

The

# Salisbury Review

*Absolutely the wrong opinion on everything*



"I just hope he doesn't regret having this new electric driverless sledge"

**An Oik's Progress**

*Jane Kelly*

**A Nation of Shopkeepers**

*Mark Griffith*

**Cannabis on the NHS**

*Berenice Langdon*

**Tourism: the Eighth Plague**

*Catherine Blaiklock*

**Living Forever**

*Myles Harris*

**Christmas at Foulacre Hall**

*Peter Simple*

Winter 2019  
Vol 38 No 2



£6.00



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**The Salisbury Review,  
PO Box 81, Shefford, SG17 9AP**

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## The Salisbury Review

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Most teachers don't pay much attention to Pol Pot these days. If a pupil asks about the Cambodian dictator they will explain he was an inevitable complication of the struggle to create a classless society. It is true they will say that Pol Pot killed two million of his subjects, Stalin twenty million, and Mao Zedong, seventy million, but there are bound to be mistakes on the way to perfect equality. You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. Pupils would be much better studying the evil Nazis, who believed in the coming of the master race and not the dictatorship of the proletariat where all will be equal and live in harmony.

Pol Pot was the son of a wealthy Cambodian farmer, an ex-Catholic schoolboy, many Marxist killers were, who thought up the idea, long before computers were part of the furniture, of a 'clean install' of society. In modern terms, the old hard disk, as it were, of Cambodian society, corrupted by centuries of class privilege, would be wiped clean and a new operating system called 'Year Zero' installed.

*Year Zero* involved the killing of all intellectuals, farmers, doctors, nurses, business men, tradesmen, property owners of any kind – even a grass hut, while anybody who had the tiniest advantage in society, people who wore glasses or spoke a foreign language, were butchered. Cambodia's cities were emptied and their inhabitant driven into the country to work as lowly agricultural labourers. Life meant nothing. A party slogan read: *To spare you is no profit, to destroy you is no loss.*

Jeremy Corbyn, the allotment holder of Islington, is not Pol Pot, nor will he ever be. He is a mild and peaceful man, but for years, until like Cinderella he was suddenly elevated to the leadership of Her Majesty's Opposition, he has dreamt of a classless Britain. It is why you can see whenever he looks directly at the camera the bright gleam of revolution in his eyes that spells the end of the British middle class. Unlike Pol Pot he will try to achieve it not by violence but by ramping up migration. Which is why Dianne Abbott, his shadow Home Secretary has promised that if Labour wins she will shut down

our immigration centres and open our borders. Like all Marxist idealists, Corbyn believes in a world without frontiers, passports, voting, property, religion, patriotism, monarchy, rank or class. *Workers of the World Unite* is his first commandment, which means the working class does not end at Dover, it is worldwide. It explains his ambivalence toward the EU. He wants us to leave because it is a tool of international capital, yet still allows its workers to pass freely in and out of a frontier less Britain. The same goes for the working classes from the rest of the world. Muhammed from Somalia has much right to live here as Jim Smith from Oldham and the same claim on our property.

Will there be room? The savage taxes on wealth and property planned by Corbyn, by driving middle-class people from their homes, and capital from the country will ensure an adequate supply of empty houses for the new wave of migrants. The latter will never own those houses – all property is held in common. 'Ah,' but his enemies will say, 'He will go bust before he achieves it, look at his ridiculous spending plans.' But Corbyn does not believe in money, except for purchasing the week's shopping or tiny items for domestic use. People do not need savings in a communist state or titles to land or property. The state owns everything.

Is this ever likely to happen? Not this time around, but if we keep our borders open yes; Boris is keen on it as well. Net migration is increasing the population by one million every four years. With pull migration, bringing in the relatives of migrants already here, it is likely that by 2025 the population will have passed the 100 million mark. We don't have enough farmland, water or power to support such a number. This is fertile ground for revolutionaries of both left and right. Street fighting brought the Nazis to power in thirties' Germany, famine and war put the mass killer Lenin in power in Russia

We are however not allowed to speak about these matters; all the competing parties in the coming elections as well as the media, churches, mosques, universities have nothing to say and the police are now actively looking for people who do open their mouths. This was our country once. Where will we go when we have lost it?

# A Nation of Shopkeepers

MARK GRIFFITH

Frenchmen, Germans, EU officials have insisted for decades that we British are obsessed with our past. I've been hearing this for so long that it took me years to realise it was the opposite of the truth: projection, as the Freudians say. *They* are obsessed with their past – and with ours. It was living on the Continent that showed me. My French and German friends in Budapest always – sooner or later – brought up the British Empire in conversation, often in the context of why Britons are 'bad Europeans'. This was presented as friendly banter, not hostile but concerned, sympathetic chastisement – yet I always heard an edge in their voice, something else behind the pretended teasing.

By the third time I noticed that it was always they, not I or any other Brit, who brought our empire into the discussion first. No Spanish, Russian, Polish, Italian, Dutch, or Swedish friend ever mentioned the British Empire. Not once. No Brit whom I knew ever mentioned it. Only – and always – the French and the Germans. Near the end of the 19th century, Prussia's brilliant conservative chancellor, Bismarck, said that the most important fact about the world was that the United States spoke English. Imagine being French in 1903, and knowing that your own country in 1803 sold an enormous slab of land, partly comprising theoretical claims but also with real territories, of North America to the nascent United States. This land covered part or all of 15 of today's US states, a vast area. And this is just the USA. Never mind the other distinctive cultures of the English-speaking world.

I've written before that the truly formative event of the modern world was the Anglo-French Seven Years' War in the 1750s and 1760s. Fought on several continents, smaller and poorer Britain defeated France in what some historians call 'the 18<sup>th</sup>-century world war'. France lost India and North America to us, and has never quite recovered. Specifically, losing that war so enraged the French crown that they went heavily into debt by vindictively helping our 13 colonies, now the United States, to become independent of Britain in the war of the 1770s. This crushing debt then brought on the French Revolution at the end of the 1780s, an event which was a huge disaster for France and Europe, but which is currently taught to schoolchildren as a brilliant new dawn.

They didn't give up. Even today, France's government works hard to encourage new technology, albeit in their

relentlessly top-down, centralised way. The technically advanced Franco-British aircraft, Concorde, lost tons of money. French telecoms specialists were leaders in the early Internet, but their 1980s state-backed Minitel, putting special terminals into millions of French homes, was rigid. Les Anglos leapfrogged it with the more flexible internet.

France and Germany are naturally rich territories. France in 1600 had 20 million people while England and Wales together had only four million. Perhaps this is why they despise traders? English-speaking economists from Smith and Ricardo onwards insist that private firms are the truly creative element in any country, the innovating geese who lay golden eggs. This view is alien to the French. Firms have a more respected place in German culture, but the grand aims of the state still come first. Despite the many great early modern thinkers in both languages (Leibniz, Pascal, Descartes, Kant, Rousseau, Gauss, Goethe... the list is long and eminent), France and Germany are strangely short on major economists. The most famous German whom some call an economist, Karl Marx, was really a Hegel-influenced pamphleteer who claimed that all trade is inherently unfair.

France and Germany inspect the globe like an ageing couple who painfully regret not having children. In contrast, the Iberians and the Anglos have spread their seed, and planted their cultures on other continents. Italians cheerfully regard Spain and Portugal as Latin provinces. And when the Spanish or the Portuguese look around the world, they see Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, and Mozambique. Yet there is no German Australia, no French Brazil. This shared imperial nostalgia is the hidden Franco-German motor inside the EU.

If the EEC/EC/EU is a project dominated by two countries who feel that they are barren parents who didn't transplant themselves overseas, it explains a lot. Particularly why French, German, and EU officials in the Brexit episode have been so bitter, so petty since 2016. This is why they are so incensed that British voters kicked over their eurovillage train set. This is why the pro-German lobby conquered French foreign policy-making in the 1950s, so soon after Nazi occupation. British failure at Suez and London's tactless puzzlement at Paris's secret request for political union just hastened the decline of the pro-UK lobby. For both the French and the Germans by the 1950s

were appalled to grasp that English speakers ruled the 20th century. This is France and Germany's secret bond: cultural angst, economic envy, imperial regret, and wounded pride.

There was a Soviet-era phrase that NATO had three functions: to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down. The three jobs of the EU now are: to keep the Americans out, the Germans in, and the British down. It's easy for Britons to overstate that last role, to exaggerate EU desire to confine the UK. Yet recent remarks by Guy Verhofstadt reveal that (surprise surprise) the EU does see itself as an empire after all,

and that Britain becoming a less-regulated (and richer) 'Singapore by the North Sea' is a major EU fear. They intend to stop us: bribery, treason, lies, blackmail, whatever it takes. In their unfortunate mindset, this is their last throw of the dice, their last chance at empire. There is no rule that Paris and Berlin won't break to save their sickly federation, their Frankenchild.

*Mark Griffith is a financial trader whose weblog <http://www.otherlanguages.org> follows news on artificial intelligence, economics, and other subjects. He is researching a book about whether AI will change how people live.*

## An Oik's Progress

JANE KELLY

I recently met a lady at my local cathedral who seemed very friendly, almost gushingly so; I was quite flattered, she being so pukka, with designer clothes, and what my mother would have called, 'top drawer'. I was, that is, until she asked if I would consider becoming a carer for her demented husband, for £50 a week and meals.

With lightning speed she'd assessed me as someone who might be useful to clean, nanny or black-lead the grate. She was one of our right-wing snobs. Thackeray, in his 1848 work *The Book of Snobs*, published while he was still writing *Vanity Fair*, expanded on his theme of social mobility or lack of it, and examined every form of English caste distinction: snobs literary, clerical, club joining, county, university and marrying. He'd met toff Tory snobs but probably not the *Guardian* variety, who is charming until you say you're not voting Labour, and then freezes as if you'd said you prefer Aldi to Waitrose.

According to researchers at Yale University, social class can be determined within just seven words. In England, of course, it takes only four: 'I voted for Brexit'.

The Yale scientists asked nearly 300 employers to listen to recordings of the conversations of people applying for a managerial post at the university. They had to assess the candidate's professional qualities, social class, and starting salary without reading their CV. Those first seven words told them all they needed to know about the candidate's class, which later affected decisions to hire and how much to pay them.

None of that is news to us in England, where class does not appear to be solely based on money but on myriad intangible qualities, including your basic name.

There won't be many Kylies, Parkers, Pipers, Tylers or Tracys among the top salaries in Britain. According to Yale, the average starting salary of those judged to be higher class started at around £45,260 compared to roughly £44,680 for those judged to be from a lower class. Although they start at roughly the same level, disparity soon kicks in. The majority of the higher class received a starting bonus above £1,925 while nobody from the lower orders reached that level.

Getting on to a national newspaper in the 1980s, I was told that your salary should be at least the equivalent of your age. I was exactly suited to my £28,000, which more than doubled over the next few years, and I quickly joined Mrs T's property-owning democracy. When my father heard, he was disgusted, having proudly never earned above £25,000 in his whole life. He considered my earnings to be somehow unseemly, a new culture of greed which had never touched him.

Growing up, I knew nothing about class. My parents lived in dread of ever being confronted with anyone from the class below or above, but we rarely saw real differences; our council estate contained a broad range of people, including middle-class pensioners from an age when renting had been acceptable. Children going to private school rather than the local Grammar were suspected of being 'thick'.

Later I heard about the caste system from reading middle-class brigadier's daughter Jilly Cooper's 1979 book, *Class*, which was all jolly good fun. Then I moved to London and found myself being scrutinised, and usually dismissed, every time I opened my mouth.

'Most people only want to be with PLU,' a slightly braying voiced secretary explained to me, 'That's People Like Us.' She and her family lived in my home

village; I'd never met her before as she lived in one of its few detached houses. We had other interests in common but she had been educated at Benenden and I quickly realised that I was never going to penetrate her inner circles. She and her earliest friends had all been to the same schools and moved down to London together. They had what I saw as a menial job, fluttering their eye-lashes over their typewriter bars, but I knew with sinking certainty that they were more likely to find eligible men than I.

As Thackeray put it, 'Marry down and society shall forsake thee, thy kinsman shall avoid thee as a criminal, thy uncles and aunts shall turn up their eyes and bemoan the sad manner in which young Tom or Harry has thrown himself away.'

The man who hired me was lower middle class but most of the others in the office were like Greek Gods to me, lordly, self-assured, and all privately educated. When one of them did ask me out I was so uncomfortable that I was happy to be posted to Kinshasa as it was a good chance to avoid him. My secretarial almost friend told me, 'No one gets around the class system unless they are very beautiful, very rich, or perhaps Scottish or Jewish, when you don't count in the same way.'

How could they tell that I hadn't been to public school? I fretted about that for years. I thought about elocution classes, which had been favoured by the generation before mine, including Liverpoolian novelist Beryl Bainbridge. But by the 1980s that was old hat; we'd entered a new age of Thatcherite meritocracy. I didn't think it could be my voice, certainly not my grammar. More likely what I said and how much. The charming girls I envied were gifted with poise and silence. If they spoke at all, it was sweetly careful never to sound clever. They had been brought up to please men, not compete with them.

In both England and America, class is really all about money, keeping it safely tied up in certain groups. The Americans are just less hypocritical about it. 'If we want to move to a more equitable society then we must contend with these ingrained psychological processes that drive our early impressions of others,' opines pompous Dr Kraus from Yale, as a social scientist delighting in stating the obvious: 'Despite what these hiring tendencies may suggest, talent is not found solely among those born to rich or well-educated families. Policies that actively recruit candidates from all levels of status in society are best positioned to match opportunities to the people best suited for them.'

Alas, he is too late. Instead of social mobility at present we have got snobbery with violence and warring, grasping identity groups. Some from marginalised groups claim to now hold the 'cultural

capital' which once belonged only to upper-class white men, but they have simply benefited from a slide down in educational values. Anyone can get a PhD now, but there I am, being snobbish.

We are more furious with each other than my parents' post-war generation could have imagined. This is partly the fault of Mrs Thatcher's prosperous 'Yuppies,' who decided to educate their children privately, thus allowing state education to go on languishing in Marxist mediocrity. The socialist plan is to finally wrest the 'cultural capital' from the upper classes by destroying the public schools, while in the meantime being content with lowering standards and introducing group and community projects rather than individual work, so that no one can easily be 'elitist' any more.

This has been particularly detrimental to the white working class, now an almost extinct species in London. I didn't know that they still had any kind of voice until they started saying those four little words with the arrival of Brexit.

The snobbish middle classes are still there, still struggling against each other, but unlike Thackeray's time we now have new classes, which are generational, economic, cultural, and ethnic. Grinding along the bottom is the 'precariat,' once thought obliterated by the welfare state, characterised by poor literacy and welfare dependence. Then there are the imported service workers, those silent, invisible cleaners in offices and hotels, call centres and globalised companies, on short-term contracts with no economic security. It was simpler when it was all about who rode in a carriage and who didn't.

'Never lose the chance for saying a kind word,' Thackeray wrote in *Vanity Fair*, presiding over the savage turmoil of his greedy, callous characters. Hopefully he would laugh rather than cry if he knew how little his message had been heeded.

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



Have you got anything  
for existential dread, doctor?

# 'Wham, Bam, Thank You Mam'

JAKE STARK

I am sitting in a bar. Shiny copper spotlights adorn the ceiling, tan oak wood covers the floor, and the whole place is lit in a dark yellowish hue, giving it a swanky feel. I glance back and forth at the glass doors in front of me. Tiny bubbles rapidly rise to the top of my pint. A sign of exciting times to come – hopefully. Could this be the one? My date enters. Thank god, I haven't been catfished (when one poses as someone they are not).

After an awkward hug, we get to talking. I make a casual joke about her being five minutes late. She laughs. We carry on with more small talk. How long have you lived in the area? Any brothers or sisters? Any embarrassing drunk stories? Two drinks later, we leave the bar. As we leave, she grabs me on the arm and commands in a tipsy tone, 'So, where are we going next?' I suggest my place. Her eyes light up, 'Yeah, let's do it!' Thirty minutes later, we are in bed having sex.

The game has changed. Seven million UK residents now use dating apps. More and more people are having one-night stands and taking more lovers in their lifetime. What are the consequences? I didn't call the girl back. The chase was too easy.

For those unfamiliar with dating apps, you download an app on your phone, create a profile, add a few pictures, answer a few questions about yourself, maybe put a few quirky lines describing yourself, and then off you go.

Pictures of nearby young women (up to a radius of 100 miles) appear on your phone; you swipe right if you like what you see and left if you don't. To match with someone, they also have to swipe right. It is a cruel and quick way to judge if you would sleep with that person, based entirely on looks.

There are other dating apps for different purposes. Some are for men and women in their 30s, others for the 40s. One tracks people who walk past you in the street and you can 'like' them if they have the app. Others are more refined. They are more rigorous in the questions they ask, going into religious beliefs, favourite hobbies, political inclinations (I suggest giving this one a miss if you are a Brexiteer or Trump fan – social justice warriors unfortunately litter the dating space – I wonder why?), with random set questions like, who would be your favourite dinner guest? Name two truths and one lie? And so on.

There is a strange and distinct divide with individuals who use these apps. Women looking to 'hook up' write a cryptic but obvious phrase in their bio, 'Looking for a good time not a long time', amounting to something just short of a prostitution advert. Others write the exact opposite. 'Looking for a genuine and real connection'. They want a relationship, a partner in crime.

According to a recent study, one in five relationships now start online. But the other side of dating apps is a dark and promiscuous world. To put it in perspective, Generation Z (those born after 1995) have had nearly as many sexual partners as Baby Boomers. Gen Z already average eight while Boomers average ten and a half. The bonking epidemic is upon us.

It comes as no surprise. When you use these apps, it is difficult to personalise whom you are talking to. You have a picture and a short description, nothing more. You know nothing of their life, friends, or family. They can make up anything they want. When you meet, the encounter seems so forced as though it is a transaction, especially when you meet under the pretence of, 'Let's have a good time not a long time'. The object is clear. If for whatever reason the encounter is too awkward, you move on to your next 'match' (it's normal to have a few going at the same time). 'Cashier number four please...' as the computerised local Post Office speaker announces to queuing customers.

Falling in love can be the most magical experience. That moment when you and your partner's eyes lock and the surrounding world mutes; you have her and she has you. But there comes a risk with this kind of emotional connection; you are vulnerable. Dating apps in contrast do away with the risk of getting hurt. You can experience all the passionate intimacy of a relationship with none of the burdens; not answering her texts back in time, arguing over your alleged flirting with someone else, or failing to acknowledge her feelings.

However there are consequences to this digital pursuit of pleasure. Can you fall in love with a woman who has slept with ten men? Maybe 20? Even 30? Does it matter at all? I can already hear the feminists banging at my door for daring to ask such a question. Yet, statistics show that sleeping with a considerable amount of people affects our happiness in relationships.

According to the Institute for Family Studies, 74

per cent more men who take just one sexual partner over a lifetime are likely to say they are 'very happy' in their relationship. While, at the other end of the spectrum, men who take over 21+ sexual partners over their lifetime report to be 'very happy' 61 per cent of the time. There are exceptions. Yet the temptation to indulge in a night of sweaty ecstasy has never been stronger, knowing that it is all in reach of your phone. Jane Eyre's love of blind and scarred Mr Rochester makes her a rare breed in our mobile phone world.

Are a good portion of us millennials and Gen Z then doomed for marital despair? Or love? It might well be the case. I recall one experience using the app abroad. There we are in a bar, the conversation limited to little more than one you would have with an acquaintance, let alone with a friend.

Hours later, we are lying in bed after doing the deed. She whispers in my hear, 'I have to say that was one of the better experiences I've had on (whatever dating app it was: Hinge, Tinder, Bumble, Happn)'. Rather

impressed with myself, I reply, 'Well, thank you. But how many "experiences" are we talking about here?' 'I don't know, about 40', she says. The sweet taste of self-congratulation in my mouth turns to sour milk.

The fact that she so casually admitted this left me perplexed. But who am I to judge? Dating apps have not only made the act of dating a hobby but the act of sex a hobby as well. The days when sex meant something, what women made men work hard for, along with flowers, chocolates, poems, candlelit dinners, long walks, and evidence of clear and consistent interest, not just in their body but in their person, all seem over.

More than that, there is limited incentive to get into a relationship with someone who so readily has sex with someone they've only known for a few hours. Can you trust such a person to stay loyal? Should I book an appointment with my GP?

*Jake Stark is an entrepreneur and social observer.*



**I'm afraid we had to downgrade to a cheaper messaging service.**

# Chinese No Take Away Hong Kong?

ROGER WATSON

I have witnessed all the main events of the post-handover pro-democracy events in Hong Kong. With my wife I took a bus through the Central District of Hong Kong Island in 2003 when a million people gathered to demonstrate, peacefully, for democracy. I recall the protesters parting to allow our bus to pass. In 2014, I visited the umbrella protest in the same area when a largely student-led protest closed it down for over a week. In 2019, I witnessed the first outbreak of violence and the use of tear gas by the police.

Anyone who knows the Hong Kong people will know them as peaceful, polite and patient. They have the undemonstrative modesty that is typical of most Chinese people and an overwhelming desire simply to be left alone to get on with their lives. In many ways this served them well under British rule, and there are very few incidences recorded of pro-democracy protests in colonial times. Ironically, the anti-British riots of 1967 were inspired by mainland Chinese controlled communists in the local trade unions. It is telling that the Hong Kong people have been pushed to the recent extremes of disrupting the rail system, closing the airport, petrol bombing, and physically attacking the police.

Anyone in doubt about how China will behave as it assumes control in Hong Kong (perhaps someone who doubts that past performance is the best predictor of future performance) now has the benefit of present events to inform them. Communist China has always ruthlessly oppressed dissidents, using the full force of its legal system and, when that fails, its illegal system to imprison, torture and execute with international impunity. The predictions of public executions in Happy Valley Racecourse by Paul Theroux in his novel *Kowloon Tong* may have been exaggerated, but sufficient metaphorical warning shots are now being fired in the face of mass pro-democracy protests which show precisely what China will do should the protests persist and their nature continue to escalate from peaceful to violent.

A massacre like that at Tiananmen Square in 1989 is unlikely in Hong Kong, where most events continue to be covered copiously by the press. The Chinese

will instead demonstrate their power in other ways, exemplified as follows. Pro-democracy millionaire Jimmy Lai is under continual surveillance and his mainland Chinese relatives have been forced to have him officially removed from their family tree. Rebecca Ly, the Cathay Dragon airline union representative, was dismissed for participating in peaceful pro-democracy rallies following the dismissal of cabin crew who also participated. Cathay Pacific chief executive Rupert Hogg was forced to resign and was subsequently replaced by a pro-Chinese chief executive. This was followed by the resignation of the Cathay Pacific chairman, John Slosar. Outside China, vile abuse, allegedly from pro-Chinese students, was received on the social media platform WeChat by Sharon Wong, a student in Adelaide, Australia, who showed her support for the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.

President Xi recently claimed that he would honour the ‘two countries, one system’ arrangement which was promised at the handover of Hong Kong to China, but this only applies until 2047, when Hong Kong loses its special administrative status. The Chinese think in dynasties while the West thinks in decades.

The ‘umbrella movement’ of 2014 led to low-level reprisals, and one notable casualty was Peter Mathieson, the current Vice Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh. Mathieson was President of the University of Hong Kong in 2014 and, while stating that Hong Kong would never be independent, he also defended the right of students to take part in the protests. There is little doubt that his lack of condemnation for the students and the protests precipitated his early departure from Hong Kong. His parting shot in the *South China Morning Post* certainly pointed to the difficulties that he had faced. Since then there has been a systematic replacement of university presidents with pro-Chinese academics, and increasing pressure on these presidents to condemn the pro-democracy protests.

The People’s Liberation Army (PLA), already firmly positioned in Hong Kong in the former British Army headquarters, are also gathered under the guise of the People’s Armed Police in Shenzhen on the border between Hong Kong and China. The Hong Kong police, who some believe are already staffed by many

PLA personnel, use increasingly stringent tactics against pro-democracy demonstrators.

Meantime, in mainland China the events are reported as an uprising against the local capitalist élite who rule the island. Presumably, if the PLA take to the streets of Hong Kong, this will be portrayed as an intervention to support the downtrodden masses of the special administrative region. When China eventually assumes full control of Hong Kong, the extradition agreement, currently shelved but not abandoned and the focus of so much anger in Hong Kong, will become unnecessary. China will be able to hunt down and remove former pro-democracy protesters as it wishes. We can be sure that China will.

I was recently asked if surveillance was obvious in China and were people free to live as they wanted. The answer to the surveillance is ‘no’ and to a fair degree of freedom is ‘yes’. But China does not need to exercise physical surveillance of its population as the government is aware of almost every detail of almost every person’s life and movements. Only social media sites approved by the Chinese government are permitted to be used openly, and the criteria by which such sites are judged is their willingness to share user data with the authorities and to be read openly by them. So Google-based social media sites and WhatsApp are blocked (Google refuses to share user data and WhatsApp is encrypted).

Most of the Chinese population from very young children to the very old use mobile devices for every aspect of life from communication to booking travel and paying for shopping. Some shopping malls are cash-free zones, only permitting payment with mobile contactless facilities, such as ApplePay, WeChat, and AliPay. All of these are tracked and, of course, are increasingly international and very commonly used wherever Chinese expatriate communities such as university students gather. Almost every shop in Finland, for example, where there are many Chinese students, uses AliPay and it is increasingly common in London. There are reports of Chinese citizens who fail to demonstrate wholehearted support for the regime finding their financial accounts blocked, or being prevented from purchasing specific items such as air fares, or being restricted in that they may only purchase economy and not business tickets for flights and train journeys.

The Chinese government has a mobile phone application on which citizens may indicate approval of the president and their agreement with policies, which gains them social credit and access to privileges. The converse is the case for those who do not comply. Apparently, this has become an obsession with Chinese employees, such that they now spend inordinate

amounts of their working day on these applications, seeking approval – to the detriment of their work. No employer wishing to keep his or her job would dare try to put a stop to this.

Meantime, the world watches events with impotence. The USA threatens trade wars which will be unsustainable, the Vatican agrees to ordain bishops in China but only with the approval of the Chinese government, and the United Kingdom merely whispers about the need for democracy in Hong Kong in case the Chinese government should hear them and take diplomatic reprisals. The UK probably fails to protest too much in favour of democracy in Hong Kong because we created the place and left the mess which precipitated the current situation. We failed to establish democracy there despite nearly two decades of preparation for the handover in 1997.

For Hong Kong watchers and lovers of its people it is distressing to see a situation developing which has only one outcome. While the Chinese government may seem to be currently restrained, we can be sure that all identifiable leaders and members of the current demonstrations will be recorded, listed and – in due course – dealt with. The Chief Executive’s decision to make the wearing of masks illegal for protesters is undoubtedly designed to facilitate such developments. There is little that the UK or any other government can do to influence the present situation in Hong Kong and virtually nothing they can do to influence the outcome.

However, over half a million Hong Kong citizens have UK passports – albeit an attenuated version which does not permit settlement in the UK. The UK missed the opportunity to open its borders and allow an influx of Hong Kong citizens who wished to leave Hong Kong at the time of the handover. Imagine how this hard-working, productive, peaceful, integrating and self-sufficient people would benefit the UK economy. Nevertheless, this is not a viable solution now; the UK and other countries with influence in the region should be doing all they can to ensure that the citizens of Hong Kong can remain and live in peace and without their everyday lives being dominated by mainland China.

As I write, the situation in Hong Kong deteriorates, the Chief Executive refuses to rule out requesting Chinese intervention to quell the protests, and the world continues to watch. It will become much worse with no guarantee of getting better. The end of ‘two countries, one system’ – if it ever existed – may be here sooner than planned.

*Roger Watson is a regular visitor to Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China.*

# Sexton or Sex Policeman?

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ANDREW TETTENBORN

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Years ago, whenever I opened a newspaper and read that abuse, like death and taxes, was always with us and that everybody's first priority had to be to safeguard someone from it, I used idly to wonder one thing. How on earth could sensible, educated people be inveigled into thinking that way? I have now found the answer, by an entirely unexpected route. A little time ago, there being no one else available, I did a spell as a churchwarden and soon found out about the church's penchant for re-education.

As far as the new churchwardens – about 20 of us – were concerned, it started with a round robin email from the diocesan office in – shall we say, Barchester. We were summarily ordered to rendezvous in a week's time in deepest Bassetshire. The reason was that we were required to be trained, and that three hours had to be dedicated to initiating us into the mysteries of 'abuse' and 'safeguarding'. We obeyed, numb fingers clutching mugs of instant coffee on a freezing Saturday in a village hall equipped with state-of-the-art electronics, little noticeable heating, and a very earnest volunteer from Barchester. We could see that we were indeed engaged on weighty business. No fewer than four names and telephone numbers appeared on a screen; all were employed at diocesan headquarters, and all had job titles implying importance in the world of safeguarding against abuse.

Seated, and without so much as a prayer in sight, we were then treated to slide after powerpoint slide on the subject of abuse. After ten minutes or so, we began to see the point. Abuse turned out to be rather like sin, only more so. Indeed, some of us wondered if it might be intended to supplant sin as the embodiment of evil, since our volunteer, in tune with the literature she helpfully distributed, solemnly informed us that its elimination now formed a central, if not the central, tenet in the teachings of the Church of England.

In the same way as sin is described in the General Confession ('by thought, word and deed'), it seems that abuse these days takes all sorts of forms: not only the kind you thought, but emotional abuse, financial abuse, abuse by neglect, employment abuse, modern slavery. We were told that it is everywhere – at home, at work, in the street, in church – and was committed by everyone: bishops, priests, husbands, employers, parents. By half-time, we (or at least the two-thirds of

us who had stayed awake) could have written a thesis on abuse in modern Britain.

More coffee and biscuits came during the interval. While our volunteer acted the earnest saleswoman by waving at a pile of booklets and pamphlets on a groaning trestle table, available free to anyone wanting to take matters further, most of us wondered what our new wealth of knowledge had to do with us as churchwardens.

We found out soon enough. With the kind of deadpan assurance you used to associate with old-style television newsreaders, our instructor pulled us up short. We might think of ourselves as amateurs with oddly shaped pipes who kept things running on a shoe-string, but that wouldn't do. On the contrary: we had to be on our toes all the time, since we were vital cogs in a delicate bureaucratic machine. The old ways – a word to the vicar about misbehaviour behind the church after Sunday school, or the bishop if we seriously thought there might be something iffy about the vicar – were out. Thomas Proudie had become Peter Simple's Bishop Spacely-Trellis: henceforth we had to regard ourselves as ecclesiastical social workers, bound by chains of command and communication, all (of course) illustrated by the sort of graphic flow charts vaguely remembered from school and now used to show how go-ahead the church had become.

Every allegation, any suggestive nuance, any vague unease, had to be passed immediately to a parish safeguarding officer, who had his own network and rules for recording what he heard. We shouldn't, indeed we mustn't, consider such irrelevancies as whether we personally believed what we were told. We must certainly never keep anything to ourselves, even if asked to do so (we were actually told that if we did so we were committing a crime, which isn't true: but let that pass). But any such independence of thought would represent a return to the bad old days of condonation and covering up. Discretion and judgment, in other words, were out; we were there to follow instructions, and leave those higher up, trained yet further than us, to pursue their own procedures.

So that was us put in our place, as we dutifully filed out into the freezing morning. Except, of course, for one saving grace, which a number of the better-informed among us pointed out as soon as nobody

could overhear. The Church of England could, and does, insist that it is in deadly earnest about safeguarding. Indeed, if you look at the websites of many churches, including ours, almost the first thing you can see is instructions about what to do if you fear that someone somewhere might be being abused. But there isn't actually much in practice that a diocese can do about a churchwarden who chooses not to be a glorified agent for social services, but simply potters on as a member of his congregation willing to look out for those in need and exercise his good sense and discretion when things go wrong. It is difficult enough to get people to act as churchwardens as it is: if those without proper training are eliminated there would be a great many parishes without any churchwardens at all.

The rest of the story you can guess. I was now trained: I could tick a box and prevent further nagging from

the well-meaning Barchester diocesan pen pushers. I fear that it did no good. I went straight back to making sure that the church raises enough money to keep itself going, that the flower rota is kept up as it always has been, and (this being an interregnum) that where there isn't a priest then one of us is available to take morning prayer. Only one thing made me uncomfortable. The rather unnecessary safeguarding exercise of which our lengthy morning harangue had formed a small part is a major enterprise. It apparently costs some £7 million annually of the sums raised from the church plate, or nearly £600 per parish.

But I didn't have the heart to mention this when touching our well wishers to help us with the funds to keep our local church going of a Sunday.

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## A Mysterious Order

BRIAN RIDLEY

**A**s a scientist, I am aware of extensive shortcomings regarding my knowledge of literature, poetry, art, music and philosophy. I appreciate much of its creations, from Jane Austen to Sibelius, Aristotle to Nietzsche, and our Gothic cathedrals, but with regrettable blind spots about modern art and music. But also, as a scientist, I am aware that I know quite a lot about particular bits of the material world, but appallingly little regarding what the universe is about, and with only a smattering of what other physicists know – general relativity, string theory, quantum gravity, etc. I am comforted, if comforted is the right word, by some fellow-feeling voiced by Albert Einstein:

*'The human mind is not capable of grasping the universe. We are like a little child entering a huge library. The walls are covered to the ceilings with books in many different tongues. The child knows that someone must have written these books. It does not know who or how. It does not know the languages in which they are written. But the child notes a definite plan in the arrangement of the books... a mysterious order which it does not comprehend, but only dimly suspects.'*

How little we scientists know!

This should give us pause, when we contemplate some prevalent views about modern society in the West. So much that was once unquestionable is that no longer. Some say that religion has given way

to science; free speech is limited by the pundits of political correction and of race; even democracy is subordinated to the will of the elite. The views of the public about free speech and democracy find plenty of support from current and recent events. All of which belongs to the realm of opinion – opinion rationally argued, opinion passionately held, opinion as dictat – a realm of rhetoric with optimistic claims to truth.

Science is nothing like that. Like everyone else, scientists have opinions, but if they are opinions about the world of matter, they belong to a realm entirely different from the realm of rhetoric. Such opinions will be submitted to the scrutiny of their peers and to experiment. Experiment is the final arbiter, but an asymmetrical arbiter – if it falsifies whatever claim is made, then that is that, the opinion is wrong; if it does not falsify the claim, it does not mean that the claim is true, but only 'so far, so good'. The extreme difficulty of devising meaningful experiments in the subjects of sociology and economics tends to limit their world to the realm of rhetoric and 'expert' opinion.

As regards science and religion, I have to say, science has got nothing to do with Christianity. Indeed, right at the birth of science, Sir Francis Bacon exhorted scientists to keep God out of the laboratory, and it has striven to do so. Striven, even to the heresy of denying the claim of Sir Isaac Newton himself, that space and time were absolutes. Absolute things smack of God, and modern science will strive to

have none of it, replacing, where it can, the absolute by the relative. But still, the velocity of light is not a velocity relative to something at rest. It looks like an absolute. The charge and spin of the electron are what they are. They are not relative to anything, they look like absolutes.

Two of the highlights of physics in the last century were Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity, which focused on bodies moving uniformly with constant velocity, so-called inertial systems, followed, ten years later, by the Theory of General Relativity, which includes acceleration and relates gravity and matter to the geometry of space-time. It has the unfortunate reputation of being far too difficult for us mortals to comprehend, with its tensor calculus, its Christoffel symbols, and its metric of space-time. Certainly, we are aware of that famous equation relating energy and mass,  $E=mc^2$ , but that was from the Special Theory. The General Theory alerted us to the existence of black holes and weird claims of the possibility of time-travel. But it is somehow sad that the sheer elegance of its mathematics cannot be appreciated by us; it is rather as if a blind man was presented with the Renaissance treasures of Venice. Perhaps, more to the point, experiments so far have supported its predictions and have not falsified them.

However, we should not be bamboozled by the word 'relativity'. In the theory, it refers to the relativity of motion. Outside of the theory it certainly does not imply relativism (one thing is as good as another). One comes across this abominable view in casual conversation too frequently. Sadly, on a par with the decline of Christianity, this view indicates a lack of belief in the existence of absolutes. Something that both the philosophy of ethics and the philosophy

of aesthetics dispute. Science cannot help in this; it can pontificate about all the material world, except where it matters – consciousness and mind. Computer engineers can make clever robots; they cannot make you, or me, although some would dispute that.

It is best to leave science out of this. In any case, the alarm that is expressed concerning the decline of religion is utterly misplaced. Religion is being confused with the institutional beliefs of the church, of whatever denomination; that is, the religion of books and the curacy. Religion is felt to be more fundamental than that. It is something that permeates the writings of Einstein and other scientists. Alfred North Whitehead, mathematician and philosopher, calls it 'the ultimate ideal, the hopeless quest':

*Religion is the vision of something, which stands beyond, behind, within the passing flux of immediate things: something which is real, yet waiting to be realised; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet it is beyond our reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest.*

This might sound far too mystical, and would exasperate Nietzsche, but it alludes to a fundamental difference between institutional religion and true religion. A scientist contemplating the universe in its infinite richness cannot avoid that feeling, so eloquently expressed by Whitehead. Nor, surely, can any non-scientist, contemplating the infinite richness of the humanities.

Death of religion? Certainly not!

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

## The Salisbury Review's Future

Thanks to the generosity of our readers our recent appeal for funds raised £23,000 which means we can carry on for at least another year. Each edition costs £4000 to publish, we need to expand our readership, essential for financial survival, and ensure that in a few years the magazine is handed on to young, equally enthusiastic hands.

In the medium term we will, with regret, have to raise our subscription prices. We will, of course, tell you in good time. Meanwhile if you are planning your will do give a moment's thought to a bequest to the *Salisbury Review*, and please when you have finished reading your paper copy give it to a friend. In addition, if you already have a digital copy of the magazine feel free to email it to your friends.

Readers can now comment on articles by clicking on **Letters to the editor** on the front page of the website.

The Editor and staff of the *Salisbury Review* would like to wish all our readers a very happy and holy Christmas.

Myles Harris, Editor

# Diversity Mania

THEODORE DALRYMPLE

The late manager of the Liverpool Football Club, Bill Shankly, once said that football was not a matter of life and death, it was far more important than that. I suppose that a dedicated writer might say the same about literature, but nowadays there is an enormous difference or gulf between the perceived importance of football and literature, the former being vastly the more important.

While a large publisher such as Penguin has said that it aimed to publish more books selected on the basis of demographic features such as the race and sexual orientation of writers, no football club nowadays would select players on the same basis. Given the intellectual frivolity of positive discrimination, I conclude from this that football, unlike literature, is far too serious a matter to be interfered with by those of politically correct inclinations.

Last Sunday (as I write this), my French nephew was visiting England to improve his English. He is a keen fan of football and took me to the pub to watch Manchester United play Liverpool. From the point of view of learning English, it was very helpful to him: he learnt an exclamation that is useful on all conceivable occasions, to judge by the way the men in the pub used it: *f.....g w....r!* The only variation was that it was sometimes applied in the plural.

I could not help but notice that five of the Manchester players, and seven of the Liverpool, were either black or, like Obama, of mixed race. And I saw nothing wrong in this, of course: the players were chosen because they were the best players available, with no other considerations taken into account. No one would dream of demanding that, in future, there should be players of Bangladeshi or Vietnamese origin in the team, to reflect their numbers in the population. One day, perhaps, Bangladeshis will play football; for the moment they do not.

I also noticed something rather strange, considering the number of black players: very few of the spectators were black. There is more than one possible explanation of the curious dichotomy between team and spectators. The tickets for the next Liverpool versus Manchester United game start (on one website at which I looked) at £444, and therefore I presume exclude the less prosperous inhabitants of our country for whom the price, however improvident they might be, would be prohibitive. I do not exclude the possibility, either, that black spectators might experience unpleasant racial abuse in the stands that would deter them from attending. And many of the black players were from Africa or South America, which

meant that perhaps the native blacks were less interested in playing football than in other things.

What, however, can be said with certainty is that the members of the two teams were by no means demographically representative of the population of Britain as a whole and that no sensible person would object to this. A more demographically representative team would mean that the quality of the play would decline, and under a regime of bread and circuses (or football matches) such as we presently have, that would be a catastrophe.

Only in matters of unimportance, therefore, such as the composition of the higher echelons of government, attendance at university, the boards of companies, the judiciary and so forth, should the principle of demographic egalitarianism be imposed, or even mulled over. The fact that certain groups are under-represented in these spheres can be taken as evidence in itself of prejudice and discrimination, though of course the over-representation of ethnic minorities in football teams does not go to establish the same thing. *There* meritocracy prevails.

But which demographic features should be taken into account when seeking justice? Since there are an infinite number of characteristics by which people can be categorised, it is necessary to choose among them, and the choice is unlikely to be anodyne, random or incontestable. It is likely to be highly ideological.

Some seemingly relevant characteristics will be overlooked for ideological reasons. Among these are the inherent advantages of transsexual athletes in women's competitions, for example in the case of Rachel McKinnon, who has just won a women's sprint bicycle race in record time. And, now that a blind and deaf young woman called Alexandra is about to qualify as a doctor, people who have the misfortune to be born blind and deaf will soon agitate to be excluded from nothing. If she can do it, why not others? One can already imagine continual litigation over this, until a no public-expense-spared anti-discrimination law is enacted. Whatever your sympathy for, or admiration of, an individual case, daring to doubt the wisdom of this non-discrimination is likely to be taken as proof of your reactionary heartlessness, so that any discussion becomes *de facto* and possibly even *de jure* impossible.

Age is obviously an important way of categorising people. Nearly a fifth of the British population is over the age of 65, yet not a single player in the English or Scottish league is over 65, and probably not even over the age of 40. Could age bias be clearer?

To this, the obvious reply – obvious because its denial would be absurd – is that football is an activity that by its very nature is unsuited to the old, at least at any level above the lowest. You could not fill a stadium by having a match between two teams of over 75s, except perhaps as a unique comedic freak-show rather than as a sporting spectacle.

Another important characteristic is intelligence. No one ever complains that the unintelligent are under-represented in higher reaches of the judiciary, however ridiculous or worse its rulings sometimes appear to laymen. About one in six persons has an IQ of 85 or less, which suits him mainly, and at the best, to unskilled labour. Again, everyone would accept that a low IQ precludes people from most elite jobs; it would be absurd to demand that the intelligence range of the judiciary should resemble that of the population as a whole.

Height is yet another characteristic in which there is a large range in any population. For whatever reason, tall people tend to do better in their careers than short, though this is not an absolute rule. As far as I am aware – though I hesitate to mention this, for what appears like a *reductio ad absurdum* is often these days soon taken as a policy recommendation – no one has demanded that elite positions should be allocated to match the height distribution of the population.

Defenders of positive discrimination and the constant sifting of the statistical distribution of sexual orientation, race and class of those who occupy desirable – or desired – situations in society would no doubt argue that many skewed distributions are the result not of the operation of relevant factors such as intelligence, but of social factors

which can and ought to be equalised until outcomes are equalised: prejudice, discrimination (in the pejorative sense), and injustice being the only possible explanation of unequal outcomes. And who would deny that injustice has existed and exists still?

People of Bangladeshi origin are absent from professional football. *Ex hypothesi*, this absence must be the result of malign forces working against them. If they are not interested in football as a sport or career, it is because they have absorbed early in life the idea that people of Bangladeshi descent are not interested in football, because they have absorbed the idea that they cannot excel at it, there being no role models for them to follow. And the reason there are no role models is because everyone accepts the stereotype that people of Bangladeshi origin do not play football because they are not athletic. They accept the stereotype themselves.

What is required, therefore, is social and psychological engineering on several fronts. The stereotype must be destroyed by propaganda and censorship of scepticism; quotas must be set for players of Bangladeshi origin.

The totalitarian implications of this are obvious. Yet it is more and more the path down which we are going in many spheres of life – though admittedly not in football, because football is more important in our culture than life and death. And this is because our intellectual class so fears or despises the common man that it believes he must be harried into virtue. Left to himself, he is believed to be inherently a Nazi.

*Theodore Dalrymple's latest book is In Praise of Folly, (Gibson Square).*

## Grassed up on the NHS

BERENICE LANGDON

On the day it was announced that cannabis was going to be available on prescription, a young man booked in to see me. He was wearing all black, topped with a shiny black jacket with the texture of snakeskin. As he entered the room, I had a feeling of sudden caution. This man looked as if he would sell you his grandmother to do your housework.

‘Look yeah. Cannabis... It’s a prescription now, innit?’ He glanced at me to check my reaction. I tried to look neutral. ‘The thing is, I can’t be sure of my supply – sometimes it’s too strong... It’s uneven right? So, I need you to prescribe me it.’

I explained, of course, that I was very sorry, that it was available on a named patient basis only, and that I was very sorry I couldn’t help him.

The announcement in the UK, that ‘cannabis was available on prescription’ was greeted with the sort of

puerile enthusiasm with which a teenager greets his first joint. The fact that we have heroin on prescription is not treated as nearly such a good joke. Doctors normally call this diamorphine and save it to use as a painkiller for those who are dying.

The ‘fun’ of cannabis is, I hope, also going to be ruined, as we break it down to its constituent parts and call them proper, identifiable names. We already have *Nabilone*, used for chemotherapy-induced nausea, actually since 1985. We have cannabidiol (CBD) (and its branded version, *Epidyolex*), said to have no psychoactive effects, and we have delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) (synthetic version, *Dronabinol*), which is the psychoactive part.

Whether taking cannabis works for any medical condition is hard to know. But what is crystal clear is recent research which shows that taking cannabis,

whether for medical reasons or recreational use, triggers psychosis. Research this year, published in *The Lancet*, showed daily high potency cannabis caused a 4.8 increased odds risk of psychosis compared to never-users. It showed that 30 per cent of cases of first episode psychosis could be prevented in London if high potency cannabis was no longer available.

High potency cannabis feels especially topical now that we all routinely smell it on the way home, at any time of day, from people casually smoking it while in their cars or even walking along openly.

Knowing that cannabis causes psychosis is one thing, but it is a different thing to actually see it. An unkempt 19-year-old girl had come to see me because of 'headaches.' As I looked at her face, waiting for her to tell me more, I noticed that she was looking to one side as if listening to something I couldn't hear. 'What's the matter?' I asked.

'It's just two men talking to each other. Sometimes it gets a bit loud like they're arguing or something and then I can't hear what you're saying.'

I tracked down her recent admission: picked up by the police, distressed and shouting at nothing, on the street at 2 am. Acute psychosis following a one-off ingestion of cannabis, discharged three days later, apparently resolved. But apparently not.

In spite of the problems with cannabis, we have an enduring hope that if we could just find the exact right version, it will cure us. And the latest hope is CBD (cannabidiol).

Europe, as well as America, has just announced that CBD is approved for use in children with epilepsy. In the UK, Home Secretary Sajid Javid, concerned for the same patients, ruled that cannabis-derived medicinal products should be changed to Schedule 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Act, meaning that they can be prescribed.

However, NICE, (the doctors' watchdog on treatments) has flatly contradicted the moves of those countries determined to approve CBD. According to its draft guidelines on *Cannabis-based medicinal products*, published last month, it advised 'No' for treatment for every medical condition suggested. And particularly, 'No' for severe treatment-resistant epilepsy. NICE based their advice on the fact that 'there is no good quality evidence'. For the specific severe children's epilepsy conditions, Dravet Syndrome and Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome (in both of which, extensive damage to the brain causes severe epilepsy in early childhood), the guidance is due for publication later this year.

We can look ourselves at the studies on the necessarily small numbers (given the rareness of the syndromes) of patients – 120 with Dravet, 225 with Lennox-Gastaut – published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. They do show consistently that CBD reduces the number of seizures, but it increases profound sleepiness. Those children were also on clonazepam, the standard treatment. It is known

that CBD reduces the ability of the liver to digest drugs. It is not clear from the study whether the effect we see is due simply to the clonazepam building up in the child's system, or whether it is the unique effect of CBD.

Sadly, as well as CBD being promoted as a miracle cure for epilepsy, it is also now touted as the next cure-all for cancer, any cancer. This is further promoted by celebrities such as Bill Turnbull, a former broadcaster for the BBC, diagnosed with prostate cancer, who has used unprescribed and unproven 'cannabis oil' on television.

An experienced palliative care consultant explained that she was expecting cancer patients to ask about cannabis; 'They are at the end of life and everyone is talking about how it's 'on prescription'. No one did ask, which I thought was strange. So, I asked them about cannabis. And they're all taking CBD.'

Although it has not been proved to help 'cure cancer,' people are buying it, and mainly they won't even know what they are buying. An analysis of 84 CBD products including oils, tinctures, and vaporisation liquids published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* showed that the concentration of CBD ranged from anywhere between 0.10 mg/ml to 655.27 mg/ml, and THC (the psychoactive part) was detected unexpectedly in 18 of the samples tested.

Trying to repair the damage caused by cannabis use is neither fun nor funny. The risk of psychosis is high. CBD may – possibly – benefit a very small number of children with severe epilepsy syndrome, but at the moment its hard to know if it is a real effect.

The use of CBD as an alternative and unproven therapy for 'any cancer' is especially tragic. Bill Turnbull argues that 'It's legal, to a greater or lesser extent, for medicinal purposes in more than 20 countries... and I think we should be one of them.' I disagree. As NICE insists, we should wait for the science. We should not rush in to prescribe cannabis simply because other countries have done.

And I don't mind waiting. If we do ever get a useful medication out of cannabis, then fine. I want it named, I want exact dosage, indications, course of treatment and side effects, all backed up with proper trial data. Not just two weeks' follow up on two patients, but large trials – like the trials highlighted above – with lengthy follow up. It's a difficult medication (toxicity effects, side effects) and if it ever passes muster, I am sure it will be prescription only.

Sorting out cannabis-related medicinal products is not meant to be a sensationalised circus with excited politicians wading into the fray to save little children. It is meant to be meticulous, transparent drug research with all the stages: safety stages, efficacy stages, and cost analysis. None missed out. For me, that's what I call exciting.

*Dr Berenice Langdon is author of Learning Microbiology Through Clinical Consultation.*

# How Woke Was Jesus?

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JOHN PRIESTLEY

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**A**n evangelist for trans-gendering goes up to a bloke and tells him, ‘You must be born again – next time as a lass, if you like.’

This tragi-comic scene is just one part of a new social-cultural phenomenon which also includes environmentalism, feminism, egalitarianism, antiracism and Islamophilia. This amalgamation of pseudo-virtues has come to form the new *Zeitgeist*. You speak out against it – however politely – and at once you become a pariah. (See, for example, the life and career of Sir Roger Scruton, about whom I hope to write in these pages in the near future.) This new and comprehensive outlook is regarded by many – not least by the clergy – as the only possible form for Christianity to take in a secular age in which what, in the age of our innocence, we took to be the truths of Scripture have been ‘demythologised’ – so that now they are only metaphors for the preferred social attitudes.

There’s not room to go into detail about each individual pseudo-virtue in the new *Zeitgeist*, so let me look a little more closely at just one of them: the fashion for trans-gendering – or what I call the sex-change racket.

When it comes to what the Church of England believes about the most basic matters of faith and doctrine, I admit to being confused. And church leaders themselves appear to be even more confused. Recently, Julian Henderson, Bishop of Blackburn, welcomed a new form of service to provide for the ambitions of those who wish to be recognised as having a different sex or, as we are now obliged to say, gender from that into which they were born. In this service of prayer, a changeling may adopt a new name to affirm his/her new sexual identity. There is a lively dispute about whether this new rite is a baptism. Who knows? But if it looks like a baptism, sounds like a baptism, and smells like a baptism, then it probably is a baptism.

But a fortnight later, Bishop Henderson changed his mind and withdrew his support for this innovation. Perhaps he was influenced in his decision by the fact that 2,000 Anglican clergy strongly and very publicly opposed the new rite. Meanwhile, at a Synod briefing, Dr Eeva John said that trans-gendering means, ‘recognising that God does new things in his Church and being open to that kind of change rather than just hanging on to our convictions.’

But if we don’t just hang on to our convictions, Dr John, then we have no convictions!

The issue is being deliberately confused by those in favour of the trans-gendering process. Graham James, Bishop of Norwich, says, ‘We welcome transgendered people and wish them to be included in the life of the church.’ I can tell the bishop a thing or two. When I was a boy growing up in Leeds, the wayside pulpit of the chapel across the street from our house displayed a poster saying, ‘WE WELCOME SINNERS!’

Of course we do. Yes, but to welcome sinners is not to approve of sin. Yet this is exactly the sleight of hand being operated by the Bishop of Norwich and the many thousands of modern church-people who agree with him. Another name for this deceit is the slippery slope: the bishop wants to confuse our minds by making us think that to disapprove of sin is the same as being unwelcoming to the sinner. That is how theological innovation always proceeds: the slippery slope, the thin end of the wedge, until new – and false – doctrines are accepted, and unscriptural – and therefore unchristian – practices become the norm. It is a form of emotional blackmail. It says in effect, ‘If you don’t accept the legitimacy of trans-gendering – or homosexual practices – then you are rejecting transgendered and homosexual people.’ And of course faithful biblical Christians are not rejecting them, but only those of their activities which are manifestly unchristian.

We should not allow the innovators to blur our vision. We should insist that the Christian faith has a very definite content which is set out plainly for us in the words of Scripture. So, to return to the issue of the moment, what does Scripture have to say about trans-gendering? It says, ‘Male and female created he them’ (Genesis 1:27). The same message is underlined in the New Testament: ‘From the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female’ (Mark 10:6).

There is nothing difficult or abstruse about those words, but the innovators try to tell us that we moderns have ‘fresh insights’ and that matters we thought were settled are amenable to revision. They are not. What next? If we can set aside biblical teaching on the subject of sexual morality, how long before we ignore what the Bible says about the wrongfulness of theft and murder? We must stand firm and answer the iconoclasts with constant re-affirmation of the biblical truth. In as many words, we must tell them plain: ‘When God speaks, it is because he has something definite to say.’

Plainly then, trans-gendering cannot possibly be included in any form of Christianity, ancient or modern: for it is against both Scripture and Reason. And it is the same with all the other aspects of the new agenda: the infantilised drivel screamed at us by the young narcissists who constitute Extinction Rebellion; the militant Islamophiles who want a law which says the smallest criticism of Islam is a ‘hate crime’; the angry vegans who would snatch the bacon and black pudding off your plate; the feminists who clamour for an equality which never was and which, in any case, is an impossibility – and all those other fashionable pseudo-virtues.

They are not the new form of Christianity. They are not an imitation of Christianity. In fact, they are a blasphemous parody of Christianity.

*John Priestley is a social commentator.*

# Tourism: the Eighth Plague

CATHERINE BLAIKLOCK

*Oxford, in those days, was still a city of aquatint.  
In her spacious and quiet streets men walked  
and spoke as they had done in Newman's day.  
Evelyn Waugh.*

Not any longer. Want to visit Evelyn Waugh's Oxford? It vanished long ago under a tsunami of tourists. Global tourism fuelled by the Internet and cheap travel is exploding. In just a few clicks you can book a hotel in Oxford, buy a ticket to Disneyland or make an order to have your teeth fixed in Delhi whilst combining it with gawking at the Taj Mahal. You can, with the same ease, along with your flight, order a young prostitute in the same city.

Want a swim in a top resort in the pristine blue sea off the Indonesian coast? Sorry to disappoint. Dramatic increases in global wealth, population growth, longevity and excessive leisure have caused some of her finest beaches to drown under tidal waves of sewage and be closed.

Four billion passengers flew in 2017, an additional 280 million journeys or a 7.3 per cent increase over 2016. At this growth rate, it will take a mere ten years for the number of travellers worldwide to double to eight billion – compare this with 1950 when according to the UN, there were just 25 million tourist arrivals. As with lots of really big numbers, it is almost impossible to truly comprehend the scale of what is happening but we can see it with our own eyes, in front of us, everywhere we go.

Depending on who you are or from whose perspective tourism is either marvellous or a Frankenstein monster. We love visiting Everest Base Camp whilst bitterly complaining about floods of foreign tourists in Oxford. We see the pollution, the overcrowding and the physical and cultural destruction without realising that we are part of the same global phenomena.

Being part of the zombie invasion myself (making the usual excuses about my journey being necessary – I need a rest in the sunshine while doing business etc) I flew from London in November to Orlando Florida, a city of two and a half million people, only to be welcomed over the airport address system with the 'good' news that seventy-five million people had visited the city this year. The same number of people as the total of international visitors to the USA

including those just coming from across the land border from Canada. Which demonstrates that you do not have to cross borders or fly to be a tourist; local tourism can be as big a scourge as the international variety.

Tourism is money, lots and lots of it, which is why governments like it and have done little to date to curb it. Tourism brings Orlando \$65 billion dollars in revenue a year, the equivalent of the combined incomes of seven medium-sized African countries. (Chad \$10 billion) to just one small city,

Yet Orlando, once a flat, humid, smelly alligator-filled swamp earns \$65 billion a year out of this wasteland by recreating some 'real wonders' of the world. You can 'see' the 'Hanging Gardens of Babylon' from your Disneyland hotel room window. There are exploding volcanoes, Mount Everest and the Taj Mahal along with some tropical islands, all of which are fake.

No one is going to stop this gigantic moneymaking machine but there is a downside, even for Orlando. Because the city lies on a bog its rubbish cannot be buried. Instead, along the highway into the city, rising up above the flat, pancake swamps, there are three, enormous, man-made, landfill mountains.

However culturally deserted Orlando is, perhaps it is in some way a solution to the seemingly insatiable demand for leisure and entertainment that drives tourism. Eight billion people cannot all descend, simultaneously on the real Taj Mahal. Why not go to Orlando instead?

The Pareto principle, known as the 80/20 rule, says that 80 per cent of people will want to visit the same 20 per cent of places. We all want to see the same thing and go to exactly the same famous places. Only the Taj Mahal will do. All the other thousands of Indian temples will never be substitute for the majority. The fastest-growing group of tourists in the world are the Chinese, all 1.5 billion. Most of them would like to visit the exact few same famous places: The Houses of Parliament, an Oxford college and perhaps something a bit more adventurous like the Pyramids. The 'selfie' in front of the great place is the prize.

Everest is a very specific example of the Pareto Principle. There are over one thousand mountains in Nepal between 6000m and 8000m, many pristine and unclimbed, some unnamed, but almost every

climber wants to climb just one mountain, Everest. Even at \$100,000 for a small group permit, there is a ten-year waiting list. Quite clearly while there is a problem with supply and demand the Nepalese government is not maximizing the benefit from one of the few natural resources it has. Would a price tag of \$500,000 create an equilibrium between supply and demand? Should the Nepalese government auction permits off to the highest bidder? Would Microsoft pay \$5,000,000 so that its chief executive could climb Everest next week?

Such ideas cause outrage. ‘Only proper’ mountaineers should be allowed to climb Everest, not rich, middle-aged executives. But who is a ‘real’ mountaineer or a ‘real tourist’? Scarce resources have to be priced or regulated in some way and money and the free market are often one of the best ways of doing it.

Nepal is also a country that has done nothing about the harm mass tourism can do to its ordinary citizens. It has, like most other places in the world, engaged in mass low-value tourism. Which is why you can find people using the net to claim British social security payments and living in a hut in the mountains for a pound a day. Even in the capital Kathmandu, you can stay in a central hostel for as little as £3 a day. Nepal receives three million tourists but gets little benefit per tourist except a lot of employment because many visitors stay for months and months and small level entrepreneurs benefit. It is very easy to start selling banana pancakes from a street stall to a passing Westerner, it is not so easy to build a five-star hotel. But with low level tourism all the problems mentioned above have come – water shortages, food shortages, rubbish and despoliation of the environment, both

culturally and physically. Mass tourism uses a lot of resources.

Next door Bhutan has taken a totally different approach. It is one of the few countries in the world so obsessed with cultural purity its citizens have to change out of western dress into national costume on the plane before they arrive. Just a few thousand tourists arrive in Bhutan each year because before you can get a visa, you have to buy a thousand dollar permit. A holiday to Bhutan is only for the rich and you will not get much change from £5000 each for a two-week trip. The result, of course, is local people see none of the money which is scooped up by the government and the rich businessmen who own the five-star hotels, often the same people.

Western would-be visitors do not like the Bhutan model as it stops them going there. They say it is unfair and favours only the rich and discriminates against the poor. Surely it is for the Bhutanese to decide who they want to visit and at what cost?

Likewise for the people of Oxford. High priced permits and the old Oxford Waugh wrote about might return: quiet streets, tolling bells, aquatint skies, a handful of cyclists on the high, with super rich tourists who bankroll this protection of the environment hidden away in discreet first class hotels? The alternative is mass tourism, noise, pollution, hundreds of buses, litter, crime, and eventually the destruction of the very thing they came to see.

So maybe we should build a replica Oxford on Rannoch Moor?

*Catherine Blaiklock founded and named the Brexit Party.*

## The Black and White Minstrel Show

MARY SIDNEY

Anyone with a job they value will hesitate to contradict any promotion of ‘non-heteronormative and non-binary identities,’ criticise ‘victims’ or the obsession with ‘inclusivity’. It was reported to an employment tribunal this week that even transgender people who prefer the biological terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ are afraid to speak out because of the backlash they receive.

Protest is covert, increasingly in the form of parody, which it is hoped will not be understood by our ‘Woke’ rulers. Titania McGrath, ‘Activist.

Healer. Radical inter-sectionalist poet. Selfless and brave. Buy my book,’ has got away with it on Twitter, where his/her account is a grinning attack on the Zeitgeist.

I was recently fooled by a brilliant satire from David Lee who publishes *The Jackdaw* art magazine. He publishes letters from, ‘Mo Bagshaw, director of Southwark Community Arts Centre’. Right-on Mo recently opined: ‘Although I am not personally blessed to be born a Person of Colour, I am a woman and, as such, politically Black. As your politically

Black director I have battled tirelessly against racism.’

It’s easy to be duped as satire is no longer dafter than reality. This week the University and College Union, (UCU) trades union for further and higher education, representing 100,000 university lecturers, suggested that white members could identify as black if they wish.

Their paper, ‘UCU Position on Trans Inclusion,’ stated: ‘UCU has a long history of enabling members to self-identify whether that is being black, disabled or LGBT + or women. At recent further and higher education conferences, (Congress 2017) policy has been made on more options than binary genders to ensure an inclusive approach to gender identities which is different to that assigned at birth/and or their sexual identity being other than heterosexual.’

They assent to a growing trend. Last November Anthony Lennon, a white theatre director describing himself as an ‘African born again,’ secured public funding intended to help ethnic minorities in their stage careers. Lennon, 53, born in London, whose parents are Irish, won a place on a two-year Arts Council-funded scheme, after a leading black theatre company that accepted his claim to be of ‘mixed heritage’.

The UCU’s paper also reaffirmed that it supported a ‘Social, rather than medical, model of gender recognition Self-identification is a standard practice in many organisations.’

This unscientific nonsense first began with the case of Rachel Dolezal, in the US. Of European ‘heritage’ (that buzz word) with no African ancestry she rose to be Washington president of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (the only group now allowed to use the term ‘coloured’ rather than ‘of colour’) until her real racial identity was revealed by her puzzled white parents. Dolezal had also ‘identified’ as mixed-race on an application and claimed that her father was African-American. She lost her position as an ‘instructor in Africana Studies,’ at Eastern Washington University. In 2015 she acknowledged that she had been born white to white parents, but maintained that she self-identified as black.

In 2018 a white couple gained press attention when they ‘identified as black’ at their wedding. Martina Big, 30, and Michael Eurwen, 31, appeared on ITV’s *This Morning* to discuss their change of race. This was a spectacular and unchallenged case of blacking up. In September, Canada’s Prime Minister Justin

Trudeau was internationally excoriated and accused of racism after old photos showed him in black-face at a student party. This couple escaped censure as they did it with Melanotan, a tanning cream sold over the Internet. She looked about as convincing as Al Jolson while he remained still strangely pale.

She told interviewers their DNA would be changed too, saying doctors said their babies would be born black. ‘It will be a mix of me and Michael, but I’m pretty sure it will be black, but if it is milk chocolate or a little bit lighter it doesn’t matter,’ she said, words which normally would have labelled her racist. She then travelled to Kenya to be baptized as ‘a real African woman’.

‘Self-identifying’ as something you are not can be lucrative; male athletes can now win medals and big prizes once meant for women, and white people may soon take jobs and grants originally assigned for black people. Anything is possible and unopposed. Strangely in this age where once innocent conditions are medicalised no one is prepared to recognise ‘Transmania’ as a mental illness, or at least a symptom of profound depression.

I speak from some experience. I was an unhappy child. Adopted as a baby, at a time when infants were regarded as little more than parcels which could easily be passed around, I never felt I fitted in. My invisible friends meant more to me than my adopted relatives and certainly offered more approval and reassurance. My only friend at primary school was a mixed-race girl who was being fostered. She believed she was a horse. Although she was too poor to have riding lessons, she told me her name was Silver and charged around with her head down making whinnying noises. I often wonder where she is now. I hope she managed to find a stable relationship, but I doubt it.

I wasn’t keen on horses, but identified as a cowboy. The landscape of Wyoming as seen on TV was more attractive to me than anything I saw in Wolverhampton. The beautiful teenagers in TV Westerns, ruled over by a benevolent father-figure, embodied an unrealised ideal of family life. In early adulthood I wanted to be Irish. My adoptive father’s family were Ulster Protestants but I longed for the self-destructive, poetic Irish of literature and history.

When a priest in Donegal, with IRA connections, asked me with terrifying intensity, are you Irish, Jane?’ I was sad to say no. It was like a real failure. But my love did not last. Increasingly I disapproved of their treatment of animals. I wanted the Irish to be

perfect, but it was a fantasy and love died.

Despite feeling depressed and rather lost, I became quite successful on the newspaper where I worked. But one day my boss, a young woman of obsidian self-confidence said to me, 'Just be yourself.' Without any fantasy-self to protect me by then, her words opened up a yawning emptiness and I knew that I still had no idea who I was.

Most doctors wouldn't dare to describe 'transmania' as an illness, but one of the accepted symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* is identity disturbance, or a markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self. Most experts see identity as the essential sense of oneself. A stable sense of identity means being able to see yourself as the same person in the past, present, and future. It's the glue that holds together all the diverse, sometimes troubling aspects of oneself. Having a sense of identity allows people to develop self-esteem and helps the mind adapt to change. People with BPD often say that they are like a chameleon, changing who they are depending on their circumstances and what they think others want from them. Or they may take on reckless, idealised fantasy personalities.

Instead of attempting to empathise with the desperate dreams of these people, shouldn't we be thinking how we can put an end to the 'Woke' world

of fantasy identity, to restore factual mental health? One in eight people under nineteen in England now has a mental health disorder, according to official statistics published last year. The figures, based on a survey of 9,117 children and young people showed the incidence of disorders rose to one in six for people aged seventeen to nineteen.

Boys were found to be more likely to have a mental health disorder than girls until the age of eleven. Between eleven and sixteen both sexes were equally likely to have a mental health disorder, but by the time they reached seventeen to nineteen girls were more than twice as likely to have a disorder. Within this age range, almost one in four girls had a mental disorder and half had self-harmed or attempted suicide.

I once coped with my rage and disappointment by imaginatively riding the range and dying in the Easter Rising. Later I escaped into the world of work. Others less fortunate, all their whims sanctified, seek to resolve their painful emotions by becoming someone or something else, living out the fantasy into adult life. Our increasingly unscientific culture of 'Don't judge me with facts and reason' stops anyone pointing out that identifying as something other than your real self, however bad you feel that is, won't solve anything in your life at all.

*Mary Sydney is a social commentator*

## The Last Tattoo

LINDSEY DEARNLEY

A woman in her sixties phoned to say she had a tattoo that was making her sad.

She was already waiting when I arrived, looking out of place amid the death metal posters and the rowdy men crowded on the benches of the barber's shop behind which I had my tattoo parlour.

'Oh hello,' she began nervously, blinking as she stood to greet me. She wore a pink cardigan and pleated skirt and big horned rimmed glasses that magnified her eyes. As she held out her arm I noticed a grey weeping angel on it and although it was half hidden by a cardigan, I got the feeling this was what it was about.

I took her through to my tattoo parlour, with her apologising all the way.

'I'm sorry I'm a bit overwhelmed, this is only the

second time I've been in a tattoo shop,' she chuckled shyly adding, 'I'm glad you are a woman, it makes the whole thing a bit less scary.'

She held out the arm with the angel again, and this time I could see it fully.

The tattoo was copied from a statue, perhaps on a grave; the angel was weeping in the rain.

Underneath was the name: Sam.

'My friends think I'm daft having this big tattoo on my arm, but after my son Sam died, I didn't know what to do with myself.'

'It's beautifully done,' I offered.

'Oh it's very beautiful,' she replied. 'It's exactly what I asked for at the time.'

'But not now?'

She put a hand over it, as if she didn't want the angel to hear.

'It's too grey for me now,' she whispered.

Only a week ago a friend had told me of his surprise at seeing the sudden appearance of tattoos on people who would otherwise have never considered them.

People got tattooed to remember, but what if there came a time when they wanted to forget? There was no chance of lasering it, though I suspected she would have it disappear now if she could.

She looked at me hopefully.

'I don't suppose you can just colour it in?'

'I wish it was just that easy,' I said, but the stone grey of the angel would show through whatever colour I put over it.

'What about putting flowers around it?'

Her face lit up.

'Yes, bright flowers.

I think that might help'

Together we chose flowers and I drew up some designs and got everything set up and ready, taking care to reduce the volts and soften the spring of the tattoo gun's needles.

The skin of older people bruises easily, and can even tear.

We started.

Tentatively I brought the needles down to the stencilled flowers.

Her face creased in pain.

'Oh that sting again!' she said, as the needles began to puncture, and I felt as if I was assaulting her, something I never did while tattooing bikers and other rough customers. As I outlined the flowers little droplets of blood bloomed in the trail behind the needle tip.

The pain made her talk about Sam.

'It's been three years since I last saw him,' she said, 'Now he is just another forgotten suicide, a statistic, and there is nobody left to remember him but me.'

Sam was her only child. Perhaps the fear of him being forgotten had compelled her to get the tattoo so big and so prominent.

'Our young men,' she went on, 'why do they go for the bad women? Why the ones that screw them over and spit them out and trash their dreams.'

She hung her head sadly, wiping a tear from under the glasses. I worked on the flower, sad but able to both tattoo and listen. I understood it as part of my job now.

'I'm sorry to hear what happened,' I said,

'I see a lot of broken relationships, a lot of hurting people. I don't know how things have ended up this way, but so much of the community is broken now.'

She nodded, I'd lost count of the names I'd scribbled out, and the angry stories I heard about ex-partners. They didn't all end in suicide, but it never surprised me, when it did, that people chose to exit this man-made hell.

She said, 'I can't get over losing him, not really, but just these last few months, I've begun to laugh again, and I thought to myself how long it had been since I had been able to do that. Suddenly I didn't want to be looking down and seeing all this grey.'

I concentrated carefully, scared of making a mistake, and I wondered who her first tattooist was, who must have listened to her story raw just days after the event. Was it wise to tattoo somebody right after bereavement? Was it the tattooists call?

'How long did you wait before having the tattoo?' I asked.

'Three days'

'And now?'

'I don't want to be in this grey place anymore'

After I was done, she looked at the pink flowers, and, even though a little blood still pricked the surface, smiled,

'That's better,' she said.

I walked through the streets later that day to clear my head. The tattoo had affected me. A great number of the people who came through my doors were bereaved, something I was unused to and had never expected.

She had left looking reinvigorated, and lighter somehow. I do not think it was just the tattoo, but the opportunity to talk to somebody and cry in private. I felt strange and for the first time, morally burdened in a way that I hadn't before.

*Lindsey Dearnley's book The Last Tattoo is in preparation.*



# Living Forever

MYLES HARRIS

Who would have thought that the Internet which promised complete freedom of speech would result in a worldwide crackdown? The British authorities, alarmed by such a dangerous idea as giving a voice to ordinary people, have instructed the police to arrest and charge people for uncomfortable things they might say online. Do we talk to our friends face to face more now we all have an iPhone, or has speech lost the battle to text? Take a trip on a train or visit a cafe; apart from ordering a meal or buying a train ticket, hardly anyone, even lovers, speak or look at each other. Everyone has their head in a phone.

TV was supposed to broaden people's horizons. On average people spend three hours a day, over half their time away from work, watching TV rather than going out to chat to neighbours or visit friends. TV has killed the pub, the dance hall, social clubs, anywhere people get together to talk.

Did Henry Ford realise that in inventing a mass production line for cars he created a means of distributing a ruinously expensive form of transport that has killed millions and is slower than walking? The economics of car ownership means you spend so much time earning the money to buy and run one it's faster to walk at five miles per hour. Did the Wright brothers realise that their flying machine would one day change into a 500 seat monster wrecking entire societies because of mass immigration? There are eighty million footfalls a year just at Heathrow alone, leaving immigration authorities trying to sieve for illegals with a colander. The jet engine has blown down our frontier posts.

When the genius Geoffrey Pincus, said to have had an IQ of 230, invented the contraceptive pill, did he have even an inkling that far from women being able to choose their mate, they have ended up with no mates at all? Since the pill men have learned to keep women at arm's length when it comes to marriage or commitment. In the most advanced technical society in the world, Japan, where the pill and other forms of contraceptive are everywhere available, nearly everybody has given up sex. Alas, the list could be hugely expanded – did Jenner when he invented his small pox vaccine ever imagine that it and the vaccines that came after it would create the most dangerous mass epidemic the world has ever seen, of human beings who are destroying the earth?

Surely we should know by now what a liar technology is; but no.

On the 21st of October *Nature Medicine* published an account on Prime Editing, allowing technicians to write new genetic codes into our DNA, 'to correct efficiently and with few by-products, the primary cause for sickle cell disease'. Prime editing has been likened to having a computer keyboard linked to our DNA, so scientists can type in any changes they want. The authors concluded, 'Prime editing substantially expands the scope and capabilities of genome editing, and in principle could correct up to 89 per cent of known genetic variants associated with human diseases.'

Note the coy phrase, 'known genetic variants associated with human diseases'. A list that will expand until the genetic background to all diseases or how we react to them will be known. There is worse. Scientists will start rummaging through this Pandora's box until they find the genes responsible for the programmed death clock we all carry in each cell, which when it stops, leaves the cell to slowly fall to bits. It's why we die.

The Duke of Wellington, noticing a certain unwillingness to charge on the part of a cavalry brigade at Waterloo shouted, 'Dogs do you want to live for ever?' Do you dear reader?

*Myles Harris is our Editor*



# England My England

ALISTAIR MILLER

The opening of the late Sir Richard Body's *England for the English* must be the most arresting of any political tract. In the process of being mugged for the second time on the train home and not wishing to lose what was left of his eyesight after the first mugging, he decided to engage his new acquaintances – this time black, illiterate, school dropouts – with the proposition, 'Now I would be very grateful if you would help me over my book'. Taken aback, the young men sat down to talk. The notion of being British, it turned out, was not for them – 'We never British, man'; but 'the thought that they could be English intrigued them'. So, the scene is set for Sir Richard's thesis, a passionate plea for a multiracial society united by a common culture – as opposed to multi-culturalism, which dooms us to a dangerously fractured society of ghettos and subcultures, mutual suspicion, and festering resentment.

Body wrote this in 2001 when few dared to question the prevailing dogma of multi-culturalism. To this day, loose talk of 'England' and 'the English' remains firmly beyond the pale, but since Trevor Phillips warned that Britain was 'sleepwalking towards segregation', the idea that multi-culturalism might, at least in some respects, be 'problematic' has gained currency. Louise Casey's 2016 report calling for integration only confirmed what to most people is blindingly obvious. But Body went further. His central thesis, that there cannot be a cohesive society or democracy without *a common culture*, led him not only to reject the supranational European Union (as one might expect), but also to question the worth of our very own union, the United Kingdom – a fundamental article of faith among conservatives.

What led a one-nation Tory like Sir Richard to utter this heresy?

His argument was that the British Empire was an interruption in a much longer story. Yes, we conquered our Celtic neighbours and then collaborated with them in the building of the empire, finding common cause in the process. But this merely masked the fact that our cultures have grown from different roots. With the demise of empire, these differences have been cruelly exposed. Yet for there to be a coherent society and system of government attracting common allegiance, there must be a shared culture: 'Any

attempt to govern according to another culture will fail eventually'. A reassertion of English identity within an independent English nation state would, he concludes, both enhance a sense of national unity and give newcomers something they might assimilate into. For Body, individualism is the animating spirit of English culture, and so representative government and parliamentary democracy are sacred. Scotland's desire to be part of a bureaucratic European super-state and engineer every aspect of its citizens' lives exemplifies, by contrast, a culture utterly alien to England.

Alan Macfarlane's *The Origins of English Individualism*, the classic text on the subject, seems to support this idea, namely that the early growth of capitalism in England had its roots not in the transition from feudal society to a market economy, but in an individualistic spirit rooted in property ownership dating back at least to the thirteenth century, quite probably much earlier, for the Common Law dates back to the Anglo Saxons. Body, a farmer himself, traces it all back to those early settlers who braved the crossing of the North Sea. Their sense of independence was closely bound up in their ownership of 'the soil they tilled and the dwellings they built'. Even tenant farmers were contracted as free men. The tradition of the yeoman farmer was born. To this day, there is a profound need among the English to own their home, to tend a garden or an allotment – an instinct 'not shared by others on the Continent, nor even among the Celts'. It all seems plausible.

Yet the greatest defence of individualism, in the sense of individual freedom, remains Hayek's in *The Road to Serfdom*. For Hayek, a refugee from pre-war Vienna, who was intimately familiar with the collective mindset, the continental bureaucratic tradition, and its totalitarianism tendencies, the English tradition of liberal individualism was uniquely precious and distinct. Though far from perfect – Hayek never pretends that freedom will bring everyone riches or good fortune or success, or that inequality is easy to bear, or that *laissez-faire* is the antidote to all ills (some readers might be surprised to hear Hayek arguing this) – it is infinitely preferable to collectivism.

For Hayek, the danger of delegating decisions to planners, bureaucrats and experts engaged in a quest for ‘social justice’ is as much moral as political or economic. It is not just that they cannot hope to take account of our myriad personal needs, but that the collective end, the agreed plan, must take priority over any notion that individuals are morally responsible for their own actions. All spontaneous and unguided activity must be eliminated, and dissent suppressed. In a particularly chilling and prescient passage, Hayek warns that though it is true enough that on most questions the great majority ‘accept views that they find ready-made’, and that ‘freedom of thought will probably be of direct significance only for a small minority’, ‘this does not mean that anyone is competent, or ought to have the power, to select those to whom this freedom is to be reserved’.

There is no doubt that an individualistic spirit rooted in property and possessions, in acquisitiveness, brings with it an impressive array of vices too. The English have been, in turn and at times, arrogant, proud, penny-pinching, suspicious of foreigners, cruel in war and to animals, stubborn and taciturn, as foreign visitors to our shores have testified since as far back as the fifteenth century. They have also been courageous, straightforward, generous, tolerant and self-effacing. Above all, they always valued freedom, and are the last peoples on earth who would accept rule by some jumped up dictator or caste of officious bureaucrats.

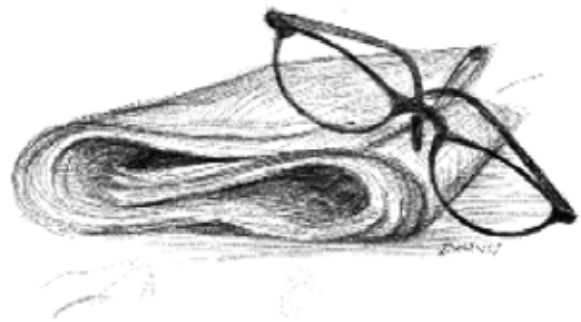
No doubt, our divorce from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would be painful and technically difficult. Border area plebiscites and refugee trains to England might further complicate matters. Wall construction would provide much needed employment. But shared economic and military interests, and emotional ties, do not amount to a common culture. As Linda Colley noted in *Britons*, the British identity was always dependent on ‘Protestant wars, commercial success and imperial conquest’. Our deepest sympathies, on the other hand, are tied up with England – and always have been. Our gardens, our afternoon teas, our countryside, our weather, our sense of humour, are all English. We speak English. The Common Law is the law of England. Our literature, art, philosophy and music are recognisably English. Our greatest age was the Elizabethan age, hardly parochial, unless one counts Shakespeare as ‘a Little Englander’ – a term originally employed to describe those opposed to the expansion of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. And *England*, not Britain, expects that every man will do his duty.

Britain used to mean something: it was England projected overseas. It encompassed the Scots, Welsh and Irish because they collaborated in the project. It is said that in the pre-1940 period, one third of colonial governors were Scots. The exploits of the Highland regiments of the British army speak for themselves. But the empire is long gone, and surely with it the reason for our collaborating politically with our Celtic neighbours. Inevitably we have much in common, but then so we do with Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians and Americans. The English have much affection for their Celtic neighbours, but how much is reciprocated? I have never met Scots or Welsh who remotely thought of themselves as ‘British’. The term was meaningless, even insulting, just another term for ‘English’. And there is always that festering resentment against those (us) who robbed them of their independence. Few things are more calculated to raise the ire of the English nowadays than the sound of Nicola Sturgeon – her historic grievances, her self-righteous priggish moralising, and her accent, which seems tailor-made with its over emphatic sing-song tones. Pompous, moralising, grievance-ridden Welsh oratory must come a close second. Do the Scots and Welsh have no vices?

Britain, or ‘Global Britain’, is now little more than a proxy for a diverse, inclusive, anonymous, multi-cultural society, an international freeport where anyone who feels they can ‘contribute’ (ie, make some money) can set up shop. Marxists like it because old England, along with its values and traditions, is obliterated. Celts and other protected minorities quite like it because they can use it as a rod to beat the guilty English. And the liberal élite like it because it lends them an aura of virtue at no personal cost.

Yes, there is only one way of saving England now, and that is to abolish Britain.

*Alistair Miller is a journalist.*



# Letting in the Poms

DARYL McCANN

The UK is, as Prime Minister Johnson insists, much more than a middle-ranking power. It has all kinds of advantages, including being a key element of the Anglosphere. CANZUK is the clumsy acronym for Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, four countries that are separated by great geographical distances but not civilisational ones. Johnson, speaking about the challenges and opportunities afforded to the UK at this remarkable moment in its history, has written: ‘Now is the time – as we leave the EU – to turbo-charge those advantages.’ One way of deepening the ties between these four countries with a similar heritage, along with upgrading trade, defence and education arrangements, would be bold new common travel areas throughout the Anglosphere.

A post-Brexit UK will not have to look far to find a perfectly good model. It is the Australian-New Zealand Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement (TTA), which has been successfully operating for years. Today, more than 650,000 New Zealand citizens, out of a population of only 5 million, live and work in Australia, and there is only ever light-hearted talk here about a ‘Kiwi invasion’. Although every New Zealander, by possession of a New Zealand passport, is free to live and work in Australia at any time of their choosing, subject to criminal and health checks, the TTA does not provide a fast track to Australian citizenship. Quite the opposite. My Dunedin daughter-in-law met her husband while working in Melbourne on a TTA visa. Though she has always paid Australian taxes, married an Australian, given birth to an Australian daughter, provided her own private health insurance, and adopted Australia as her homeland, she cannot obtain Australian citizenship unless she returns to New Zealand and applies to emigrate here at a later date, with stipulations very different from and not as welcoming as those attached to the TTA.

There are, to be frank, young Kiwis who complain about the unfairness of the TTA. They might be here for years, contributing to Australian society and yet not enjoying the full range of social services provided to Australians. They will point out that New Zealand is much more flexible and generous to Australians abiding in *their* home country and grumble about being second class citizens. This is to totally misunderstand the opportunity that the TTA offers them. To put it bluntly, Kiwis are not second class Australian citizens

but first class New Zealand ones, and because they were fortunate enough to be born in the Land of the Long White Cloud, they are free to work in New Zealand *and* Australia as desire or ambition takes them, an opportunity that others in the world can only dream about.

The TTA only exists because Australia and New Zealand are successful and sovereign nations and the vast majority of their respective populations want to retain their original citizenship for life. If that were not true and if virtually everybody in New Zealand suddenly wanted to relocate to Australia (or vice versa), the TTA would be axed in a heartbeat. The best way for a common travel area to be viable, then, is that the countries concerned enjoy living standards and a world view that are comparable and compatible. Otherwise, the common travel area is likely to devolve into a *de facto* or illegal migration racket. The host country, preferably, is not so alien that the traveller/worker cannot readily be assimilated, nor so similar that there is no point being away from family and home.

The kind of internationalism that the TTA involves does not impinge upon a partnered country’s sovereignty. Five or so years ago, when the then-Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, refused to change the terms of the TTA to make it easier for Kiwis to claim social services, as the New Zealand government had decided itself to do for Australian expatriates, the New Zealand leader, John Key, quickly acknowledged one of the pillars of a common travel area: ‘In the end, we totally respect the sovereign right of the Australian government to make the decision how it will treat people who come and work in Australia.’ New Zealand is the only country in the world that has the right, as contained in the Australian constitution, to unite in a federation with the Commonwealth of Australia. Political union with Australia is something New Zealand has never sought, since any economic or military advantages derived from a merger could never compensate for the renunciation of their cherished autonomy. Australia and New Zealand, in other words, have found a way to forge a productive alliance on any number of issues, from the Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, from the Anzacs to the International Whaling Commission and the Antarctic Treaty System, without emasculating each other’s sovereignty (unlike the European Union).

The UK, under the leadership of Boris Johnson, would be much better placed to join an expanded TTA once a Brexit deal is finally brokered. After all, it was Mayor Johnson who, way back in 2014, proposed a common travel area between the UK and Australia after hearing first-hand about the plight of an Australian working as a teacher in London. Sally Roycroft had her visa revoked on her twenty-seventh birthday. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, Johnson fumed that an Australian could be ‘deprived of a freedom that we legally confer on every French person’. Many of the British PM’s critics have lambasted him as an opportunistic fraud who unscrupulously took charge of the Brexit campaign for his own political advantage, and yet the Sally Roycroft case, which came to his notice during a joyous and triumphant visit to Australia five years ago, shows that he has long been troubled by aspects of the EU, including its propensity to distance the UK from the Anglosphere. UKIP, more daring, prescient and quixotic than the Conservative Party, was never a mainstream entity. Not until Prime Minister David Cameron pledged a referendum on Brexit did the possibility of leaving the EU become a real – if unlikely – possibility for Tories such as Boris Johnson.

That said, the record shows Johnson supporting the EU – in principle, at least – on any number of occasions, including in parliament in 2003: ‘In some ways, I am a bit of a fan of the European Union. If we did not have one, we would have to invent something like it.’ And yet his past affirmations about the European Union often came with something of a caveat: the reality of an enormous market on the UK’s doorstep and the existence of the EU *ought* to be an indisputably good thing for the British people. Johnson’s anti-EU politicking during the Brexit referendum – ‘We are seeing a slow and invisible progress of legal colonisation, as the EU infiltrates

just about every area of public policy’ – does not necessarily negate his claims to being ‘pro-European’ and not an ‘ultra-Euro-sceptic’. The problem, from Johnson’s point of view, was always not so much the EU’s free-trade arrangements or a common travel area but its burgeoning, supra-national, ruling elite who seemed unacquainted with the precepts of the Magna Carta.

The worry, of course, is that the UK’s decision to leave the EU might have come half a century too late. The real political opportunists in the UK, from the perspective of this outsider, are the Remainers, who have exploited the poisonous ideology of political correctness and identity politics to slander Boris Johnson and Brexiteers as racists, xenophobes, Islamophobes, jingoists, and so on *ad nauseam*, as if enlightened patriotism and national self-determination were crimes against humanity rather than the kind of raw grit that saw the UK through the Blitz. If the anti-sovereignty forces, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats, win the General Election on December 12, there will be no common travel area founded between the UK and Australia/New Zealand, and that will be the end of the story. In that scenario, I can imagine a time when even mentioning the subject of ‘the Anglosphere’ will be *verboten* in the British province of Euroland.

A Johnson victory, on the other hand, might quell the rising tide of PC hysteria. I certainly hope so because we already have our share of radicals and crazies in Australia, and a revised TTA, expanded to include the UK, will see a lot more Brits here in a regeneration of – as only Boris Johnson could put it – a ‘throbbing intercontinental two-way pipeline’.

*Daryl McCann is an Australian journalist. He has a blog at <http://darylmccann.bigspot.com.au>.*

## Christmas at Foulacre Hall

PETER SIMPLE

**D**ec. 17: Fog. Mortalities: the Conniptions, 1; the Copulation, 4. Ate some roast beef and pigs’ trotters for dinner. Also Roots. Afterwards the Rector called and asked for money to distribute to the old and poor in the parish at Christmas. Gave him £0 0s. 2d. on condition he will give nothg. to Crippled John until he apologises for strikg. me with his crutch durg. the riots against the

Enclosure Acts. Also Grandpa Turnip, who once voted against my man at an election.

Just before supper the Rector returned and said the threepenny bit I gave him was bad, which I knew, havg. received it from Surly Tom for a pig I sold him; but the animal being diseased, I thought it wiser not to say anything.

Soon after breakfast came a Methody begging

on behalf of Decayed Gentlewomen; and he was followed by another seekg. money for slaves in Barbary and another asking alms for an orphanage until I told Grunge to answer the door no more. But then came a thunderous knockg. and I flung it open to be confronted by Perverted Polly, the whore from Lower Sodom.

‘Oh, sir,’ she cried, ‘If you have a heart give me some money to help poor Steaming Kathleen Malone. She is sinking fast with a fever caught from lying on the wet grass after the Hunt Supper and needs money for Physick. An old friend like you will not forget her in her need.’

‘Nor shall I!’ I cried. ‘She did not forget me when I could not afford the usual threepence and I shall not forget her. I have no money, but return tomorrow, and I will raise it.’

Dec. 18: Out in a.m. to beg alms for Steaming Kathleen, but recvd. a cold welcome. The Rector refused to give anything, but the cantg. hypocrite said he would pray for her.

‘Pray!’ I ejaculated. ‘That woman has given her health in the noblest service a woman could render her fellow human beings! Whilst you have been mouthg. hypocrisies on your knees, she has been servg. mankind on her back. Know you not she has been patronised by sevl. bishops and the Lord Lieutenant himself?’

But alas, it did no good, and my collection realised but two pieces of string, an old chestnut, four apples and a groat. Palsied Peter gave me a box containg. a shrivelled piece of human flesh, and asked me to give it to Kathleen so she would know what she had done to him.

On my returng. home Polly called to say Kathleen was worse and would I call a priest. My first impulse was to say I would as soon call Jack Ketch, but charity prevailed and I called on Father O’Flynn, a Papist who ministers to the Irish navigators buildg. the new canal and asked him to see Kathleen.

Sevl. hours later I was aroused by a knock on the door and there was Polly overjoyed. ‘Sir,’ she cried, ‘All is well. As soon as the priest saw Kathleen he declared her the finest piece of flesh he had ever seen, even better than the Dublin whores, gave her a guinea and jumped into bed with her. She sent the money to the apothecary – he delivered the Physick – and she is now well again.’

‘And the Priest?’ I asked.

‘Alas,’ cried Polly, ‘He succumbed to the exertion and has just been given the Last Rites. Oh sir, I am so grateful to you.’

item: To Polly, for special services: £0 0s. 3d.

Dec. 20: Roderick is in ecstasy because yesterday he recvd. a gift from his Beloved Miss Foulacre, together with an affectionate letter invitg. us to Foulacre Hall in January. Provided he does not mar everythg. by some act of stupidity, this could be the last Christmas in which I have to worry about money. Alas, the poor lad does not hv. all his wits about him (a quality he inherits from his mother) and is liable to do anything.

I believe we had an excellent dinner; unfortunately I cannot remember anythg. about it as I collapsed under the table after the first remove.

Dec. 24: Wind. Mortalities: The Paralytick Spasms, 3; The Putrid Fever, 2; The Purple Eruptions, 4; The Pox, 24.

Mindful that this is the season of goodwill, I gathered the servants together and distributed Christmas gifts. To each and every one gave I a piece of coal and to Grunge a particularly large piece, since he has not been paid this year; Mrs. Runcible, the housekeeper, declined her lump saying she still had the piece I gave her last Christmas.

Grunge asked if he might have Mrs. Runcible’s piece, as he was trying to save up enough for a fire in his room and in four or five years would have sufficient. I gladly consented and attended midnight service with a good heart and a clear conscience, although I fell over in front of the altar owing to faintness, having been so busy all day I had taken no nourishment except two botts. of brandy and a pail of port.

Dec. 25: Rain. This day being that most sacred feast in the Christian Calendar, viz: Quarter Day, I sallied forth in a.m. to evict those behind with their rents. The first tenant was old Granny Hayseed, who snivelled, ‘Do you not know what day it is?’ to which I replied, ‘Yes, Rent Day,’ which caused me so much mirth I nearly fell into an Apoplexy.

Altogether I evicted the largest number of tenants I have expelled since Christmas three years ago; including One-Armed Oswald, Club-Footed Cuthbert, Deaf Daniel, Impotent Isaac and Deformed Dorothy. By the time I reached the end of the street I was footsore and weary; then I realised they had all crept back into their houses when my back was turned. I was too tired to start again, so contented myself with trippg. up Blind Billy. As he has a malevolent turn of mind and might take revenge, I snarled in a disguised voice, ‘There is a present from Crippled John,’ and returned to the Hall.

*Michael Wharton, who died in 2006, was one of our authors and also wrote the highly popular Peter Simple column in The Daily Telegraph and we publish this extract with their kind permission.*

# Nothing in Common

JAMES MONTEITH

As soon as a white English person utters the words, ‘Some of my best friends are Asian’ (or ‘black’ or ‘coloured’), and then introduces the word ‘but’, you know instinctively that they are a racist xenophobic bigot working up to protest about immigration. In fact, if they had their way, they would pile all Asians, blacks, Muslims and ethnic minorities on to banana boats and send them right back – never mind that they (and their parents and possibly their grandparents, too) were born here. Disgusting, these white working-class bigots who voted for Brexit. They wouldn’t know fettucine from bruschetta, have never shopped at Waitrose, and could not tell the *Guardian* from a roll of toilet paper. No-one is fooled by the ‘my best friend’ act, right? At least Bernard Manning was honest when he joked, ‘My Pakistani neighbours tell me they’re better than me: they don’t live next to Pakistanis’. Of course, Manning got on famously with his Pakistani neighbours and they paid him a moving tribute when he died. Could it be that Manning was sending up himself? No, *Guardian* readers are not so easily fooled.

Well, I do know the difference, being middle class, educated, well travelled, culturally refined – though I prefer to shop at Tesco because it is cheaper and friendlier – and I am reasonably well up on the corpus of the French postmodernists. But I still find my Asian neighbours bore me to death. Don’t get me wrong. There are plenty of white English who also bore me to death – especially laddish types who have booming voices, talk incessantly about sport (something I got over at about the age of sixteen), and laugh at their own witticisms. But my Asian friends, who are lovely, friendly, hard working, intelligent, and utterly trustworthy – in short, perfect neighbours – bore me for a different reason. I think it is worth exploring, even though by doing so I am revealing myself, by current standards of acceptable discourse, to be a racist xenophobic white supremacist bigot.

The reason why they bore me, in a way that their English equivalents in intelligence, education, culture, and good manners do not, is that *we share nothing in common*. There is a cultural divide. Now, I can talk highbrow or lowbrow. I can tell amusing anecdotes that reveal some education and cultural sophistication, and ones that are thoroughly filthy – good seaside postcard and smoking-room stuff, like the joke that allegedly got Max Miller banned from the BBC. I like talking

about the Bloomsbury set, finding them fascinating and repulsive in equal measure. My favourites are Vita Sackville West and Harold Nicolson, who once described the Edwardian hostess Mrs Greville as ‘a fat slug’. Their outrageous snobbery and prejudices only add to the attraction – but hardly make them suitable topics for conversation with my neighbours. I like chatting about classic British cars, wartime escapes, camp comedians, and chippies in Leeds which fry the fish (or did in the old days) in pork dripping – but again, these are hardly suitable topics for conversation with my neighbours.

The point is that we share no cultural reference points. And even on the rare occasion that our hinterlands cross, we are at cross-purposes, having little idea what the other is getting at. For the English, what is not said, or understated, or hinted at obliquely, is usually much more important than what is said. But unfortunately, my neighbours take everything literally. So, once we have done the weather, our holiday plans, our cars, how to get to work, pensions, home improvements, airlines and South Indian cuisine, I am seriously beginning to flag and thinking of excuses to withdraw.

I do not feel good about these confessions. I share the same sense of guilt as an old friend who delighted in erudite conversation but was forced to work with a colleague who liked to hold forth on the merits of different herbal teas. He took all possible measures to avoid her but paid the price in suffering constant pangs of guilt. He only hoped that she had not noticed and had not been hurt by his behaviour, but what was he to do?

The same divide, I fear, separates work colleagues of different races and cultural backgrounds. They talk shop. They pass the time of day: ‘Those are very nice biscuits; I think it is going to rain.’ But when it comes to serious conversation, to letting it all out, to sharing one’s inner thoughts and troubles, or to pulling the other person’s leg, an invisible barrier descends, a dividing curtain. And then they avoid each other like the plague. Of course, the knowledge that any misplaced thought, word or deed, even a look, can be judged offensive and constitute a hate crime regardless of whether any malice was intended only compounds the problem. We white English have all witnessed the awkward silence that descends when a person of colour (ie black), particularly a professional or semi-professional person of colour, perhaps even a representative of officialdom, enters the room. What

had been animated, even uproarious, conversation suddenly dies. Not out of good manners or respect, but because we are terrified of causing offence, of uttering *the wrong word*. Knowing that every person of colour is the victim of historic injustice, and that every white person is unconsciously racist, the descendant of slaveholders, does not exactly help the conversation flow.

Neither does it help that much English conversation involves self-deprecation and irony, whether the target is oneself, the English and their prejudices, or Johnny foreigner. I once had the job of organising a group of boys into two football teams but had forgotten to bring the colour bibs. I whispered to my colleague something to the effect that since half the boys were white, we could racially segregate them. He laughed. But if the remark had been overheard and reported, I would have been done for. Tongue in cheek humour is all too easy to misinterpret. It could so easily cause offence if taken literally. Better to avoid any communication at all or restrict it to work-related subjects and inanities. Even Dr Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, could not have devised a more effective means of promoting ethnic segregation, and fostering mutual suspicion and misunderstanding, than our aggravated hate crime legislation.

The cultural divide ought only to be a generational problem. First generation immigrants are inevitably going to have more problems assimilating, integrating, mastering the finer inflections of the host language and the native sensibility. A traditional Western liberal education at a good public or grammar school would

have gone a long way to putting this right for their children. But multi-cultural grievance education in the local comprehensive in a neighbourhood ghetto will not do it. Nor will conferring minorities with ‘protected status’. Nor will positive discrimination. Nor will quotas. Nor will the proscribing of the host society and its culture as institutionally racist. Even the public schools are now at risk, the cultural inheritance they used to transmit having officially been declared unacceptably white and Eurocentric.

Yet just before they moved away to a bigger house in a more prestigious road, my neighbours confided why they had moved here in the first place from their diverse inclusive multi-cultural suburb. It was a jungle and they had wanted ‘to live among English people’. All the time then, I had been tip-toeing round trying not to tread on eggshells for fear of causing offence, and they were racist xenophobic bigots too. They had even voted for Brexit. Coming from South India, I could only imagine what their views would be of Muslims and Sikhs, let alone Orientals and Africans. If only I had known, we could have let our hair down and given vent to all our prejudices. We could have laughed about the English – and about Indians. Then we could have moved on to homosexuals, eunuchs and the transgendered. The conversation would have been uproarious. A beautiful friendship might have been forged.

I might just look my old neighbours up and invite them round for dinner.

*James Monteith is a journalist.*

# Trans Trouble at the Tokyo Olympiad

NIALL McCRAE

**T**he coming Olympiad 2020 in Tokyo promises to be much more than a sporting fest. It will also be an ideological battleground: relentlessly pushy identity politics versus the natural order that has survived longer in the stadium than in other walks of life. Transgenderism, the latest assault on traditional mores, has the opportunity to win the world over – or get shot down in flames.

There are few mixed-sex sports, mainly because men have a physical advantage: they are bigger and more muscular, fuelled by testosterone. Also, it would

be socially unacceptable for a man to beat a woman around the boxing ring or to trample over her in the rugby scrum. That just wouldn’t be cricket, old boy.

Back in 1973, in a televised tennis match watched by 50 million, Billie-Jean King beat Bobby Riggs over three sets. This was overhyped as the Battle of the Sexes. Aged 55, Riggs had retired from professional tennis 22 years earlier, while King was in her prime. Perhaps the gap has narrowed. The powerful Williams sisters, I guess, would have matched men in the low hundreds of world ranking. Women’s football

has gained in pace and popularity. In the prevailing egalitarianism, soon the original first teams of football clubs will be relabelled, like 'Everton Men'.

From office work to the prestigious professions, women are prospering with their generally superior communication skills, emotional intelligence, and educational attainment. But in some vocations, biological differences continue to favour one sex over the other. In athletics, the stopwatch doesn't lie: men run faster. If tournaments were not segregated by sex, most teams would be all male (with some exceptions, such as gymnastics).

So it is very worrying for female athletes that biological males have been given a pass into their preserve. Canadian transgender cyclist Rachel McKinnon, for example, uses her masculine build and vigour to win tournaments, towering over her female rivals on the podium. If this doesn't seem fair, it's because it simply isn't fair. But there will be more, much more of this in Tokyo.

If self-identity is the determinant of gender, a trans-woman can play in female competitions without surgical re-assignment. The *Mail on Sunday* reported that taxpayer-funded quango Sports England paid Gendered Intelligence (a charity whose funding sources include BBC Children in Need) £26,000 to train sport associations in trans-inclusivity, based on self-identity rather than medical certification.

Setting guidelines for the 2020 Olympics, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) appears to slavishly bow to the transgender lobby, as most public and commercial organisations seem to do nowadays (the company producing *Always Tampons* has agreed to remove the female symbol from packaging because people who have periods do not necessarily identify as women). The IOC has decided that tightening the limits on testosterone is too politically charged. Consequently, a competitor with testes will have a head-start.

But a backlash has begun, initiated by prominent figures such as Martina Navratilova. And British swimmer Sharron Davies, a medal-winner at the 1980 Olympics, has argued that 'To protect women's sport, those with a male sex advantage should not be able to compete in women's sport.'

The 'toxic masculinity' of gender studies, now seeping into mainstream politics, will pale into insignificance compared with the damage caused by transgenderism. Gender-neutral toilets, as found in most universities, have kept provision for men ('toilets with urinals') while the female loos are now free for all. The same is happening in sport.

Many feminists are aware of the danger, although most stay quiet for fear of denunciation and career

damage. But there are also useful idiots in feminism who seem to accept 'woman' as no more than a social construct, while smearing the likes of Germaine Greer and Julie Bindel as TERFs (trans-exclusionary radical feminists). The aggression of trans-activists is fierce, although they portray themselves as victims. As Stonewall seems more interested in the T than the L in LGBT, a group of dissidents founded the LGB Alliance (they include lesbian lawyer Allison Bailey, whose chambers threatened to evict her after a Twitter mob led by the likes of Owen Jones burst upon them).

Women are being erased. Incredibly, police investigated a poster in Oxford declaring 'Woman = adult female' as a hate crime. Midwives are discouraged from using sex-specific terminology. Awards and quotas for female empowerment are expected to include trans-women whatever their genitalia. Female prisoners have been sexually assaulted by transitioning men (who typically were convicted of sex crimes). Teenage girls with gender confusion are assumed to have been 'born in the wrong body' and are treated with hormones that make them infertile. Not surprisingly, Joe Public sees such developments as madness.

In Tokyo, this over-reach of identity politics will be exposed as a travesty for female athletics. Inevitably this will cause turmoil, but it will be a turning point. As cultural Marxism pushes an unsustainable projection into common morality, let us savour its coming defeat at the hands of the fairer sex.

*Niall McCrae is a senior lecturer at King's College, London.*



# Conservative Classic – 76

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## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

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FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

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SEAN MCGLYNN

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Dostoevsky (1821-1881) was not a reactionary from birth but was, in that famous phrase, a ‘liberal mugged by reality’. His reality was a life and death one. Following the success of *The Double* (1846), the introverted and socially sensitive Dostoevsky responded gauchely to his newly found fame. Denied the craved-for approval and acceptance of the literary circles dominated by the likes of Turgenev, he found belonging with socialist groupings instead. His depression, epilepsy and highly nervous disposition further drove him to seek the certainties sought by the young; for a while, he believed these could be found in revolutionary socialism. He was understandably motivated by the palpable social injustices of Russia’s Tsarist regime, but his role amounted to little more than readings and perhaps contributions to written propaganda. The pan-European revolutions of 1848 alarmed the authorities into a crackdown; Dostoevsky was arrested and imprisoned and, in a draconian over-reaction, sentenced to death. On 22 December 1849 he was tied to a post in front of a firing squad. At the very last moment, he was reprieved on the orders of the Tsar and sent to Siberia. He spent a decade there, the first four years in a prison camp.

Writing to his brother later in the day after his near-death experience, Dostoevsky confessed: ‘I think how much time I have wasted, how much of it has been lost in errors, in mistakes, in idleness, in an inability to live properly’. In prison he discovered a newfound understanding of the way of the world and adopted a form of conservatism that bore the zealous conviction of the convert. This left-to-right journey is common, as exemplified by such modern ex-Trotskyist conservatives as Peter Hitchens, that gloriously reactionary commentator, and Irving Kristol, called the ‘godfather of neo-conservatism’. (Kristol is the progenitor of the mugged liberal quip.) In the hell of the Siberian camps, Dostoevsky also found his way to a closer connection with Christ and, in an insight more Sartrean than Sartre himself, an understanding of his need to distance himself from the ‘poison and plague’ of other people. His biographer Richard Freeborn

perceptively writes of this time as Dostoevsky’s ‘martyrdom of penal servitude’; indeed, this becomes the redemptive, resurrectional penitence that ends *Crime and Punishment*.

Dostoevsky married and returned to St Petersburg as a devout, patriotic member of the bourgeoisie. Travel abroad had opened his eyes to the horrors that existed beyond Russia; he was particularly disgusted by the open child prostitution in London. It also opened his pockets to a ruinous addiction to gambling. *Crime and Punishment*, the first of his truly great novels, followed in 1865-6. It is not the work of a quiet, contented mind. In a letter Turgenev writes Dostoevsky is ‘not in full control of his mental capacities’, but it is the work of a brilliant one. His wife and brother had died the previous year: ‘And there I was suddenly all alone, and it was simply awful’. The dark mood carries through into the novel.

The novel’s chief protagonist, Raskolnikov, is a deeply impoverished student drop-out in St Petersburg. A repellent character – arrogant, egotistical, handsome and clever in a twisted manner – he deems it morally right to kill a loathsome old woman who makes her living from usury. He plans and executes the graphically depicted murder; in the process, he also kills an entirely innocent woman who walks in on the scene. The rest of the tale concerns itself with Dostoevsky’s trademark psychological analyses of Raskolnikov’s febrile mind and his motivation for the crime, the right of ‘great’ men to act as they see fit as he attempts to evade the subsequent police investigation led by the doggedly intelligent Porfiry. Simultaneously, he behaves abominably to his only friend, the good-natured Razumikhin; breaks up his sister’s engagement to an odious official; and looks out for, and eventually falls for, the prostitute Sonya, forced into a life she finds shameful on account of her family’s indigent circumstances. The love of Sonya wears down the repulsive psyche of Raskolnikov: he confesses the crime and, showing remorse, is sent to Siberia. Sonya follows him on his purgatorial journey to redemption.

The novel is peopled by pathetic but amiable losers and eccentrics (Razumikhin), almost stereotypical female saints. (In his draft notes, Dostoevsky identifies Sonya's optimism as wholly impractical), and vile sinners (the disturbing Svidrigailov is as acute a portrayal of sleaziness as Raskolnikov is of troubled evil), but the focus of attention and almost unrelenting intensity is the murderous Raskolnikov. It is a sordid, depressing novel which would seem an inauspicious home for conservative values. But they abound.

In addition to a strong reaffirmation of the family, the novel also makes clear Dostoevsky's contempt for new notions and fads, not least Western nihilism, describing one character as 'one of the countless and multifarious legions of vulgar persons ... and half-educated petty tyrants who like a flash attach themselves to those current ideas that are most fashionable only to vulgarise them, caricaturing the very cause they seek to serve, sometimes with great genuineness'. How often we see that playing out these days. A contemporary critic of the novel accused Dostoevsky of associating 'liberal ideas' leading 'young men to murder and young women to prostitution'. For Dostoevsky, the murder committed by Raskolnikov undermines and challenges the stability – the conservation – of society.

Razumikhin weighs in against socialists and their unproductive, idealistic cogitations like those of the younger Dostoevsky, which foolishly renounce history and the nature of humanity, as if socialism could 'at once reorganise the whole of mankind and in a single instant make it virtuous and free from sin, more speedily than any living process, bypassing any historical or living path!' Socialists, he asserts, 'don't want the living soul' as it 'isn't obedient to the laws of mechanics ... The living soul is reactionary!' Socialists prefer people who are servile, will not rebel and 'have no will of their own'. And, in that classic conservative refrain, he exclaims: 'It's impossible to leap over nature solely by means of logic!'

The ultimate expression of Dostoevsky's conservatism comes in Raskolnikov's salvation through his return to God's grace. As Gide wrote of Dostoevsky's work in 1923: 'humiliation damns, whereas humility sanctifies'. While some modern conservative readers in our secular age might prefer a more judicially punitive and retributive fate for Raskolnikov, contemporary readers were far more likely to be so spiritually inclined as to accept his transformation and offertory atonement.



## Roy Kerridge

Every Christmas my West African stepfather would sit tipsily in front of the television grinning at images of dancing showgirls and sipping away. Most of the children regarded him affectionately as a figure of fun. They would vie in telling him pointless jokes to see if he would laugh. He always did. Most popular of their 'jokes' repeated every year, was this: 'Two wolves get married.' And he shook with merriment every time.

Wolves and foxes get married or at any event pair for life. I have seen the anguish of a vixen when her mate got run over and dies. The poor widow stood bolt upright on her hind legs, screamed and seemed to wring her paws. Animals that mate for life have more than 'animal passions', since they stay together in season and out of season. 'Sex on a first date' seems to be their wedding ceremony and they stay together thereafter. If adultery takes place, it is committed sneakily, as if the animals and birds have their own Ten Commandments and break them.

Tex Avery, the master cartoonist, specialised in amorous wolves, but of course he humanised them and gave them zoot suits and brown shoes. Yet in real life we humans still marry on the wolf standard. The church and the dressing up are only part of a human wedding that is not complete until it is consummated. If it is not consummated, the marriage can be annulled, no divorce necessary.

Many people lack the moral standards of wolves and foxes, and misunderstandings occur. The most usual involves a girl who imagines she is now engaged to be married and a boy who cuts yet another notch on his bedpost. In fiction this situation is described humorously from the man's point of view in Richard Gordon's *Doctor in the House*. Honor Tracy's novel *In a year of Grace*, takes the woman's side with sympathy as well as humour. In real life the bedpost versus marriage ideas often clash tragically. A girl I know seduced at university wrote to me desperately. She begged me to pray to God that her one time boy

friend would marry her. My reluctant prayers proved ineffectual and she was admitted to a mental hospital. The lifelong affection of wolf couples seems changed to non-sexual love in dogs, animals that are certainly partly descended from wolves. A dog loves his master, not his bitches.

Whence came our domestic animals? Their wild ancestors have often disappeared, domesticated all. Wild horses and cattle found in wildernesses today are usually supposed to be descended from ranch or farmyard runaways. However culling of Western mustangs has been halted in some prairies, as the idea has arisen that the prehistoric American wild horse, remembered in folklore by the Indians, has lived on as a cross breed in the wild horse herds. I doubt this, as all the pictures I have seen of modern American wild horses show them to have floppy manes that hang down in long strands. Australian wild horses, or brumbies look just the same, and are of undeniable European domestic background. The wild ancestors of both horses and donkeys still found today on Mongolian steppes look surprisingly similar. Both have white muzzles, upright hogback manes and tufted tails. Similarly wild sheep and wild goats might baffle St Peter, should he try to separate them. Naturalists distinguish them only by their chins, and call anything with a beard a 'goat'. The fleece of a sheep is a coat turned inside out as wool originated as an undercoat, normally not visible among the stiff hairs of a wild sheep. Tightly curled snail shell ram horns are not found on any kind of wild sheep, who tend to goat horns.

I agree with the received idea that most of our cattle are descended from a formidable beast called the aurochs. Though extinct the aurochs live on as an almost totally domesticated species; Spanish fighting bulls closely resemble miniature aurochs. 'Miniature', not to disparage Spanish bulls which must seem enormous enough to the matador but a pure blood aurochs could stand over six feet tall at the humped shoulder. The last true aurochs were killed by Polish hunters in the seventeenth century but matters are confused by the European bison, often called aurochs in old books. Like the bison, the aurochs was a creature both of dense forest and open plain. In colour, it ranged from dark red to black with a pale strip along its backbone, as in Hereford cattle today. Its horns were long and curved, and it may have resembled a modern day wild ox of Cambodia, the mysterious kouprey, a dweller of the deep forest. Domestic and wild Indian water buffalos can grow to aurochs proportions, and some of the many species of Asiatic wild cattle may have also contributed to Daisy or Buttercup's ancestral stock.

Feral cattle live in the Pyrenees, in districts once known to be the haunt of the aurochs. Here the idea that escapees such as mustangs are partly descended from ancient wild stock might have more than a grain of truth, for Pyrenean wild cattle could be in disguise or degeneration. I had always thought that British aurochs died out in the Ice Age and did not afterwards recolonise our country. However in Neil Oliver's masterly *History of Ancient Britain*, the author describes a recently excavated Bronze Age site where the bones of a wild aurochs are buried separately from the remains of domestic cattle. Medieval English writers often refer to the wild bulls of our lost greenwood, dangerous animals and no doubt not as feral as once supposed, but perhaps half-bred aurochs.

Who first tamed the terrible aurochs I wonder? James Wellard, author of *The great Sahara*, gives us a clue. Tassili-n-Agger is a remote, rocky desert in south east Algeria. Here on cliff faces can be found paintings of men and animals begun probably by pygmy bushmen seven thousand years ago and continued by later comers until 3,000 BC. Elephants, hippos, giraffes and auroch herds are portrayed in the earliest paintings show herds of cattle, looking exactly like aurochs or 'longhorns', now kept in pens tended by herdsmen. Wild animals do not appear in these paintings, and it seems that they left when the desert encroached and the land dried up. Former hunters, tall men and women, prevented the wild cattle from following the other beasts in a quest for water and fenced them in. Tamed, they became the ancestors both of European and African cattle, depicted in Egyptian art and surviving today as the huge-horned Watasi cattle of the Congo. The latter were often seen in English zoos in the happy days before the Watasi herdsmen were dispossessed by their former subjects, the Hutu people.

Bushmen, no longer artists, are themselves being 'domesticated' by their Negro masters in Botswana, their last stronghold. They are being given forcible Education in the modern English sense, as if education in hunting, story telling and surviving in the desert does not count as Education at all. I have met a Central African pygmy who wears a suit and lives in north-west London, a nice enough but lonely fellow. However the thought of Kalahari bushmen sitting for A levels and, even worse, passing them, fills me with horror.

When Botswana was Bechuanaland, ruled by Sir Charles Fernand Rey, all the Bushmen were unofficially classed as wild animals and released from prisons, where some of them had been pining away. Let alone being excused from Education, they were evidently excused from crime- mostly cattle rustling. How happy is the man who is an animal, and this brings my ramblings to a full circle.

# Eternal Life



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PETER MULLEN

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The world is rapidly becoming a more dangerous place so we must love and look after one another. Particularly at this Christmas season we should remember our Christian brothers and sisters who are suffering persecution in many lands. In Pakistan, individual Christians and their families are attacked every day while churches are routinely burned down. Recently, a Christian lorry driver in that country stopped at a roadside stall for a cup of tea. He made the mistake of wearing a Cross. The stallholder was upset by this so he called his friends and together they stoned the lorry driver to death. Again a Christian was making his way from Saudi Arabia to Syria, when he was impeded by three men who noticed a tattoo of the Cross on the man's wrist, so they cut his hand off.

These are not isolated incidents. In Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and dozens of other locations, Christians are being murdered and dispossessed. It rarely gets into the papers while the aggressively secular BBC doesn't report it either. Both the Arab TV channel *Al Jazeera* and the Jewish *Jerusalem Post* feature the persecution of Christians more prominently than our mass media. In 2019, the number of Christians in the Middle East is half what it was twenty years ago. If you want to see the extent of this persecution, do a Google search for *The Barnabas Fund*, a charity which reports these atrocities and also supports distressed Christians worldwide.

What do our Bishops and Archbishops say about these worldwide outrages? Next to nothing. They explain that they are deeply committed to interfaith discussions with moderate Muslims and do not wish to jeopardise these talks by drawing attention to this widespread persecution. But it's not the moderate Muslims who are doing the persecuting; it is the barbarian Islamo-fascists in their worldwide *jihad*. A barbarism is a form of hell on earth and the demons in hell are not merely the enemies of God. Every form of hell is chaos and a house of lies; every demon is at war not just with God but with every other demon. So the same *jihadists* who suicide bomb Christians and burn down churches also blow up other Muslims and burn down their mosques.

It's hard to imagine a worse persecution, but there is one because it is home-grown. Militant atheists and secularists, highly placed in governments and political institutions throughout Europe, attack Christians. It

is illegal now in Britain in state schools to teach that Christianity is true. The 2000 year old institution of Christian marriage is now officially regarded as no more significant than any of the other fashionable arrangements. The mildest criticism of the LGBT+ industry – now by law being promoted among children as young as five – could land you in jail. And, even as I write – on All Saints' Day – news is coming in about a man arrested for praying in the street outside an abortion clinic.

Churches have always been regarded as charities but soon they will have to apply for charitable status by proving that what they do is for public benefit. Whereas the Christian religion was always regarded in this country as a good thing in itself, now the ancient office of churchwarden is turned into that of a Trustee and churches have to register to achieve charitable status. Why don't the secularists know that the word *charity* is the English for St Paul's *agape* in his First Epistle to the Corinthians? Throughout public policy there is a deliberate and sustained attempt to marginalise the Christian faith. Church schools have their admissions policies scrutinised by government officials who wish to see the faith relegated to the purely private practice of individual eccentrics. The faith which created European civilisation will have no more say in public life in England.

Just after the London bombings on 7/7, Osama bin Laden said there would be no need for a military campaign in order to win Europe for Islam. He taunted us: *You lack the stomach for a fight*. Given the aggressiveness of our own powerful secularists, the pathetic lie-down-and-die attitude of the church leaders, the demographic revolution which is upon us through mass immigration and relative birth rates, the last vestiges of Christianity in Europe will have been extirpated within a generation.

You must wonder why I am spoiling your Christmas issue of the *Salisbury Review* by writing about these persecutions. Surely I could save my doom-laden remarks for the spring edition and the penitential season of Lent? The bleak future which overhangs us is what Christianity is about. In the Sermon on the Mount, Our Lord said, *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad... for so persecuted they the prophets which were*

before you. This was no casual remark. He meant to warn and encourage us.

The Christian Father Tertullian told us explicitly: *The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church*. So when we are under persecution we should not grumble or ask *What's the use?* and, like the bishops, keep our heads down, but redouble our enthusiasm for the faith.. Why do our enemies hate us? They hate Christianity because it tells the truth. As usual Eliot puts this supremely:

*Why should men love the church? Why should they love her laws? She tells them of Life and Death and of all that they would forget. She is tender where they*

*would be hard and hard where they like to be soft. She tells them of Evil and Sin and other unpleasant facts. They constantly try to escape from the darkness outside and within by dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good.*

Christmas is not an escape. It does not allow us to ignore the truth, for everything we do at this season, from the first glass of fizz to the very last mince pie, is a celebration of the truth:

*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

## ARTS AND BOOKS



Can we go home now?

Jane Kelly

**The Lost Boys. A Family Ripped Apart by War,** Catherine Bailey. Penguin, Random House, 2019, £20

At the beginning of World War II, beautiful, blonde Fey, Granddaughter of Admiral von Tirpitz, daughter of Ulrich von Hassell, German Ambassador to Italy, was living a fairy-tale life in Brazza, a strikingly lovely palazzo in northern Italy, attended by loyal servants and doting estate workers. She had moved there in 1940 on marrying Count Detalmo Biroli, an Italian cavalry officer. They had two exquisite little blonde sons, Corrado and Roberto. In 1943 after the fall of Mussolini the Germans arrived at Brazza and Detalmo disappeared to join the partisans. Fey was out of fairyland.

Alone at Brazza, Fey began writing a diary, eventually producing seven volumes. Her father put his into a tea caddy buried in a fox hole, retrieved by his wife Ilse after the war. All over Europe people were writing and secreting desperate journalism. At first life with the Germans in her house was not too bad. She was under the control of Lieutenant Hans Kretschmann who was friendly, and like the other officers, loved her boys. But she was threatened by 'Garibaldi' communist partisans who saw her as a class enemy, and local people started suspecting her

of collaborating with the Nazis. On September 9th 1944, Kretschmann marched in to her bedroom and told her coldly that her father had been executed and it was his 'duty to report her to the authorities'.

Hassell had been hanged with piano wire the day before, after being implicated in the July Plot to kill Hitler. His trial was witnessed by Helmut Schmidt, later chancellor of Germany. After the war he wrote to Ilse, telling her 'what a huge impression her husband had made on him in his last hours'. The book is full of such intriguing little details. Who knew that Hitler took to wearing a 'metal-plated, bullet-proof cap,' of 'extraordinary weight'?

Deltamo's activities had threatened the safety of his family and Fey had agonised over whether to flee but she had felt safe at Brazza which she described as a protecting 'mother hen'. She now shared the fate of the other families of the July Plotters, described by Hitler as 'a brood of vipers,' part of a poisonous aristocratic bloodline which had to be wiped out. These families were known to the SS as 'Sippenhaftlinge,' a group singled out for special attention, possibly useful as hostages.

Using a mixture of narrative voice and these first-person diary accounts from many different languages, we are dragged with Fey into the Nazi terror machine. On 27 September 1944 the children were dragged away, Corrado screaming, and she was arrested. They were taken to an SS orphanage in Innsbruck, once the HQ of the Rudolf Steiner schools. She had no idea where they were and was taken to a Gestapo prison where she shared a cell with a young girl who had been badly beaten and imprisoned for selling pork on the

black market. Her safe, pampered life was over for she was now living with prostitutes and petty criminals, sharing one bucket between five. On her 25th birthday she was deported to the east.

'I was utterly powerless,' she wrote in her diary later, 'in the hands of these criminals, without news from home and forced to leave my children alone in a strange country'. During the journey, by cattle truck with straw on the floor, she scrawled a note about her situation and her missing children and dropped it out onto the tracks as they entered a station. She frequently found herself travelling with other members of the 'Sippenhaft'. In Stutthof concentration camp near Danzig, where prisoners were seen gnawing on human bones, they watched the glow from pyres and smelled 'a sickening smell of burning flesh'. They suffered from typhoid, dysentery and scarlet fever, and increasing starvation, but their importance as hostages saved them. There were orders from Himmler to keep them alive so they were spared the full horror of the camp system, given basic food and segregated into sick rooms.

They moved on to Buchenwald where they saw 'human skeletons marching in columns,' and Dachau where they met 'Prominenten,' distinguished prisoners such as French Socialist Leon Blum, who became President of France in 1946, the Wittelsbach family which had produced two Holy Roman Emperors, and Prince Xavier of Bourbon, pretender to the Spanish throne. All were under sentence of imminent death, so extra straw on the floor could inspire panic. Their status could change at any moment at Himmler's whim so they were sometimes moved to hotels then sent back to the death camps. During this nightmare Fey fell in love with fellow prisoner, Alexander von Stauffenberg. Bizarrely their journey was often trailed by his wife Melitta, one of Goering's favourite pilots. Even in Buchenwald she was able to land and have a few minutes with her husband. She was later shot down and killed by an American fighter plane.

As it became clear that Germany had lost the war, Himmler opened private negotiations with Swedish diplomat, Count Bernadotte, and promised that all executions would stop. Later he gave an order that all the hostages were to be taken to a hotel in the Alps and shot. But history overtook him for he was soon on the road himself, sleeping under hedges but had the luck to be handed over to the British by a Russian soldier who thought he was a refugee.

Bailey is brilliant about the horror and chaos of the German retreat and Soviet invasion. If you ever wondered why the Red Army conducted such an intense rape campaign in Germany, Bailey has

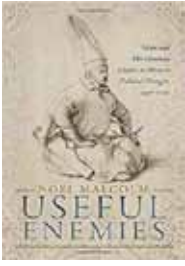
found a clue in the writing of Major Lev Kopelev, later arrested by Stalin. He noted a conversation with a military superior who mentioned deliberate strategies to get exhausted Soviet soldiers to continue fighting: 'The soldier must go on hating so he can get his revenge. He must be told that when he gets to Germany everything is his – goods and women, do what you want!'

By 1945 there were at least 25 million 'displaced' persons in Europe, many were lost children. About 50,000 had been removed from their parents and 'Germanised.' An allied programme for finding children specifically excluded 'enemy' children such as Corrado and Roberto. Reunited but trapped in the south of Italy, Fey and Detalmo could not hunt for them, but Ilse, aged 60, in Munich could. She had lost her husband, brother, and her two sons were missing. She had received no letters from Fey throughout the war. The Red Cross didn't hand on telegrams Fey had sent. Incredibly, all she had received was the scrawled note Fey had dropped from the train when she was being transported east by the SS. She found a wrecked car which would still go, persuaded an American colonel to give her petrol coupons, and set off for an orphanage in the mountains. With no luck there she headed for Bad Sachsa in the new Russian occupation zone, about to be sealed off. Her pass only got her to the frontier, the rest was on foot.

The local mayor was so amazed at her courage that he drove her to the orphanage. Inside they found only one child, the grandson of Carl Goerdeler, the former mayor of Leipzig, hanged with the other July Plotters. They begged to take the child with them but were refused and both returned weeping. The reader is likely to join in as the story, always harrowing becomes increasingly moving. Ilse eventually found the children. Corrado, aged 4 who said simply, 'Can we go home now?' She couldn't recognise Roberto, aged three, who identified himself by naming his pony. They were only ten days away from being adopted by a local farmer.

The final chapter is fascinating on how the family got back together; Fey was still deeply in love with Alex and angry with Detalmo for failing to rescue her and the boys. He was bewildered by a wife and children who had been damaged and changed.

It's encouraging that a woman has written such a tough, clever book about World War II, a topic which still appeals more to men. Her work should be on the school History curriculum as it is both factual and complex but brings to life the grotesque excitement of those terrible years with all the power of a brilliant novel.



## Islam: the Old Enemy

John Jolliffe

**Useful Enemies: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought, 1450-1750**, Noel Malcolm, OUP, 2019, £25

This monumental study is not a History of Islam and the Ottoman Empire, but of European attitudes and relations with it, chiefly on the political front, but also with regard to Christian beliefs. Its main message is that in many ways the ‘Infidel’ world of Islam was indeed regarded as the enemy of Christianity, at least in the age of the Crusades, which was about to peter out after the heroic failure of Pope Pius II to end it with a triumph, and his death in 1464. He had even drafted a letter inviting Sultan Mehmet to convert, though it was never sent.

An extreme example of Christian attitudes can be found in Luther’s claim that the Ottomans ‘dishonoured marriage, were merciless towards women, children, the weak and the sick. The Sultan was no better than a murderer, a robber, while his conquests were followed by rape and butchery. Any Christian who died fighting them was defending the fatherland, shedding blood for Christ’s sake, and would go to Heaven.’ But of course he didn’t think much of the Jews either.

Erasmus, on the other hand, had advised ‘If you want to win Ottomans for Christianity, lead a blameless life and earn respect from your enemies,’ instead of going to war with them. But after the ideas of Macchiavelli had been digested, reasons of state came to mean more than the Defence of the Faith, however much the two were intertwined. And while Catholics, Lutherans and other Protestants went for each other ferociously throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was also a constant desire by the French to maintain the support of the Turks as useful allies against the Austrian Empire, especially after the defeat of Francis I at Pavia in 1525, after which he spent a year imprisoned by Charles V. An Ottoman fleet even spent a whole winter at Toulon, ‘so that the place looked more like Istanbul than France’. And in Spain a *modus vivendi* was found between the Moslem and Christian communities. At the same time there were many Ottoman overtures in the years when Europe was convulsed by the Wars of Religion: one account has listed 176 missions to Vienna between 1509 and 1757, and 22 to Poland in

the decade between 1576 and 1586, though later it was Jan Sobieski, the Polish king, who crucially routed the Turks when they besieged Vienna in 1683. A hundred years earlier, Hungary had been occupied by the Turks. So the overall picture is complex. Three contemporary descriptions of Ottoman life were widely translated, and circulated in the West. They revealed that ‘the system gave ordinary people real material benefits’ – of which there were precious few in many parts of Europe – and they were generally content to obey their rulers, given free hospitals, and surprisingly, three days of free board and lodging for travellers.

War and peace came and went during the three centuries covered by this book, but when it came to war, the Sultan Selim I was in a stronger position than his forerunners. Strategically he owed considerable debts to Alexander the Great and also to Julius Caesar; and his Janissaries, recruited in youth from Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Spain, were invaluable forces against external enemies, and also provided a good safety valve against discontent at home. For a long time they gave the Sultan numerical superiority while weakening the Christian countries by reducing their manpower. Altogether it has been calculated that the Sultan’s Empire covered 1,023,209 square miles as against the 7,266,160 of the Hapsburg Empire under Philip II (including his possessions in the New World); but those of the Sultan were more coherent, less widely spread out, and better organised.

The later sections of the book explore how various European scholars, many of whom will be quite unknown to most of the readers of this review, have covered the whole development of Islam, with special examination of the comparative theories and practices of despotism followed by the Sultans, and Louis XIV and other European monarchs respectively.

The book runs to 417 pages of text, followed by another *forty* of bibliography, as well as useful and well-referenced footnotes in the main text. The print is very small, and as with some other recent blockbusters, the reader would have been better served if it had been published in two volumes. But university presses seldom feel obliged to make allowances for the general reader, and the only illustration is an enchanting drawing of a Janissary by Gentile Bellini, very well reproduced on the dust-jacket. A wonderful companion volume of illustrations could be compiled: and a rich store is quite readily available. Perhaps some suitable compiler of illustrations will take the hint. But for dedicated scholars the book is a goldmine, worked on by the author for the last eight years (and more). He has been a Visiting Fellow at St Anthony’s, and for the last seventeen years a Senior Research Fellow at All Souls.

Reader, you know what you are in for.



## A Monument to Self Absorption

Anthony Daniels

**Sontag: Her Life**, Benjamin Moser, Allen Lane, 2019, £30.00.

These days, biographies of writers can often double as doorstops as well as shelf-fillers, irrespective of the literary importance of their subjects. This biography of Susan Sontag is (with index and scholarly apparatus) over 800 pages long, and though the author makes a large claim for her – ‘Susan Sontag was America’s last great literary star’ – she was in fact a minor figure who wrote some unreadable novels but is remembered mainly for some influential essays. Influence, of course, is not the same as merit.

Nevertheless, the biography is worth reading as cultural history (its pages are mercifully not closely-printed). It is generally well written, though occasionally slightly difficult to follow in its chronology. No one could call Sontag’s life dull, and she was clearly remarkable in several ways. She was intelligent, well read, ambitious, combative, beautiful and, in private, conflicted and self-doubting. Deeply self-absorbed, she was not incapable of brave or decent acts, as were Brecht or William Burroughs. For example, she stood up unequivocally for Salman Rushdie after the Ayatollah’s infamous *fatwa*, when many of the supposedly radical intelligentsia were reluctant to do so – from sheer physical cowardice, one suspects. And whatever one might think of the value of her attention-grabbing determination to put on a production of *Waiting for Godot* in Sarajevo during the siege, the Bosnians valued it highly, it displayed a rare bravery on her part.

But there were many less attractive sides to her character. Her self-absorption often resulted in casual cruelty to others and her treatment of her son, to whom she gave birth when she was 19 years old, could be chilling in its indifference to his welfare. She loved him when he was physically present but was quite happy to leave him for long periods – indeed, insisted on doing so – when she thought it necessary for her career.

According to her biographer, her character was deeply affected by her strange upbringing. Her father had been a successful fur merchant in China, but he died early of tuberculosis and his widow was an indolent

alcoholic, both neglectful of, and over involved with, her daughter. This was a pattern she repeated with her own son, but it is curious that Sontag’s sister, of whom we learn little, grew up to be normal. There is (thank goodness) something eternally unaccountable in the development of the human character.

Sontag was precociously clever, attending – though never for very long – Berkeley, the University of Chicago, Harvard and Oxford. A voracious reader, she must have impressed academics of the highest calibre with her intellect, though no doubt her beauty also helped; but she preferred bohemia to academe. She certainly had a talent for falling in with prominent artistic bohemians, for being, from the point of view of becoming a celebrity, in the right place at the right time. But though she was bohemian, Sontag was also extremely competitive and had always to be the cleverest, best-read, most erudite person in the room. This need derived from the wish to escape the pointlessness of her mother’s existence, but also from her difficulties with personal relations. She even intellectualised banalities: someone once said that she could intellectualise a potato. Intellectual hypertrophy prevented her from seeing or experiencing anything directly, but only through a distorting lens of concepts.

But were her intellectual pirouettes – which is mainly what they were – of lasting value? I doubt that they were. At the early age of 42, she was diagnosed with breast cancer from which she was not expected to survive. After her unexpected recovery, she wrote one of her most famous books, or rather booklets: *Illness as Metaphor* attacking the use of illness, particularly cancer, as a metaphor, trying to make us see it as a purely natural phenomenon without meaning. She claimed that metaphors of illness were harmful, adding to the suffering of those who had them, and preventing them from seeking medical assistance. The book begins:

*Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.*

This is surely a strange way to begin an assault on illness-as-metaphor. But then Sontag was not much of an ironist – nor was she over-endowed with a sense of humour. Her internal conflicts prevented her from being honest, either with herself or with others. One of her most famous essays, *Against Interpretation*, argued against the tendency to over-intellectualise art instead of apprehending it directly: but this was precisely her own tendency. She advocated openness and frankness

but was secretive about her own lesbianism. An elitist, her cultural effect, perhaps not intended, was to dissolve the distinction between high and low culture.

Sontag always feared that she was a fake; she was pathologically incapable of unselfconsciousness. She was like an onion with an infinite number of layers, or a Russian doll with no final core. She interpreted the world through her own peculiar psyche, making little or no effort to detach herself from her own problems while doing so, and at the same time making no reference to them as the source of her thought. The result was that she seemed to live permanently in bad faith. But in this she was a harbinger of things to come.

Her frequent resort to metaphysical afflatus in her writing notwithstanding, she had occasional flashes of good sense, as when she admitted that the *Reader's Digest* had been a better guide to communist regimes than *The Nation*. Even as late as 1982 it took some courage to say so in public to an audience of intellectuals (in itself a fact of great significance). This book is worth reading for such insights, even if the biographical subject is worthier of an essay than an extensive and expansive biography.



## The Master Fraudster and his Boswell

Peter Mullen

**The Professor and the Parson: A Story of Desire, Deceit and Defrocking**, Adam Sisman, Profile Books, 2019, £12.99.

If you come across a more entertainingly bonkers book than this one, drop me a line and give me its title.

One day in 1958, Hugh Trevor-Roper, the Regius Professor of History at Oxford, received a cry for help from a post-graduate student calling himself Robert Peters who claimed, as you do, that he was being persecuted by the Bishop of Oxford. Trevor-Roper met Peters and was so overwhelmed by their conversation that he kept a file on him for the next twenty-five years. The contents of this file – with additional personal testimony from other sources – make up the text of Sisman's brilliant book.

Peters was beyond all definitions of *weird*. He was an almost supernaturally talented conman, a serial seducer, a fraud, a forger, a bigamist and the last Anglican priest to be formally and ritually unfrocked by the Bishop of Bath and Wells in his cathedral. Peters had no academic qualifications, yet he was appointed to significant teaching posts in more than

a dozen universities on four continents. He was married eight times, and served three jail sentences. He was investigated by the FBI and made a comically disastrous appearance as a candidate on *Mastermind*.

How did he get away with all this in a nefarious career that stretched over more than half a century? Adam Sisman explains all in his jaw-dropping account which, I promise, will render you near apoplectic with tears and laughter. To get my breath back, I tried to put the book down several times, only to find that it stuck to my hand.

The biggest puzzle to me is how Peters, this chubby, unprepossessing serial liar, cheat and misogynist had shoals of intelligent, beautiful women fall at his feet? His eight marriages weren't even the half of it. His almost daily habit was to steal headed notepaper and write his own references. He abandoned his second wife in the course of a train journey and while holding teaching posts couldn't keep his hands off the schoolgirls. He even propositioned Trevor-Roper's stepdaughter. One incredible triumph was that he managed to apply for postgraduate work at Oxford, claiming he had a London Master's degree while he applied to London saying he held a Master's from Oxford.

The mere fact of his official unfrocking never for a moment hindered him from preaching, on one occasion in St Paul's, celebrating the Eucharist and illegally solemnising marriages. How peculiar was he? For some time he shared a room with a man who claimed to be a clairvoyant and lectured on ghosts. One afternoon he stole – in today's values – £70,000 from two old ladies in a fishing hotel in Scotland. *Plausibility* was his middle name. Sisman sums him up neatly: 'His lies carried so much conviction because he believed them himself.'

As I read this book, I was seized by one fascinating question: is there one mischief-maker – Peters being the obvious candidate – in this story or are there two? For Hugh Trevor-Roper shared some of Peters' characteristics. Not to the same psychotic or criminal level of course, but they were similar. Trevor-Roper was sour, ambitious and greedy and he was adept in the black arts of academic one-upmanship and put-down-manship. One of his colleagues famously called him a s\*\*t.

He had made a great name – and a pile of money – for himself with his best-selling book *The Last Days of Hitler*. And of course he had been connected with the secret service and given responsibility for itemising the Fuhrer's possessions in the bunker in 1945. Quite a few of these goods went mysteriously missing. And, when he was packing up to leave Berlin, a Luger pistol fell out of Trevor-Roper's luggage. Now, who had that

belonged to, I wonder?

Trevor-Roper lost his reputation as one of our finest historians when he mistakenly validated the forgeries, which became known as *The Hitler Diaries*. They weren't even competent forgeries. How could a man with his historical acumen be so easily fooled? I have a hunch: I think Trevor-Roper desperately wanted those diaries to be genuine. How much more glorious to go down in history as the man who validated Hitler's diaries than the one who merely had to admit they were fake?

Curiouser and curiouser, In 1983, at the time of *The Hitler Diaries* debacle, Trevor-Roper abruptly abandoned his twenty-five years' work of compiling that huge dossier on Peters. Why? Adam Sisman opines, 'perhaps he no longer found charlatany quite so amusing'.

When it comes to charlatans; as they say it takes one to know one.



## Wild Immigrants

Celia Haddon

**Invasive Aliens. The Plants and Animals From Over There That Are Over Here**, Dan Eatherley, William Collins, 2019, £16.99.

The magnificent red deer stags of Scotland and Exmoor and the smaller roe deer with their cute long ears are British natives. But the beautiful spotted fallow deer that adorn the parks of stately homes were brought over by the Normans, while the tiny Chinese water deer, the sika deer, and the solitary muntjacs with their pokey bent horns are more recent immigrants.

These last two were deliberately introduced under the influence of gentlemen wishing to improve the range of species available for sport, ornament or gastronomy. Many of them were keen members of the Society for the Acclimatisation of Animals, Birds, Fishes, Insects and Vegetables. *Invasive Aliens* tells the story of how the British stopped welcoming animal and vegetable immigrants and began to see them as a threat particularly those invaders that thrived here.

But what *is* native? Our own species, *Homo sapiens*, flourished in Britain at the expense of the first inhabitants, the Neanderthals. They brought in spelt wheat from the Middle East, goats and sheep, pigs and horses and their settlements provided homes for house sparrows and house mice. The first domestic cat bones have been dated to the pre-Roman Iron age

and the black rat or ship rat arrived during the Roman occupation.

Many animals that are now an established part of British wildlife, like brown hares, introduced in the Iron age unlike the native Arctic hare still found in Scotland, and rabbits, possibly introduced by homecoming crusaders, were once alien invaders. If we got rid of all invaders, we would miss the beautiful snowdrops naturalised in our woods, the occasional fields of fritillaries, though not the ground elder that plagues gardeners.

As well as foreign deer, there are now grey squirrels almost everywhere in England introduced by the Duke of Bedford and other landowners presumably for fun, as it is difficult to see them as useful additions to our wildlife. Not all invaders were introduced deliberately. Ships' ballast brought the invasive Japanese knotweed as well as the sweet smelling pineapple weed, an Asian daisy.

While the larger animals may do little harm, there are new introductions that may be truly disastrous. A New Zealand flatworm, the *Arthurdendyus trainagulatus*, came to our shores with imported garden plants. This slimy creature grows up to 20 centimetres long and reproduces by zipping open its back and depositing a shiny capsule of eggs before healing the skin that tore apart. It ambushes earthworms at night, wraps its body round them while exuding a substance that reduces the worm to goo, which it then sucks up. In Northern Ireland it has reduced the worm count by up to 75 per cent, water-logging the soil, and starving the birds and beasts that rely on earthworms for food. If you find one in your garden, the Open Air Laboratories Network ([opalexplornature.org](http://opalexplornature.org)) would like to hear from you to help monitor how far it is spreading.

Global trade, including the free trade area of the EU, has brought in several severe plant diseases. Dutch elm disease has already reduced our splendid native trees to hedgerow saplings that spring up then die off prematurely before they can grow into trees. Now ash dieback, another fungal disease, threatens our 90 million ash trees, and the box tree moth, which invaded the UK in 2007, has a caterpillar which totally defoliates our native box. Meanwhile the Forestry Commission is attempting to stop the spread of the processionary oak moth, so called because the caterpillars clump together in nose-to tail processions.

It is not all bad news. Sometimes introduced species die out of their own accord, like the wallabies in the Peak District, who survived for 70 years before dying out this century. Thanks to the eccentric Duke of Bedford, when the Père David deer went extinct in China, it could be reintroduced there from the animals in his park. Today it is wildlife trusts and

conservationists who are re-introducing animals like red kites and bustards arguing that these are not aliens but native species that belong in our country. Wild boar, which were hunted to extinction in Britain, have escaped from boar farms back into the wild and have now reached Oxfordshire, and beavers are flourishing in Devon.

Some alien invaders have been unfairly blamed for what was human destruction. The American mink, it was claimed, was partly to blame for the decline of the otter. In fact, it was a combination of DDT, persecution by otter hunts and river bailiffs, and agricultural pesticides washing into rivers that devastated numbers. Mink, on the other hand are at least partly responsible for the catastrophic decline in the water vole populations, as they, unlike otters, can pursue water voles right into their burrows.

Attempts to wipe out invasive species rarely work. True, the coypu, a semi-aquatic rodent rather like a large hairy guinea pig, was wiped out in East Anglia in the 1970s and 80s, but smaller animals like the American mink have proved impossible to exterminate. There are now regulations about importing alien animals, but these are difficult to enforce. Earlier this summer a pet raccoon escaped into the wild in Oxfordshire, but fortunately returned a few days later. Pet owners continue to dump unwanted small furies into the landscape where they usually die of cold and it is probably only our cold climate that has protected us against the huge Burmese pythons, set free by irresponsible pet owners, that now roam the Florida Everglades.

So widespread is the globalisation of wildlife that some are beginning to argue it will be a good thing. Fred Pearce, a science journalist, has asserted in *The New Wild* that the current attempts to promote re-wilding, which bans invasive species like sheep in favour of native species like lynx or wolves, is creating an artificial concept not unlike a zoo. Is this just invasive species denial or a realistic take on the problem? It is difficult or at least uncomfortable suddenly to claim that familiar species like rabbits and cats are alien species that should be wiped out.

*Invasive Aliens* mentions but does not investigate this controversy in detail. What is interesting about this book is not its list of invasive species but that Dan Earthley has taken the grand sweep of history starting in Neolithic times to examine them. Most of the time his writing is a pleasure to read despite covering a great many species. There are charming line drawings at the beginning of each chapter and a good index. One tiny omission disappointed me. There used to be tropical guppies living in the warm outflow of a UK power station. He didn't mention if they are still there.



## Fascist Loyalty Cards

Brian Eassty

**We Have Been Harmonised**, Kai Strittmatter, Old Street, 2019, £9.99.

In the 1998 film *The Truman Show*, Jim Carrey lives his whole life unaware that he is on the set of a soap opera, his every experience manipulated from behind a bank of monitors by Ed Harris' shadowy director. One wonders if the hapless citizens of Rongcheng depicted in this book realise that they are similarly living in a kind of simulation but in imitation of a rather different genre – that of the game show. As part of an experiment in social control which may well soon be rolled out across the whole of China, everyone in Rongcheng is given 1000 points and can, by behaviour approved of by the authorities, increase them or, by making more anti-social choices, such as speeding through a red light or allowing one's dog to foul the footpath, lose them.

Points mean prizes but not in the manner of those accumulated on a loyalty card issued by a chain of coffee shops. Rather the points one has collected are used to tell everyone what kind of person they are dealing with and where he stands in China's new meritocratically run caste system from a triple A 'Role Model of Honour' with 1050 points to a 'Dishonest' D with less than 600. The honour or stigma arising from this can affect the ability to be granted a low interest loan and even one's marital prospects.

If the news that China is running major cities and perhaps soon its whole society on a regime similar to a school house points system is surprising, there is much else in Kai Strittmatter's book which will act as a long overdue corrective to the notion that China, having introduced some elements of consumer capitalism and been pushed further by the internet, is becoming more like the West. It might have been so for a while; it is not so now.

Strittmatter writes of the period from 2009 to 2013 as a kind of brief golden age of freedom, a Chinese Spring: '... people felt that they belonged to a society... learned to pool their knowledge; to connect with each other; to have public discussions about the things that determined their lives.' The feeling of liberation which resulted from being able to do such things without the interference of the Party in everything led to a rather hubristic belief in the power of the internet to disrupt.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo spoke of the web as ‘God’s gift for a democratic China’ and Ai Weiwei asserted that the Internet was uncontrollable and so ‘...freedom will win. It is that simple.’ That spirit of optimism was widespread and growing in 2012. A year later, Xi Jinping came to power and set about bringing the Internet to heel.

In this aim, he was helped that most criticism of the Party took place on one platform: Weibo, China’s Twitter. The main players were identified, warned about ‘social responsibility’ and then brutally crushed if they continued to blog in a manner critical of Xi and his regime. *Pour encourager les autres*, the worst offenders would later appear on Chinese state television – whose name translates, fittingly for a state so fond of surveillance, as CCTV – and denounce themselves in a manner reminiscent of a defendant in a Stalinist show trial. It is not surprising that, after this, Weibo devolved into a site devoted to celebrity gossip and party propaganda. On the day that Xi changed the constitution to make himself President for Life, for example, the trendy topic on Weibo was: ‘Is it okay to eat instant noodles on the high speed trains?’

If the challenge to the established order from the internet was neutralised in a manner that seems to owe something to 1984, the way the Party dealt with the threat from consumerism, like the division of society into Alphas, Deltas etc mentioned earlier, is more reminiscent of *Brave New World*. Strittmatter quotes Huxley’s disquiet at ‘man’s almost infinite appetite for distractions’ and it is the potential of consumerism to distract that the Party has made use of in keeping it under control. If these newly liberated consumers are indulging in the acquisitive frenzy of Singles Day, an orgy of spending akin to America’s Black Friday, or reading posts on social media about TF Boys, China’s foremost boy band, they are not worrying about corruption, Hong Kong, Tibet, Taiwan. To quote Huxley again, they are ‘a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced because they love their servitude’.

The extent of the hubris which convinced so many Western leaders that China would grow more like us is laid bare by Strittmatter’s analysis of the extent to which the history of China under Mao and the Cultural Revolution has been rehabilitated by the current regime. On the death of Mao, the Chinese Communist Party condemned the Cultural Revolution as ‘ten years of chaos’ and the leadership of Mao as ‘70 per cent good, 30 per cent bad’ – less even than the ‘7 and a half out of ten’ Jeremy Corbyn famously gave the EU! It was a good start in what was assumed to be a process of revisionism which would lead eventually to a clear-eyed assessment of China’s tragic years. It was

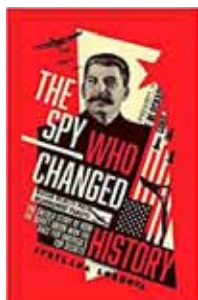
a vain hope. On taking office, Xi was quick to condemn any attempt to reassess this period of the recent past and in 2018 the National People’s Congress passed a law making ‘insulting or slandering the heroes and martyrs’ a punishable offence. Instead of a kind of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, by which Germany has attempted to come to terms with its Nazi past, China has what Strittmatter calls a ‘nostalgia without memory’, a vague, fuzzy sense of a glorious past devoid of any specifics. Yet it is also true that the generation now in power in China grew up under Mao, so the poisonous legacy of that era is the cynicism and lack of trust which lies behind the façade of China today.

If a regime like Mao’s is what is in store for China in the future, there is a significant difference which should give the West cause for concern. The China of the 1960s and 1970s was content to live in a bubble sealed off from the wider world until President Nixon’s visits encouraged it to open up. China now is very much out in the world, which has to accommodate it, and not just in terms of the disruptive effect it has had on the economies of the West since it was admitted to the World Trade Organisation on such favourable terms in 2001. China has a nationalist drive to be Top Nation and the tentacles of its economic influence and its soft power are spreading out across the world attempting to choke off debate about Hong Kong and Tibet. China has exacted a grovelling apology from America’s National Basketball Association for tweets made by one of its members in support of pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong. Attempts to sway perceptions around the world about how China conducts its business will only grow as they meet with success. Strittmatter alludes to the campaign to change the way some Australian universities handle China. He reveals ‘the pressure that Chinese student organisations – steered by Beijing – have been putting on university lecturers who criticise the motherland’. Demanding a change to the course to accommodate ‘the feelings of Chinese classmates’, the regime neatly appropriates snowflakery language always a useful ploy for the bully posing as victim but, as with the NBA, it is the yuan’s power which brings about the climb down.

This book is a timely reminder of the extent to which Xi has managed to ‘harmonise’ China, in the euphemism that gives Strittmatter his title, to overcome any dissent, to mould it in his preferred image, the one we have always been told could never be – a successful player on the world economic stage yet eschewing democracy at home.

Such is the extent of Xi’s influence that he seems able to disorient the Chinese people by changing the fabric of their cities on a whim, with cityscapes no more than twenty years old being torn down and

replaced as if they were no more permanent than film sets. As one of the country's leading architects remarks: 'Everything else, our old life, our tradition and culture, had already been shattered, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. The old houses were just a final, hollow remnant.' Such omnipotence over every aspect of people's lives would be the envy even of the powerful Director in the *Truman Show*.



## Hid in Plain View Martin Dewhirst

**The Spy Who Changed History: The Untold Story of How the Soviet Union Won the Race for America's Top Secrets**, Svetlana Lokhova, William Collins, 2018, £20.

It's now more than a century since far-sighted people in a number of countries realised that in some future military conflicts the air force might on occasion play a more decisive role than the land and sea forces – provided, of course, that their planes and the bombs they would discharge were no less advanced than those of their enemies. As we know, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was fascinated by flying machines, and those readers of this review who have watched Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Andrei Rublyov* may remember its undated prologue in which a Russian has his Icarus moment probably even before da Vinci was born, soaring up into the heavens in a hot air balloon and shortly afterwards suffering a disastrous crash landing. Later Russians, well before the 1917 revolutions, were fascinated by the prospects for human flight, and one of the most popular Soviet novels, Veniamin Kaverin's *Two Captains*, tells the story of one such young man who becomes a pilot and serves during the Great Fatherland War in the Arctic (which played a very important 'over the Pole' role in Soviet aviation). Symbolically, Stalin's son Vasily was trained as a pilot.

Another representative of this prestigious profession is the main character in Lokhova's fine monograph, a scientific spy whose name, Stanislav Shumovsky, was hardly known until now, even to experts on Soviet espionage. Born in Kharkov (Ukraine) in 1902 and of Polish heritage (he changed his patronymic from Adamovich to Antonovich in order to sound more Russian), he was infected with aviation fever at the age of eight. While still a teenager he immediately sided

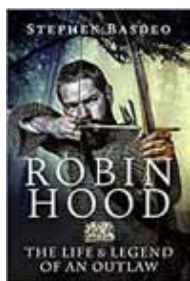
with the Bolsheviks, fought bravely in the Russian Civil War, was wounded three times and later damaged an arm so badly in a plane crash that he had to give up all hope of a career as a pilot. In 1929 he enrolled at the Bauman Higher Technical School in Moscow, and two years later (and two years before the USA established diplomatic relations with the USSR) he was one of a group of 75 Soviet students (all of them already married, their wives remaining in the Soviet Union) who were sent to study in some of the very best American educational institutions, which at that time had surplus capacity for fee-paying foreign students as a result of the Great Depression. Shumovsky, often later referred to by the author as 'Stan', was one of the 25 members of this group whose destination was the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston. None of the 75 defected.

In retrospect, it might seem incredible that both then and later the FBI showed so little interest in and suspicion of these Communist students, several of whom became very productive spies. But the American economy was in bad shape for several years – some 1,700 US engineers had gone to the USSR in 1929 to work on major industrial projects, and in 1931 about 12,500 Americans applied *each month* to AMTORG, the Soviet American Trading Corporation, for permission to move to the Land of the Soviets. New batches of Soviet students arrived to study in America in 1938 and 1943. Of course, the USSR was in chaos all that time, with the Five Year Plans, collectivisation, the Great Purges and the ever-growing Gulag. Communism didn't seem to be a serious short-term or long-term danger to the US authorities until the pendulum rather suddenly started to swing to the other extreme towards the end of the Second World War.

In 1936, after getting his BSc and MSc at the MIT, Shumovsky moved to New York to work at AMTORG, where he continued to hide in full sight, giving the impression that he had become so Westernised, despite his Soviet patriotism, that he did not present any danger to Western security. The FBI apparently made no attempt to 'turn' him; by now he was functioning not merely as a Soviet 'talent spotter' but also as a recruiter and controller of 'suitable' Americans and apparently even, on occasion, handing over cash to some of his informants for their invaluable cooperation (or collaboration). He was recalled to Moscow in 1939, but apparently neither then nor later did he come under any NKVD/KGB suspicion. He was sent back to America in the autumn of 1941, shortly after the Nazi invasion of the USSR and just as the American Lend Lease operation to support the Soviet allies was getting under way. Shumovsky worked in the Soviet Purchasing Commission to acquire as many of the best

examples of US technology and as much know-how as possible, and returned to Moscow in 1943, leaving it to colleagues like Ben Smilg, Semyon Semyonov and the brilliant Gaik Ovakimian (who deserves wider attention) to carry on the good work and maintain contacts with Klaus Fuchs, the Rosenbergs and many, many others. Shumovsky never returned to the States but, astonishingly, worked at UNESCO in France for ‘many years’, according to Lokhova. Perhaps more information on his charmed life (he died in 1984) will be found in due course in some of the still closed archives in Paris?

Potential readers of this book should be advised that the author was apparently given no assistance whatsoever in her research by Shumovsky’s descendants, so there may still be some new revelations to come in the future. This fascinating account should certainly be published in Russian in Russia. And it is really two books in one, with many pages devoted to the technical and constructional problems gradually solved by the American, Soviet and British designers of ever more sophisticated aircraft. To what extent did Shumovsky ‘change history’? Germany, Italy and Japan (and others) were defeated by the allies, the USSR, the USA and the UK (and others) at sea, on land and in and from the air, but history didn’t change all that much in 1945 – or in 1991. There could well be some ‘post-Soviet’ Russian Shumovskys poking around in the West today.



## Not Quite Under the Greenwood Tree

Brian Welter

**Robin Hood: The Life & Legend of an Outlaw**, Stephen Basdeo, Pen & Sword, 2019, £10.39, hardcover.

Who was Robin Hood? How does he fit into English history? Why did authors so frequently tweak storylines and develop fresh characters? Basdeo, who teaches history at Richmond University in Leeds, introduces the ever-changing content of Robin Hood literature throughout the centuries. The author aims to link each tale to the culture of its era. This involves highlighting how shifting or newly-inserted themes in the story reflected evolving social or political landscapes. Readers interested in the connection between the history of literature and political and social history will gain some, though fans of the Middle Ages will feel

cheated, as the author focuses mostly on later centuries. Overall, the book mostly fails to achieve the objective of connecting these depictions to the perspectives of the writers and readers of the day by its leaving out one essential element.

Robin Hood literature encompasses many genres, including poems, plays, ballads, and novels. Keeping with the goal of placing these tales into larger social contexts, Basdeo defines each genre before discussing the relevant Robin Hood tales and any fresh characters, plots, and themes. The earliest renditions differed from more recent and familiar ones. The medieval poems, including *A Gest of Robyn Hode*, do not depict the hero as ‘concerned with the problems of the people at large, and he certainly does not steal from the rich and redistribute their wealth to the destitute’. These tales focused not on serfs but on freemen, ‘people based in urban areas, predominantly those in mercantile professions and trades’. Basdeo describes the additions of various strands to the main story. One famous character ‘appears to have had his own legend before being incorporated, in a rather convoluted way, into the Robin Hood story. In early Robin Hood stories, Friar Tuck was not the fat, jolly monk depicted today but a hardy, stout man of action’. The post-medieval period saw more twists to the basic storyline and involved an expanding number of genres.

The sixteenth to eighteenth centuries elevated Robin Hood to the upper classes, first in Anthony Munday’s *The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon*. Basdeo strengthens his discussion by referring to wider social and political upheavals that brought about such rearrangements. By the late sixteenth century, ‘portrayals of the “good outlaw” in popular culture ... were becoming fewer and fewer. At the same time there was an intense fear of normal, everyday criminals’. Throughout the book, Basdeo comes back to the outlaw image. How storytellers justified Robin Hood’s outlaw status depended on social conditions. Clearly, writers took keen consideration of their audience. In other words, Robin Hood’s gentrification reflected the perspectives and concerns of post-medieval audiences.

The seventeenth to nineteenth centuries featured many Robin Hood ballads. Basdeo provides the cultural and artistic background, including the fact that all classes enjoyed this genre. Robin Hood ballads grew in number owing to the popularity of outlaw stories. Other genres also flourished while authors continued to reshape the plot. Ben Jonson (1572-1637), for instance, penned ‘a pastoral play, *The Sad Shepherd*’.

In 1819, Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* brought lasting and significant disruptions to the legend in his Victorian medievalism and romanticism. Basdeo shows how later stories tended to take for granted the accuracy

of *Ivanhoe*'s previously-unknown elements. Scott emphasized the tensions between the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans, suggesting that his own 'society does not have to be divided the way that it was in the 1190s'. Robin of Locksley, once again a yeoman, symbolized the lower classes (though, as Basdeo points out, a yeoman ranked much higher than a medieval serf) working with the middle classes and the monarch through the alliance of Robin, Ivanhoe, and King. Robin comes across as anything but a revolutionary.

The twentieth century furthered *Ivanhoe*'s influence. The discussion on Robin Hood in the movies reinforces the argument that each story somehow reflected its era. Solid writings also appeared. R L Green's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* influenced 'the famous children's novelist, C S Lewis', who supposedly took Green's suggestion for the title of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Green enjoyed membership in the Inklings, Basdeo mentions, without mentioning Tolkien's or Lewis's Christianity.

In fact, aside from references to greedy churchmen (not counting the usually-heroic Friar Tuck), Basdeo ignores England's centuries-long Christian nature. The resulting distortion of the historical background prevents the author from tying the tales to the succeeding historical eras. We never learn of Robin Hood's Christian nature. Nor whether the *steal from the rich to feed the poor* motif stemmed at least in part from Christian charity. The fact that the equally-heroic Richard the Lionhearted went off crusading in many of these stories should naturally have prompted deeper reflection on the medieval era's Christian and crusading spirit.

The author whitewashes old England's Christian character. Would he write a book on Saudi Arabia without mentioning oil? *Robin Hood: The Life & Legend of an Outlaw* misleads us at times and falls short of its aims. The book better portrays today's lack of a sense of the Christian past than it does the history of Robin Hood literature.



## Help the Poor Struggler

Jan Davies

**Court Number One: The Old Bailey trials that defined modern Britain**, Thomas Grant, London, John Murray, 2019, £25.

I am old enough to remember the hanging of Ruth Ellis; my parents tried to stop me from reading the

newspapers, so I can remember hiding behind a sofa with a copy of *The Times*. She had admitted killing her lover by shooting him and although pleading not guilty, she had made it very plain that she did not dispute any of the prosecution case. So what, I remember thinking as I furtively read the newspaper articles, was the point of killing her. Why were all those people outside the gaol waiting to read the notice of her death? And most of all, I remember thinking, if killing was wrong, why was she going to be executed? Reading about the case now the chapter about Ruth Ellis was particularly fascinating. Not only is there an account of the trial but also details of her life and of what happened after the verdict. Times have changed. Now if the history of the abuse she had experienced was given beforehand to the prosecution she would be facing a charge of manslaughter not murder, and of course now there is no death penalty. No longer is there the frisson of horror in court when the sentence of death is pronounced. It may be that juries have fewer misgivings about convicting a person if they know that without the death penalty, a miscarriage of justice can be corrected.

This book begins by suggesting that there is something special about *Court One at the Old Bailey*, but it is only a useful peg on which to hang a series of fascinating stories of cases that have been heard there. Some interesting cases have been omitted because they were tried in a neighbouring court and Grant has also decided to omit some of the more ghoulish trials, like those of Peter Sutcliffe or Dennis Nilson.

In a chronological spread from 1907 when the Old Bailey opened its doors to our own time this book charts some of the changes, particularly in styles of advocacy. No longer do we have the histrionics of a Marshall Hall. There is an account of his defence of Madame Fahmy, the wife of an Egyptian prince. Marshall Hall shamelessly played on the prejudices of an English jury to imply that she had been subjected to unnatural foreign sexual practices and was not behaving rationally at the time when she shot her husband. Marshall Hall died in 1927 and Grant says that 'with him died a style of advocacy'. As Patrick Hastings is quoted as saying, 'those days of flatulent oratory are gone'. Hastings was briefed in the case of Elvira Barney who had shot her partner after a drunken party. He was the opposite of Marshall Hall, a master of understatement. In a closing speech he said '...I shall not indulge in flights of oratory or dramatic surprises, supposed to be the attributes of an advocate.' With his masterful dismantling of every piece of prosecution evidence he secured an acquittal not just of murder but of manslaughter also.

Back in 2010 I was teaching an intensive course in criminal law to some students at a college in Poland.

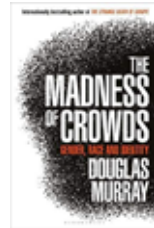
For a little light relief we watched an episode of *Kavanagh Q.C.* This isn't realistic, I told them, but it's the best I can show you now. They had seen a number of American films with court scenes and were surprised at how static our advocates are. In an English courtroom, you do not walk up and down in front of the jury or approach the witness box and glare at close quarters at a witness. You are rooted to the spot. Bullying witnesses is not appreciated and if you adopt a melodramatic style the Judge will stop you. Restraint can be deadly while good manners can be deployed as a weapon.

Grant writes concisely, giving the background to each case as well as examples of effective and ineffective cross-examination. He also has in Timothy Evans a harrowing example of a miscarriage of justice. Evans lived at 10 Rillington Place and was induced to confess in the police station to a murder he had not committed. Only some time after he had been hanged was it discovered that John Christie who also lived there was the murderer. Nowadays, Grant says, he would have been offered a solicitor in the police station and had the assistance of an 'appropriate adult' as a chaperon to help him.

I hate to disillusion Thomas Grant but all too often the solicitor does not intervene to prevent aggressive questioning and the appropriate adult is often useless. Although all interviews are DVD recorded, there is often a strange reluctance at court to play the DVD to the jury, and for less serious trials in the magistrates court there is often reliance on an inadequate summary, reducing perhaps an hour of an interview to a few lines. However, interviews are better than they used to be before tape and DVD recordings. We do now at least have the safeguard of the recording; it was the supposedly hard-nosed Thatcher government which changed the law to ensure that solicitors were present in police stations.

Even though I remembered reading about the trial of Jeremy Thorpe, I nevertheless found the account of his case fascinating, and I very much enjoyed reading about Randle and Pottle, two people who had helped the spy George Blake to escape from prison. They ran a defence of duress of circumstances; Blake had been in such dire conditions in prison that it was a matter of conscience to help him to escape. There is no such defence in English law so the pair had to represent themselves at their trial, since an advocate cannot run a defence which is completely contrary to law. They took advantage of the latitude given to defendants representing themselves and contrived matters so that the jury did not want to convict them. This is the strength of the jury system: sometimes it seems that they will decide that whatever has happened it would be wrong to label this defendant a criminal.

The book concludes with an account of the Soham murders. Few of us who were around at the time when Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman were killed will forget the anguish of all those involved desperately searching for them. Not only do we have an account of the trial but also of the investigation and the aftermath when the predictable verdict had been given. The cadaverous advocate Richard Latham, QC, with his syringe-like approach to presenting evidence, makes a good contrast to the showmanship of Marshall Hall. Times have indeed changed.



## All True Except the Facts

Alexander Adams

**The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity,** Douglas Murray, Bloomsbury, 2019, hardback, £20.

In Douglas Murray's new book the pathology of social culture in Anglophone countries today is clearly laid bare. *The Madness of Crowds* will not create the explosive impact of *The Strange Death of Europe* but it will serve as a well-researched and witty primer for those wanting to understand the culture wars that have ravaged and undermined Anglophone countries for the last decade.

The loss of traditional narratives and cultural certainties has created a vacuum, which has been filled by identity politics and its 'identarian' supporters. This stew of leftist activism, minority lobbying and post-modernist theory had long been brewing in universities but it was only in 2008, Murray suggests, that disillusioned people facing the wreckage of the financial crash lost what little confidence they had in capitalism and turned to new narratives. The ills of the world could be blamed on the lingering legacy of slavery, colonialism, Christianity and patriarchy. This new creed had the righteousness of religion, the luxury of narcissism and the comradeship of socialism. Denunciation culture with its tightening purity spirals can only lead to paranoia and persecution. Factional interests can never be aligned and can only conflict, leading to a continual derangement.

The rise of social media has allowed ordinary people to participate in mob justice – and to be subject to group harassment. There is a clear hypocrisy over the treatment of individuals in the press and social media according to political perspective. Murray's example is the divided responses to a white actor

(Benedict Cumberbatch) being excoriated for using an outmoded racial term in a friendly comment about actor opportunities and a let off being given to Sarah Jeong, who joined the editorial board of *The New York Times*, despite many years of making vicious, racist comments about white people. A momentary slip by a white man was worse than an Asian woman's sustained bigotry.

Silicon Valley technology firms are far from neutral in the culture wars and are being used to re-educate ordinary people along leftist lines. The political manipulation by big tech firms is apparent in Google search results. Murray recounts how the searches for Black and Asian couples and families returns images on Google that accord with the search terms but that 'white couples' returns images interspersed by non-white people, 'straight couples' includes gay couples and 'white men' features black men. Google's algorithms have a strong anti-majority bias by favouring women, non-white people, followers of minority religions, immigrants and so forth, but only in Western countries and the English language. This has been noted before and it is hard to conclude that Google's systems and staff are not persistently pushing a leftist agenda.

To his credit, Murray presents the strongest good-faith case for the behaviour of activists. Often, when one examines words and actions of activists, it is fairly clear that there are no principles and only the desire to gain power through silencing, intimidation, *ad hominem* attacks, moving the goalposts and other cynical tactics. Forcing divisions on a personal level is about control and power – not of a marginalised person over his/her life but that person's power over us. We are confronted with people who make themselves ugly and dare us to be repelled, people perform obscene acts in public and dare us to be shocked, people who make themselves look ridiculous and dare us to laugh.

Murray's acerbic wit and flashes of irritation and incredulity are ideal for his subject matter. Murray draws examples from popular culture and news and has footnotes to allow readers to find specific quotes. In lieu of genuine oppression – a cause as grand as the struggle of the American race-equality movement of the 1960s – leftists have taken to tilting at racism so diffuse that that it can never be pinpointed. Murray identifies black American author Ta-Nehisi Coates as a race hustler, whose entire career depends on exposing and deepening racial tensions. He has profited from the guilt of white liberals, winning awards by advocating racial segregation and telling white Americans they are irredeemably tainted by their (putatively) slave-holding ancestors.

Followers of the new creed are expected to maintain contradictory beliefs – people are born homosexual and this is immutable but one can choose to become another

gender simply by announcing it. A few people played a prank in Boston in September. A simple sheet of paper with the following words was printed and placed in public positions: 'Islam is right about women'. This made television news when it drew criticism from local women. These people knew that the statement was a dig at feminism, women's emancipation and the feminisation of public life but they could not say so without acknowledging that Islamic holy texts treat women as inferior to men. This would have meant an admission that there is a conflict between the doctrines of feminism and Islam, both of which are representative of 'minority/marginalised' groups. The prank showed a very public example of cognitive dissonance inherent in identity politics.

Murray approaches the question of forgiveness. Is it fair to punish a person today for views expressed in youth or made when social mores differed from those of today? We can think of many instances when a hardworking and qualified individual was publicly shamed – even fired – following activist offence archaeology. What Murray does not tease out are the parallels between offence archaeology and notions of inherited race guilt. All white people are considered fair game because of colonisation. This division of people into those blessed and damned by their birth has always a major component of racial prejudice and ethnic genocide. These divisive Left-wingers calculate historic culpability and nurture racial grievances as meticulously as any Jew-hating Neo-Nazi or jihadi.

The most contentious issue is the treatment of transgender people. Accelerated by identity politics, aided by a public, which wants to be sympathetic to individuals in a difficult situation, advanced by aggressive activists and assisted by a cadre of therapists and surgeons, the amount of gender-reassignment surgery is escalating. Murray asks us to consider the future social and legal ramifications of thousands of transgender people regretting their sterile scarred bodies and angry towards health and governmental authorities that hustled them into their current states. The suicide rates for pre- and post-operative transgender people are very high.

Transgender identity is the ultimate test – to force people to call black white and to back that with not just moral opprobrium, potential public shaming and the threat of losing one's livelihood but also the might of the state. Out of politeness most of us might call a transgender woman 'her', but she will never be biologically female. Yet to say as much is now a quasi-legal offence. It is tyranny when the state decrees that a commonly held truth to be too dangerous to be spoken aloud. The arguments set out in *The Madness of Crowds* remind us of that.



## Tomorrow we die?

Merrie Cave

**Extremism Rebellion, A review of ideology and tactics,** Tom Wilson and Richard Walton, Policy Exchange, 2019, £10.

Most of us had never heard of Extinction Rebellion until last April when their activities blocked London streets, prevented people from going to work and necessitated extra police forces from around the country to help out. We have now experienced another last October, and this well argued booklet summarizes the aims, methods and supporters of the movement. But most people *are* worried about climate change and the destruction of the environment in so many ways. It is not true as the Prime Minister remarked that the participants are all ‘crusties’ for I know several well educated middle-class people who have travelled up to London to take part including the PM’s father. However most of them would not agree with breaking the law – one told me ‘you will not be arrested unless you really want to be’. At the same time many of them may be unaware of the other radical aims of the movement some of whose members are drenched in Marxism, like the current leaders of the Labour Party, believing that capitalism is dysfunctional and heading for history’s dustbin. Extinction Rebellion should reflect that many communist governments have had a lamentable record on the environment; there are many examples besides Chernobyl.

Their rhetoric tends to be about feelings rather than reasoned argument: ‘We are going to force the governments to act. And if they don’t we will bring them down and create a democracy fit for purpose and yes, some may die in the process. I suggest you watch the professors on *You Tube* until you break down and cry and cry like you are never going to stop and come back home and do what is obvious, Rebel!’ They reject technological solutions that might counter climate change but look forward to a social collapse. Obviously there is little information about what might come afterwards except returning to a pre-industrial society in some kind of Stone Age repetition. They might consider what happened to Zimbabwe and presumably ignore the problem of China which frustrates any attempt to reduce carbon emissions by building coal-fired plants. Last October their lack of practical intelligence was illustrated by their attempt to spray red paint over the Treasury building without understanding how to control the fire hose which doubled back on the

protesters. Their handbook whose contributors include Rowan Williams and Dr Susie Orbach explains that the aim is to ‘let people continue to party in the streets’ and describes how activists can block roads and bridges. ‘The capital can’t be shut down for days at a time but if large numbers are arrested this will serve to increase public support for the cause.’

Extinction has received a lot of money from various businesses: There is a German fund, the Guerilla Foundation, Lush cosmetics, Agent Provocateur and several other fashion companies as well as the former head of Unilever, Paul Polman. Surely these contributions show that the problems facing this planet put Brexit, for instance, right into the shade and deserve an intelligent response from governments and international bodies. These problems are urgent and if Extinction Rebellion’s propaganda can bring about action, its childish methods could be forgiven. Shutting down London for two weeks with plans for further similar action has already damaged public sympathy; a two-day event might maintain the public’s attention.

Commentators have written at length about how market capitalism will solve the problem in increasing off-shore alternatives, solar power, electric vehicles etc. A report from Goldman Sachs states that renewables can ‘profitably enable a \$16-30 trillion clean energy infrastructure investment’. However the commentariat ignore a problem which is rarely discussed frankly except in dodgy websites or the *Salisbury Review*. The former German Chancellor Willy Brandt, in the Brandt report in the eighties warned that the chasm between the living standards of south and north was the world’s biggest challenge. Recently the UK Space Agency’s chief scientist warned that droughts, famine and deforestation would bring mass migration from Africa. From 2001 to 2016 immigration added at least 5.4 million to the UK’s population but without an attendant expansion in infrastructure: roads, public transport as well as health and education. This has been the main factor in the housing crisis but is barely mentioned. Every year for the past twenty years or so we should have planned to build new cities. Instead many live in miserable overcrowded conditions so pensioners who persist in staying in their houses are blamed as well as government incompetence.

There are other factors besides: the overuse and pollution from plastics, the condition of the soil in many parts of the world which cannot produce enough food and the loss of so many of our species, plants and animals. I don’t agree with having so many government departments; more usually means worse like the universities. Abolish some like Culture and Women and have a Department of Climate Change with effective teeth instead of submerging it in the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

# IN SHORT

**September 1 1939: A Biography of a Poem**, Ian Sansom, Fourth Estate, 2019, £16.99.

In case anyone should be misled by the well-designed jacket into thinking that this book might be about the outbreak of World War II, they must think again. Its subject is not even W H Auden's poem of that name, written in New York soon after that date. It is about the author's obsession with the poet, whom he never met, and his dreary awareness of his own 'awe, disappointment and self-disgust' at his unsurprising inferiority to his hero. He includes Auden's later view that *September 1 1939* was 'the most dishonest poem I have ever written'.

Many of Sansom's short paragraphs consist of navel-gazing, ending in dead ends, and reading him is like watching a man treading water in a big lake, and vaguely wishing he would sink. The great question 'So What?' hovers like an impatient kestrel over many a page of this superfluous book. So too does the comment 'Non Sequitur'. The net result is a series of indifferent yawns, almost everything leading nowhere. There is also the question of irrelevance. Among those dragged into the book is Rex Warner and his translation of Herodotus's account of the Peloponnesian War. Well, Warner was a friend 'or at least an acquaintance' of Auden's. That is all.

There is however an occasional useful quotation from Auden himself, such as his opinion of the value of studying the classics: 'Anyone who has spent many hours of his youth translating into and out of two languages so systematically different from our own learns something about his mother tongue which I do not think can be learned so well in any other way ... inculcating the habit of asking, whenever one uses a word, 'What is its exact meaning?' This can however descend to the level of my Oxford tutor in philosophy whose only published work was an essay in *Mind* on 'Alternative meanings of Or'. Auden also vehemently stressed the value of learning poetry by heart, a habit for which today's students are thought to have no time.

There is also the occasional false note. Auden asks 'What is a hero?', and gives the surprising answer that 'he can be recognised by the degree of interest he arouses in the spectator or reader' – surely not what most of us mean by the term. But to be fair, something can be forgiven Sansom when he recalls a lecture he

gave, where two members of the audience had arrived under the impression that he was someone else of a vaguely similar name. On realising their mistake they got up and left, but 'The other half of the audience remained where they were.'

Sansom's book ends with a 26-page bibliography of books which have some bearing on the beginning and duration of the War, but it is hardly a subject that has been previously neglected, and Sansom's banal obsession with the poet takes us no further. His publishers say that he is a frequent contributor to *The Guardian* (you guessed?) and the *London Review of Books*. On this showing his readers are to be pitied.

*John Jolliffe*

**Magnetic Island**, Harry Cummins, Connor Court Publishing (AU), 2019, £33, (Amazon).

*Magnetic Island* charts the journey of British art aficionado, Patrick Mynts, on a meandering cultural junket in the Antipodes until he gives himself a mission – tracking down the reclusive but gifted artist Tray Beautous. Mynts' progress through Australia, with all his observations and ruminations, casts a satirical eye over a way of life that Mynts believes is on the verge of disappearing. *Magnetic Island* is not plot-driven, but there is mockery, caricature, parody, lampoon and travesty. Harry Cummins is a sit-down comedian who sees the boundary at which political incorrectness goes too far and he barrels through it.

Tray Beautous, like any artist of genius, has tried to impose his uncompromising inner-vision on the world: 'Which is what ART is, of course, staking a claim – asserting the supremacy of one's own subjective eye, one's own "take" on an environment.' A successful politician, Prime Minister Sir Dewy Popkiss, a relative of Patrick Mynts, is determined to impose his inner-vision on the world, only he is all ego and no soul. Mynts approaching Canberra by car is cleverly compared to Dante's descent into hell, with Parliament House at the very epicentre. *Magnetic Island*, cut up into bite-sized pieces, could be reconstituted into hundreds of knowing poems. The book conjures up a picture of a vanishing Australian paradise. Old-style Australia was at ease with itself with no understanding that its civilisational roots were shallow. Only the

skill of the Great Artist can capture this moment of a civilisation which, like Late Antiquity or Byzantium, exists for a limited time. The soul of outmoded Australia is captured in the work of Tray Beautous.

The theme of a waning Golden Age suits Cummins's melancholia. The narrator alludes to the classrooms of the 1950s and early 60s with a remark about 'honour rolls and gold stars'. The honour rolls and gold stars represent a form of education, with half-year examinations and regular Friday Fifty Tests from Grade 3, that is gone. Class seating arrangements in Australia were based on demonstrating the successful absorption of great reams of knowledge. Did the system encourage fortitude? Were Australian children any less happy than the 100,000 youngsters now prescribed anti-depressants?

Much insight about the human condition abounds in *Magnetic Island*. When we catch up with Tray Beautous, hiding on his island in northern Queensland,

Patrick Mynts describes 'a very ordinary Australian, like some short, brown professional cricketer from Wollongong with a hairy chest, primitive snub-nosed face, and one of those provincially fashionable haircuts'. The point is not so much that genius in Australia lurks behind the façade of an ordinary-looking chap, but that genius per se lurks behind the seemingly ordinary anywhere. Using Australia as a metaphor, Cummins is playing with stereo-types – now forbidden by our PC guardians – to make a non-stereotypical point. In our progressive era, Cummins' satirical writing is unlikely to be studied since it might trigger the young Australian reader. If 'soft totalitarianism', a favourite expression of Cummins, judges *Magnetic Island* to be off-limits, then the author's central point about a vanishing Australia is made.

*Daryl McCann*

*The*

# *Salisbury Review*

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

Annual subscription rates:

UK £27

Europe £30.

Airmail rest of world: £38,

Digital copy £10 + VAT.

Single issues £6+p&p

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Printed in the UK by The MANSON Group Limited

Typesetting — DASH

Graphics — Lindsey Dearnley

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

The  
*Salisbury Review*

*The quarterly magazine of conservative thought*



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