, not only of 'three prodigal fathers,' as he calls them, but of the city itself. He seems to know every street and shop, connecting them to his subjects, showing their overlapping lives. Behind it all, Dublin is the greatest *paterfamilias*.

'As I walk past the Wildes' house on Merrion

Square,' he writes. 'I note that W B Yeats lived on the square too in the years after his marriage, and his brother had a studio on Fitzwilliam Square close by.' 'The street between Nora's hotel and Wilde's house is called Clare Street. Samuel Beckett's father ran his quantity surveying business from Number 6. Westland Row was also a commuter stop for those going to work in the city. These included the poet Thomas Kinsella, who working in the Department of Finance on Merrion Street.'

There might be almost too many of these small city connections. It couldn't work if the context was Wolverhampton or Scunthorpe, but this is Dublin in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the poorest capital in Europe, lacking any industrial base, referred to by Joyce as 'A centre of paralysis.' Tóibín calls it 'a place of isolated individuals, its aura shapeless in some way, a place hidden from itself, mysterious and melancholy.' Beleaguered and sinking in economic importance perhaps but a place which produced within a few years and a few streets men of lasting original genius.

My only quibble with this book is its inept title borrowed from a description of Byron.



## Neanderthals: Increasingly like us?

Celia Haddon

*The Smart Neanderthal: bird catching, cave art and the cognitive revolution*, Clive Finlayson, Oxford University Press, 2019, £20.00.

The reputation of Neanderthal humans is on a bit of a roll at the moment. When a skeleton came to light in a cave in the Neander Valley in 1856, the bones were recognised as being those of a different species to modern man though it would be a generation or so before this interpretation of *Homo neanderthalensis* was fully accepted. Though the cranial capacity was actually bigger than that of *Homo sapiens*, the low forehead, heavy brows and jutting forward jaw, immediately reminded a then expert of an ape.

'Considering that the Neanderthal skull is eminently simial, both in its general and particular characters, I feel myself constrained to believe that the thoughts and desires which once dwelt within it never soared beyond those of the brute... assuming, as we must, that the simial faculties are unimprovable – incapable of moral and theositic conceptions – there seems no reason be believe otherwise than that similar darkness

characterized the being to which the fossil belonged,' wrote Professor William King in the *Quarterly Journal of Science* in 1864.

At a time when physical skull measurements were an important part of anthropology, this resemblance was bad news for the reputation of this early hominid. Early physical anthropologists were convinced that they could measure 'racial' intelligence by measuring skulls, an obsession which culminated into Nazi racism. Neanderthal skulls were reconstructed to show a brutish ape-like figure with a fierce expression. In 1866 one suggestion for the species name was *Homo stupidus*. 'Neanderthal' became, and still is, an adjective to describe a slow-witted person.

Today we are still passing judgement on the early hominids and the new buzz phrase is that we are superior 'Behaviourally Modern Humans'. Now it's our behaviour not our skull shape that account for the *sapiens* in our species name. Modern behaviour involves stone tools made into blades not flakes, a variety and complexity of stone tools made of bone, antler and ivory, geographical differences in stone tools, personal ornaments like beads, sophisticated and naturalistic art, and 'a strong hint' of associated changes in economic and social organisation, according to Paul Mellars in 1991. Another archaeologist, Mary Stiner, theorized that the difference between Neanderthals and 'modern' man was what they hunted. Slow-moving prey like limpets on the seashore or tortoises on land were all that primitive hominid beings could catch. Fast-moving prey like rabbits or birds were beyond their abilities.

How this proves intellectual incapacity seems odd to me since cats can catch birds and nobody suggests cats are equal in intelligence to humans. Many 'fast moving' birds and animals can be ambushed. Cats, big and small, do it all the time. Most of the archaeologists putting forward this argument seem to have had little knowledge of the behaviour of birds or other kinds of human prey.

Clive Finlayson, the author of this book, just happens to have the expertise in both Neanderthals and birds. He is a keen birder and an archaeologist who has specialised in the Neanderthal remains in Gibraltar. There are four caves there where Neanderthal bones have been found. The bones of an amazing 160 species of birds have also been found in the same caves. While some of these birds may have merely visited and died in the same caves as the Neanderthals, others seem to have been brought there by these early humans.

All this requires painstaking study by zoo-archaeologists, people who specialise in animal bones. These experts have concluded that there were cut marks on the wing bones of some of the larger birds both of

the crow species and birds of prey species. The wings of a raptor have very little meat on them, so possibly the Neanderthals had cut off the feathers as personal adornments.

At the same time a different team of archaeologists in Italy came to the same conclusion – irritating for the Gibraltar team but important as an example of independent verification. A little later a third team of archaeologists found the talon of an eagle, which seemed to have been smoothed and cut so as to be part of a necklace, while a fourth team discovered perforated shells which may have been coloured with nearby lumps of pigment.

In addition to the bird skeletons there were also limpet and other shells with signs where they had been prized off the rocks, and the bones of Mediterranean monk seals, fish, and two kinds of dolphins. Signs on the bones showed that these had been cut and burned, and (presumably) then eaten. Previously it had been argued that this kind of hunting and foraging was a mark of higher intelligence in the *Homo sapiens*, before they spread out into Europe.

Needless to say, these studies have been highly criticised by those archaeologists wishing to preserve their view of the superiority of our own species. Because Neanderthal sites are still rarely found, the evidence has been pronounced too slender to be taken seriously. Another argument has been that Neanderthals picked up these clever 'modern' practices from the newly arrived *Homo sapiens*. Anything to avoid the possibility of Neanderthal intelligence!

Neanderthals also cooked! They left hearths showing that they had lit fires in the caves, and pigeon bones showed signs of having been roasted. Interestingly, the excavators also found traces of the modern people who had displaced the Neanderthals – they had left similar traces of fire, shellfish and roast pigeon. This suggests that both species caught and ate what was available. Other archaeologists in France have found twisted fibres on stone tools, suggesting that Neanderthals may have been making these into string. Finally, a series of grooves made in the floor of one of the Gibraltar Neanderthal caves suggests these early humans were engraving something. Could it be art? This too has been fiercely, and more justifiably, contested.

We now know that there was interbreeding between our species and the Neanderthals and that we Europeans are their descendants. So why did the Neanderthals die out? Did *Homo sapiens* take a long time to move out of Africa because the Neanderthals were already there, but then once established in big enough numbers take over the ecological niche, just as immigrant grey squirrels from the USA have driven out red squirrels in most of the UK? Were *Homo sapiens*

really intellectually superior, or did they simply bring diseases with them that obliterated the existing Neanderthals?

This book does not deal in detail with all of these questions, but it throws light on how slow we are to relinquish our ideas of a cognitively superior human species. In a similar way studies of animal emotion and cognition are showing how feelings and intelligence are not confined to humans. *Homo sapiens*, the self-congratulatory name we have given to ourselves, seems to need the illusion of being the peak of evolutionary 'progress'. This enjoyable book should make the reader have second thoughts about our innate superiority.



## A Relentless Progressive

Anthony Daniels

*Antisemitism: Here and Now*, Deborah Lipstadt, Scribe, £14.99.

Deborah Lipstadt is famous in this country mainly as the defendant in the libel suit brought against her by David Irving, the apologist for Hitler and Nazism. In her book *Denying the Holocaust* she had characterised Irving as a falsifier of history and an anti-Semite, and probably no victory on the grounds of justification in a case of libel has ever been as crushing as hers.

In this book she considers the recent resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe and the United States. She employs a literary technique that is mildly irritating, at least to me. She invents two interlocutors, one a Jewish undergraduate student and the other a young Gentile law professor, who write her letters seeking urgent clarification and explanation of this resurgence, and she replies to them by letter also. Several times they praise her for her analysis of aspects of the problem – 'our exchanges have helped me put a painful phenomenon into perspective', 'Your honesty in your letters has given me the courage to admit this' – which would have been realistic enough had this been a real correspondence, but since it is fictional the praise of her interlocutors reads jarringly as self-congratulatory.

This, however, is not important. More worrying is something that she says in the note to the reader that precedes the book proper:

*But the existence of prejudice in any of its forms is a threat to all those who value an inclusive, democratic and multicultural society. There is prejudice in favour as well as prejudice against, so this statement seems*

*naïve to the point of shallowness. I doubt that it is possible for anyone to expunge his mind of prejudice, nor would it be sensible if he were able to do so. A person who walked out into the world without any prejudices whatever would be as vulnerable as a newborn babe.*

It is not, therefore, that we should have no prejudices; it is rather that we should be prepared to revise them in the light of experience and reflection, and not harbour them so firmly that they imprison our mind and feeling and destroy our judgment. We should be both aware and beware of them: but that is not the same as expunging them altogether.

As for the multicultural society, her somewhat fluffy blanket endorsement of it as if there were no problems associated with it – after all, a liking for one country's cuisine is not incompatible with a liking for another's – seems either lazy or evasive of hard questions, like how far to accommodate basic cultural beliefs in a single society that are incompatible with one's own.

Another irritation in the book is Lipstadt's use of the word *progressive* in an unquestioning manner completely devoid of irony, in order to categorise both herself and all the people whom she considers politically virtuous. Progress towards what, exactly? Universal happiness? Cosmic justice? Immortality? Equality of outcome irrespective of contribution? Caviar for all? It is a self-congratulatory and question-begging term that no self-aware person should ever use.

Progressives, she tells us, are the opposite of anti-immigrant bigots. But given that she admits that much of the contemporary upsurge of anti-Semitism emanates from Islamists, would it really be bigotry rather than an instinct for self-preservation if Jews in the west were not very happy at the prospect of mass migration of Muslims into the countries in which they lived?

Because of her self-beatifying progressivism, she misses an essential and comprehensible connection between 'progressive' thought and anti-Semitism. In most modern societies Jews have been economically, culturally and intellectually very successful. But it is an axiom of 'progressive' thought that our societies are deeply unjust, and that both success and the lack of it can be explained only by unfair and unjust influence wielded by selfish cabals that plot to keep the lower orders and the unsuccessful down. For the progressive, the dice will always be loaded until equality is reached so success in such a society must be illegitimate and cannot be truly deserved. This is a thought that is completely in tune with that of anti-Semites.

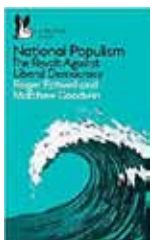
The success of Jews, *despite* prejudice against them, contradicts much of progressivist ideology. Although it is true that many Jews were supportive of that

ideology, their own success owed nothing to it and in fact subsequently refuted it. The qualities that made for their success – the application of intelligence, hard work, family support, respect for education – required for their operation an open, not a progressive, society. And if the Jews could do it, anybody could, but such a thought is not welcome to ‘progressives’.

People do not give up their world-views lightly, however, and it is easier and more gratifying for at least some ‘progressives’ to become anti-Semitic, than to cease to be ‘progressive’. Progressivism and anti-Semitism are easily reconciled, indeed the latter is nowadays almost required by the former. Lipstadt misses this entirely.

I don’t want to give the impression that her book is uninteresting or worthless. If nothing else, she informs her readers of something of which they may not be fully aware, namely the extreme virulence of the hatred to be found in the blogosphere and social media, a lot of it from the extreme right. This hatred, whose practical significance is hard to assess, is horrible enough to make you tremble; and the author rightly asks the question as to whether it was always there, awaiting a means of expression, or whether the availability of a means of expression has brought it into being and magnified it as in an echo chamber. Either way, such sheer malignity is an unfathomable mystery; perhaps for some people hatred is its own reward. But the question remains, which I do not blame Lipstadt for not answering satisfactorily: why the Jews?

She has no facile solutions to recommend. She believes, rightly, that free societies offer the best, though not a perfect, defence against the evils of extreme prejudice. With admirable consistency, she has spoken out against the imprisonment of David Irving in Austria for Holocaust-denial. One of the paradoxes of trying in the name of human decency to suppress prejudice by the blunt instrument of the law is that it drives it underground where it accumulates and festers, awaiting eventual eruption.



## The Morlocks versus the Eloi

James Monkton

*National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy*, Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, Pelican, 2018, £9.99.

The recent rise of ‘populism’ has startled many of the *bien-pensant* classes into a predictably sneering

response. Rather than acknowledge much of the phenomenon as a re-engagement of the disenchanted with democratic processes, many haughty and alarmed liberals are, with breath-taking cheek, wailing that populism actually threatens democracy. In fact, it might be the only way to save it.

This carping trend has been equally noticeable in academia, cosily secluded away from the real world of the precariat working classes. They are some thoughtful exceptions among liberal-dominated ivory towers, one being Mark Lilla in America. In the UK, we are fortunate to have some serious and objective analysis on the topic from the likes of Chris Bickerton at Cambridge and the authors of this book under review. Matthew Goodwin has earned a name for himself through his work on UKIP and the popular right, including his book *Revolt on the Right*; since the Brexit referendum he has publicly distanced himself from the Remainer ‘intellectual’ class. Roger Eatwell’s acclaimed research into fascism and populism is marked by those often rare academic qualities: common sense and an eschewal of an automatic, conformist liberal response to all issues. Given their respective university affiliations (Kent and Bath – or indeed, any university for that matter) this demonstrates some courage in doggedly adhering to academic rigour rather than the usual group-think virtue-signalling. Thus their collaboration on national populism for Pelican’s re-invigorated series is much to be welcomed.

*National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy*, is an important and profound book. It was prompted by a genuine inquiry into the success of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump in the *annus mirabilis* of 2016. They note, mischievously or with sadness it is hard to tell, how 90 per cent of 300 scholars, journalists and pollsters in the UK (gleefully) predicted a Remain vote in the referendum, and how a similar percentage in the US thought Hillary Clinton would win the presidency. It always cheers me up to write down numbers like this. Such thinking is, the authors believe, the lazy result of smug short-termism which fails ‘to take into account the historic shifts in politics, culture and economics that are now having profound effects on the outcome of our elections’.

The book makes it clear that this revolt is not against democracy, but against the liberal interpretation of it as determined by the cosmopolitan elite. In tone, they tend to follow the succinct and accurate definition of populism from Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde in 2015: ‘Populism is an illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism’. They warn against people being too ‘quick to lump national populism in with extreme ideologies like Nazism’, something which

‘reflects a serious problem about how we think of populism’. One example they give of this is super-rich ‘sleb’ Madonna who, on one of her recent tours, crassly superimposed a swastika over a projected image of Marine Le Pen. The inane vacuity of such actions passes as ‘informed comment’ amongst many establishment figures.

Elsewhere they emphasise that national populism can sweep across the political landscape from left to right. Amusingly, but wholly justifiably, they note that Nicola Sturgeon’s SNP ‘find themselves in the same camp as the Hungarian Jobbik movement’; popular nationalists can include ‘both liberal democrats and supporters of authoritarian government’. It is therefore deeply dishonest and fear-mongering for UK, US and EU politicians and media to vilify populism as a 1930s’ style scourge, as the weird French President Emmanuel Macron did recently (and without a hint of irony after having being elected by voters who rejected the established parties in France). Such attitudes are not only deliberately disingenuous; they are insulting and patronising. They reflect the worldview of those who do not give a fig for ordinary people on whom they look down in disdain. Politicians who contemptuously deny voters the dignity of being listened to deserve to be swept from power. No wonder that Eatwell and Goodwin attempt to highlight ‘the way in which people want to be heard, rather than ignored or treated with contempt’.

Readers have the analysis of the book laid out for them in the effective sequence of one-word chapter titles that chart the dashed expectations and then alienation of millions and millions of voters in the western world: ‘Myths’, ‘Promises’, ‘Distrust’, ‘Destruction’, ‘Deprivation’, ‘De-alignment’. The financial crash of 2008 is given its due credit, but, sensibly, it is not overplayed. Economic issues are always important, but cultural and identity factors are, too: immigration, liberal social policies and a disregard for deeply-held values (if not always articulated), play their part. In many ways, the authors show the disconnection between the establishment and the people to be as much about university degrees as anything else: ‘Education lies at the heart of this divide’ and is therefore ‘one of the key factors in national populism’.

The authors offer an especially focused and devastating critique of many modern-day liberals’ contempt for their worst *bête noire*: national identity. They might have gone even further into exploring the many facets of nationalism and national identity (an admittedly huge subject), from patriotism and nationalism through to its aggressive and rarer extreme forms as in colonialism and fascist imperialism. For many liberals these are all one and the same; they

forget (or, more likely, are simply ignorant of the fact) that nationalism in its original political form from the early nineteenth century was very much a liberal manifestation, when it was correctly perceived as the means towards greater democracy. Perhaps it is to be so again in the twenty-first century.

This is a balanced book. The ugly sides of extreme nationalism and the incompetence of nationalist politicians are not glossed over; all politics, without exception, is messy and inconsistent. As, indeed, is democracy itself. But most of us have an in-built sense of when the balance is no longer functional or equitable: hence the 2016 Referendum result. The authors give voice to this.

Eatwell and Goodwin believe that the national populist revolt against liberal democracy is here to stay for the long-term. Historically, the swing of the pendulum – or a political Newton’s cradle if you prefer – would suggest that they are right. But I am too much of a pessimist to hope that this will happen. The liberal establishment is just too entrenched. As the US car-bumper stick said: ‘If voting changed anything they’d make it illegal’.



## Is Russia Really a Country?

Martin Dewhurst

*Subjugate or Exterminate! A Memoir of Russia's Wars against Chechnya*, Akhmed Zakaev, Academica Press, 2018, \$34.95.

Some people, if asked to choose the two most repulsive people in the misleadingly named Russian Federation, would pick Vladimir Putin, its President, and Ramzan Kadyrov, the President of the Republic of Chechnya (aka the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria). However, the person most guilty of the two recent (1994-1996 and 1999-2003, but still ongoing) wars against Chechnya is Boris Yeltsin, who, having lost the *Union Republics* of the USSR, could not accept the loss of any of the Republics *within* the Russian Federation, especially Tatarstan and Chechnya. Before and during the second war, Yeltsin was ably and energetically assisted by Vladimir Putin. It is not always realised that the loss of the *Union Republics* was the result not of Gorbachev’s policies but of the coup and counter-coup in August 1991, which brought Yeltsin to power. For both Putin and Kadyrov and many others in Russia, Big is Beautiful and Bigger Still is even Better, so Putin’s *Anschluss* of the Crimea is currently being

followed by Kadyrov's attempted land grabs of bits of his neighbours' territories to the West (Ingushetia) and to the East (Dagestan) – faraway places about which most Europeans know little and could hardly care less. Another thing that Putin and Kadyrov have in common is a vindictive attitude to the person who would have been or, in the second case, who would be their most competent successor. Boris Nemtsov was demonstratively murdered just outside the Kremlin in 2015 in a complicated plot devised and executed by a mixed and sordid group of Russians and Chechens. The author of this book is very different in some ways from Nemtsov – I have had the privilege of meeting both of them on several occasions, but he is undoubtedly the most experienced and competent Chechen who, being 60 this year, could take over in the future from Kadyrov – unless, of course, Zakaev too becomes yet another victim of the Kremlin's Russian and/or Chechen murderers.

One of the crucial questions implicitly posed by the author – not the only professional actor to have become a politician, but perhaps the only one who has actually played Hamlet on stage – is whether Russia can ever become a mere country, rather than remaining as an Empire. Yes, the Russian so-called Federation, *still* easily the largest country in the world, is *still* an Empire, whose rulers *still* treat its provinces, whether largely inhabited by ethnic Slavs or not, with not very benign contempt. Most Russian civilians have now left Chechnya, and the same is happening in all the largely Muslim Republics in the North Caucasus. With a declining birthrate among Slavs and a growing number of Muslims in Russia, it just might be only a matter of time before a stronger *Rexit* movement among ethnic Russian patriots and democrats in Moscow gets under way and would actually welcome the secession of at least this part of the Federation. Moreover, many members of the very large Chechen emigration now living in the West would almost certainly return to Chechnya with their children – and with the knowledge and skills that they have acquired during their exile.

The title of this book ends in an exclamation, not a question mark. Russia 'proper' has tried, but failed, to exterminate the Chechens (and some of the other North Caucasian peoples) in the past, but it's now clear that it has failed to subjugate them as well. Whatever one thinks of Ramzan Kadyrov, who doesn't appear in this book, and his father, who very much does, one has to admit that Moscow has been finding it very difficult to tame the present Chechen leader and even to control him. There is a widespread joke that Russia has now become part of a greatly expanded Chechnya, rather than the other way round.

Zakaev's well translated (by Arch Tait) monograph,

which has an exceptionally good index, is largely an extremely detailed account of the two recent wars, especially the first that Moscow has inflicted on Chechnya. I trust it will soon be published in Russian, if not in Chechen, and be followed by a much shorter volume taking the story up to the present day. There is space here only for a few examples of the many valuable takeaways. Writing of the chaos in Chechnya between the two wars, Zakaev asserts that 'Crime, the gradual impoverishment of the population, corruption within the government, the economic crisis, all were due mainly, of course, to Russia's failure to honour its obligations to restore the republic's economic infrastructure, destroyed in a war it had unleashed'. Moreover, all this was completely justified by the official Russian concept of morality. To explain this, Zakaev quotes the following very significant passage from a secret Kremlin Instruction: 'We do not need to be squeamish about the means. We need to remember morality in this situation only in the context that it would be immoral for us to lose Russia. Defending the power of our state is the supreme moral priority of the Russian people and its political elite. Failure to defend Russia on the grounds of the immorality of a number of actions which it is necessary for us to take in Chechnya would be a crime, because it would deal a fatal blow to Russia itself.' Thus, one could add for comparison, the recent reacquisition of Crimea was illegal, but it was completely moral and just, and morality and justice are more important than legality. (Naturally, this very Soviet approach doesn't necessarily apply to other countries.) Moreover, we should always bear in mind that for the Kremlin, '*Russia's leaders consider Islamist extremism less dangerous than Western-style democracy*'.

I suspect that many readers will skip over a lot of the details of the fighting in the two recent wars in Chechnya, fascinating though they are for students of military tactics and strategy. A careful study of the text does, however, shed a good deal of light on the character of Zakaev himself, his bravery, common sense, humanity and intelligence – a Hamlet who became a man of action because he realised that there was and is something very rotten in the state of Russia.





## A Democratic Authoritarian

James Barasel

*Inside the Mind of Marine Le Pen*, Michael Eltchaninoff, Hurst and Company, 2018, £12.99.

An infallible sign of a country in poor political condition is when one of the more reasonable figures in its public life speaks like an outright Jacobin. Marine le Pen is widely despised because she defends ideas which should be accepted as basic sanity. Unfortunately, such a phenomenon is depressingly unsurprising in the western world. Only by the low standards of public life can the politics of Marine Le Pen remotely resemble conservatism, adhering to an agenda which regularly alternates between the cheer-inducing and the disturbing, Le Pen is now one of the more paradoxical figures in contemporary politics.

Michael Eltchaninoff's *Inside the Mind of Marine le Pen*, the first study of the subject in English, makes her ideology easier to understand. I had expected a typical left-wing screed, but found an objective analysis of the topic; this is refreshing in spite of the author's obvious prejudices.

Le Pen's confused ideology attempts to combine some mutually exclusive French political traditions. One of them is the now defunct *Action Française* and its leader Charles Maurras. Catholic and Royalist, Maurras was a self-professed 'Catholic atheist' who supported a religious state, monarchy and a traditional political order. He supported Catholicism because it was essential for 'social control' and he respected the Catholic artistic tradition, which he believed had 'saved from itself' the Christian morality which he despised. In 1926 *Action Française* was condemned by the staunchly conservative Pope Pius XI while Maurras later became a leading supporter of the Vichy regime. The other side of the Le Pen coin is, of course, the tradition of French republicanism – 'Enlightened', secularist, egalitarian and culturally 'modern.'

Le Pen tries to bridge the gap between these two traditions. Her perplexing efforts to fit the square peg into the round hole claim a strong affinity between Catholicism and secularism. For most of its history the monarchy was grounded in the same values later embraced by the French Revolution – Joan of Arc turned into a prototype for the *levee en masse* of 1793. Trying to understand just where she is trying to go with all this can be difficult.

Firmly supporting a secular republic, Le Pen combines the rhetoric of the French variant of secularism with the practice of the (traditional) American one, with a government indifferent to claims of divine revelation but largely tolerant of Christian religious practice rather than hostile to it. She opposes Muslim support for the spread of Islamic governments and sharia law, for various violent practices, for Islamic dominance of Western countries and for the destruction of Western culture. But the reasons she gives for calling attention to these dangers is that which more stereotypical French secularists have long used against Catholics. She is quite different from Nicolas Sarkozy who thought that that Muslims would be useful allies in his battle against secularism and who tolerated the spread of Islam in his country.

Le Pen also claims the mantle of egalitarianism. She thinks that the political parties which dominate the European Union are like the royalty and the nobility of the eighteenth century. Traditional conservatives believe that social, political and economic hierarchies are often inevitable; the real debate is about whether forms of elites are compatible with justice. One is ultimately doing battle on the enemy's terms when one proposes substituting one egalitarian pipe dream for another.

The particular pipe dream favoured by Le Pen is both authoritarian and democratic, in some ways a sort of Jacksonian democracy on steroids. She seems to advocate a strong French president ruling with a massive expansion in the use of referendums, greatly reducing the role played by other government bodies and turning the head of state into a populist strong man. Her preference for a combination of pure democracy with such a dominant role for the head of state – both lacking sufficient legal restraints – is precisely what classical political philosophy has always warned would lead to dictatorship, with echoes of Jean Jacques Rousseau's 'general will' reverberating as loudly as they do from Le Pen's leftist opponents. One ought to be wary of any politician who would give more power to an electorate, which has made Presidents of François Hollande and Emmanuel Macron.

Culture rather than either race or place should determine who is French and Le Pen defends national cultures against global multiculturalism. She opposes treating people just as economic units, a fallacy of which both capitalists and socialists are all too often guilty. Her opposition to multiculturalism is not simple chauvinism; the material must be subordinated to the human while human life itself requires cultural and communal roots. There are also objective standards by which particular cultures are judged.

Racism, remains a real problem within the National

Rally. What is too little recognized is that it will best be overcome by shifting peoples' understanding of national identity back to culture, as Le Pen is doing, rather than caricaturing the defence of national cultures as a form of covert racism, or like Emmanuel Macron, denying that national cultures even exist. Yet, as we all know, the left is not interested just in ending racism but using it as a way to promote multiculturalism and globalism.

On the ideological level one cannot be enthusiastic about the dramatic rise of Le Pen's popularity. In practice Le Pen and her 'far right' party might in important ways be significantly less conservative than the 'centre left' contemporary French Republican party, while adding unpleasant aspects of French nationalism into the mix. But that is, of course, not the whole story. Sir Roger Scruton once observed that in his time as editor of *The Salisbury Review* he made it easier for people in his country to be conservative because his periodical was so far to the right it became possible to profess both to be conservative and to be to the left of something. For too long 'mainstream conservative' politics has operated on that deplorable slogan of the French Revolution 'no enemies to the left' while doing everything it can to distance itself from anything seen as being further to the right. Le Pen and the National Rally are breaking that taboo and, despite their reprehensible aspects, defending many points of common sense. If these were universally accepted, and there were others willing to defy the left and not pretend to accept its values, Le Pen and her party would become the marginalized joke, which her father's party had always been.



## The Church of Celluloid

John Jolliffe

*Believing in Film: Christianity and Classic European Cinema*, Mark Le Fanu, I B Tauris, 2018.

Mark Le Fanu has worked as Director of Film Studies at the European Film College in Denmark. He defines his subject here, which is Christianity and Classic European Cinema, not in terms of a general treatise but as a 'suggestive' essay, inviting readers to arrive at their own opinions; which indeed seems the best approach to such a subjective business.

The films he describes are two from Russia, and one each from Poland, France, Italy, Sweden and Spain. Bad luck, England, no score, though to be right up

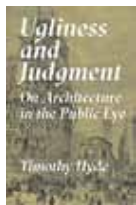
to date, he could perhaps have included *Fleabag*. In Russia, Tarkovsky's masterpiece *Andrei Rublev* is the story of an itinerant icon-painter and monk in the fifteenth century; it shows that however severe the persecution of Christianity may have been, it never succeeded in banishing 'thought about religion' from ordinary cultural life, such as it was at the time (1965). What makes this film, and two or three others, so fascinating is the anomaly of their being made under such stultifying conditions, combined with the unique Russian flavour which was generally quite unfamiliar at the time.

In Poland, however, Catholic survival, in the much shorter period from 1946 to 1989, existed as a counter-culture at all levels. Andrei Wajda is the Polish director best known in England, and *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958) is a moving celebration of the hankering after national independence in the aftermath of the country's partition. The triple alliance between religion, love and patriotism is shown to have been the ultimately successful formula for survival. It was theatre and film that would so often put across a barely concealed message which would otherwise get the creators into serious trouble. The theatre was of course very important to Pope John Paul II in his early days. Le Fanu develops the implications of all this in significant ways, some of them psychologically painful. Even better known at the time of Solidarity were *Man of Marble* and *Man of Iron*. The less familiar director Zanussi is also well worth pursuing.

In the rest of Eastern Europe dreariness, corruption and sycophancy were the real enemies of the people, and the Czech and Polish directors all seem more dedicated and rewarding than their counterparts in the freedom of France and Italy. But the better-known directors such as Bresson, Truffaut and Chabrol were in tune with the aftermath of existentialism, and French audiences could not have enough of them. In Italy, the ambivalence between religion and paganism is often reflected in a film industry which was of great importance after 1945, until the rise of television, perhaps the greatest enemy of the earlier art form of film. Most of the Italian directors do not seem to have been particularly religious, with the possible exception of Vittorio de Sica; but religious themes are much in evidence in the works of Rossellini and Pasolini, though more important to them was the reaction to the disastrous years of fascism, and the natural emergence of a strong but superficial Italian-style leftism. In Spain, Mediterranean but alien from the rest of Europe, Bunuel's rejection of 'facts, reasons and explanations' characterised such films as *Nazarin*, *Simon of the Desert* and *La Voie Lactee* which would all be nothing without Christianity. And in secular, multi-cultural

Scandinavia, there was much anxious straining to do without God, yet creating images of great delicacy in unforgettable surroundings. Bergman and Dreyer stand high in the list of great European directors, and Le Fanu analyses their work with sympathy and great respect.

If it is difficult for an author to cover all this varied ground in an informative way, it is much harder for a reviewer. But over and over again, Le Fanu succeeds in showing how stories which often appear to oppose, misunderstand or simply ignore the various forms which religion can take, nevertheless so often spring from the soil of religion. Sometimes they are ironic, sometimes hostile, sometimes respectful but nearly always uncommitted. In a short book of only 250 pages, he covers an immense field, and provides an ideal introduction for anyone interested in pursuing the various films more deeply and forming their own conclusions.



## Stone Ugly Alexander Adams

*Ugliness and Judgment: On Architecture in the Public Eye*, Timothy Hyde, Princeton University Press, 2019, £27.

‘Ugliness’ is a term commonly used in debates about architecture. Often it is used as a marker, which divides the plain-speaking man on the street from the jargon-using, over-educated, unreasonable architectural expert. This dichotomy is persuasive yet false, isolating as it does the general population from specialists. Evaluating architecture is unlike artistic appreciation, in that architecture must be evaluated on its functionality, cost, appropriateness, maintenance requirements and speed of construction in a way that does not apply to art. We can and do live with architecture we dislike in ways that do not happen with art; debates about architecture are uniquely public because we have to see (and live in) buildings all the time.

Timothy Hyde’s book examines debates over the ugliness of particular buildings in British history. Ugliness is treated as a relational not an absolute quality; it is not an absence of beauty but an excess of inappropriate aspects; it is the breaching of conventions. According to the author, ‘ugliness is understood not as a simple matter of taste but as a manifestation of social and political conflict that is diffused through different modes of cultural production’. Hyde does not express aesthetic opinions on buildings in his case studies. Sparing black-and-white illustrations remind us of the

buildings under discussion.

Bath is given as an example of a town considered rough and squalid in the age of Queen Anne. The alleys were narrow, the ornamentation of more prominent buildings was crude and structures were in a state of disrepair. With the arrival of Queen Anne and her court to take the waters, Bath became the first modern tourist destination in Great Britain – a centre for the moneyed classes to restore their health and escape the social constraints of their hometowns. Curiously, the famous Bath stone was considered inferior as a building material – no better than Cheshire cheese, London architects sneered – but it was the Georgian redevelopment that changed the general opinion. Nash and Wood established the town’s civic respectability through an extensive campaign of architectural work which benefited from an innovative trolley system which delivered stone from quarries directly to the town for use and export.

Other issues include the competition for the building of the Houses of Parliament. Discussion of the capital’s notoriously noxious and corrosive smog suggested a plain style would be less susceptible to decay. Regardless, Barry’s design was selected, with magnesian limestone nominated as the prime exterior material for its durability, cost and appearance; both of which proved inadequate, as observations made even during construction revealed. The Select Committee held their nerve in the face of evidence with the ‘confident expectation that a remedy will soon be found to arrest or control the decay’. Within a century the entire building had to be re-faced with more durable stone. Ugliness caused by pollution was deemed a manifestation of a pervasive threat to buildings and inhabitants of London. Scientific investigation, spurred on by parliamentary requests, caused MPs to recognise the extent of acidic corrosion because of aerial pollution and led to laws to reduce smoke emissions.

A case of incongruity as ugliness is the controversy over Henry Moore’s Modernist altar in Wren’s baroque St. Stephen Walbrook Church, in 1986. The inappropriateness of the solid block in an organic swelling form in the traditional sacred space is the basis of objections. The commissioners of the altar and Moore’s supporters disagreed on the importance of that incongruity – or rather they reframed incongruity as a positive aspect by stating that great works of art from different eras can coexist and interact in proximity. Yet such a clash interferes with the effect of the architecture – that it is an imposition akin to a terrace of a uniform style and a single house of a different style. Incongruence can generate ugliness through the juxtaposition of two objects, which may, separately, each be beautiful.

Hyde recaps Sir John Soane's mooted libel case against *The Observer* in 1799, when the newspaper published a poem critical of his design for the Bank of England. Accusations of producing ugly designs were a slur upon his standing as an architect. On legal advice he settled for some assertive published letters and did not proceed with the action. Unwisely, he put this lesson behind him and on another occasion sued a different publication on similar grounds, only to lose. Having the criticism raised again during the trial and circulated widely did his reputation more damage.

The most public accusation of architectural ugliness in recent decades came from the Prince of Wales. In 1984 he criticised an early design for the extension to the National Gallery as a 'monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend'. The comment drew support from traditionalists and ire from modernists and republicans. The proposal was subsequently rejected. Ministers and civil servants went out of their way to state the comments had not influenced the decision, which would have amounted to interference in a procedural consideration that was intended to be on a disinterested and transparent basis. The Prince's behind-the-scenes contact with the Qatari government influenced the Chelsea Barracks redevelopment, contributing to the thwarting of Richard Rogers's proposal. Here aspersions of ugliness were used in what could be described a power play between architects, developers, ministers, planning officials and royalty.

The design for the South Bank Arts Centre (completed

1976) was a lightning rod for the strongly held views pro- and anti-modernism. Brutalism (a style promoting giant angular buildings, cellular repeated forms and use of undecorated brick or concrete) is seen a uniquely modern manifestation of ugliness and one that particularly alarms conservatives as it is a triple threat: anti-traditional, foreign-originated and socialist-promoted. There were legitimate pragmatic reasons to choose a Brutalist approach but its uncompromising style aroused anger.

While there are reasonable objections to the aesthetic of modernism, we face a problem. How are we to build airports, bridges, hangars, factories and other modern building types in ways that are affordable and honest without using modern forms, sizes and materials? Even those of us who wish historical urban centres to retain continuity of style and size would not want mock-Tudor car parks, Baroque-ornamented overpasses and neo-Gothic airports. We must allow engineers and architects the leeway to use new materials and construction techniques in the way our ancestors developed the flying buttress for cathedrals. Clearly, the problem is not modernism *per se* but distinguishing between the beautiful and useful and the ugly and impractical forms of that style (and every style) and deciding where modernism is appropriate. That is why discussions such as those effectively summarised in *Ugliness and Judgment* are so instructive when we evaluate how to apply concepts of beauty and ugliness in architectural debates.

## Film

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### PETER MULLEN

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#### **Churchill: When Britain Said No BBC2**

**Directed by Christopher Spencer**

I hope you missed the recent re-screening of *When Britain Said No*, a BBC film which attempts to discover why the Conservative Party, led by prime minister Winston Churchill, lost the 1945 general election. It was a sixty minutes' gloat in which Churchill was decried as a warmonger, an antediluvian imperialist, a racist and a class warrior. Churchill had expected his triumphant war leadership to be confirmed in peacetime by a renewed mandate. Unexpectedly, Labour won with a majority of 180. The makers of *When Britain Said*

*No* wallowed in the news, performing the televisual equivalent of dancing in the streets.

So why was our national saviour so emphatically rejected? Answers are not hard to find. People were exhausted after six years of war with all its suffering and privations. And not just those six years: they had endured a relentless foreshadowing of war since Hitler was made dictator of Nazi Germany in 1933. It was entirely reasonable of the British electorate to want a change. And the Labour Party were quick to claim that they were precisely the change that was needed for they promised a socialist heaven on earth. What they actually delivered was rather different: stricter rations than in wartime, shortages, administrative and financial incompetence and more than enough

regulatory bureaucracy to crush the spirit of a people already on their uppers.

As usual, Churchill correctly interpreted the signs of the times. He knew that increased bureaucracy would produce political and social stagnation. And he made himself very unpopular with the *bien pensant* left-wing elite when he claimed that the socialist government would need the equivalent of a Gestapo to carry out their ambitions. He was right – though the full formation of the new Gestapo took rather longer than he envisaged, indeed until our own day and the dictatorship of political correctness. Churchill saw it coming:

*I hope you have all mastered the official socialist jargon which our masters, as they call themselves, wish us to learn. You must not use the word poor: they are described as the lower income group. When it comes to a question of freezing a workman's wages, the chancellor of the exchequer speaks of arresting increases in personal income. There is a lovely one about houses and homes. They are in future to be called accommodation units. I don't know how we are to sing our old song Home, Sweet Home. No doubt we shall sing, Accommodation Unit, Sweet Accommodation Unit. There's no place like our Accommodation Unit.*

He continued his jibe:

*I doubt if it gives very much pleasure to the average socialist when he wakes up in the morning to say to himself, Oho, I own the Bank of England, I own the railways, I own the coalmines. But if it does give him any actual pleasure, he is certainly paying dearly for it.*

*I hope to live to see the British democracy spit all this rubbish from their lips.*

Well, of course, he didn't and neither have we who have lived to see this nonsense multiplied a million times.

How we could do with a triple dose of Winston today, now that Brexit is everywhere being betrayed!

Churchill saw socialistic, strangulating federalism coming as early as 1947. He said, 'I cannot see Britain becoming an ordinary member of a federal union limited to Europe.' He told the House of Commons: 'In our European Movement, we have worked with federalists and we have always made it clear that, though we are moving along the same road, we are not committed to their conclusions.' He explained to Violet Bonham Carter that, '... a parliament of Europe is quite impracticable.'

He repeated the message when he opened the Congress of Europe at The Hague in May 1948, causing Gladwyn Jebb, the British representative there, to conclude with the note of profound certainty in his voice: 'Churchill is himself clearly not a European at all. If he had his way, Britain would be associated with a Europe that would extend from Lisbon to Brest-Litovsk, but would never have formed part of it herself.'

There can be no doubt about the way Churchill's mind worked on these matters. He was explicit in the foreign policy debate of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, saying:

*We are not seeking in the European Movement to usurp the functions of government. I have tried to make this plain again and again to the heads of our government. We ask for a European Assembly without executive power. We hope that sentiment and culture, the forgetting of old feuds, the lowering and melting down of barriers of all kinds between countries, the growing sense of being a good European – we hope that all these will be the final, eventual and irresistible solvents of the difficulties which now condemn Europe to misery. But the structure of constitutions, the settlement of economic problems, the military aspects – these belong to individual governments. We do not trespass upon their sphere.*

Winston, thou shouldst be living at this hour!

And, for the information of the BBC gloaters, and for all those who thought the socialist government of 1945 would be in power for decades, Winston Churchill and his party were returned to office in 1951.

## Art

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### BRIAN EASSTY

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*Culture War: Art, Identity, Politics and Cultural Entryism*, Alexander Adams. Imprint, Academic, 2019, £14.95.

The unifying theme of the essays in this book, which deal with a wide range of challenges to our cultural life,

is that the ideologies identified as threats by Alexander Adams are relentless, not amenable to appeasement and all the more worrying as a result.

He begins with the censorship of art related to Islam and shows how concessions made pre-emptively to avoid giving presumed offence, as much as specific

demands, can lead from a prohibition on offensive images of the prophet Muhammad to a situation in which the images of pigs in school books are censored. So much is unsurprising perhaps. We are thirty years on from the Rushdie controversy and, as long ago as 2001, the *Daily Mail* made a grovelling apology when it innocently published an image of Muhammad. But, perhaps because it is such a familiar story, Adams is right to put this essay at the beginning, the better for readers to compare it with the chapters on other belief systems which follow.

Though not quite as absolutist as Islamism, the secular orthodoxies which Adams describes differ from Islam or indeed any religion in that what they are against is more important to their followers than what they are for. What they are against is Western capitalist society and the values of the Enlightenment. In its place they seek to put a politics based on identity and ‘atomise society along as many axes as possible’ seemingly making it crazed in both senses of the word. Adams identifies this secular fundamentalism as identitarianism. Its practical manifestation is cultural entryism in which its adherents attach themselves to existing cultural institutions to remake them in their own image.

Adams outlines at length what has happened in the comic book genre in the USA. Entryists from minority groups who displayed little sympathy or talent for the established conventions of the form managed to get on to the staff at Marvel where they changed the ethnicity or sexual orientation of existing superhero characters and made these fantasy figures mouthpieces for very earthbound political propaganda. One might compare it with what the BBC has been doing to Dr Who, which currently resembles nothing more than a character from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* – unchanged on the outside but with a mind more given to obsessing

about the Raj and the American civil rights movement than fighting aliens. The viewing figures for the latest series have plummeted, as did the sales of the comic books subjected to the tender embrace of the entryists.

The length at which Adams described Comicsgate suggests that there may be potential for resistance to the identitarianism surge but he is keen to stress that comic books are consumed by a fairly cohesive and homogeneous readership. He is concerned that other art forms will not have such resilience, if they are too consumed by their own internal conflicts. He begs traditionalists and modernists in fine art to overcome their differences and make common cause against the post-modern Leviathan before it devours them both.

Elsewhere in this collection, Adams turns his attention to the question of reparations and whether art works should be repatriated to their ‘original’ countries. As with many of the other fashionable causes Adams attacks, it is unclear where this process would end if it were to begin. Though Adams makes clear that the whole policy is flawed and illogical, with its legacy only likely to be a series of damaged artefacts fought over by the lawyers of rapacious third world dictators, one would have to be brave to bet against it becoming a widespread method of assuaging post-colonial guilt in the future, for that is an emotion against which mere logic has little power.

That Adams is a good writer – though one prey to the odd Americanism such as art museum for art gallery – will come as no surprise to any *Salisbury Review* readers who read his masterly explanation of the art canon in these pages last year. A longer version of that essay in this collection makes clear how art has its own inbuilt method of renewing itself while maintaining standards, impervious to any external threat – except perhaps that of persistent politically motivated unreason.

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# IN SHORT

**Woke: A Guide to Social Justice**, Titania McGrath. Constable, 2019, £12.99.

*Definition of 'woke': 'Being alert to injustice in society.'*

(Injustice being in the eye of the beholder, of course.) Woke is a parody of privileged feminist identitarian activism. And it is hilarious. Andrew Doyle the author chose the persona of 'Titania McGrath' as his messenger, who is away with the fairies and has no grasp on reality. Doyle abandoned academia for comedy – an elderly don wisely warned him not to waste his life among the ivory towers. Titania is the embodiment of arch wokeness, a social justice warrior jumping onto every trendy, virtue signalling bandwagon cause that passes, but most obsessed with gender. Any segregation of the sexes is 'gender apartheid', except in mosques, when it's empowering'. Older readers might consider her as Peter Simple's Mrs Dutt-Pauker's feminist equivalent for the digital (and much cruder) modern age.

Titania's manifesto compels all and sundry to follow her programme of social engineering, because she is always right, as expected from a cossetted, genius in her early twenties. She is a selfless mentor: 'Imagine me as a potter in her workshop, and yourself as a malformed lump of clay'. How brilliantly this captures the altruistic arrogance of her kind.

Anyone can be an activist. By adding a rainbow flag to your Facebook profile, or calling out an elderly person who doesn't understand what 'non-binary' means, you can change the world for the better. Indeed, social media has now made it possible to show how virtuous you are without having to do anything. As a 'bloodhound of righteousness', one of her many achievements has been the successful re-definition of 'Nazi' to include 'anyone who voted for Brexit, has ever considered supporting the Conservative Party or who refuses to take the *Guardian* seriously'.

Titania rails against the hardship of her upbringing. She is horrified to have been breastfed for the first six months of her life. 'Did my mother not realise that I was vegan?' And she knows that 'Prince Harry is just the latest manifestation of a corrupt and outmoded class system' because 'I met him at one of Daddy's soirées in Capri'. But she also socialises with working-class people, 'like Kate Middleton'. There are plenty of genuine examples of wokeness interspersed into the text by some fantastically stupid people, usually

academics who can spout a load of old fish heads and still expect to find a sizeable gullible audience to take them seriously; the thin line between parody and fact is often blurred. But never for our SJW hero Titania.

Titania – 'a radical inter-sectionalist poet committed to feminism and social justice' who 'lives in Kensington' (one of her London properties) – treats us to some of her sublime poetry. My favourite is *A Little Boy's Brexit*, with such searing lines as: 'Why does Theresa May hate us so much?' and 'Mummies and daddies will start eating their own babies / And I'll have to go back on the game again'.

Whenever this drenching wet world of wokeness is too much for you, dip into Titania's wisdom so that you may laugh rather than cry. It is probably the funniest book that I have ever read.

*James Monkton*

**How to dismantle the NHS in 10 Easy Steps**, Youssef El-Gingihy, Zero Books, 2018, £7.98, **Sick-Note Britain**, Adrian Massey, Hurst, 2019, £20.00.

Blackwells Oxford are launching a series of talks on big issues. I went to the first one in February which predictably was the NHS. The authors of both these books (both doctors) gave presentations of their books followed by a civilised discussion and questions from the audience. Massey describes himself as one who believes in free market solutions to problems and works in occupational health. He believes that doctors waste their time writing millions of sick notes a year for patients that cannot be cured. Doctors should be left out of it and other solutions should be sought.

Such an attempt would be hampered by a complex employment law and an outdated benefits system. As is usual no one dares mention the challenge of over-population and the reasons why this has happened. In many areas hospitals are full, people waiting for appointments with everything taking far too long particularly in the administration. SR readers already know well that doctors are expected to solve social rather than medical problems and that demand and entitlement are infinite. The usual crises in life: birth, death, family break ups depression et al are not medical conditions but part of the warp and weft of being human. The consequences of drunkenness, and obesity further burden a service which is working at an emergency pitch the whole time.

He agrees with El Gingihy however that the

NHS reforms which aimed to make the NHS more accountable and efficient were a disaster. In the Blair-Brown years the method of hiding government borrowing so it does not appear in government expenditure plus the cronyism and corruption resulting from that method further aggravated the problems we face now. He suggested that charging, like for plastic bags, might be a way forward. This has always been anathema to all but I wonder why dentists have been charging for many years and there has been no outcry about it. Massey presented his arguments lucidly – a pity that his book was much harder to understand.

The by-line of Gingihy's book contains 'the story of how your NHS was sold off and why you will have to buy private health insurance soon. With praise from Ken Loach, Corbyn and Pilger you get the flavour of the book. He is convinced that the government wants to plan a US style health care system. It was a pity there was no time for me to tell him this was nonsense as no government would dare to kill this sacred cow, a religion in some quarters.

*Merrie Cave*

*The*

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