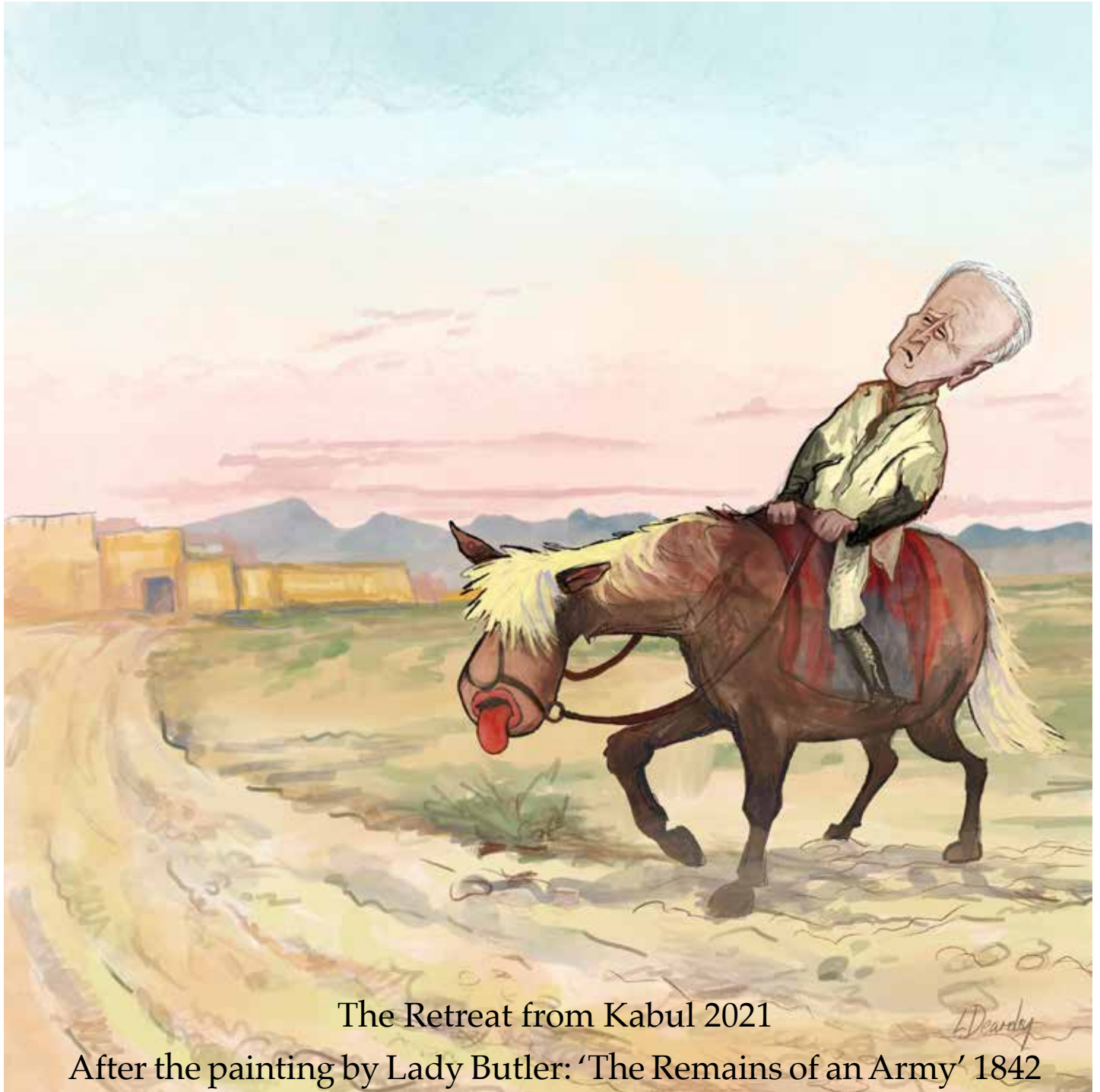


The

Salisbury Review

Absolutely the wrong opinion on everything



The Retreat from Kabul 2021

After the painting by Lady Butler: 'The Remains of an Army' 1842

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought

Autumn 2021 | Vol 40 No 1



ARTICLES

- 3 Editorial
- 4 “Afghanistan – where Empires go to die”
Catherine Blaiklock
- 6 Building back baloney
Jane Kelly
- 8 Britain crippled by a single word – racism
Frank Haviland
- 9 Has the Church of England a purpose?
Peter Day-Milne
- 12 Has Britain become an autonomous territory of China?
Alistair Miller
- 14 Lockdown a letter to the Prime Minister
Keith Brown
- 16 A short history of vaccination and its enemies
Edward Pilbrow
- 17 Stiff upper lip is better than psychotherapy
Mark Mantel
- 19 GB news: as gutless as all the other media
James Monteith
- 21 Australia: Larrikins and negative nancies
Daryl McCann
- 23 The Transistor: chips with everything
B K Ridley
- 24 Hungary bans teaching children about homosexuality
Mark Griffith
- 26 Teach yourself rude
Mary Sydney
- 27 The concreting of Paris
Theodore Dalrymple
- 29 White slaves in 17th and 18th century Britain
Bill Hartley
- 31 Living below sea level
Daniel Egerton
- 32 The flying snails of sophistry
George Hopewell
- 34 Is Britain in danger of ever rejoining the EU?
Mike Mosbacher

COLUMNS

- 35 Conservative Classic — 82
The Passenger, Ulrich Alexander Boschwitz
- 36 Eternal Life
Peter Day-Milne

ARTS AND BOOKS

- 38 Jane Kelly
on Mary Wortley Montague
- 39 Richard Bassett
on Tito
- 40 John Jolliffe
on Meritocracy
- 41 Celia Haddon
on Shakespeare
- 43 Jan Davies
on anti-female prejudice in the Law
- 44 Brian Eastty
on British Muslims
- 45 Anthony Daniels
on Dangerous Ideas
- 46 Martin Dewhurst
on Russian spies
- 48 Alexander Adams
on the parasitic mind
- 49 Roger Watson
on Niall Ferguson
- 50 Sean McGlynn
on Machiavellian advice
- 52 FILM
Nomadland, Jane Kelly
- 53 In Short

Subscription payments by cheque to

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

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

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

*Credit card payments by phone
01462 234279*

Please leave a message and we will get back to you



The Salisbury Review

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

PO Box 81, Shefford, Beds, SG17 9AP
Tel: 01462 234279

E-mail: info@salisburyreview.co.uk

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

One morning in late October a large cruise ship flying the Panamanian flag anchors off Ramsgate. Customs, who have been watching her for some time as she made her way up the English Channel, send a cutter. Its crew report that the name of the ship is *Windrush 2*, with five thousand asylum seekers on board, all claiming asylum. Her captain says they are not trying to enter the country illegally as all of them, having a well-founded fear of persecution in their own countries, are claiming asylum under the 1951 UN Convention on refugees. He wants the border force to ferry them ashore, adding that similar ships are on the way. This method, he claims, is far safer for the refugees who now can undertake the journey risk free and in comfort, while not breaking the law by failing to seek asylum in the first safe country they come to (Britain is their first safe country) and of course it is much cheaper. The only difference is the size of the transport.

There is much huffing and puffing in the *Daily Mail* about our island kingdom. Various ministers appear on TV to 'vow' this outrage will be speedily ended. Meanwhile, just as they do every day, convoys of charity workers head for Ramsgate, (they will advise all their clients over 18 to claim they are under eighteen) the Home Office books all the town's available hotel rooms and beyond, teams of immigration lawyers arrive. Talks go on until midnight in the Treasury about funding legal aid for the migrants as each has a right to be properly (and expensively) defended. A convoy of Border Force ships set out for the *Windrush 2* to take off the migrants; on board are BBC reporters on the lookout for human interest stories to sweeten the public palette for this latest migration dish about to be forced down their throats.

With the exception of the size of the boat this is the exact state of migration today. *Windrush 2* is what Einstein called a 'Gedanken' experiment, a 'thought experiment' laying out the principles of an idea to see its consequences.

Priti Patel proposes to stop asylum seeking growing

into a scandal of *Windrush 2* proportions by making it an offence for illegal migrants to enter the UK without permission. In future, asylum seekers will have to apply to a British embassy or consulate abroad where their cases will be assessed, and if genuine will be given papers to come to Britain.

Lawyers will make mincemeat (and as usual loads of money) of her proposals, claiming every one of the passengers on *Windrush 2* is making an urgent claim for shelter, just as a man fleeing a gang in the streets might seek shelter in a nearby house. Time is of the essence. If you are in a country where you are being pursued by the police, waiting for the British Embassy to give you permission to come to Britain would be highly dangerous. Better buy a passage to Calais from the gangs.

The lawyers' case is a tissue of lies, just as the entire history of illegal migration into Britain from the 1980's onward is based on a huge lie. Modern asylum seeking is almost all economic, a considered financial decision taken over many months by a migrant and his family often with plans for his entire family to follow. Just as foreign aid is money given by the poor of one country to the rich of another, illegal asylum seekers are rich people moving from a poor country to a rich country in order to steal the pension funds and social security of the latter's poor.

Allowing illegal migration to go unchecked is an assault on the very idea of nationhood, a breach of our frontier, an invasion, for some as terrible as the French endured on seeing pictures of German soldiers marching through their streets through lines of cowed and silent civilians. We did not ask for this. But those who rule us no longer care what we want, even worse, they no longer care they don't care. They know they have the means to crush us; by jail if we speak out, by taking away our jobs, by telling our children lies about our history, by demolishing our statues and ripping up our history. How long are we going to tolerate this gigantic lie?

“Afghanistan – where empires go to die”

Catherine Blaiklock

We had been hopelessly labouring to plough waste lands; to make nationality grow in a place full of the certainty of God... Among the tribes our creed could be only like the desert grass – a beautiful swift seeming of spring; which, after a day's heat, fell dusty.

T E Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom

Richard Burdon, Labour MP for Leeds and one of Corbyn's right-hand men, must have been disappointed at not being called to speak at the debate in the House of Commons on Afghanistan. One would assume he wanted to condemn the Taliban for their atrocities: The gouging of an old woman's eyes because she could not afford to cook Taliban fighters a meal, a young girl brutally murdered in the street in front of her grieving parents for refusing to cover her hair, a famous journalist shot dead for daring to wave what was the national Afghan flag until a few days ago, or men tarred and dragged behind pick-up trucks.

Perhaps Mr Burdon intended to talk about babies being thrown over airport walls, people falling from planes or just the pure terror many are feeling, knowing that they will be soon killed? However stupid he thinks the actions of Boris, Biden, Blair or Trump, it's not them raping twelve year virgin brides.

Instead Mr Burdon wants the British government to pay the government of Afghanistan war reparations. Since a genocidal regime is in power, is he suggesting we give the money to the Taliban as the de facto government? It would be like financing Pol Pot's killing fields or Hitler had he won the war.

Marxists like Mr Burdon, blinded by their hatred of Britain, America and therefore the West, do not understand what is happening in Afghanistan. It is not a fight between left and right, Marxism or Capitalism. It is a fight between science, individualism, modern thought and ancient religious beliefs, beliefs established well before Marx, long before either the Russians or the Americans invaded the country – a re-enactment

of the Renaissance. It is why the Taliban would in good conscience have no problem killing someone with Mr Burdon's views.

Which is why it is easy to mistake the fall of Kabul for that of Saigon. It was not. The Vietnamese were interested in getting back their country, rebuilding it and making money. They were not interested in religious purity as the only factor driving society. The Taliban are fighting for the restoration of a medieval past.

Nor is it the same as the ancient colonial wars of the British – the Afghans then were a fierce people fighting for their land, not for global Jihad. America's enemies – China, Russia, Iran – will, now that America has fled the field, take advantage of any power vacuum, but they did not orchestrate or fund the overthrow. The weakened Russians have already tried and are not going to try again, the Shia Iranians are not going to take on a pile of Deobandi (extreme Sunni) battle hardened fighters who know every rock and mound in this vast, wild and mountainous land. (Afghanistan is three times the size of Britain and rises almost as high as Everest, Kabul is significantly higher in altitude than Kathmandu.)

The Chinese, with an eye on Afghanistan's mineral wealth, will no doubt go in fast to make commercial deals, offer infrastructure and start mining. One of the ironies is that Mr Burdon and many on the left want a complete green reset including electric cars. To do that the world will need vast quantities of lithium. The world's largest untapped reserves of lithium are in Afghanistan.

In mining what will be the world's most sought after resources, the Chinese would be wise not to send in female geologists, engineers and managers. The role of women is absolutely at the forefront of this fight between modernity, 'material progress' and science on one hand and non-material spiritual beliefs and morality, including the after life, on the other. Gays, transgender, tribes, racial and linguistic differences, inequality, corruption and the nuances of who owns what all fade compared to the chasm

of thoughts about women.

Many parallel worlds existed in Afghanistan during its twenty year occupation by America. Superficially you could say the divide was between the modern five star luxury hotels in Kabul with the gyms, cafes and swimming pools and hordes of liberal NGOs spouting gay rights and female empowerment, versus dirt poor villages scratching the earth with sticks and carrying goods on donkeys their eyes blinded by dust and flies – between the millionaires in their Land Cruisers and the average peasant living on an income barely a quarter of the hardly rich Pakistanis; but this is to put a Western, Marxist perspective on it. (Afghanistan has one of the highest birthrates in the world and the highest in Asia as well as the lowest income only comparable to a few African countries.)

Instead we should concentrate on what must be to western eyes the incomprehensible philosophical differences between two groups of middle class, reasonably prosperous, young urban Afghan women who outwardly look the same but think so differently that they end up having nothing in common and would probably kill each other for their respective beliefs.

Twenty per cent of 200,000 Afghan college students were women. These were women trained to think like the dominant paradigm in the UN and the West: Women are not only equal to men but probably superior to men. Women can do anything a man does and are the same as men. Patriarchies need to be overturned and fought. The extreme end of this view is that all men are inherently nasty and sexist and all sex is rape.

A few Afghan women became fighter pilots, the governors of big cities, members of Parliament, soldiers, doctors, lawyers, journalists and NGO workers. Except for a headscarf these women often wore modern clothes and were little different from their American counterparts. Which was why the 'Feminist Majority Foundation' was so thrilled when Kabul University launched its first 'Gender and Women's studies' graduate program in October 2015. (I wonder how they are faring this last week).

On the other side of town a large and increasing number of girls from wealthy, traditional, conservative households were taken out of ordinary school at puberty and sent to madrassas. Ordinary government schools hold classes for five hours a day, madrassas are open ten to twelve hours a day.

Pupils are covered from head to foot, not in the blue Afghani Burka but the black Burka of the Gulf States. Even in the heat, they wear gloves and socks. Male teachers take classes from behind a screen or curtain. To the horror of NGO's and Western liberals, these schools have increased dramatically in number and size over the last ten years. The women they produce think in exactly the same way as jihadi men.

Did these girls rebel? Quite the opposite. They ended up preaching to all their old 'immoral' westernised friends that they should join them. Their main ambition in life was to worship and respect God, learn the entire Koran by heart and be, as one put it, 'An employee of their husband.'

It did not take the barrel of a gun for these young girls and women to believe every word of the Koran literally – they were shown and they wanted to respect their parents and God. They wanted to worship God as their primary purpose in life. Some will say they are brainwashed. Others will say they are moral and will go to heaven.

The left cannot understand this. How can a woman choose to be subservient and covered up? The right cannot understand it either. How could people reject individualism, materialism, science and rational thought and above all money?

Such beliefs are incomprehensible to a materialistic west. Which is why TV pundits are now bleating about a newer, kinder Taliban who we can do business with. We may as well do business with a crocodile. The Taliban with their longing for martyrdom want only two things, to bring down Satan's kingdom, our society in the west, and establish a world wide Caliphate of unspeakable backwardness. No means are too cruel or ruthless to bring this about, witness the Manchester Arena bombing, the Twin Towers and the countless killing of innocents all over the world by suicide bombers. Like some tottering old Roman emperor President Biden has delivered us into the hands of our enemy. Look out for the man on the underground with the padded jacket.

Catherine Blaiklock was a currency and options trader in London, New York, Singapore and Tokyo.

Building back baloney

Is the new head of the NHS a woke lunatic?

Jane Kelly

I can't hear, my ears are full of wax. They used to be syringed by a doctor, then a nurse, but in early August, my GP phoned to say they will no longer be done at all. 'You have to go private,' he said. 'It costs about £90. Not much.' I think it's a lot and was shocked. He said it had happened due to concerns about 'health & safety.' I think it's about cost cutting, and more people will be going around partially deaf. No one likes change to services they've taken for granted and my problem is nothing of course compared to other issues as we try to 'Build back better' as the government slogan has it; lack of GPs, delays in patient care with waiting lists at a fourteen year high and a backlog of nearly five million people. Poor comparative cancer survival rates, higher than European average infant mortality, low level of health care in Cornwall and Ulster and an epidemic of diabetes and obesity. Despite the outbursts of organised clapping and a medal from The Queen, no one can be confident about the future of the NHS.

A popular topic of conversation among middle class Britons is how surprisingly good health services are in France, Italy and Germany, even Spain. A friend in Singapore says westerners are astonished when they see their hospitals and at the kind of health care offered. The NHS is now fourth on the list of eleven wealthy countries according to a Commonwealth Fund report. In 2014 it was ranked first. But new ideas about funding and organising the NHS amount to heresy. Like the issue of transubstantiation and the status of the Pope in the 1530s, it's a burning issue and far too dangerous to discuss openly. The government have just plonked the matter on a back-burner by 'after a global search' appointing, 'Continuity candidate,'

Amanda Pritchard as Chief Executive of the NHS.

She was formerly its Chief Operating Officer in England, responsible for 'overseeing the health service's performance and implementing improvements'. Matthew Taylor, CEO of the NHS Confederation, says the job is 'Arguably the most significant across the entire public sector and this continuity at the top of the NHS will be vital.' She greeted her appointment with teenage levels of hyperbole: 'Thrilled,' 'proud,' 'amazing', particularly wonderful for a woman to get the job, for the first time, as she pointed out eagerly 'Seventy five percent of NHS staff are women' as if that was obviously significant of extra value.

After that bit of wokism, she outlined her priorities. 'Its diversity makes the NHS really special,' she said. 'I want to make it somewhere that embraces diversity and inclusion at the core.' Perhaps she hasn't noticed but the NHS, as one of the largest employers in the world, and the biggest in Europe, already does that. Of current staff, 67,000 are from the EU, 64,000 are Asian nationals, Indians are the second largest

group of employees, followed by Filipinos, and there are 8,000 Nigerians, from a country badly needing medical staff. Disturbed by the shortage of workforce in the health sector, a women's cancer charity, Project PINK BLUE, revealed in July that Nigeria will have a shortage of 50,120 doctors and 137,859 nurses by 2030. They despair at the mass migration of their health care workers to foreign countries.

Pritchard will be pleased to perch atop a truly 'International Health Service,' drawing in ever more migrants. Why is a woman in such a vitally important, highly paid job, so preoccupied with



'He refuses to take the knee to the G.P.'

the sex and race of her staff, and feels the need to emphasise such politically correct views? The NHS is now a shining socialist monolith constantly used by the extreme Left to discredit not just capitalism but the white indigenous culture, presumably in the hope of one day seeing a truly multi-cultural Marxist state. In April 2020, in an interview with *Nursing Times*, Carol Cooper, 'Diversity and Inclusion Champion of the Year' at the *Nursing Times* Workforce Summit and Awards 2019, and 'Head of Equality, Diversity and Human Rights' at Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust, said 'BAME' nurses and healthcare assistants felt they were being deliberately sent on to dangerous Covid wards by their white colleagues. 'BME staff feel that they are being exposed to patients with Covid over and above their colleagues,' said Cooper, 'Some are saying they are being taken from the wards that they usually work on and put on the Covid wards and they feel that there is a bias, that existed before is now influencing their being appointed and they are terrified.'

She had no data to prove this but repeated the allegations of racist murder by white NHS staff on BBC Radio 4 *Woman's Hour*. The govt launched an enquiry into the higher rate of ethnic minority Covid deaths. The result was inconclusive but for a whole section of NHS employees and our educational and cultural institutions such as the BBC, there is no explanation except lack of diversity, or as it's also known, institutional racism.

In July, Afro-Caribbean writer, Sian Ejiwunmi-Le Berre, a bright young woman, doing brilliantly in her career, claimed on BBC Radio 4 that her cancer was misdiagnosed and black women suffer a higher peri-natal death rate because of 'systemic bigotry'. No health problem can be blamed on individual life choices, she said, that is just 'medieval' cruelty. For her, even 'eating well, is a privileged (ie, white) position'. People who hold those ideas have received a fillip from Pritchard's appointment, which could have been made by a Labour administration, and it surely shows how far this government has drifted from the views of the average Conservative voter. It's hard to believe this Tory government came into power on a tide of populist sentiment, or recognise anything truly conservative about them now. Allister Heath,

'building back' seems to be another term for more of the same; a winter of the usual NHS beds crisis, just like old times, plus a possible tax on heating gas, and energy price hikes.

French born business journalist and fierce critic of cultural Marxism, recently suggested that Boris should be proposing an insurance scheme for social care, using market forces, rather than drifting towards another cumbersome NHS style system. But 'building back' seems to be another term for more of the same; a winter of the usual NHS beds crisis, just like old times, plus a possible tax on heating gas, and energy price hikes. Radical decarbonisation, with a ridiculous dead-line, along with attacking motorists, are now the government's top priority, leading some to wonder whether we are getting bicycling Boris' views or his

new wife's. In areas such as crime and immigration, Priti Patel now seems to be a lone voice, abandoned by him, with no tools to carry out reforms, her cash has probably been spent on HS2.

After the Brexit bounce, and with the success of the vaccines, this government could have pushed ahead with radical reform, even sold the idea of a new tax to the public, instead we have a confusing rag-bag of infuriating ideas on education, health, transport, and even the economy, policies that would have pleased Corbyn. The consensus on keeping welfare spending low to encourage work was binned during the pandemic and it seems to have gone for good. Our schools and universities are damaging themselves as places where teachers and academics have lost faith in the pursuit of knowledge, preferring to teach 'emotional literacy' and identarian politics. The issue of improving our railways has also been parked, apart from ominously renaming the network, 'Great British Railways,' presumably by a committee with no idea of the meaning of 'Great' in its original context. That embarrassing and probably expensive bit of ungrammatical advertising will no doubt soon go the same way that 'Consignia' went for the Post Office, consigned to the bin.

As we take stock of the future, post-pandemic, we are left to ponder, not inspirational and challenging plans presented to us by our trusted leaders, but the depressing reality of how such a successful Tory government became so easily addicted to state spending and central planning, with all the torpor and waste of public money we know too well, that inevitably involves.

Jane Kelly was a social editor for the Daily Mail.

Britain: crippled by a single word – racism

Frank Haviland

It is a fact of life for inveterate doom-mongers, such as myself, that being right is never quite as satisfying as it ought to be. And yet, optimism of course is never an option. I admit to a brief dalliance with the latter after the 2019 General Election, when I imagined a Tory government with an 80-seat majority might harbour the vaguest sentiments of conservatism. How foolish I was not to trust my better instincts.

The nation has suffered more during the Johnson administration than it would ever have done under Corbyn; at least we'd have been able to enjoy free Wi-Fi with the apocalypse. It is not Brexit or even Covid causing the damage, but *soi-disant* 'Conservatives'; Conservatives who have aided and abetted the left's undermining of Britain, to the point where she is incapable of defending herself from without or within.

How has this been achieved you may ask? You can put it in one word: *racist*. For decades, this slur has been the left's only trump card; one therefore you can almost forgive them playing it. But the Conservative response to this has been unforgivable. Not only have Conservatives failed to resist the smear, they are now employing it as justification for their own indolence.

For the first time in history, Britain can boast a whopping £2 Trillion national debt. That's more than 100 per cent of GDP; an amount so sizeable, it is rumoured even David Lammy refused to put it on expenses. Part of the rationale behind the staggering £250 billion annual cost of lockdown, is that the virus affects minorities disproportionately; no overreaction then.

Financial ruin is the least of the things our government refuses to protect us from. According to Cummings, Johnson refused to shut the country's borders at the start of the pandemic, because he feared it would be seen as 'racist'. It is also self-evident that part of Priti Patel's problem deterring illegal migrants crossing the Channel is the accusation of racism. Try sending over a few Grand Wizards of the KKK in a dinghy, and see how quickly the Home Office get their fingers out.

It is the *racist* slur that allowed Muslim rape gangs to flourish in Britain for decades, a problem which even now has not abated. It is fear of the word *racist* that causes police to ignore BLM riots, and fail to employ stop and search in the capital. Sure, black lives matter, but not nearly as much as *pretending* black lives matter.

We cannot protect our democracy with voter ID, because that would be racist. Neither can we protect industry by hiring the best person for the job, because they don't always come with the right skin tone. We cannot protect our education system, because teachers keep grading work without due consideration of the student's ethnicity. We cannot protect little girls from getting blown up at concerts, because security guards are uncomfortable approaching non-white terrorists. And if you're thinking about objecting to Shamima Begum coming home, you might want to think again.

The accusation of 'racist' has precious little to do with actual racism these days, and everything to do with controlling our response. Daring to object to the wrong thing is now as good as a criminal offence. Accuse Prince Harry of being a spoilt, self-centred disgrace to the nation, and you won't hear many complaints. Call Meghan Markle the same, and you might have a problem.

The sleight of hand involved here is breathtaking both in its stupidity, and in its success. The idea that disproportionate outcomes are inherently problematic is foolish. The idea that truth is mediated by the identity of the speaker is moronic. But the idea that crime being committed disproportionately should somehow determine our response to it borders on farce. Would Sadiq Khan perhaps be more motivated to stop London stabbings if it were Old Etonians with switchblades?

The race card is now operating as a panacea against the common man, every one of whose concerns may now be dismissed by the authorities, with the merest allusion to it. Care about immigration, crime, policing double standards, education or access to services; you're racist. It's why Labour lost the red

wall, but why the Conservatives are so keen to lose it too is baffling.

What exactly is the goal of the common man here? Forbidden to complain about being stabbed, supplanted, gang-raped, or simply blown to smithereens, and assuming he makes it to an NHS deathbed, does he meet his maker with the smug satisfaction of claiming ‘at least I wasn’t racist’?

What exactly is the aim of our government? Incompetence can always be forgiven, but incompetence which consistently favours the destruction of Britain smacks of intent to even the least conspiratorial among us

The race game is unwinnable, intentionally. Britain and the British are ‘systemically racist’; you’re racist if you acknowledge your racism, and even

more so if you refuse to. So why play? Let the left tie themselves in Gordian knots of their own design, arguing that 20-stone ‘women’ with cocks should be able to compete as women, because of feminism (there’s a TV show in there somewhere).

I would argue that a political party unafraid of the race card, and with the vaguest conservative policies would instantly pick up 40 per cent of the vote: equality before the law, enforced borders, zero quotas, hiring exclusively on ability, and a stop and search blitzkrieg on London. Call me a doom-monger, but I don’t see one coming.

Frank Haviland is a Londoner living in South Korea and the author of Banalysis: the Lie Destroying the West.

Has the Church of England a purpose?

Peter Day Milne

A few years ago, I heard a senior Muslim cleric tell the following anecdote to a small audience. At a conference of religious leaders, he had asked a C of E bishop what one had to believe to be a member of his church. After a pause, the bishop had answered ‘That’s a very interesting question.’ The cleric remarked to his audience that he found it easier to deal with Catholics.

It is easy to laugh at that nameless bishop’s confusion about the faith that he was tasked to defend, but his answer was profound. What is the Church of England? What does she believe? These have always been disputed questions. Is she a Catholic Church in disagreement with the Pope, as Henry VIII saw it? Is she a Protestant Church, as she seemed to become under Edward VI? Is she an Elizabethan ‘broad church’, neither one nor the other? What defines her? Is it her fairly Catholic Prayer Book, with her noble evensongs brilliantly distilled and translated from the old monastic offices? Yet most Anglicans do not use it. Is it,

then, her Protestant thirty-nine articles that define her? Possibly; but the Articles were evidently an eclectic product of their times. Besides, the Articles commend the Book of Homilies, one of which calls the Pope the anti-Christ; if that is the Anglican faith, then it is hard to explain recent archbishops’ cordial relations with Rome.

I say none of this to denigrate the faith of Anglicans, nor the Church of England. Despite the ambiguities of her doctrine, she has been the custodian of the religious heritage of the English people, and the nurturer of many English Christians’ faith; generations of devout, morally serious people have worshipped in her glorious cathedrals. Moreover, the Church of England remains established, and so oversees many of the great ceremonies of our national life; it adds a Christian character to everything from royal weddings to the annual ceremony at the Cenotaph.

It is precisely because of her good qualities and her important symbolic role, that the Church of England still matters – as does her inability to

define herself. For this inability makes her ever vulnerable to attempts to redefine her in radically new ways. A new attempt to do just that is to fuse the old established religion with the modern Establishment's new religion of the NHS.

Many members of the modern British establishment, politicians, media leaders, civil servants and the like, have long seen the NHS as a potential unifier of today's deeply diverse Britain: a cause that we can all support; an altar around which we can all gather; a mother who looks after us 'from cradle to grave'. To our elite, NHS-adulation is a useful substitute for the older religions and philosophies that divide our heterogeneous society; hence it has tried to create a narrative about the NHS's power to unite us. As the programme to the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics put it, the NHS is 'the institution which more than any other unites our nation'.

Politicians and the media have tried to give this new NHS *cultus* all the properties of a mainstream religion. It has its own Ersatz moral code: 'do as our NHS heroes do'. It even has its own teleology: 'we can all agree that the most important thing is that we all live as long as possible, and hence the NHS must come first'. The object of the new *cultus*, like many objects of veneration or worship, also has its own linguistically peculiar title of address, 'Our NHS' (a title which, with its redundant qualifier, makes no more sense than 'Our DVLA' or 'Our DfID'). Lately, too, the elite have attempted to make us to the rhythm of an NHS liturgical year 'Clap for Carers' petered out, but 2021 has seen extensive official celebrations of the NHS 'Birthday'. Our leaders have even given the NHS-religion a spirituality: the fostering of the Modern British Values of secular equality and diversity. Today, when many NHS workers wear rainbow badges for Pride month, and other Britons display the rainbow for the NHS, it is hard to distinguish the two possible meanings of the rainbow; 1.3

million public workers, some against their will, have effectively been made into standard-bearers of the Woke Revolution.

However, the NHS is not a fit object of worship. Many of its workers have been self-sacrificing and brave. But these doctors' and nurses' very bravery shows that there is more to life than mere survival: life is valuable precisely because we humans have the free will to risk our lives for eternal values like truth and beauty, to do our duty and to serve. Hence the NHS, an organization that exists merely to preserve life and health, cannot itself lead us to the highest truths. In a society with no shared moral or metaphysical roots, the NHS cannot even fulfil its claimed function, the preservation of life: it kills unborn humans every day.



One might have hoped that the Church of England would have fought against the new religion of the NHS, asserting her role as the established religion, with the saving, universal truths of Christ to proclaim, and highlighting the inadequacy of the purely secular value-system of 'equality' and 'diversity'. Unfortunately, however, her leaders have cast themselves as cheerleaders of our new

NHS-centred spirituality.

We first saw this in England's first lockdown, in which the Church of England, having closed its churches to the public, barred its own ministers from celebrating services within them; all, as one bishop put it, in order to 'protect our NHS'. In addition, the Bishop of London and the Bishop of Chelmsford, now the Archbishop of York, banned most of his clergy from volunteering to work as hospital chaplains. Chelmsford suggested that his clergy could help the NHS in other ways instead, perhaps by doing health workers' shopping for them. Nor did the Anglican bishops offer any clear protest at recent lockdowns, in contrast with low-protestant pastors, and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Thus, they gave

the impression that the protection of the NHS was more important than the Gospel and the sacraments.

At the service of thanksgiving for the ‘birthday’ of the NHS at St Paul’s Cathedral on the 5th July, attended by Prince William, Dame Sarah Gilbert, and selected NHS staff and ‘key workers’, both Dame Sarah Mulllay, Bishop of London, and Sir Simon Stephens, Chief Executive of NHS England, gave addresses. In these, both Sir Simon and Dame Sarah, who was herself ordained priest whilst serving as Chief Nursing Officer for England, talked of giving thanks *to* the NHS, not, as one might have expected, of giving thanks *to* God *for* the NHS. Sir Simon, who quoted the Torah and Koran but not the Bible, talked of

a gift this country gave itself exactly 73 years ago. An institution founded on 5th July 1948, in place of fear, and in a spirit of optimism.... A National Health Service now integral to the life and wellbeing of our nation...

Dame Sarah said:

...Followers of Jesus Christ believe that every human being is created in the image of God – The Imago Dei – and as such we are not made in isolation.

We belong together in community, in relationship, which should be cherished. We are most human when we know ourselves to be dependent on others and maybe the best working out of that relationship is seen in the NHS.

The NHS was born out of a vision of healthcare available to all, regardless of wealth or status. Born out of a belief in something called the common good...

At the heart of the vision was the belief that all people should be treated as of equal value... The NHS is a demonstration of community and of solidarity in society, between generations, between rich and poor – and between people of diverse cultures and ethnic heritage.

The NHS has lived out the 6 c’s the benchmarks of excellence: ‘competence, care, compassion, communication, courage and commitment.’

Today... we say thank you to the NHS – and we pledge ourselves anew to make it the best we can. As T S Eliot reminds us in his poem The Rock:

What life have you if you have not life together?

There is no life that is not in community,
And no community not lived in praise of God.

Any sense that the Christian faith might sustain a valuing of the ‘common good’; any sense of the urgency of repentance, and everyone’s need of the grace of Christ; any sense that *religious* diversity is not an intrinsically good thing are missing. Anglican bishops (including, in other contexts, Dame Sarah) continue to talk about the Christian roots of the NHS; but few now publicly suggest that the evangelization of Britain is an urgent task, that Britain as a whole needs ongoing graces, not just the past spiritual capital on which the NHS was (they say) built.

This reflects a longer-term tendency amongst Anglican bishops to see their job as the guiding of their flocks in the established secular values of equality, diversity and human rights; ie, to ensure that their people are Good Modern Britons, rather than to make Modern Britain Christian, what I call an ‘idolatry of values’. This idolatry itself reflects the church’s lack of confidence in herself and her message. But now that the NHS has become a concrete symbol of these nebulous ‘values’, the idolatry has become more obvious and more dangerous.

Of course, the bishops will always go on subscribing to the Creed and the Articles, since there is no definitive Anglican answer about what they mean by them. But now that they present the Christian faith not as a saving truth that all men need, but rather as a mere fosterer of the Modern British values embodied in the NHS, one has to ask: what’s the point of them?

Peter Day-Milne read Classics at Oxford and Philosophy at St Andrews. He is now writing a new Latin course for scholarly learners.

Has Britain become an autonomous overseas territory of China?

Alistair Miller

What are we to do about China? Not very much it seems, apart from winning more golds than them at the Olympics, thanks to UK Sport's targeted funding of those physical activities, however inane, which are most likely to produce medals, and from the symbolic sailing of a naval task force through the South China Sea.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallis described Britain's new aircraft carrier, HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, the centrepiece of the carrier strike group, as 'a floating piece of sovereign territory', 'probably the most guarded UK airfield to be found', a 'mother ship', and 'a great projector of Britain's soft and hard power'. The group includes nine other Royal Naval warships and auxiliaries, and 24 F-35B Lightning fixed-wing combat aircraft, eight of which are British and the rest American.

Apart from us only being able to muster eight combat aircraft (that will put the wind up the Chinese), it all sounds very impressive – so long as China does not choose to deploy any of its new generation of DF-17 anti-ship missiles, comprising a rocket launched into the upper atmosphere which releases a 'hypersonic glide vehicle' armed with a warhead (conventional or nuclear), whose gravity-assisted descent enables it to reach a speed of over 7000 miles per hour. Much harder to intercept than conventional ballistic missiles, which current Western missile defence systems are designed to counter, they are accurate to within metres and have a range of over 2000 kilometres.

But the naval games are little more than a pantomime. The real war, the great game, is being

waged under our very noses, and is one that China has been waging, and winning, for years. Why launch a missile when you can flick a switch and bring a nation's infrastructure – its digital and communication systems, its power supplies, its transport systems – to a halt; or interrupt the supply of microchips on which all our technology now depends; or cut off the funds we need to finance our borrowing and our investment projects?

The secret of China's success in the great game is its mercantilist trade policy, the maintenance of huge trade surpluses that generate correspondingly huge inflows of foreign money which can then be recycled into the purchase of assets abroad (foreign

investment), most notably in the form of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which has seen China supply the capital needed for economic development in 70 countries around the world, and also buy up Western assets, most notably in innovative high-tech firms and start-ups. China provides the money, and we hand over our ideas and technology.

Naturally, the deals are never advertised in these crude terms. The Chinese are 'securing the future' of

firms that need investment for long-term growth, or that have run into financial difficulties. For example, when British Steel was bought last year by Jingye Group, a leading Chinese iron and steel company, the British government was pleased to announce that thousands of jobs were 'secured' and that a billion pounds of investment would be 'poured in'. Thank goodness for the Chinese. But there was no mention that it was the glut of cheap subsidised Chinese steel



on world markets that had brought British Steel to its knees in the first place, or that valuable technology would be transferred to China, or that steel was a strategic industry. Business Secretary Greg Clark met with Jingye on four occasions, once in China, to help smooth the deal.

More worrying, however, is the buy up of innovative high-tech firms and start-ups in areas such as semiconductors (microchips), biotechnology and artificial intelligence. In 2017, Britain's Imagination Technologies, which designs the graphic processors used in smartphones and other electronic devices, was bought up by a private equity firm backed by a state-owned Chinese fund for £550 million. This year, Newport Wafer Fab, our largest remaining microchip manufacturer, was bought by the Chinese firm Wingtech. Cambridge Science Park, home to 130 high tech companies and start-ups, even boasts on its website that 'there are more links between Cambridge and China now than ever' and invites companies to 'build your own links with China'. Its current expansion programme is funded by its Chinese business partner, Tsinghua University's Tuspark, enabling even more 'bridges' to be built between 'Chinese and British research'.

Since new rules on foreign acquisitions have been introduced in response to concern over Chinese cyber warfare, both in the US and the UK (the National Security and Investment Act was enacted in April this year), the Chinese have preferred to make their purchases anonymously. The perfect vehicle for this is the private equity firm, which may be nominally American or British, but whose venture capital is supplied by anonymous 'limited partners'. As Elisabeth Braw notes in *Foreign Policy*, there is no way of knowing how many Western start-ups (or takeovers of established firms) are being funded by Chinese venture capital to gain access to our technology.

The Chinese have not even bothered to hide the sale of Newport Wafer Fab. Some concerns have been raised. Ciaran Martin, former chief executive of the National Cyber Security Centre, said that the sale posed a greater threat to Britain's national security than Huawei's involvement in the 5G

network. But Welsh Secretary Simon Hart assured us that 'due diligence' had been taken over the deal, and since there was already a Chinese shareholding in the firm, nothing much had changed. Nor does Boris Johnson's request (as I write) that the deal should be 'double checked' for due diligence inspire us with much hope. Johnson is keen to rebuild our trading relations with China in the aftermath of China's brutal suppression of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, its genocidal campaign against the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, the unfortunate about turn forced on us by the Americans over Huawei's involvement in the UK's 5G network (now to be phased out by 2027, or so we think), and, of course, China's culpability over the pandemic. Politics, believes Johnson, should not get in the way of business.

Johnson stands here with his predecessors Cameron and Osborne, whose 'golden era' trade deal with China back in 2015 notoriously included the involvement of China's state-owned China General Nuclear (CGN) in constructing three nuclear power stations – Hinkley Point C and Sizewell (which it is joint funding with the state-owned EDF of France, who are designing the reactors and leading the projects), and Bradwell in Essex, where the reactor will be Chinese designed and managed. Presumably as a reward, Cameron was subsequently hired by the Chinese to chair a \$1 billion fund to help implement its Belt and Road Initiative.

However, even the Johnson government is now trying to find ways out of the nuclear deal. The prospect of a Chinese nuclear plant (essentially a controlled nuclear bomb) 30 miles from London is, sources in Whitehall reveal, feared to be 'politically unpalatable' in current circumstances, though 'a minority Chinese interest' in our nuclear programme 'could probably be tolerated' – in other words 'we still want your money'. The danger is that if the Chinese are locked out of Bradwell and Sizewell, they will pull the financial plug on Hinkley Point, which is due to open in 2026 at a projected cost of £23 billion and generate 7 per cent of the country's electricity.

Johnson stands here with his predecessors Cameron and Osborne, whose 'golden era' trade deal with China back in 2015 notoriously included the involvement of China's state-owned China General Nuclear (CGN) in constructing three nuclear power stations

The tragedy is that Britain was once at the forefront of nuclear power development, with Calder Hall at Sellafield the world's first commercial nuclear power station. Britain's subsequent Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR), or Magnox, programme proved costly, with on-site construction more complex than expected, decommissioning costs vastly underestimated, and labour problems adding to the difficulties. But the last two reactors to be commissioned, Torness and Heysham 2 in 1988, which were built to an improved design and featured world-leading computerised control systems (British designed, by Ferranti), are still doing good service.

Ironically, problems have also beset the rival pressurised water reactor programmes, both in America and France. EDF's reactor at Flamanville in Normandy (the same design as Hinkley Point C) is five times over budget and eight years overdue, beset by a succession of construction and safety issues. France's energy minister described the project as 'a mess'. It seems that Britain's AGR reactors were not so bad after all.

Sadly, British investment and research in nuclear power ceased with the privatisation of electricity under Mrs Thatcher. Much of our technical expertise and manufacturing capability were subsequently lost – except for Rolls Royce, whose pressurised water reactors have powered British nuclear submarines

since the 1960s. Rolls Royce is now leading a consortium to build small modular reactors (SMRs) which could avoid many of the problems of the mega-plants like Hinkley Point C. Unfortunately, they will probably not be ready for another ten years. Moreover, debt-ridden Rolls Royce is itself in financial difficulties, exacerbated by the shutdown of the commercial aviation market. Perhaps it too will be ripe for rescue by a Chinese funded private equity firm. There would be rich pickings all round for shareholders and investors.

How did we get into this mess? Like junkies, we have grown dependent on cheap Chinese consumer goods, while our decadent governing class has put its own financial gain above the national interest. Why train British workers when cheap labour can be imported instead, enabling firms to maximise their short-run profits? Why make onerous capital investments to secure long-term growth when we can sell our assets to foreign investors, netting existing shareholders a huge profit, along with fat fees to those who cut the deals in the City of London? The Global Britain-free-trade-open borders mantra serves our rulers and their Chinese paymasters well. Let us just hope that the Chinese do not take our sabre-rattling in the South China Sea too seriously.

Alistair Miller is a teacher.

Lockdown, a letter to the Prime Minister

Keith Brown

Dear Mr Johnson

Because of the destruction of our lives, liberties and livelihoods in your foolish attempt to control Coronavirus by lockdown measures I can no longer remain a member of the Conservative Party.

There is no evidence that lockdown, social distancing or masks work. Pandemics follow a bell-shaped curve regardless of government action, thus now unlocked 'cases' (actually positive tests) have fallen 40 per cent in a week. There is no reason you could not have dealt with Covid by 'focused

protection' on the elderly and vulnerable who were the ones under threat from it.

Instead you have locked the elderly in their rooms in care homes where many turned their faces to the wall and died without seeing relatives again, you have prevented people attending the funerals of these victims, you have imprisoned students in their halls of residence even though that age group is literally more likely to be struck by lightning than die of Covid, you have withheld education from the young for months on end, you have destroyed the country's fiscal position (it's our money Prime Minister) for

a generation to come by absurd measures such as paying people not to work. You have blown a hole in our liberal democracy and long-established rights from which we may never recover and treated parliament with contempt by announcing policy at press conferences not in parliament; not that parliament is allowed to function and scrutinise legislation both due to so-called 'social distancing' so most MPs are not even present and because you have passed laws by diktat under the Coronavirus Act and 1984 Public Health Act without any scrutiny at all. Meanwhile, businesses, culture and jobs and mental health and fitness are destroyed (locking people up in their own homes is not good for people's health). Quality of life is as or more important than quantity of life.

These measures have been ineffective, counterproductive and in many cases downright bizarre. How is sitting outside in the cold supposed to protect against a respiratory virus (pubs only open outside 12/4/21 to 17/5/21), how is wearing a mask when standing up but not when sitting down supposed to help, how is turning everyone out of a pub at 10pm, so they mingle on the street supposed to promote social distancing?

Meanwhile, we can see what those in power actually think of these measures as you behave normally, mask-less and unsocially distanced, at the G7, in Downing Street, with Ferguson ignoring the stay-at-home advice to carry on an extra-marital affair, with Dominic Cummings popping up to Barnard Castle when we were told to 'stay local' or with Hancock up against a wall with his mistress whom he appointed to a lucrative sinecure in the Ministry of Health.

The terms of getting rid of this nonsense have consistently been changed. Three weeks to 'flatten the curve' has turned into a year and four months so far. Cancelling Christmas we were told would be 'inhuman' a few days before it was cancelled, freedom once the vulnerable were vaccinated was quietly dropped in favour of freedom once the over 50s were vaccinated. A 'roadmap' of opening on 21/6/21 was cancelled in favour of 19/7/21 which in turn has been effectively cancelled by continued urges to 'caution' and the self-inflicted 'pingdemic' of the absurd and ineffective track and trace system. Still, we continue with warnings of further lockdowns, vaccine passports (which you have explicitly ruled out several times and is now government policy) and now attempts to control journalists via an updated Official Secrets Act.

What are we supposed to make of a Conservative

government that is advised by a Communist (the Communist Party being openly committed to the overthrow of liberal democracy), Susan Michie and Neil Ferguson, whose absurd modelling predicted 500,000 deaths in March 2020 (wrong), 50,000 deaths if we reopened this Spring (wrong) and 100,000 cases a day if we went ahead with unlocking measures in July (wrong, actually cases are around 30 000 a day and falling). This is a man with a track record of being wrong. In 2000 Ferguson predicted 136,000 cases of Creutzfeld-Jacob disease in the UK (wrong, there were 178), in 2005 he predicted 200 million deaths worldwide from bird flu (wrong) and that 2,700 prisoners would die of Covid (wrong, 47 did).

You have terrified a proportion of the British public with false data (dying within 28 days of a positive Covid test does NOT mean you died OF Covid), last Spring and early Summer if you died at any point having tested positive for Covid you were put down as a Covid death yet still the false numbers are trotted out. Increased testing of the healthy is not factored into the number of positive tests (if you test 700,000 people a day you will get more positives than if you test 100,000 people a day) and the data shown on these dreadful news conferences would not gain a pass at GCSE Maths if students were still allowed to take such a thing.

You talk to us as if we were ignorant peasants or backward children – 'hands, face, space' with a picture of said hands, face and space in case we don't get it, we are told not only to wash our hands but how to do it, and we have constantly been urged to 'save the nan' (don't we care about grandad?) while said nans are prevented from enjoying their last few years and are prevented from seeing their loved ones and if in care homes imprisoned in their rooms. 'Protect the NHS' – a health system Prime Minister is supposed to protect the public not the other way around!

I will always be a Conservative, a Liberal (in the widest sense of the Whig tradition) and a Libertarian; as you are no longer any of these things and are leading our country down an authoritarian road, I cannot remain a member of the Conservative Party whose government you lead. Thus, I return my party card and, as you/your office has had neither the courtesy nor the organisation to reply to the many letters I have previously sent I will be sharing this letter with anyone I can think of.

Keith Brown writes for the website White Rose.

<https://thewhiterose.uk/author/white-rose/>

A short history of vaccination and its enemies

Edward Pilbrow

There are limits to unreason as well as to reason. When vaccination against Covid-19 first became a realistic possibility, half the population of France said that they would not agree to it. A few months later, eighty per cent said that they would, and this change of opinion occurred before M Macron, with the heavy-handedness that has become his hallmark, proposed to make life difficult for those who were not fully vaccinated. One would like to think that the population's change of opinion was a response to the weight of the evidence that vaccination was both safe and effective.

Other interpretations are possible: for example, that the population had been bombarded with corrupt and misleading propaganda. Those who are against vaccination, fewer in Britain than in most countries, use a variety of arguments, ranging from the rational to the lunatic, for example that the long-term effects of the vaccines are not known, which is of course true. However, it is unlikely that the harms will outdo the good.

The vaccines are not fully effective: again true, but irrelevant. The vaccines have side effects: yet again true, but mostly they are trivial, the serious ones being very rare, far, far rarer than death from Covid, at least in much of the population. The anti-vaccination argument becomes more rational in the younger age groups in which the risks from the disease itself are trivial and the risks of vaccination equal to them. The young are being asked to offer themselves up to vaccination for the public health rather than for any benefit to themselves, and the public health benefit has been far from proved.

But it is the lunatic arguments that really captivate, for example that the vaccines are part of a pharmaceutico-masonic plot to control the population by introducing microchips into it, or to prevent it from using cheap but effective preventives and remedies such as hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin. Conspiracy theories both alarm and comfort; they suggest that evil is afoot and widespread, but that everything that happens is under human control and that all that is needed to ameliorate the human condition is to eliminate the scoundrels.

For a reason not perhaps susceptible of definitive explanation, immunisation as a medical procedure

has from the first aroused profound distrust and opposition, far more than other medical procedures such as bleeding, purging, cupping or vomiting that, from a modern standpoint, were more obviously deleterious. The anti-vaccination movement was one of the strongest social movements of the second half of the nineteenth century, and the National Anti-Vaccination League published a journal for seventy years.

Possibly it was the preventive nature of smallpox vaccination, which needed the treatment of people not as sick individuals, as medicine had traditionally done, but as an undifferentiated herd, that upset people. The introduction of non-human animal material into the human body seemed unnatural and even blasphemous. The imposition of vaccination on children, under threat of punishment of the parents, naturally inflamed opposition, as all compulsion does, especially as vaccination did sometimes lead to fatal illness. I recall a case of *vaccinia eczematum*, the generalised spread of the vaccine virus when introduced into a patient with eczema, with a fatal outcome, as late as 1973; in 1962, when smallpox vaccination was still encouraged though not compulsory, except for those travelling to certain countries – there is no new thing under the sun, a correspondent wrote to the *British Medical Journal* to ask whether such vaccination was still justified when the fatal complications of vaccination were more common in Britain than deaths from smallpox. The anonymous answerer did not deny that death from vaccination was more frequent (about 1 in 100,000) than death from the disease, but said that it was reasonable to suppose that vaccination played a large part in keeping the death rate from smallpox low.

Though compulsion added fuel to the flames of the anti-vaccination movement, the movement continued unabated after the Act compelling vaccination was repealed, and the passion with which those who were opposed to vaccination wrote suggests an almost religious devotion to the cause. The anti-vaccination literature was vast and was generally an admixture of statistics and invective. The founder, or discoverer, of vaccination, Edward Jenner, sometimes lauded as the man responsible for saving, or preserving, more human lives than any other single individual in history, appears in anti-vaccination literature not merely as a

man mistaken, but as an unscrupulous, dishonest, self-seeking, unintelligent impostor. ‘Future ages,’ wrote Jonathan Pickering, in *Which? Sanitation and Sanatory Remedies or Vaccination and the Drug Treatment?* in 1892, ‘will speak of Edward Jenner with bated breath, and consign his name and memory to everlasting obloquy.’ (Pickering consigned the names of Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch to the same future obloquy.) Charles Creighton, the eminent pioneer of bacteriology and historian of epidemics in England, published a book in 1889, *Jenner and Vaccination*, portraying Jenner as lazy, dishonest and stupid.

Many of the themes of present anti-vaccination feeling are to be found in Pickering’s book, as in all the others. Pickering thought that the germ theory of disease and sanitation were mortal enemies. He wrote:

Devices and methods like those of Jenner, Pasteur, and Koch are gross interferences with man’s physical organization: they are pre-destined to fail; and why should they succeed when Nature has a remedy for each, a remedy which is simple in character, harmless during its operation, recording no after-consequences, easy of attainment – without money and without price – and in its completion is admits of no imitation, assistance or rivalry. Surely a remedy like that should be known? Ah, no, before men accept that which is simple, they have to conquer all that it difficult. Nature’s cures are free; man’s are faulty, painful, and costly.

Pickering also attributed the spread of cancer, leprosy, syphilis, and tuberculosis to vaccination. (William Tebb published a book in 1893 titled *Leprosy and Vaccination*.)

More than 40 years later, in 1936, Joseph P Swan, in

his *The Vaccination Problem*, attributed the persistence of vaccination to the venality of the doctors who administered it. He did not believe that smallpox was caused by a virus, was contagious, or was even a single disease. He quotes Bernard Shaw, who called vaccination ‘an amazing empirical stunt’, as he called all immunisation and aseptic surgery, Pasteur and Lord Lister being frauds. Bernard Shaw also likened vaccination to putting the contents of a dustpan into the body.

At the rear of Joseph P Swan’s book are advertisements for other works such as H Valentine Knaggs’ *The Salad Road to Health*, *The Lemon Cure* and *A First Aid to Internal Cleanliness*. Knaggs was a vice-president the National Anti-Vaccination League, whose purpose, according to an advertisement also at the end of Swan’s book, was to oppose ‘an insanitary medical tyranny’ that harms young children by ‘introducing indefinable poisons into the blood-stream’. ‘Will you not join us in this fight for clean blood?’ it asks, by subscribing to *The Vaccination Inquirer*?

Though the anti-vaccination movement was concerned with what should have been a largely technical question, upon which it did indeed expend much time and ingenuity, it is difficult not to see in it something of wider significance: anxiety about technocracy and the extension of its power over everyone’s lives, and the way in which nature was viewed not so much as a benign force but something to be manipulated. These anxieties are with us still: not entirely without reason.

Edward Pilbrow is an editor and journalist.

A stiff upper lip is better than psychotherapy Mark Mantel

I have a pal (a lanky college instructor with a goat’s beard) whose teenage daughter had suddenly taken to spearing her own limbs with a cocktail fork. One day his wife flung open the door and caught the girl *in flagrante delicto* and forthwith tossed her in the Volvo and deposited her at a clinic. Now, the girl is back home and goes to daily psychotherapy, as miserable as ever.

I don’t know the exact nature of the girl’s malady. What I do know is that she is quite plump and hasn’t many Facebook followers. What I also know is that she adores

being the center of confabulation and gets awfully sore when she isn’t. I think a good diet and a daily hike, as fast as her legs can carry her, might do a world of good.

I have kept this opinion mainly to myself. Nevertheless, I did have the following exchange with my pal about psychotherapy. It took place on his patio while a sucking pig roasted in the smoker, and I hope it might be of general interest:

‘So why are you so against therapy? Have you ever been?’ he asked.

'Yes, I had to go when I lit that dumpster on fire at school, remember? But that's not why I hate it. I think therapy is good at taking a man apart. But it doesn't know how to put him together again. And a man already falling apart rarely needs more dismemberment.'

'But doesn't a person need to 'get it all out' sometimes? After all, Christians confess...'

'Humans are not steam engines. We are not always fixed by adjusting our hydraulics. I do see your point about confession, *to a point*. But a priest must love you at least in theory. Can a suffering man really be made right by a therapist's cold rationalism?'

'But you can't fix a problem without first identifying it and making a plan. Don't you see that?'

'No, I really don't. But I'm not saying all therapy is bad. Some folks really need it. And some therapists have been brilliant. Take WH Rivers who treated WWI soldiers for shell shock. His 'talking cure' brought repressed memories to light to rid them of power. Even Siegfried Sassoon called him 'father confessor.' Yet Rivers went way beyond babble. He replaced the soldier's feelings of horror with that of grief, which is easier to cope with. And he seems to have had some inkling of a more ancient approach to suffering. He knew that the mere Justice or Rightness of a war is not always enough to cure an ailing man. He almost seems to have had a sense of the now lost notion of 'blood guilt'.

'Blood guilt?'

'Yes, it's an old insight. As old as Homer. It recognises that once a man enters the zone of blood, he has transgressed. The Greek tragedians describe it all over the place. And even St Paul forbade a returning soldier to take communion for three years. Not to punish him. But because it takes time for a man to purify and return to the community of souls. The West understood this until Urban II preached the crusade, but the Byzantines never forgot it. That's why in Slavic countries to this day a priest will bless the soldiers before battle. It's a kind of protection.'

'That is all nonsense on stilts! It's outrageous! A brave man fights for his country and he has 'blood guilt?' You can't possibly believe that? You, of all people? The arch-reactionary?'

'Look, I respect soldiers tremendously, you know that. But even Achilles or Hector would have readily agreed with what I've said. A lot of it I got from a book called *The Ethics of Beauty* by an Orthodox theologian named Patitsas. He explains it better than I can...'

'How long is it?'

'It's a 700-page big boy. But it makes a compelling case against modern psychotherapy. I've read other good books against therapy like *Therapy Culture* by Frank Furedi or Philip Rieff's classic *The Crises of the Officer Class, The Death of the Tragic Sensibility*. Both books confirm all my prejudices perfectly. But this other book

is on a different plane.'

'And it's all about blood-guilt?'

'Yep, 700 pages on blood-guilt ... No, it's not all about blood guilt!'

'So, what does it say?' he asked (betraying some genuine curiosity).

'I can't say all what it says. But it totally buries psychotherapy. You've heard of the three transcendentalists, right? Truth, Beauty and Goodness? It basically argues that modern therapy attempts to use Truth to achieve Goodness, but that it also negligently leaves Beauty out. It says a 'Beauty-first' approach is older and wiser.'

'Beauty-first? So, am I to take my daughter to the botanical gardens, is that it?' he snarked.

'Look, I shan't take the liberty of advising on your particular worry. You asked about the book. The book argues that people encouraged to talk about horrors often end by feeling totally isolated. It also describes how many groups of soldiers encouraged to tell of their trauma experienced an epidemic of suicide, more than those who'd been left alone. Apparently, the reliance on reason to the exclusion of the aesthetic sense has been a disaster. I think many therapists are deeply ignorant of our human situation, that's all.'

'Ok, genius, so Beauty will save the world. But tell me this: If Beauty is so efficacious, how was it that Nazi officers who listened to Brahms and Bruckner in the morn would be gassing Jews by tea-time? And why aren't pretty actresses all as tender as Mother Theresa?'

'I haven't been among many pretty actresses, so I'll leave that to your imagination. But I didn't say you *stop* with Beauty. I merely said you *start* with it. Incidentally, the Beauty-first approach isn't just for therapy. The book applies Beauty-first to all the realms of life: Politics, Love, Work, everything.

At this, my friend laughed jovially, 'My parents would love it!'

'How so?' I asked.

'In a way, that's how they raised me. Not that they steeped themselves much with your tragedians. But some conduct was 'handsome' and other conduct was not. It was that way with everything. Tell me, are there any shorter books on the subject?'

'Well, there's a lovely introductory book on aesthetics by Sir Roger Scruton. It talks of the relation between beauty and conduct. Am I to assume I've convinced you then?'

'Well, it's like this: Many of your words seem true. But you're unshaven and you get awfully excitable in your delivery. It's not very handsome. So how can I possibly agree with a word of it?'

'Fair enough!'

Mark Mantel is an American lawyer

GB News: as gutless as all the other media

James Monteith

Amid all the media babble surrounding the launch of GB News, the much-fêted alternative news channel (Freeview 236), one thing seems to have been missed: that far from promoting an alternative to the mainstream liberal media, GB News is ratcheting us even more securely within the straight-jacket of the prevailing liberal orthodoxy.

It is certainly welcome that GB News is questioning the absurdities of ‘woke’ and identity politics – transgenderism, historic grievance, victim culture and cancel culture; and that it questions prevalent metropolitan liberal assumptions surrounding Brexit. Yet when it comes to addressing the fundamental existential issue, the core dogma that has generated identity politics, that is responsible for the self-flagellating quest to deconstruct our civilisation, and explains the witch hunt against those who utter heresies, who must be cancelled and prosecuted for ‘hate’ crimes, namely, the dogma of multi-culture and its associated core values of diversity and inclusion.

Not even Nigel Farage, who was brought in to boost ratings, dares broach the subject of multi-culture and address the gross contradictions inherent in the idea, let alone question the value of ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’, vacuous slogans that have been elevated to core principles of justice. To do so would be to proclaim himself a racist, fascist and bigot of the first order, as well as to insult all his colleagues who are black, or female, or homosexual, or belong to any other minority group, by implying that they should not be there.

Part of the problem is that the multicultural dogma has become fused with the liberal dogmas of ‘equal opportunities’ and ‘social mobility’, questionable in themselves, though not questioned by modern conservatives, which demand that all forms of privilege, inheritance, precedent and tradition be abolished. To question diversity and inclusion is therefore tantamount to proclaiming oneself in favour of discrimination. And yet the great American political philosopher Thomas Sowell, who cannot be labelled a ‘racist’ or ‘bigot’, because he is black, excoriates the multicultural vision and its accompanying baggage. In *Intellectuals and Society*, he writes:

Sweeping claims for the benefits of demographic and cultural diversity in innumerable institutions and circumstances have prevailed without a speck of evidence being asked for or given. It is one of the purest examples of arguments without arguments, and of the force of sheer repetition, insistence and intimidation.

Sowell goes on to demolish the equally groundless arguments that inter-group differences in outcomes can ‘assumed *a priori* to be due to discrimination’, and that all cultures and identities are equal – which ‘flies in the face’ of ‘massive borrowings’ of cultural and technological advances between civilisations ‘that has gone on for millennia’. He warns:

The promotion of separate group identities not only fragments a society into warring factions, it keeps those groups that are lagging from utilizing the existing culture of the larger society around them for their own advancement.

You would think that such arguments were worth rehearsing, that this profoundly important subject is worth debating; that a news channel advertising itself as ‘anti-woke’ would tackle the core liberal dogma, the great orthodoxy of our age, that is multi-culture. Yet there is nothing.

The issue of multi-culture is inextricably linked with that of mass immigration, which continues unabated. Yet the cultural and demographic transformation of this country, unparalleled in our history, is judged unworthy of discussion. It is just too sensitive, too hot to handle. Millions of our fellow citizens feel themselves to be ‘foreigners in their own country’, no longer at home in their neighbourhood. The flight of the white English from the cities continues. We see demographic change all around us. Schools and neighbourhoods grow more segregated by the day. But on the stark reality of a multicultural society, there is silence.

No such constraints seem to apply to CNews, the French equivalent of GB News. Every evening, Eric Zemmour, France’s most controversial anti-establishment conservative (far-right ideologue), Figaro columnist, author of the best-selling *Le Suicide français*, and possible presidential challenger to Macron, expounds his views at length on the debate

show *Face à L'Info*, watched regularly by up to a million viewers. That he has been prosecuted for inciting hatred, racism, Islamophobia etc, for example, for pointing out that most drug dealers are Black and Arab, only adds to his popularity.

Zemmour's constant refrain is the threat to French and to Western civilisation by what he terms Islamo-Leftists (Islamogauchistes), the useful fools who, in the name of human rights, would see the values of the French Republic sacrificed to medieval Islam. He subscribes to the 'white supremacist' theory of the Great Replacement, according to which Europeans are gradually being replaced by immigrants. He believes that immigrants should conform to French norms, including dress codes. On recent programmes, he has argued that Islamic dress in France relays the message 'I do not wish to be part of your civilization', that this is unacceptable and that since statistics showed that nearly all attacks on women on French public transport were committed by immigrants, feminists ought to support an end to immigration.

There is something else remarkable about Zemmour's show on French television. He articulates, with great lucidity, coherent intellectual positions

on the news of the day, making erudite references to philosophy, literature, and history, as well as providing plentiful empirical backing to his case. Though he speaks at great length, he is listened to respectfully by the other panellists, who respond in kind. There is no sloganizing or name-calling. So long as the argument is well-constructed and justified, with reasons given, no subject is off limits and anything goes. There is freedom of expression in precisely the spirit that the Enlightenment was supposed to have bequeathed us. But the debate remains civilised and respectful, not because anyone avoids causing offence, but because the participants possess intellectual integrity, and allowed to voice their thoughts. As Jordan Peterson puts it, 'In order to be able to think, you have to risk being offensive'.

Tragically, civilised debate of this sort is no longer tolerated in this country, with GB News proving no

exception. There is only one place you can still find it, that is on YouTube, a repository of debates from the past, many of which would never be allowed on air now. Yet compared to today's ritual exchanges of warmed-up slogans and platitudes, they are pure gold.

A good example is the debate on the *Dick Cavett Show* in 1971 between Jonathan Miller and Enoch Powell on immigration and Britain's post-imperial legacy. The two held diametrically opposite views, but the striking thing about it was that, as in the French programme, they listened respectfully to each other's arguments, without interruption, and then responded to them. Again, there was no name-calling, no personal abuse. The participants had intellectual integrity. It helped too that they were able to express their arguments lucidly and coherently, and that they

were allowed to do so at length.

Powell's arguments, which evidently struck a chord with millions of ordinary people, would never be allowed airtime today; and nor, one suspects, would his 'imperialist' sentiments. Powell believed that the British-Indian experience was predestined. Yet his view of Britain's ambivalent colonial relationship with India was infinitely more subtle than Miller's. Powell

had lived and served in India, was fluent in Urdu, and had grown to love the country, things that did not apply to Miller, whose cosmopolitan liberalism was nurtured in St John's Wood.

GB News is just another outlet for global liberalism. Its creed is centred on free trade, open borders, and free movement for the 'brightest and best' from around the world. As for the concerns of traditional Tories, and not a few traditional Labour supporters, which centre on notions of home, community, tradition, and culture – of *English* culture and civilisation – these remain firmly beyond the pale. For Andrew Neil and his friends, the cult of cosmopolitan liberalism, with its accompanying ideology of multi-culture and its slogans 'diversity' and 'inclusion', remains sacrosanct.

James Monteith is a journalist.



Government offers free kebabs for jobs

Australia: Larrikins and Negative Nancies

Daryl McCann

There has always been a place for the maverick in the Land of Oz. We even have a term for such a person – larrikin. Larrikinism, according to Russel Ward in *The Australian Legend* (1958), means not only holding a healthy disregard for convention and respectability but something more. To be a larrikin – ‘mischievous, uncultivated, rowdy but good-hearted’ – is a key component of the Australian national psyche. Ward’s speculation about the national character is officially out of favour these days, not the least reason being that ‘larking about’, being irreverent, independently minded, and non-compliant, is at odds with the protocols of our PC police, latter-day curmudgeons known in an earlier era as Negative Nancies.

Take the latest injunction from Kim Ellis, director of Australia’s Antarctic Division (ADD). Ellis has just decreed that the official weekly limit on alcohol consumption in Australia’s Antarctic territory will be reduced by 60 per cent. Ellis wants those under his authority to adhere to Canberra’s health guidelines of no more than 10 standard drinks a week, conveniently overlooking the fact that a guideline is a recommendation and not an edict. The crackdown on booze, the director of ADD explained, is a part of his determination to make the ADD ‘diverse and get gender equity’. The modern Australian woman, in my experience, enjoys a drink, from a boutique beer to a sauvignon blanc, as much as the modern Australian man, and so how Ellis’ wowserism will contribute to ‘gender equity’ I am not entirely sure.

Curmudgeons usually have any number of reasons to spoil the party and Director Ellis is no exception. Ponder his supposed concern that an inebriated scientist working in Australia’s Antarctic base is at special risk: ‘If you walk out of the accommodation module because you’re blind drunk, into the snow, we may never find you again.’ Kim Ellis, whose history of working in the Antarctic goes back to 1979, was forced to admit that his new restrictions were not ‘sparked by any single incident’. There

is no record of a blind drunk Australian scientist leaving the accommodation module in Antarctica and vanishing into the Great White. Ellis’ concern, is improbable or what Australians call a furphy. The director of the ADD belongs to the Australian tradition of officiousness and conformity, a mindset that is always at odds with larrikinism.

The two traditions, irreverent individualism and compliance, have battled it out during Australian history. Ward, obviously, argues in favour of the former having acquired the dominant position in our home-grown version of nationalism, a phenomenon that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Larrikinism has its roots in the spirit of rowdy egalitarianism forged by ‘bushmen’ in outback Australia. Men, usually without wives and families, relieved the loneliness of their isolated existence by getting well-oiled with their mates whenever the opportunity arose. The opportunity arose, maintains Ward, during breaks between their mostly seasonal work as shearers, drovers, and ranch hands. The magnificence of so many nineteenth-century era hotels or pubs in outback Australia is a testament to that bygone era.

Ward makes even further claims for his thesis. The so-called Anzac Spirit, developed by Australian (and New Zealand) soldiers in the 1915 Gallipoli Campaign, and subsequently advanced under the leadership of General Monash on the Western Front at the battles of Hamel, Amiens, and Mont St Quentin, turns out to be an extension of the Australian Legend. Most of our First World War Diggers came from the city rather than the remote outback and yet, according to Ward, they nevertheless adopted as their *leitmotif* the intrepid, impertinent, and boozy folklore of the bushman of the nineteenth century. The same ‘true blue’ spirit, at once resilient and democratic, animated the nation during the tough years of the Great Depression and our showdown with Imperial Japan in the Pacific War.

Anzac Day, celebrated on April 25 every year, the

anniversary of the 1915 Gallipoli Landing, saw the veterans of the First World War and later the Second War marching through the streets of every town and city in the land before repairing to the nearest pub and knocking back pint after pint of beer and playing Two Up, a traditional Australian game of throwing 2 pennies up into the air and betting how they land, a form of gambling that, until the 1970s, was illegal on every other day of the year. Today, of course, the PC brigade would criticise the excesses of those long ago boozy Anzac Day re-unions as a case of 'toxic masculinity'. Anzac Day is still observed in contemporary times but has become a much more sober and orderly affair, while the once forbidden Two Up is staple fare in every Australian casino.

The larrikin-versus-conformist divide can be observed in most aspects of Australian life, from our cricketing heroes, and the roguish flair of Shane Warne to the beer swilling prowess of Doug Walters, Rod Marsh and David Boon, all of them masters of 'larking about'. But then our greatest icon of all, Donald Bradman, was the very opposite of a larrikin. Respectability is written all over his 1930s-era mansion still standing in the Adelaide suburb of Kensington Park. Bowled for a duck in his last ever innings, at the Oval in 1948, left him just four runs shy of a batting average of 100. Sporting lore has it that such was the enmity between the strait-laced, and alcohol adverse Bradman and his beery, knockabout Aussie teammates that some of them chortled with glee when the Don's bails flew, his batting average downgraded in perpetuity to 99.94.

There is a balance to be struck. If the larrikin is prone to acts of irresponsibility and even delinquency, the Negative Nancy is disposed to being a killjoy. The 1971 Australian film, *Wake in Fright*, tells the story of a teacher from the city living in a remote outback town and falling in with a swag of larrikin-cum-criminals and losing his money and self-respect in bouts of drinking, gambling, and gruesome hunting trips. The twists and turns in *Wake in Fright*, which is after all a psychological thriller, are a long way from what I experienced in my first job, a teacher from the city living in a remote outback town but the amount of alcohol I consumed that year, not to mention all the other personal misadventures, left me reeling. There is something in the notion that we only know

our limits when we reach them; recklessness can be cured if it doesn't kill you first.

Which brings us back to the new directive issued by the ADD's Kim Ellis and his determination to change the ethos in Australia's Antarctic stations to more of a 'café culture' with 'coffee corners and extras such as popcorn, as social alternatives to bars'. Director Ellis has even banned the home brewery pastime which, as he himself acknowledged, has long been regarded as vital to the well-being of the researchers and technicians confined to their faraway accommodation modules without family or friends: 'My first trip to the Antarctic was in 1979 and in those days...they used to send people off to breweries to learn the trade... it was considered that important.'

Ellis' worry is that because the alcohol content in home brew is harder to predict, someone might inadvertently go beyond the recommended 10 standard drinks guideline and, yes, somehow stumble out the sealed door into the snow and never be seen again. In today's PC landscape, Director Ellis' curmudgeonly decree falls under the category of 'socially responsible'. Even the largest brewers in Australia, almost all of them foreign owned, have also become socially responsible, their latest marketing campaigns promoting newfangled alcohol-free or low alcohol beers. What would Bazza McKenzie, always a cold tinny in hand, think of this disreputable situation?

Fortunately, there is a sting in this tale. While our major brewers turn themselves inside out to disguise the purpose of their existence, to induce tipsiness, in moderation, of course, the people of Australia have developed a taste for beer produced in the multitude of micro-breweries now dotted across the land. In the spirit of the nineteenth century shearer and the Anzac veteran, and in the venerable, albeit defunct, practice of the Aussie home brewer in Antarctica, nowadays every touristy town under the sun has a local brew or two available to sample. To paraphrase Mao Zedong: the maverick brewers of Australia, like the maverick winemakers of Australia before them, have stood up.

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

The Transistor: chips with everything

B K Ridley

There has been a revolution. Some of us are delighted, some of us are aghast. The young, of course, can cope. The rest of us, the Neanderthals, find it difficult, even horrid. What has happened is Change, Change in historically quick time. Change happens all the time, but usually slow enough to allow us to adapt. But not always; if you think of the French revolution or the Bolshevik one in Russia. These were changes that were predominantly political, affecting the elite infinitely more than the commoner. But the present Change is not like that. It is cultural, and here to stay and it affects everybody. A technological innovation in electronics has produced Change far beyond its original aim. It has managed to reach the individual via the pleasure of instant gratification and nudged the egomania that is inside us all: facts at the press of a button, your opinions instantly transmissible to your fellows. And what was the innovation? The invention of the transistor by William Shockley, John Bardeen and Walter Brattain, who were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1956.

It occurred to me the other day that I had spent a good part of a quarter of a century working on the science of transistors. In the 1950s my first view of a transistor was a small chunk of crystalline germanium, about a quarter of an inch big, with wires attached. Remember the cat's whisker in your transistor radio? In the physics of solids, germanium was classed as a semiconductor, electrically sitting between a metal, like copper, containing a hoard of mobile electrons that can carry a current, and an insulator, like common salt, with no mobile electrons at all. Anything other than a semiconductor conducted electricity or it didn't. The interest in semiconductors is that they are tiny switches whose conductivity can be altered by clever electronic engineers, and can be crammed in large numbers into a device like a mobile phone, a TV or that key fob you use to open your car door. Size matters. Those glowing thermionic valves you used to see in the back of old radios (can you imagine one in your key fob today?) became extinct virtually overnight.

The brilliant colours on your TV screen are the result of millions of electrical pulses created by transistors hitting the back of the screen, in turn taken and amplified from signals off an antenna maybe miles away.

Transistors are crystalline and have to be grown on

a suitable substrate. Accordingly, along with the art of electronics, what kept pace was the art of crystal growth. Looking back to my PhD research into the colour centres in sodium chloride, in which I grew crystals from molten salt in a platinum beaker, I squirm at the crudeness of my technique. Now, crystals are grown by what is called molecular-beam epitaxy (MBE), which means growing a layer of molecules on a crystal in a machine where MB can easily stand for megabucks. (I thought I was lucky getting funding for a platinum crucible.) Once the UK joined the European Union my 'quarter of an inch' germanium crystal rapidly became five millimetres. Now, germanium has been replaced by its superior in the Periodic Table, silicon, superior that is, to diamond, which is an outright insulator. The size of transistors has gone down from millimetres to nanometres, one billionth of a metre, which makes devices a million times faster. In Palo Alto, California, where it all started, Moore's Law claimed that the number of transistors that could be grown on a substrate doubled every two years (some said eighteen months). Moore was right. Computers have got smaller and smaller and faster and faster. Which is why we now have smart phones, although we may have reached the limit.

Along the way, we got email and the internet about 1970, and Tim Berners-Lee, a computer scientist, invented the World Wide Web in 1989 to facilitate information sharing between scientists in universities and in institutions throughout the world. Today, nobody has the excuse of ignorance. Information abounds. Perhaps the Master of Balliol was far ahead of his time:

First come I, my name is Jowett,

There's no knowledge but I know it,

I am the Master of the College,

What I don't know isn't knowledge.

Nowadays 'knowledge' is too strong a word for many with delicate sensibilities and should be replaced by 'information'. There is no doubt none of us is short of information, should we be bothered to acquire it. I can't remember anybody being described as addicted to knowledge, but addiction to information is another matter. The drug is the smart phone.

Some people like what Change has brought, others are averse. During lockdown I found it useful to be

able to shop online. On the other hand, a chat or a conversation was often interrupted by the smart phone. Instead of sentences there are boxes to be ticked. Three or four choices are offered, crude and simplistic, not a hint of a nuance. Subtlety of meaning is too difficult to cope with, so it is irrelevant. More ominously, is the appearance of an outbreak of lunacy: religious mania about climate change; the denial of impersonal truth or, indeed, denial of impersonal anything; the ignorant interpretation of history. A lunacy, thanks to the digital revolution, easily spread. It seems, along with covid, we have a new pandemic, a digital one. It doesn't kill, it just enhances the natural insanity of your every-day activist. Those of us who read books and get on with

things are immune, and merely longsuffering. There is not much hope of a vaccine appearing. What would it be?

I have an answer to that. It would be the invention of digital mockery, automatically triggered by digital lunacy. Here is a worthwhile project for the computer scientist with a social conscience. Hopefully, antibodies carrying mockery might be encouraged to grow in the activist's bloodstream.

I think I'm all for digital mockery. Its potential applications, beyond the pandemic, are endless.

Brian Ridley is a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Hungary bans teaching children about homosexuality

Mark Griffith

The current quarrel between the EU and Hungary is a fascinating example of how out of touch many governments now are.

With astonishing near-unanimity, newspapers and TV channels in a range of countries are depicting a new Hungarian law regulating what schools can teach children about sex as a piece of draconian bigotry instilling hatred of homosexuals.

This idea that if you don't actively teach young children that homosexuality is normal and healthy, you are oppressing homosexuals, seems to have taken root quickly. Some might have thought that campaigning for further legal changes would stop once civil unions were replaced by full marriage, but apparently not. It seems that even suggesting marriage mainly exists to create and protect children is a form of 'hate speech' now. Not only must same-sex marriages be considered equal to heterosexual marriages, but it's now bigotry to publicly comment on the difference between traditional marriage and other types of union, such as a 'nuptial pact between a woman and a railway station.'

The EU's reaction has been harsh. Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, a prominent Brussels liberal, was horrified by Hungary's Viktor Orban, as if a law banning advocacy of homosexuality to under-18s is in some way extreme, or even wrong. Xavier Bettel, the openly gay prime minister of Luxembourg, is particularly critical of the Hungarian leader, appearing to take another country's laws as a personal affront.

There is a clear desire to find the next 'progressive' cause, whatever it is, and thereby to be on, 'the right side of history'. The left is desperate to believe that they have always been and always will be on the right side, despite the fact that many times it was Tories such as William Wilberforce who led campaigns to abolish slavery and ban child labour, and often the leftists of the Liberals who opposed them. We should remember the term 'left wing' emerged from the 1789 French Revolution, midwife of all the genocidal police states of the 20th century.

Still, this belief, clearly voiced by many leftists, is why the latest battle for civilisation is over sexual 'identity'. Muppet Babies, a US cartoon 'aimed at 4-to-7-year-old children' this spring introduced a transsexual character. Britain's Labour party recently apologised for hiring an entertainer to dance in front of children, a character delightfully described by some witnesses as a 'butt dildo paedophile monkey'.

Despite this, Camille Paglia, an American university lecturer and writer on sexuality and history of ideas (herself openly a lesbian), described the 'transgender' mania as a symptom of cultural decline in an October 2015 interview in Brazil. She said crisply 'I think that the transgender propagandists make wildly inflated claims about the multiplicity of gender.'

Nowhere, outside Orban's Hungary, in this curious episode are the preferences of parents even considered. The Budapest government is laughably described

as ‘far right’ by the almost-united world press echo chamber.

The back story starts with the creation of Frankfurt School Marxism in the 1920s, during Marxist aesthete George Lukacs’s brief time as Minister of Culture in the ‘hundred-day’ pro-Soviet government of Hungary known as the Bela Kun regime. Lukacs altered school curriculums, playing up sex education and playing down religion across swathes of Hungary that were under the regime’s control. These changes were deeply unpopular with Hungarian parents, and swiftly reversed after Kun’s fall. Claims are made by anti-Marxist academics such as William Lind that the ‘cultural Marxists’ in the Frankfurt School wanted to reshape society and its sexual mores so as to correct proletarians’ supposed lack of class consciousness. Partly supporting this, Lukacs wrote in 1969:

...I saw the revolutionary destruction of society as the one and only solution to the cultural contradictions of the epoch. Such a worldwide overturning of values cannot take place without the annihilation of the old values.

However, the ‘Long March Through the Institutions’ (slow, long-term infiltration by leftists into the academic institutions of free western countries from the 1930s to the present) was also a restless search for a new revolutionary class, for a section of society to replace the manual workers who had failed to bring about the mass uprising classical Marxists yearned for. Such a replacement might be an ethnic minority, women, homosexuals or some other group. It is this search that motivates the growth in university subjects such as Queer Studies or Black Studies mocked by some under the cover term ‘Grievance Studies’.

A fundamental mistake contributing to today’s strange mood was the decision by Britain’s then-Tory government to relabel all the country’s polytechnics as universities in the mid-1990s. This was a foolish attempt to bribe middle-class parents who worried (with some justice) that Tarquin and Anastasia were unemployable at the salaries they hoped for. This clumsy decision cannot be reversed soon enough. Like all the best blunders, it multiplied itself into other blunders, one of which was a huge expansion of career openings for the academically weakest and wokist humanities lecturers the UK has ever employed.

If Orban loses the forthcoming election in Hungary (2022) it will not be on sex education, where his party is hugely popular with solid support in the provinces (60 per cent of the country’s population live in villages and small towns). Where he is vulnerable and legitimately resented is over corruption, for which there is genuine cause for concern. Both the last two government parties (Orban’s FIDESZ and the centre-left MSZP) engaged

in blatant corruption and maladministration.

Perhaps the oddest feature of western European criticism of this law preventing advocacy of homosexuality to children, which came into force in July this year, is the accusation the Hungarian prime minister is unscrupulously using a popular policy to divert attention from government misconduct. Furthermore, Orban announced on July 21st that he will hold a referendum on this law. If doing sex education in schools the way parents want it done, cleared by a referendum, is enough of a vote-winner to divert attention from serious government shortcomings in an imminent election, why are most purportedly democratic EU members so keen on unpopular sex education not democratically supported by parents? This is a genuinely intriguing question, and I’m not sure I know the answer. EU officials are sleep-walking into what you’d think was an obvious trap.

Mark Griffith runs a weblog at <http://www.otherlanguages.org>. He is currently making a documentary film asking: Do fewer people now read books? ...and if so, why does it matter?

The Nicene Creed adjusted for Modern Sensibilities

I believe in the NHS and in its vaccine
conceived of Astra Zeneca, born of the
Belgians
Clapped on Thursdays.
It descended into Brussels, was scorned
by Macron
And crucified by Pfizer.
On the third day it rose again
because of its cheapness
and the Huns liking for a bargain.
I believe in the vaccine
Who can leave the country without it?
In the brave doctors and nurses,
their 3% pay rise, and Pfizer’s
Shareprice (\$40.88)
Amen

Teach yourself rude

How banks are training old age pensioners to be rude and insulting over the phone

Mary Sydney

A Chelsea Pensioner answers an old black telephone and hears: 'We are calling from your account to verify your bank details.' 'Push off!' he says emphatically. A quietly spoken lady Pensioner, there are now fourteen of them, adds, 'It doesn't matter how rudely you say it. When a scammer calls makes sure they get the message.'

Santander Bank has joined forces with the Chelsea Pensioners to help older people lose the curse of good manners. It's now seen as a serious problem that many over sixty just cannot be rude enough. In the 1950s and 60s the phone was a rather sacred thing, waiting out in the cold hall. Answering it, somewhat apprehensively, people gave their three-digit number in a clear voice and children were instructed to do the same before handing it over to a parent immediately. Just one of many small codes of essential behaviour once inculcated in the young but now it seems, unsuited to our new world of globalised Internet crime and advanced capitalism.

Last month, Santander conducted a survey of two thousand UK adults, which showed there has been a sixty percent rise in complaints about fake calls during the pandemic. Some receive three or more suspicious calls a week. One in ten were targeted at least once a day. Obviously, the best way to deal with them is to simply hang up, but almost half, forty seven percent of 'baby boomers' just can't do it; one in five think it's rude to hang up on anyone. Twenty percent say they feel obliged to stay on the line to hear the caller out, even if they know they are talking to a crook. The politeness of the past is now a terrible trap leading to devastating losses.

Many of us feel baffled as social mores change rapidly. Even speaking can lead to the feeling of bewilderment I had the last time I visited Poland when I found that all the forms of polite address I'd been taught had gone. But that was just linguistic change, the people it seemed to me, were still largely very polite. I mentioned this to some young Poles I met in London who had become very rude as they eagerly tried to adapt to their new home. The English language is also changing rapidly, influenced by TikTok and on line 'gaming'. BBC usage is increasingly American. Old words such as 'effect' have suddenly been completely

replaced by the more violent 'impacted', and new verbs seem to be invented every day. With that we've also had changes in behaviour. The phrase 'excuse me,' has gone, with the need to assume that the other person wants to get up or get past by body language alone. Challenging these changes can lead to confrontation, but the vulnerability for older people is rooted in class; the scammer is doing a menial job and to a well brought up Brit, that is embarrassing.

My parents were lower middle class. They deferred and avoided those above and were excessively polite to those below, including anyone from an ethnic minority, although they were extremely rare and viewed with fascination too. On public transport English people do not speak to each other in case they have to talk to someone from a different class, which would be uncomfortable for both. This social squeamishness has incapacitated me in dealing with the scoundrels who call themselves mechanics, builders and decorators. Like many women, I just cannot stop them cheating me.

One installed a car battery I didn't need, another put in a shower which I specifically did not want, and painted the bedroom floor boards instead of stripping and varnishing them. He deliberately broke one of them in front of me, then charged me for the repair. Another, charging me by the day would disappear for hours. A neighbour warned me that he was sitting in his van smoking marijuana. None provided enough receipts and used cheap materials while charging over the odds. I could not tackle them because they were so poorly educated. I tried to combat their malicious envy and ruthless dishonesty by making them tea, being very nice and hoping for the best. What I needed to do was say, 'Push off.'

I've even had trouble on dates being excruciating unable to hurt anyone's feelings if they are slightly lower middle class than I am, upper working class for instance. I once sat for hours while an ex-police officer talked to me about his pet blood hounds, and I was unable to just say I was a cat person and leave.

Unlike the good people in the Santander survey, I have an antidote to all that helpless niceness; I love foreign workers, in London everyone wanted to employ east European builders, decorators, and cleaners, they took pride in their work and were amazingly honest. I

once had some Bangladeshi men fix my conservatory roof who were not only honest but charming and kind to my cat, but when I hear that strangled voice on the phone, peg on nose, from somewhere in south Asia out of Brooklyn; ‘Hi there, Mrs Kelly, (sic) Howaya doin, things lookin’ good today? My hackles rise, and I can bang the phone down easily, first offering the advice

which I feel entitled, as a polite, privileged, Christian English woman to give; ‘Have you ever thought of taking an honest job and trying to lead a decent life?’ Usually, their phone goes down first.

Mary Sydney is a social commentator.

The Concreting of Paris

The visual beauty of the city is being destroyed by a mayor who won only 12.5 per cent of the vote

Theodore Dalrymple

We often hear or read of democracy in danger, of its weakness by comparison with self-confidently authoritarian regimes such as China’s or Russia’s. And if democracy is in trouble, freedom – which is not at all the same thing, even if there is some connection between the two, is in even worse trouble. Democratic decisions to prevent discussion and silence dissent are becoming commonplace; elective dictatorship is by no means an empty concept.

Government by consent is desirable, but ever more difficult to achieve thanks to social fragmentation. France is a good case study, though by no means the only one. It has entered a stage of social conflict and political stagnation, an unfortunate combination. It is understandable if people think that there must be something better than the present dispensation, though this is not necessarily true. If there is room for improvement, there is even greater scope for deterioration.

The recent regional elections illustrate some of the difficulties. Only 32 per cent of the electorate bothered to vote, which could be taken as an implicit protest against the many layers of French over-administration. But the powers of the regional authorities remain the same whatever the proportion of the electorate that takes part in elections to them. Abstention changes nothing.

The elections were free and fair in the formal sense, of course, and those candidates who were elected were legitimately elected. But this is very far from rule by consent.

In the first round of the elections, the governing party received 10 per cent of the votes cast, those of just over 3 per cent of the eligible electorate. The party, La République en Marche, has no real roots in any part of French society: it was and is merely an instrument for the election and re-election of M Macron and his hangers-on, who have all the staying power of rats on sinking ships. Marine Le Pen did hardly any better; in her drive for semi-respectability, she has lost her attraction for the disaffected.

The party that did best, the centre-right Les Républicains, gained 27 per cent of the votes cast, under nine per cent of the eligible votes. This is hardly a ringing popular endorsement of the party; and in the second round of the elections, most people will have been obliged to vote not for who they like best or want, but whom they dislike the least. Again, this is not exactly government by consent, even if the elected representatives can take pride in the legal legitimacy of their election. And it is easy for them to suppose that, having been duly elected, they have the right, and perhaps the duty, to remould the country, or that part of it that falls within their jurisdiction, according to their lights.

The governance of Paris is a perfect example of this political pathology. In the last few months, the city has been uglified beyond recognition by the epidemic installation of large numbers of concrete barriers and vivid bollards to protect newly-created bicycle lanes. They turn formerly pleasant and even elegant streets almost overnight into visual slums. The concrete barriers are of the kind used to prevent car bombers

from getting too near public buildings.

The effect on vehicular traffic may easily be imagined, two lanes having been reduced to one. It now takes twice as long to go anywhere by taxi as it did before the barriers were erected, a kind of punishment for those old people with luggage going to a station, for example who sometimes have to take a taxi. I am no great enthusiast for the private car, and regard it as a great aesthetic disaster, but this high-handed way of dealing with the problem is the kind of solution that an impatient dictator would dream up, determined to stamp his mark on a country.

I haven't heard a single person put in a good word for the concrete barriers or their effects: they are as hated, at least by the people I know, as the Tour Montparnasse is hated, that appalling glass tower at the end of the rue de Rennes that by itself ruined a hundred prospects and that was given the go-ahead in 1968 by Georges Pompidou. Yet the current mass uglification of Paris by the barriers and bollards was carried out in perfect accordance with democratic procedure.

The Mayor of Paris, Ann Hidalgo, was duly elected: no one denies her legitimacy in this sense. There was no suggestion of electoral fraud. But in the first round of the election, she won about 12.5 per cent of the electorate's votes and even in the second, in which many of the candidates had already been eliminated, managed only 17.3 per cent. I do not know the mayor personally, but to judge from her conduct she imagines that she has a mandate to do with the city what she pleases. And her schemes are radically changing the city.

When she was deputy mayor, she said that Paris needed to change its image: a shallow idea not much better than if the Egyptian government declared that it needed to change the image of the Sphinx. Although Ms Hidalgo is from the Socialist Party, more or less extinct elsewhere in France, her mind has been deeply influenced by disciplines such as public relations and advertising. Among her schemes is the construction of a huge triangular tower, the Tour triangulaire, in the 15th arrondissement of Paris, as a symbol of a thrusting, new, young dynamic Paris à la Blair. Polls suggest that the scheme is detested by Parisians, and yet it will go ahead.

How is it, then, that the mayor has been elected and re-elected, when it is obvious that she is doing damage to the visual fabric of the city which, notwithstanding its need for a 'new image', is one of its glories?

When people vote in modern democracies, they make an overall judgment as to which candidate is

preferable. This is not the same as liking everything that the candidate had done or will do. And Anne Hidalgo has been adept at building a coalition between that population that hopes for or depends on subventions, and the bobos, the bourgeois bohemians for whom saving the planet is more important than preserving the beautiful, and whose intellectual constructions are more real to them than what is before their very eyes.

Then there is the question of massive abstention. It would, of course, be possible to blame the indifference or laziness of the electorate. Such abstention turns rule by consent into rule by absence of dissent. No doubt the feeling that *ils sont tous pareils* – that politicians are all the same, namely corrupt and self-seeking – and that nothing really changes, adds to the voter apathy.

Having been elected in these circumstances, people like Anna Hidalgo imagine themselves popular and, as tribunes of the people, with a mandate to do as they see fit. And where populations are increasingly divided into an ideological archipelago, it is easy to see how the will of a determined minority may with the aid of electoral bribery and in the name of democracy, pursue policies that the majority hates.

Theodore Dalrymple's latest book is In Praise of Folly, Gibson Square, 2019, £9.99.

Treat a Friend to a Half Price Subscription

Introduce a friend to the wonders of 'The Review' and they'll get the first year half price.

Contact our friendly staff
01462 234279

info@salisburyreview.co.uk
or online at:

www.salisburyreview.com
Only available for friends in
the UK owing to prohibitive
postage costs

White slaves in 17th and 18th century Britain

Bill Hartley

Earlier this month the BBC reported that the statue of Bristol slave trader Edward Coulson had been placed on display in a museum and that residents had been ‘invited to take part in a survey to decide its future.’ Professor Tim Coles, chair of the commission which is to decide the statue’s future referred to the display as ‘being a departure point for continuing conversations about our shared history’.

It seems unlikely that this departure point will include a discussion about slavery other than that which involved the transatlantic trade, the East African trade carried out by Arabs or the enslavement of Europeans by the Ottoman Turks. We can also be fairly confident that no mention will be made of slavery here in Britain.

Coal mining in any era was hardly a trade known for healthy working conditions. However, Scotland in the 17th and 18th centuries was probably the worst place to be digging coal. Before demand

for Scottish coal rose in the English market the Scottish miner enjoyed considerable independence; groups of free miners were common. That great historian of the British coal mining industry

Professor JU Nef (1899-1988) noted that one of the first steps towards servitude was the elimination of the independence of the Scottish speculative miner. Much the same thing was happening in the Durham and Northumberland coalfields: free mining had existed throughout the British Isles prior to the industrial revolution but as soon as miners became dependent upon traders for capital, the next step was to get them to accept more onerous working conditions. One of the methods used was to erode the pay of miners via fines for various infractions such as ‘incorrect working’ or even taking candles home from the colliery.

The use of ‘bonding’ by colliery owners which began in the 17th century is described by Professor

Nef as ‘legal slavery’ and persisted up to the end of the 18th century. An article in an 1899 edition of the Edinburgh Review unambiguously entitled Slavery in Modern Scotland also described miners as the ‘slaves of their employer’. Whole families were to be found working underground; meaning this form of servitude was passed down dooming generation after generation. Nef explains that the system was created by the Scottish colliery owners to deal with the shortage of labour which accompanied the expansion of the coal trade. The effect of this was a reintroduction of serfdom, which had been virtually extinct in Scotland since the 14th century. It also eroded a basic principle of Scottish law; that one year was the most a man should be required to serve a master. It was precisely this which the coal owners set out to destroy, since free movement of labour forced up wages. Assisting this development was the Scottish Privy Council which acted with great energy in promoting the interests of colliery

owners. An owner only had to establish that a miner, formerly in his employ, was working elsewhere and had ignored a summons to return. No ‘technical’ defence was allowed and heavy fines could be used. A miner

might also be held as a ward until the owner came to get him back. Even the 1701 Habeas Corpus Act of Scotland specifically stated ‘that this present Act is in no way to be extended to colliers and salters’.

The great coal owning aristocrats often had seats on the Scottish Privy Council or at least sympathetic friends. To quote Nef: ‘by these judgements the landowners served notice on their fellow countrymen that they intended to retain their workmen in permanent captivity’. Subsequently this went a stage further. Statutes originally passed in the 17th century to hinder the annual movement of colliers were extended to all workers in and about collieries and as a result of the enforcement of these Acts, by the end of the reign of Charles II nearly

That great historian of the British coal mining industry Professor JU Nef noted that one of the first steps towards servitude was the elimination of the independence of the Scottish speculative miner.

every collier was bound to an employer for the rest of his life. Interestingly this move to servitude wasn't a survival of agrarian practise as in England. Perhaps it took an American economic historian as Nef was, to note that 'actual slavery of the type developed in the Scottish coal mines like that in the plantations of the American Union, appears to be the product of a rapidly developing industry in the hands of landowner proprietors. Whilst in the United States landowners were enslaving unfortunates of African descent, in Scotland they were doing it to their fellow countrymen.' Not surprisingly the enslavement of Scottish coal miners led to a decline in their social status.

In the North of England during the same period binding miners was also practised. However here it seems to have migrated from agriculture, due perhaps to the close links between farming and mining. Because of the way the industry was structured in the North, the kind of slavery practised in Scotland didn't develop. Although there were some aristocratic owners, collieries tended to be run as partnerships whose members were continually changing. Colliery owners in England had much less influence over government policy.

The library of the Mining Institute in Newcastle contains a great deal of original material about the practice of binding miners. In the papers of John Watson, who was a prominent Mine Viewer in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (the profession of mining engineer was some way in the future). His journal records how in 1771 he secured the assistance of a constable in helping to detain four 'deserted men'. Subsequently they were brought before a magistrate in Newcastle where they were required to sign a promissory note 'personally and severally' to the Duke of Northumberland. The offenders were, as in Scotland, 'bound men' though their contract was for twelve months.

Despite lacking the same political power as their counterparts in Scotland, employers sought other ways to control their workforce. One of the earliest recorded strikes in parts of the Northumberland coalfield took place in 1771, to protest against proposals to require miners to acquire a 'leaving certificate' from a colliery owner before they could seek work elsewhere. Subsequent strikes took place

to secure the end of a practice whereby owners didn't pay miners in cash but instead with tokens redeemed at the company shop. A further strike in the early 19th century secured a reduction in the working day of boys from 17 hours to 12. Children as young as eight might be alone underground working as 'trappers'. This involved opening and closing doors to admit wagons and preserve the integrity of air flow.

It's unsurprising that Professor Nef drew parallels between the slavery practiced in the United States and that of Scotland and to a lesser extent Northern England. There were plenty of similarities: colliery

owners would insert notices in newspapers offering a reward for knowledge of the whereabouts of an absent miner, in the same way that an 'owner' in the US might pursue a runaway slave. Perhaps though, a key difference was that in the US the unfortunates held in slavery had some value as a commodity. In Scotland miners were reduced to living in hovels, with whole families working underground.

Mine owners were indifferent towards fatal accidents and mining was as hazardous as military or naval service, the difference being that no-one received any training and the dangers were continuous. Miners were lowered down deep shafts supported by ropes which could and did break. There was the risk of drowning due to water inundation, particularly when driving drainage tunnels or adits into flooded workings. Gas was a dual hazard bringing the risks of suffocation and explosion. Sudden collapses in tunnels might leave miners trapped and beyond rescue. Safety regulations and inspection were a long way in the future.

With all the talk of educating people about the history of slavery some space might be reserved to consider the slavery endured by people in Britain?

Bill Hartley is a former soldier and deputy prison governor. He has travelled extensively in the Near East, notably Syria, Lebanon and Israel. He is the author of The Dynamics of a Coalfield and Hezbollah Wishes You A Safe and Peaceful Journey. Bill is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

With all the talk of educating people about the history of slavery some space might be reserved to consider the slavery endured by people in Britain?

Living below sea level

Daniel Egerton

Flooding in the Netherlands is highly unusual. The terrain is flat, there are rivers everywhere, and it rains a lot. But the Dutch have responded to this with centuries of ingenious water management. This July's floods were clearly due to poor management, not to extreme rain or climate change.

Parts of the Netherlands are so flat that some rivers flow in opposite directions on different days. Watermills are a dead loss, but there is plenty of wind. Thousands upon thousands of windmills stood here, as immortalised in Monet's paintings, until ousted by new technology. Only about 1000 remain. Windmills sawed, hammered and ground, and of course pumped water.

To reclaim marshland, you build a dyke around it, surrounded by a ditch, and then use windmills to pump the water out into the ditch. A windmill can pump water up about a yard. If the height required is greater, a staircase of windmills is needed. You then cultivate thirsty plants and after a time you end up with good pastureland, as well as a dyke to build your house on. Do this a few times and the ditches join up to form a useful canal.

As technology progressed the Dutch reclaimed ever larger areas of land (polders). To get an idea compare a map of the Beemster (reclaimed c.1600) with the Province of Flevoland (c.1930-1970), the largest man made island in the world.

The saying goes that God made the world, but the Dutch made Holland. Indeed, the Dutch have long arranged nature to suit themselves. Peat cutting for the ancient city of Haarlem resulted in a lake, which survived for centuries. One day, however, the Dutch decided that this arrangement displeased them. So they dug another lake nearby and transferred all the water into that. Then they put the national airport on the bed of the old lake, 15 feet below sea level. The Dutch seek not to stop nature but to tweak it, pumping and channelling the water but accepting it will always be there. They themselves draw a parallel with their drug policy: you can't hope to eradicate drugtaking so instead you encourage people to use the least harmful drugs. Not ideal, but achievable.

Reclaimed land must be unendingly pumped dry. The equivalent of the saying "sink or swim" is "pump or drown" (pompen of verzuipen). But as you pump

the polder dry it gradually sinks, leading to ever faster pumping and ever faster sinking. The lowest-lying village, Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel, is now 22 feet below sea level. There is logically enough no Dutch word for 'ground level', the nearest equivalent being 'the level of the mown field' (maaiveldniveau).

There is a Dutch word for sea level, but the water level here is where you put it. Our roads often have no camber since the Dutch simply do not accept that water goes downhill.

Eventually land was reclaimed not only from marshes but even from the raging sea. From town you walk up hill to the beach. Reclamation is no longer fashionable, however. The original proposal to reclaim all the Zuyder Zee behind the 20-mile Afsluitdijk (1932) was abandoned in 1975. One island off the north coast was partway through the reclamation process at the time. It now serves as a monument to land reclamation. The natural process of drying out continues so every year engineers visit and painstakingly undo the progress naturally made over the last twelve months, leaving the island forever halfway to dry land. This is not interference in nature but interference in that interference, and is considered in these parts to be conservation.

Roughly a third of the Netherlands is below sea level, a third is waterlogged marshland, and a third is simply land like anywhere else. In particular the province of Limburg, which points a long finger southwards between Belgium and Germany, has hills where you struggle to pedal your bike. It is out on a limb, rises to a shocking thousand feet and is majority Catholic. It is therefore considered comically exotic and nicknamed Limbabwe. This is where the recent floods happened. The valley of the Maas (Meuse in French) was overwhelmed by rain which fell mostly in Germany.

The entire Netherlands is dominated by the Maas and Rhine estuaries, both of which split up into countless branches that baffle even Dutch cartographers. They flow between high dykes. Nothing unusual about a three-storey house dwarfed by the dyke at whose foot it stands. Behind the dykes often runs a pair of parallel dykes, creating copious deep water meadows to accommodate excess water when the Rhine delivers the Swiss snowmelt and the water rises to just below

the dyke tops. The whole country pumps for all it's worth, even the historic windmills since every little helps. The system works. This July the Germans are angrily asking why they have suffered so much while the Dutch have not lost a single life. The answer seems clear enough: rainfall was high but nothing exceptional, Germany had simply not prepared. The price of dry feet is eternal vigilance.

The last grave floods were in 1953 when excess water in the North Sea was forced southwards towards the Straits of Dover. The Netherlands saw 640 square miles of land flooded and lost 1836 lives (the English coast was flooded from Lincolnshire down). Low tide was at levels normal for high tide. Dykes burst in 67 places. Hans Brinker's finger in the dyke is of course absurd but one astute boatman blocked a dyke breach with his vessel and saved a village. The response included the Thames Barrier and the equally stunning Hull Tidal Surge Barrier in England, and the Deltawerken in the Netherlands. This system of dykes, pumps and gates connects former islands in Zeeland and shortened the coastline by 434 miles (Zeeland gave its name to New Zealand, just as Australia was christened New Holland). The flat terrain meant raising dykes far inland, with the result that houses now sometimes stand halfway up the dyke when they used to be atop

it. It took almost fifty years to complete.

Water is not talked about much but subliminally is always there. While the British royals studied the history of art, King Willem-Alexander studied water management. The water level in every square kilometre of territory is monitored constantly, and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management has €16½ billion to spend this year. And every day you see a drainage ditch higher than you are and remember that nature did not plan things that way.

Global warming theory, then? Well, the Dutch are pragmatists. The grander the theory the less time they generally have for it. Opinion polls show support for green ideals but once voters had a taste of their policies the vote for GreenLeft (GroenLinks) halved in this year's elections. Nevertheless, the July floods are being used to push green ideas. British readers may remember the Environment Agency's Chief Executive actively promoting the flooding of residential areas in 2000. Dutch water management officials, however, are elected, and such eco-olatry is unlikely to win votes in a land so open to natural flooding. Perhaps it is the very vulnerability of the Netherlands that will protect it.

Daniel Egerton hails from Liverpool and has lived in the Netherlands for over twenty years.

The Flying Snails of Sophistry

George Hopewell comes home to find his neighbour has knocked down his garden wall

We came home from a trip to find a section of the boundary wall between our garden and our neighbours had been demolished. It had been an attractive golden stone wall, aged with lichen and the patina of time. Two period plant pots and four iron ornaments had been unceremoniously dumped in the dust on our patio.

Being conservative in our inclinations, in the sense of enjoying gradual change based on the wisdom of the past rather than radical revolution, we instinctively felt violated. We had cherished that wall and the ornaments for many years.

What had happened? Could it be an earth tremor? A spontaneously generated wrecking ball? A rampant Somerset elephant?

Politely, we queried it with our neighbour. We were

met with a wall (sorry) of sophistry. Sophistry is the use of invalid arguments in order to deceive, using clever but fallacious arguments to further your own aims by deliberately deviating from the truth.

Our neighbour argued that the wall, according to her very small-scale plan, did not belong to us and was longer than it should be and so was not actually in our garden. Therefore, she concluded, she could do what she liked with it. Her arguments were not only false, they were pre-meditated in order to deceive. Sophistry in a nutshell. Or, as we will see, in a snail shell.

You may be asking why would anyone be so ill-mannered as to knock down a garden wall without asking their neighbour or taking their views into account? Well, it turned out that she wanted to rebuild the wall to a more pleasing aesthetic on her side

and any opinions we might have didn't figure in her plans. Frankly, as an ex-teacher, she should have been ashamed of herself. Ashamed not only for criminal damage and trespass, but for using sophistry to try and justify a self-seeking agenda.

Struggling to find any empathy or logic, we could only hazard a guess that maybe she had all-too-readily been subsumed in the modern fashion for narcissism. This trend for self-absorption, of course, extends far beyond churning out endless gurning selfies. It is the belief that you are starring in your own film and everyone else is merely an extra – the 'Me-movie' approach to life. This seemed to be corroborated when she refused to enter our garden – there was a convenient gap she could have stepped through, in order to experience our point of view, metaphorically and literally.

Now I'm not one for moral preaching and happily accept all charges of gross hypocrisy. I have many times striven to win over my wife by cherry-picking arguments, usually in a facile attempt to persuade her she needs something I want. But at least I try to avoid the guile and malice of sophistic arguments.

Some may say there is never one truth and, in the muddle of life, sophistic reasoning is needed. Maybe this is true in the world of lawyers and social media influencers. And sales, and I have to admit I have been an advertising copywriter selling things to people they don't need. But for garden walls, there are truths, property plans and deeds which can be and were checked by our solicitor. It was a jointly-owned party wall and the wall was in our garden.

Sophistry is worse than the use of partial arguments to present a case with bias. We all, to a lesser or greater extent, can be accused of bias and being uninformed. A complete understanding of anything cannot be gained by anyone other than an omniscient deity. However, most of us do our best to research a bit and glance at the spectrum of arguments.

No, sophistry is the deliberate use of specious reasoning in order to achieve a self-interested end. So, I find myself writing something apolitical; no political party has a monopoly on sophistry, although some individuals use it more than others. This isn't a speciality of the left or the right and applies to states, governments, political parties, social media and other media organisations, as well as senior political advisers. What motivates it is self-interest. To gain an angle or advantage that suits you. And, like my neighbour, the arguments become more fallacious when you haven't

a leg to stand on.

A week later we were with friends on the patio, momentarily stunned into silence by some succulent Welsh lamb chops, when an object hit the kitchen window with a considerable smack. The poor snail (as it turned out to be) then bounced off the window pane and onto the table between us, its body work in need of emergency panel beating. Our charitable friends wondered whether a thrush could have dropped the snail – an unlikely event as the snail had arrived with a horizontal trajectory and thrushes are a rarity. We felt obliged to hypothesise that the snail was probably a result of our neighbour's bowling practice. It was our fault for munching in silence.

We spent an amusing five minutes coming up with our neighbour's sophisticated arguments for the snail's arrival:

'The snail actually enjoys flying, as it gets to its mate in your garden more quickly.'

'The snail was querying the existence of glass, so I put it out of its existential misery.'

'Some molluscs, like the Japanese Flying Squid, do fly, so why shouldn't a garden snail?'

'The snail had escaped from your garden (through the hole in the wall) and needed to be returned to its home habitat.'

The reader may like to practise their sophistry by adding their own arguments.

Our favourite was: 'Every snail is an individual and, as an educator, it is my duty to help every snail achieve its potential.'

So (I'm sorry, but every sentence begins with 'So' nowadays) we are free to pick and choose our arguments to suit our case. We will inevitably cherry-pick the research/arguments that fit our biases, convictions and passions. We will always have an incomplete understanding of an issue, but we can try to understand other points of view and be creative and original in our arguments. All this is fair game.

Maybe I'm naïve and sophistry makes the world go around, but surely we should at least try to avoid deliberately, knowingly and deviously conjuring up false arguments.

Especially us armchair arguers. Sofa soliloquys should be sophisticated, not sophistical.

Try saying that with a lamb chop in your mouth.

George Hopewell studied Philosophy at Oxford and lives in the West County.

Is Britain in danger of ever rejoining the EU?

Mike Mosbacher

Might Brexit yet be reversed? For those of us who supported Brexit and endured the Remainers' machinations, and those of the quasi-Remainers, between referendum day on 23 June 2016 and the referendum's final implementation on 31 January 2020, this is a recurring nightmare. But how realistic is such a prospect?

It is not likely. Not even the Liberal Democrats, the most rabidly Europhile party, are openly agitating to rejoin, at least not yet. Its policy is to 'set up a consultation to determine how we can work to improve ties with our European friends and neighbours and build support for membership of the European Union'. The Lib Dems, after much hope and hype on their part, even pretending Jo Swinson was a feasible prospect for Prime Minister, and spending £8 million of Lord (David) Sainsbury's money on the campaign, had a disastrous 2019 general election campaign resulting in the net loss of one seat. This has been partly blamed on the party in 2019 standing on a platform of Revoke, ie that if the unfeasible happened and the election resulted in a Lib Dem led government, they would have a mandate to rescind Brexit and the concomitant legislation by parliamentary vote alone without holding another referendum.

The parliamentary road to revoke was denounced even by many ardent Remainers as an undemocratic outrage. I, whilst as a Brexiteer totally opposed to the policy, could never see why it was seen as such an affront to our democratic order. In spite of our very occasional use of nationwide referenda, invariably used as a device for managing divisions within a governing party or like the 2011 Alternative Vote referendum, divisions between parties in a governing coalition, we live in a parliamentary democracy where parliament is sovereign, and rightly so. If there were a parliamentary majority for Revoke, or indeed a future majority for Rejoin, it would have been and indeed would be a tragedy, but such a parliament would be totally within its rights to stop the implementation or reverse of Brexit. It is a principle all good British conservatives, who indeed hold parliamentary sovereignty in high regard and believe the EU's undermining of it is one of the core reasons to support Brexit, should accept if they are not to be hypocrites. Nevertheless, the Lib Dems were so badly bruised by this policy at the last

election that they will not be returning to it.

The Labour Party realises that standing on a rejoin manifesto at the next general election would gift much of what is left of the Red Wall seats to the Conservatives; it would be politically suicidal. Keir Starmer has accepted the reality of Brexit – at least in his public pronouncements. Certainly a large majority of Labour MPs, and all Lib Dem MPs would dearly love us to rejoin the EU, but they also realise that campaigning for it now would be politically lethal. A parliamentary candidate campaigning on an unambiguous rejoin platform, indeed a rejoin by the fastest means possible platform, might fare well in Bath, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, parts of London, and Oxford, but very few other places in England and Wales. The fabled 'progressive majority' is found in only a select handful of places.

In Scotland and Northern Ireland, the position is rather different. The SNP would rejoin the EU tomorrow, as would Sinn Féin and the SDLP in Northern Ireland. For Sinn Féin this is a reversal, for it has always regarded European institutions as bastions of rapacious capitalism to be shunned in the name of all Ireland sovereignty, but they now regard it as an ally on the road to Irish unification. These Rejoiners want to break up Britain and will need to achieve this first. A united Ireland would automatically be in the EU as it would not be seen as a new state, merely an extension of an existing member state. An independent Scotland would however have to apply for membership, and may well be vetoed by Spain. Accepting a breakaway state as a member would give a boost to Catalanian and Basque separatists hankering for a similar status.

The Conservative Party has been shorn of its most vociferous Europhiles; they have either retired from politics, been sent off to pasture in the House of Lords, or decided the better part of valour is silence. There is no prospect of Conservatives reversing their Brexit position, at least to the extent of advocating rejoin.

At the next election none of the main parties will adopt a platform of Rejoin. What makes this more certain is that the EU demands that all new members sign up for the Euro once they meet its convergence criteria. The UK will certainly not be offered the opt out it had before it left, is hard to see any British politician, outside Scotland, advocating for Euro membership after

that currency's travails over the last decade.

Why then should Brexiteers nevertheless be worried? Britain will not rejoin the EU in the foreseeable future, but it may well end up in a relationship with the EU where many of the worst aspects of membership return. It is most unlikely that even such a government would accept the unambiguous return of free movement. This would be a clear a betrayal of Brexit, especially to politicians who imagine the Brexit vote was only about immigration, not sovereignty.

An incoming Labour or non-Tory coalition government, conceivably a post-Boris Tory government with a leader who was never too hot on Brexit, may well argue that Britain needs a better trading relationship with the EU, to prosper and save jobs. It could also argue that this would be the only way to replace the Northern Ireland protocol, if the Johnson government

had not yet been able to negotiate itself out of it. Such a government would argue that it was not re-entering the EU or heading in that direction, merely acting in Britain's best commercial interests. Such an agreement would almost certainly force the UK to adopt 'dynamic alignment' with the EU's regulations, and very probably that this alignment would be regulated by the EU courts. The UK would have to accept new EU regulations, and reverse any departures from EU rules which had occurred since Brexit. The UK would have little or no input into these new regulations, and it would have become a rule taker rather than a rule maker. Brexit would not have been formally reversed, but we would certainly no longer be a sovereign country.

Mike Mosbacher is an editor and journalist.

Conservative Classic – 82

The Passenger, Ulrich Alexander Boschwitz

Anthony Daniels

My mother, aged 18, lived through the Kristallnacht, but never spoke of it to the day of her death. Indeed, she spoke of nothing that happened from 30 January, 1933, until about a year after her arrival in England in January, 1939. Although I would very much have liked to know what she had seen and experienced, I sensed early in my life that she did not want to talk about it.

Maintaining silence is one way, of course, of dealing with memories so terrible that they can easily overwhelm the will to live. It is not that they are erased or eradicated: rather, they are pushed to the back, or to another compartment, of the mind.

Another way of dealing with such memories, however, is to bear witness and this, fortunately, is what the young writer, Ulrich Boschwitz, did. His experience of Nazi Germany was nearly four years less than my mother's; by the time of the Kristallnacht, he had already spent three years in exile. But his novel, a version of which was first published in England by Hamish Hamilton in 1939, is an imaginative and convincing reconstruction of the effect of the Kristallnacht on a middle-class Jewish businessman married to a gentile wife. Otto Silbermann, whose home has been invaded and smashed by Nazi thugs, whose business he has been obliged to sell to a gentile business associate who takes advantage of the new conditions to enrich himself at Silbermann's expense, flees and becomes almost a resident of the Reichsbahn,

the German railway system.

Silbermann finds himself an internal exile and wanders from town to town because he is now afraid to stay anywhere for long. He does not look Jewish, but his name gives him away. The action of the novel takes place in the few days after the Kristallnacht, and for sheer power of evocation of the terror imposed by the regime, combined with the willing conformity and complacency with which it was accepted or welcomed by much of the population almost equals Hans Fallada's *Alone in Berlin*.

Boschwitz, although only twenty-four when he wrote *The Passenger*, showed remarkable maturity in not making his protagonist a wholly admirable person. Silbermann does not have all the virtues to set against the vileness of the Nazis. The persecution that he suffers is not wrong because he is a saint, but because such persecution is monstrous in itself.

At one point, Silbermann telephones his brother-in-law, Ernst, with whom his non-Jewish wife has taken refuge. He asks whether he can come to stay for a few days, but Ernst, who is a Party member, declines because he says that Silbermann's presence will put them all in jeopardy. If anyone in the Party were to discover that he had given sanctuary to a Jew, albeit his brother-in-law, his career would be at an end and his sister put in danger. How, he asks, could Silbermann have been so egotistical as to ask such a thing?

Shortly afterwards, Silbermann is accosted by a

former associate, a sixty-year-old man called Lustiger with unmistakably Jewish features. Lustiger is pleased to meet Silbermann, but the pleasure is not reciprocated. They go to a buffet, where Lustiger, being hard-of-hearing, speaks very loudly. When Silbermann goes to the counter, Lustiger calls out to him by name to ask for a newspaper. Silbermann then tells Lustiger that he is putting him, Silbermann, in jeopardy. Lustiger, disgusted, leaves Silbermann, who realises that he has just behaved exactly as did his brother-in-law, Ernst. This incident illustrates with brilliant economy the effect on human character and behaviour of a terroristic regime.

Another important episode speaks strongly to the modern world and Europe's current predicament. At one point in his peregrinations, Silbermann makes it across the Belgian border to apparent safety, but Belgian border guards find him and return him to Germany. Silbermann appeals to them to let him stay; he promises to leave Belgium within a day and go on to Paris, where his son lives. He tells them that he faces persecution in Germany, which we know to be the plainest truth and which subsequent history demonstrated to be worse than anybody could possibly have imagined; but the border guards are implacable. They have their orders to obey and are deaf to Silbermann's appeals to their humanity. Unless he agrees to return to Germany under his own steam, the border guards threaten to hand him over to the German authorities, which will certainly mean that he will be sent to a concentration camp.

The moral failure of Europe to save Germany's Jews haunts the European conscience today to such an extent that Europe fears to repeat it by rejecting

anyone who claims asylum on its territory, hence its half-hearted efforts to control its borders. The analogy with the situation in the 1930s is very inexact, of course; Germany and Austria counted perhaps 600,000 Jews in all, and the targeted persecution that they suffered *ex officio* was open, well-known and beyond dispute. By contrast, the claims of the modern wave of would-be immigrants, while it contains many genuinely persecuted persons, are far more difficult to assess. Most are fleeing bad economic circumstances, poor prospects or political chaos at home rather than persecution, and hope for a better life rather than mere survival. The fear of repeating the Belgian border guards' conduct on a large scale is the time-bomb that is one of Hitler's many legacies to Europe.

There are few books, at any rate that I have read, that better capture the swift collapse of a sophisticated and civilised society into unexampled barbarism than *The Passenger*. Whether this could all happen again is a question that must run through readers' minds and when one regards the messages of brutal and frustrated hatred in commentaries on the internet, one feels that it could. All that is lacking, perhaps, is a ruthlessly-organising demagogue.

This novel can be read at a single sitting, not because it is short, but because it is so gripping. Its author met a tragic fate. Having reached England, he was interned as an enemy alien on the Isle of Man as was a first cousin of my mother's. Then sent to Australia, he was allowed to return to England a couple of years later, but his ship was torpedoed with the loss of everyone aboard. Boschwitz had the manuscript of his latest novel with him: a severe loss to German, and to world, literature.

Eternal Life

Peter Day-Milne

There is a certain type of unhappy person who is unhappy because his conception of life, and of human nature, is totally wrong. This is the type that seeks happiness as an end in itself. We have all met people like this: the man who buys every new interesting gadget, and grows bored with it within a week, the man who is always repeating the holiday travels of his younger days, but who always returns with the sense that he had had more fun the last time. The man who always laughs a little too long, consciously trying to extend his mirth, while

a little voice in his head asks him 'Am I happy? Is this happiness? If not, how do I get it?' Such people are never spontaneously, unselfconsciously happy; and so, whether or not they show it, they are some of the saddest people around.

Fortunately, ever since the Greeks, wiser heads have understood what these people are getting wrong. Happiness, as our forebears realised, is not so much a target one can aim at, but the reward of living virtuously. We humans are limited by our embodied human nature, and we have duties. These

can be burdensome, but they also offer a road-map to virtue. If we respect our nature, and fulfil the duties of our state of life, then we start to live virtuously. Happiness flows from this. Happiness is one of the second things of life: something we cannot pursue as an end in itself. The first things – the things that we should consciously aim at – include the love of God, the fulfilment of our duties, and the nurturing of the natural virtues, traditionally adumbrated in the four ‘cardinal’ virtues of prudence, temperance, bravery, and justice. By the grace of the New Covenant, which reconciles, perfects and completes all. As humans striving after the Good and Beautiful and True, Christians also have access to the supernatural, theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, which complement but do not supplant the other ones.

An illustration of this formula lies in the Queen’s life. Last week Her Majesty undertook her first solo public engagement since the death of her husband, visiting the Royal Navy’s new carrier, *HMS Queen Elizabeth*. There she was, a tiny figure on the huge grey flight-deck of a capital ship; the gentle, indomitable reason why hundreds of sailors and marines, both British and American, had donned their best dress, and were now standing proud on deck; a symbol of duty and charity that united the servicemen in dutifulness and good-feeling. Any monarch is a person to salute, the keystone in a civilized archway of mutual recognition and duty. But few have become a symbol of duty itself, let alone a symbol of charity: a symbol of giving of oneself for others. The Queen has. Her dutifulness has led her to live out a splendid life and I believe that she is really happy. Deep happiness is infectious, and few can meet the Queen without feeling better about themselves. Since hardly anyone enjoys her degree of physical vitality or personal security, this is a quite a remarkable phenomenon. Cynics will say that the Queen has excellent public relations, yet no PR can generate the kind of respect that she has won. More plausibly, cynics will also say that she has had every advantage in life, and that the British public would always slavishly extol any monarch. But is this true? Or has the Queen won the public’s affection for herself?

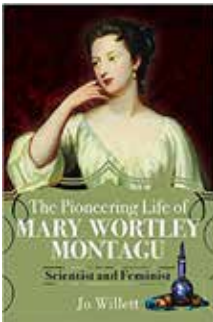
She was born into European royalty just after Europe had torn herself apart, and as crowned heads were falling everywhere. She grew up as Britain’s experiment with democracy was bedding itself in, and as aristocratic houses were daily being demolished, or sold to a new, harder kind of capitalist. Her grandfather was Emperor of India, and her father

was to be so too, but already Britain’s power was waning. As a young woman she served in the Second World War which marked the final failure of the old order, and dashed the younger, scientific-utopian hopes of the modernists. Soon, she was to ascend the throne; but she herself would be no empress. Besides, the last one, Victoria, had almost turned Britain republican with her eccentricities, until an ingeniously accelerated Jubilee had changed the public mood. The Queen’s early reign was a tale of kingdoms conceded, British flags lowered, the Iron Curtain, Suez, the shadow of the mushroom cloud, an age of changing morals, and a sense that something good had been lost. She saw the failure of the old, the failure of the new and the end of the Empire; she belonged to an age whose thinkers would lead us into a long, still-enduring rut of post-modern despair.

All her life the Queen has lived in a dying West. Even her father had some power in a Great Power; she has never had any. What was her solution? Despair? Self-pity? A sense of lonely isolation in an impossible task? Instead, her whole life has flowed from two choices: First, she chose to do her duty, and to do so for her whole life. Second, she realized that she, as Queen, would not be simply Elizabeth, a human being; but would be a symbol; a figure one would meet as an honour or inspiration or both. She accepted this unchosen burden as God’s plan for her, and resolved to make the most of it by making those she talked to feel special and important. She chose to love, and by resolve and hard work, love became a habit. Nothing else can explain her famous smile, given to all-comers, and inimitable by those merely condescending to play a part. The Queen cannot command armies, cannot influence policy, cannot thrash out deals with other sovereigns. The big abstractions—wars, nations, summits, plans, resolutions—lie just out of reach for her, in the coded hints of Prime Minister’s conversation. She reads her papers: the international acronyms, the dishonest jargon, the ludicrous sociology, the political fatuities all show a world with little room for a monarch’s personal touch. But she knows she can be kind to every individual she meets.

No decision is more human and through it she has helped to forge a true family of nations, the Commonwealth, from the fallen empire. She has symbolized steadfastness in an era of oppressive, change and with her late husband, has inspired duty and loyalty in a culture contemptuous of hierarchy and tradition.

ARTS AND BOOKS



Edward Jenner's Predecessor Jane Kelly

The Pioneering Life of Mary Wortley Montague, Scientist and Feminist, Jo Willett, Pen-and-Sword History, 2020, £25.

In late July there was a mass rally in Trafalgar Square against Covid vaccination, led by a former nurse, struck off by the Nursing Council in June. She had a large following and her protest was one of myriad conspiracy theories. The language was extreme, with threats against doctors, journalists and politicians who 'anti-vaccers' believe are complicit in a sinister global agenda. Three hundred years earlier, in April 1721, as the variola virus, smallpox, raged through England, one aristocratic lady decided to get her two-year-old daughter inoculated, launching this whole debate, and saving billions of lives. Anyone who understands the value of inoculation, according to ONS figures, ninety six per cent of the UK population, should have celebrated that date, but Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who first introduced vaccination to the west, has been almost forgotten. This book about her brilliant, unconventional life couldn't have been published at a more appropriate time.

Mary Pierrepont was born into immense privilege; her ancestors arrived in 1066 and within two centuries owned large parts of Nottinghamshire. In the 16th century a Pierrepont married one of Bess of Hardwick's daughters and built Thorsby, the great house where Mary lived. Her relatives, mostly, fought for Parliament in the Civil War, and became Whigs. She called herself, 'Whigissima'. When her great aunt married a Tory, her father disinherited her and made Mary's grandmother sole heir to the family seat of West Dean in Wiltshire.

Her family, she wrote, had 'produced some of the greatest Men that have been born in England'. She inherited what she termed unusual 'Clearness of understanding' and also beauty. Aged seven her uncle,

the Earl of Kingston, took her to his private club, a Whig stronghold, where she was put on the table, 'like a human candelabra' and toasted for her beauty. Much later, after she was married, she caught small pox which had already killed her brother. Willett writes with vivid detail about this cruel change; 'She emerged weakened, her eyesight severely impaired, her face disfigured by the disease's characteristic weeping pock marks. Her husband had been distraught at the transformation in his wife. Her career at court was now over. Her eyes were no longer fringed by dark lashes but rimless and red.'

She remained a tough and determined woman. Only a few months later she set off for Constantinople, where her husband had become British Ambassador. She put on Turkish clothes, made explorations and mixed socially with the wives of Turkish officials. Among her entourage was Dr Charles Maitland, who was interested in rumours that the Turks could protect themselves from disease using 'engraftment'. Every autumn a small group would isolate themselves for several weeks, then pay an elderly Christian woman to 'engraft' them. Willett explains bluntly; 'As a Christian, her life was expendable.'

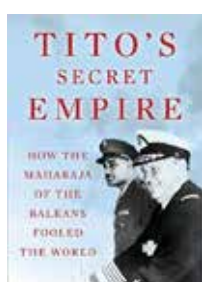
She had to remove a small amount of matter from the sores of a smallpox victim, transfer this to a clean glass and return with it stored in her armpit or bosom to keep it warm. Then she made some cuts on the arms and legs of patients with a needle, carefully transferring the infected pus into walnut shells. She put the pus into the bleeding wounds, strapping on the nutshell to save every drop. A few days later the engrafted would run a temperature and develop spots. About a week later they would be well again, protected for the rest of their lives.

Mary discovered that the two sons of the previous ambassador had been engrafted. The French Ambassador was not interested in the process and Voltaire later commented that if his wife had been as brave as Lady Mary, 'She would have done the French nation a lasting service.'

While her husband was away, against the wishes of their chaplain, Mary decided to engraft her five-year-old son. The boy survived and his father was not told. Back in England, she decided to risk it again with her infant daughter but met opposition from her family, friends, and the medical establishment. She blamed the doctor's reluctance to experiment on their concern for their bank balances, and wrote to a friend, 'I may have courage to war with 'em.'

She persuaded a reluctant Maitland to help her again, ‘Plying him with a large fat capon and veal sweetbreads.’ The child was inoculated and survived. Three members of the College of Physicians were invited to examine her, followed by, ‘Several Ladies and other persons of distinction’. A distinguished doctor agreed to have his son treated, and a national controversy began. Clergymen preached against it and pamphleteers scribbled furiously. Mary was a superb networker, travelling to aristocratic houses throughout the land offering inoculation. Her greatest coup was persuading Caroline, the Princess of Wales, to vaccinate her daughters. King George I would not allow the new practice on his sons. The College of Physicians accepted that Mary had been right but medicalised the process; insisting that patients had to be bled and purged first. When they died, they blamed the inoculation. Mary with ‘characteristic irony,’ commented: ‘Some fools would rather be sick by the doctor’s prescriptions than in health in rebellion to the college.’

She went on to encourage girls’ education, reform of marriage and financial independence for women, abandoning her husband for a bisexual Venetian count, and was regarded as the most intelligent woman of her generation. Seventy-five years after she risked everything to prove the efficacy of vaccination, Edward Jenner became lastingly famous for the same idea. Redressing the balance, Jo Willett, who has spent her career writing television drama and comedy, including a series for Meera Syal, has produced a book fizzing with fascinating detail and a real imaginative feel for the period. Thanks to her work, perhaps we’ll see Mary’s turbaned head on the next £20 note.



Eastern Approaches

Richard Bassett

Tito’s Secret Empire, William Klinger and Denis Kuljiš, Hurst Publishers, 2021, £25.

A solid, dispassionate biography of Tito by his own countrymen, drawing on mostly hitherto inaccessible documents, has long been awaited. Although both Professor Klinger and Mr Kuljiš are now dead, the legacy of their insights and research is to be found in this fascinating study of one of the key protagonists of the modern history of Europe.

Marshal Tito emerged from the Balkan mists towards the end of the Second World War. Ambitious, ruthless, his political training at the hands of the Comintern complimented a keen sense of *divide et impera*, acquired as a non-commissioned officer in the Imperial and Royal Army of the Habsburgs. After a spell in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia’s prisons, *a sine-qua-non* of any successful political education, he worked briefly as a waiter. The uniform, like that of his early Austrian military service, impressed him. In later life, uniforms, often white as in Imperial Vienna, were almost an obsession with him.

Tito – the name was a Soviet intelligence nickname for him originating from the sidearm known as a Tolski-Tokarev (TT) pistol – was undoubtedly a gifted partisan leader. His elevation to quasi-mythical status as the war progressed was, however, entirely the result of British intrigues in the eastern Mediterranean, then a rather sensitive point along our imperial jugular. On the 18th September 1943, a dashing young man who had also done a stint in Moscow, the diplomat turned MP Fitzroy Maclean, met Tito and the two men became intimates. Maclean reported directly to Churchill and his assessment was strongly backed by communist agents working for SOE in Bari. Their evaluation discredited the royalist partisan organisations and led Churchill to back and arm the communists. ‘After all’, he remarked to Maclean, ‘neither you nor I wish to live in Yugoslavia after the war’. (Maclean was not to know then that he would be, exceptionally as a foreigner, allowed by Tito to acquire a fine house on the Dalmatian island of Korčula)

As the authors wryly point out, in the Balkans, a single intelligence operative can be far more important than an army of tanks or a series of air-strikes. Maclean’s arrival on the Balkan stage ‘set the scene in which adventurous secret operatives of a magnificent empire well past its prime – writers, Scottish aristocrats, and men of the world, suddenly had an opportunity to excel’. Tito certainly knew how to impress. At Caserta he arrived to meet Churchill with a very handsome uniformed Amazonian blonde female partisan in jodhpurs, riding boots and a sub-machine gun. Churchill was so captivated that he gave the young lady an engraved Dunhill cigarette lighter.

The authors show that from the beginning Tito’s plans were imperialist and wide-ranging. He aimed at an imperial Balkania which would include parts of Albania, Italy and Austria. Above all he coveted Trieste, the great port of the Habsburgs which had always been an Italian city, even if its hinterland had long been predominantly populated by Slovenes. When Tito’s partisans occupied Trieste at the beginning of May 1945, an ugly three-way standoff

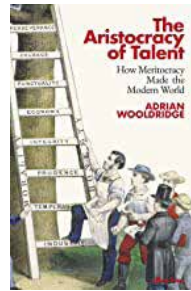
ensued between German SS troops holed up in the citadel, allied troops (to whom the Germans wished to surrender) and the communist partisans out for revenge. Tito had not broken with Moscow at this stage and Harold Macmillan, Churchill's point man in the Mediterranean, was able to use his Soviet 'allies' to pressure Tito into withdrawing. The *quid-pro-quo* left an unpleasant taste. *Operation Keelhaul*, two weeks later, resulted in the forcible repatriation to Yugoslavia of most anti-communist Yugoslavs then in the British zone of Austria. The authors convincingly argue that 70,000, including women and children were murdered. It remains to this day the one real blot on Harold Macmillan's otherwise exemplary record. Challenged a few weeks later by a Guards officer at a Fourth of June celebration in Villach, Macmillan candidly admitted it had been 'frightful' but 'how else were we to prove our loyalty to our Soviet allies'.

Unsurprisingly, the Soviets soon grew weary of this trigger-happy Slav maverick and when in 1948 Tito refused to surrender his imperialist ambitions and follow Soviet direction by folding Yugoslavia into a kind of federation with greater Bulgaria, the breach with Moscow was seismic. Tito immediately turned to Maclean, and Maclean turned to Julian Amery who enlisted his father-in-law, Harold Macmillan, and then everyone looked towards the Americans. A strategically invaluable fissure seemed to have opened up in the communist imperium and Tito soon became the object of a charm and financial offensive by the West which only ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War some ten years after his death. Tito brilliantly played both sides and the Non-Aligned Movement he instigated became useful window-dressing for Moscow, ever eager to show that there were alternatives to the embrace of Anglo-Saxon capitalism.

Tito was keenly aware that the centrifugal forces he had moulded into post-war Yugoslavia were vulnerable to external shocks. When he died in 1980, no-one foresaw that the Cold War might end before the decade was out. Nonetheless, as a Croat with a Slovene mother, he had been acutely aware of the capacity for fantasy and destructive pessimism which invested the Serbian mind-set. A strong Yugoslavia, he was fond of saying, always needs a weak Serbia.

His effortless removal of any rivals who might have succeeded him led to a system of rotating mediocrities who, while underlining the earlier brilliance of Tito at almost every turn, quickly led the country into first cultural and then political disintegration. In the end, the end of the Cold War meant Yugoslavia's non-aligned status became meaningless. Britain and France, the midwives who had presided over Yugoslavia's birth

out of the rubble of the Great War, tried hard for several years to stave off the destruction of the country they had created, but as in 1914, so in the 1990s; the Serbs showed themselves to be not just 'useful idiots' but collectively, pathologically suicidal. Klinger and Kuljiš, were they alive today, would no doubt view with contempt the generation of incompetents who completely failed to build on the foundations of Tito's legacy so that even its shattered fragments continue to resonate with incoherence today.



Meritocracy Then and Now

John Jolliffe

The Aristocracy of Talent, Adrian Wooldridge, Allen Lane, 2021, £25

What ever happened to meritocracy, the lovely idea that we should all be governed by those best qualified to be in charge? This book charts the various fluctuations that have overtaken the dream.

Many and various were the ways in which people have thought it could become a reality. Plato thought that a just society was one in which everybody is in their proper place, ruled by an elite who know the difference between truth and falsehood, and beauty and ugliness – no family life, and no ownership of property. All will enjoy 'the same pleasures and pains because they all agree about what is near and dear to them'. Oh really? It does not seem to have occurred to him that human nature does not work like that unless it is forced to do so by tyrannical controls.

In the Tang dynasty in the 7th century China the governors of a large empire were to be chosen by an endless series of examinations in which less than three per cent of the entrants were successful, but which some patient candidates were prepared to go on sitting for their entire lives. A little later the Parsees fled from the Arab tide which overwhelmed Persia in the 8th century and settled in India, where they later thrived by marrying within their ethnic group, and by the 19th century ran most of the banks and businesses in Bombay. (All the members of the first All-India Cricket team were Parsees.)

Later still, in Europe, the Renaissance bred humanists who believed that studying the philosophers, poets and masters of rhetoric of the past was the best way to foster the moral qualities needed to govern the city

states of Northern Italy. Next came Frederick the Great, Catherine the Great and Louis XIV, and eventually Napoleon, who believed in *la carrière ouverte aux talents* but nevertheless came round to the idea that a pure autocracy, in their own hands, was the answer. In England, the tide of the Civil War came in, and then went out again.

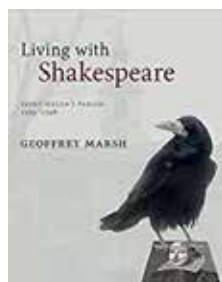
In the 19th century, psychologists tried to devise methods for measuring natural mental abilities, and educationists built ladders of opportunity, lucidly illustrated on the excellent jacket of this book. Many were convinced by this, but their recommendations would be overshadowed by the sheer diversity of human nature, and it became clear to Kant, and later to Isaiah Berlin that ‘from the crooked timber of humanity nothing straight could be fashioned.’ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the huge expansion of education in England, and all the more so in Scotland where it began from a greatly superior position, gradually transformed the situation. Samuel Smiles in his book *Self-Help* (1859) declared that all you needed to do was to work hard, and opportunities would come along. Well, yes, but more readily to some than to others. By 1900 the book had sold a quarter of a million copies.

In 1895 the Bryce Commission argued that more scholarships should be awarded for promise of general ability rather than for precocious early achievement, ie that ‘children’s opportunities should be determined by what is in their heads rather than what is in their parents’ bank accounts.’

Easier said than done, but obviously a worthwhile target, though how to achieve ‘levelling up’ rather than ‘dumbing down’ is still being argued today, in order to fight the mediocrity of which Harold Wilson was the chief High Priest in the 1970s. There was also the prevailing sex discrimination: when Mrs Thatcher entered Parliament the only concessions to female MP’s in Westminster were the provision of a *chaise longue* and an ironing board. Trial and error seem to be the way ahead, but the widely varying quality of teachers means that new errors crop up all the time. Sidney and Beatrice Webb and the other Fabians tried to replace the existing class-ridden society by one which would be ‘nurtured by the state, guided by science (what science?)’ and bent on an efficiency which has largely failed to materialise ever since.

Wooldridge concludes that even in its various imperfect forms, meritocracy ‘does a better job than the alternatives in reconciling the two great tensions prevailing today: efficiency and fairness on the one hand and moral equality and social differentiation on the other.’ His detailed pages of ‘conclusions’ are a valuable extension of what has gone before but he shows that the most promising attempts to improve

fairness often turn out to be the most vulnerable, as is shown by the fate of New York City College after in 1970 it opened the flood gates to thousands of poor adolescents, many of them the offspring of immigrants. There was a boom in student numbers, and a collapse in academic standards to an all-time low in 1999, when it had the courage to abandon admissions. The moral seems to be ‘Make your experiments by all means, but if they fail after a fair trial, then have the courage to chuck them before doing further harm.’



Shakespeare’s Parish

Celia Haddon

Living with Shakespeare. Saint Helen’s Parish, London, 1593-1598, Geoffrey Marsh, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, £25.

St Helen’s church in the City of London will be open for worship this Sunday, just as it was some 425 years ago when William Shakespeare was among the congregation. In that same congregation would also, among others, have been a dealer in animal skins, Robert Spring and his wife Denise and their six children and Timothy Bathurst with his wife Mary with six of his children and a stepdaughter from Mary’s previous marriage. The service would have used a form of the *Book of Common Prayer* not so unlike the 1662 version still used in some parishes. And as Shakespeare would have been liable for a heavy fine of one shilling (twelve pennies) if he did not attend, we can assume he would have been there on Sundays.

We know he lived in the parish because he was assessed for its 1598 Lay Subsidy roll and his name is listed between that of a court musician and a foreigner, probably a merchant. The tax demanded of Shakespeare, that he did not pay perhaps because he had moved back to Stratford earlier that year, was £5. This was a sum also demanded of the musician, a doctor and a merchant tailor. In all there were 24 parish inhabitants who were taxed higher from £6 upwards to £300 and 20 were taxed lower. So Shakespeare was one of the middling sort, ‘middle class’ or perhaps ‘upper middle class’ as we might call him today.

St Helen’s was Shakespeare’s parish, his world in miniature. There are now so many books about Shakespeare’s ‘world’ on Amazon that I gave up counting after 27 of them. Many are about Stratford on

Avon, now a Shakespeare hot spot with five houses that tourists can visit: his Stratford birthplace, his daughter's home Hall's Croft, his wife Anne Hathaway's former cottage, his mother Mary Arden's childhood home and his last home, New Place, now destroyed with only a ground plan and gardens remaining.

His family world is not in this book as he lived without them in St Helens, nor is there much about the wider Elizabethan world. This is the small world of a tiny parish in London where the writer lived on his own for four or five years, writing plays and long poems (when the theatres were closed with the plague). It is the world of his neighbours, the local rector, the merchants, both English and foreign, the leather workers, the doctors and some of the gentry who, like today's bankers, had a home in town and one in the country. The records tell us about the tenancies, law suits, the taxes they paid or didn't pay, the revolting apprentices (not unlike our modern students) and the costs of being buried inside, rather than outside the church where the overcrowded churchyard may well have smelled of the last corpse to be interred.

This is history by detail and it's fascinating. The church itself started life as a building used by the local Catholic nunnery with some space for the local parishioners. By Shakespeare's time many of the old popish statues, wall paintings and the rood itself had been thrown out and St Helen's had settled into Protestantism with a distinctly puritan slant. Lectures, as well as services, were given to educate and improve local inhabitants. As most puritans strongly disapproved of the theatre and its players, Shakespeare would have been wise to be conscientious about his church attendance. Apart from fines for absence, regular churchgoing ensured safety in the eye of the authorities and added an aura of respectability to a person involved with the theatre. Perhaps a sense of caution is why we are still unsure of Shakespeare's exact religious leanings.

In the parish's biggest house, Crosby Hall (once the property of Richard III), lived a puritan Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Spencer, whose rebellious daughter persisted in marrying the man she loved, rather than the man he had chosen for her. Echoes here perhaps of Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or of the plot line of his fellow playwright Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. A self-made very rich man taxed at £300, Spencer believed that plays 'contained nothing else but unchaste fables, lascivious devices, shifts of cozenage (trickery), and matters of like sort.' In his view theatres attracted 'vagrant persons and masterless men that hang about the city, thieves, horse stealers, whoremongers, cozeners, cony catching person, practisers of treason.'

The parish was something of a commercial centre housing the Leather Sellers Company (still in existence today as one of the City's livery companies) and several successful merchants, forerunners of the merchant bankers of the last century. There were also several foreign merchants from Antwerp, Bruges and Holland, some of them Protestant refugees. Among the humbler tradesmen, who paid no tax, were haberdashers, hosiers, coopers, carpenters and, as might be expected, several sellers of leather.

Like today's Islington or Hampstead, St Helen's parish attracted the richer kind of intelligentsia. There were three medical doctors among them a Dr Peter Turner, the son of William Turner, the father of English botany and author of *A New Herbal*. It was Peter Turner who invented laudanum, that effective painkilling mixture of opium and alcohol. A medical colleague, Dr Jorden was an expert in women's problems writing a pamphlet, *A Briefe discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* ('Mother' being the word for the womb). Nearby there were also lawyers (one splendidly named Sir Julius Caesar Adelmare), musicians and not far away even an antiquary, John Stow, author of *Survey of London*. The musicians included the composers Giles Farnaby and Thomas Morley, who composed the lute music for 'It was a lover and his lass'.

St Helens was a respectable parish and Shakespeare was a respectable inhabitant saving enough money to send home to buy a good house in Stratford on Avon. Some playwrights were less respectable. Thomas Kyd was arrested for 'lewd and mutinous libels,' and Christopher Marlowe, imprisoned briefly after a brawl and arrested for counterfeiting, was finally killed in a drunken knife fight. Those two, both suspected of atheism, lived in a less respectable non-parochial 'liberty' rather than a parish, an independent enclave not governed by the City of London and free from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction to the Bishop of London.

Living with Shakespeare is history built up by the accretion of detail, as a way of looking at the bigger themes of the Elizabethan theatre, the beginnings of empire, the treatment of mental illness and the scandal of witchcraft. The footnotes to each chapter are not the usual necessary account of historical sources, but are a further addition of minute detail, not to be missed or passed over. The book's illustrations are equally interesting, including pictures of the first Inuk brought back to Bristol by Sir John Frobisher and the monumental tomb of Sir John Spencer, which shows his rebellious daughter kneeling with her back to her prone parents. The only criticism I have of this delightful book is that it is so heaped with fascinating facts that it is very heavy. I would have liked to enjoy some of the detailed footnotes in bed.

The Rough Edge of the Law

Jan Davies

Nemone, Nemone Lethbridge, pub Milo O'Connor, 2021 (self-published, available from milo.oconnor@outlook.com)

When I qualified as a solicitor, the expectation of most firms was that lady solicitors would undertake genteel tasks such as conveyancing with maybe a little not too difficult divorce work. I would often find myself the only woman advocate in a busy London magistrates' court. At one job interview I was told 'I don't think my clients would like being represented by a woman'.

'Then why did you ask me to come here. You can see from my name that I am female.'

'I was curious to know what you looked like,' came the strange reply.

So some of what Nemone Lethbridge writes about her struggles to be accepted at the Bar strike a very familiar chord. She was refused a key to the Chambers lavatory as it was thought inappropriate for a woman to be sharing facilities with the men. Obtaining briefs when she was starting in practice was difficult.

Fortunately, her father was able to arrange for her to join a set of chambers in Gray's Inn and to find her six months' pupillage. Then she was called out one Saturday morning to make a bail application for the Kray twins, who appear to have liked what she did and started pushing work in her direction.

Nemone was to meet a Jimmy O'Connor who was not so fortunate. While Nemone was born in India in 'an Edwardian dream of innocence' with ponies, ayahs and 'adorable dogs', Jimmy was born into a household in which the cupboard was often bare and boiled bacon and cabbage was a luxury. While Nemone was at boarding school, Jimmy embarked on a career of theft, became involved in racketeering while he was in the army and deserted. Jimmy lived through the Blitz: Nemone's family moved to Somerset.

Much of the book consists of snap-shots of their very different lives, contrasting the ease and luxury of Nemone's childhood and university days with the poverty and crime experienced by Jimmy. I am not sure that this technique works as well as it should. Just as the reader begins to be interested in the life experiences of one of them, the books swerves back to the life of

the other, and knowing from the outset that the two of them are destined to meet and marry I found myself waiting for this to happen, which was not until page 329 out of a total pages of text of 356. The book then draws rapidly – perhaps too rapidly – to a close.

But although I thought the book would have benefitted from some ruthless editing, Nemone does tell an interesting story. Jimmy was falsely accused and spent years in prison. The conditions he must have described to Nemone subsequently are only too familiar: 'Cruelty, stupidity and ignorance, flogging, mailbags, the quarry and porridge were central to daily life.'

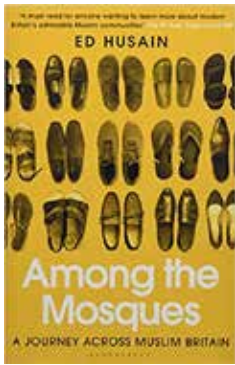
At his trial his defence barrister appeared to take little interest in representing him properly, and he was advised by his barrister not to give evidence. I have always thought, even before the law changed so that an adverse inference could be drawn if a defendant did not go into the witness box, that if a defendant was at all likeable the jury should be able to have a good look at him. Juries are not complete fools; they are bound to wonder if a defendant is silent whether it is because he has something to hide, and you will always wonder if you prevent him from giving evidence, what would have happened if he had. After his release his story was taken up by newspapers and he was able to do some work for the tabloids, writing from his own experience and in the vernacular. Nemone at this time was an undergraduate at Somerville College.

Eventually, Jimmy persuaded her to marry him. She announced in Chambers that she had married, but no one asked who her husband was. She thought of her wedding as 'a bold political gesture' but did not initially tell her parents.

Unfortunately, there was public interest in their marriage and once her head of Chambers realized who she had married, she was summarily thrown out. After trying to find alternative chambers without success and finding herself cold-shouldered by colleagues at the Bar, she and Jimmy went to live on a Greek island.

Despite its flaws, this book is an interesting story, written in an unpretentious way. It is an interesting account of life in the 1950s viewed from two very different perspectives.





A Society within a Society

Brian Eastty

Among The Mosques, Ed Husain, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021, £18:99 (paperback, 2022, £9.89).

This is a book whose influence does not even extend to its own cover for its publishers have chosen to adorn it with a puff from Sajid Javid who recommends it ‘for anyone wanting to learn more about modern Britain’s admirable Muslim communities’. In his journey around ten cities with large Muslim populations, Ed Husain *does* find some mosques which are praiseworthy. He approves the location of the central Edinburgh mosque, integrated into a diverse area, and pleased to find an Islamic centre in Belfast run by women, yet it is an odd reader who fails to see that much of what he describes is far from admirable and unequivocally portrayed as such.

Husain is a brave writer who spends much of the book cannoning into taboos like a ball in a pinball machine. In Bradford, he meets a theatre practitioner who runs workshops for disabled children and is demoralised by the lack of interest from the city’s Muslim parents, despite the high proportion of such children in British Pakistani families. He explains that this problem is caused by many consanguineous marriages in that community, a point rarely made in the mainstream media. Even when attending a family wedding, he is unwilling to compromise his principles. Asked to act as a witness for a couple who will have an Islamic ceremony but no civic registration, he refuses as it would mean his distant relative, an engineer marrying a waiter, would have no right to a divorce, should she change her mind.

The book is like a detective novel as Husain is an intrepid investigator of the less savoury aspects of his religion which makes it such a good read. Each chapter ends on a kind of doctrinal cliff hanger as he reveals which city he is going to visit next and what he intends to discover. On a few occasions when he ‘goes undercover’, posing as a parent considering enrolling a child in a madrassah for instance, the book becomes full of suspense, heightened by the use of the present tense. The last of Husain’s visits is gripping when, as a Sunni Muslim, he enters a Shi’a mosque in North

London to witness the ceremony of Muharram, in which Shi’a Muslims flagellate themselves as an act of mourning for the death of Mohammed’s grandson. He is clearly fearful about being discovered but he is equally concerned for the people in the neighbouring streets who have to witness the preceding gender-segregated jaloos procession.

He quotes one:

‘We don’t like the shouting ... and the women being covered in black at the back. But they have the police on their side... The government doesn’t care. Nobody is on our side.’

It is refreshing to find such a statement being quoted without aspersions being cast on the character of the speaker. But Husain simply describes her views as sincere.

This is typical of his generosity towards white people. Wherever he goes, he wants to hear their views of their Muslim neighbours and takes their opinions at face value where most of the media would place an assumption of covert bigotry around them like a *cordon sanitaire*. Such generosity of spirit even extends to the English Defence League. While clearly he sees them as pernicious, he reminds us that they were formed in response to disrespect shown by some Muslims to British soldiers returning from overseas.

At King’s Cross station, he even takes a fellow Muslim to task who is begging, when he uses the word ‘gora’, a racial slur, to describe white people. Husain calls him a racist but is frustrated that his ‘point is clearly lost on him’. It would be lost on many more people now, for this exchange shows that the book was published before the world was changed last year by George Floyd’s death when our institutions were submerged in critical race theory.

When in Edinburgh, he visits the grave of David Hume, the great Scottish philosopher who boldly questioned organised religion.’ Two years later, Hume is better known for being cancelled by Edinburgh University, for views he expressed some three hundred years ago.

If these observations appear trivial, their implications for Husain’s wider argument are anything but. Appalled by the extent to which many Muslims live in communities cut off from wider British society, and oblivious of its rules and principles, he enjoins us to ‘celebrate these attributes and bolster them in our public life – in schools, courts and all other institutions – and the mosques will follow’. If there were any hope of British Muslims being inspired by a patriotic narrative a year ago, it is a forlorn hope now. The whole process has been thrown into reverse.

How disheartening Husain must find it to hear that a school in Batley faced with the challenge of upholding

the principle of free academic enquiry, chose instead to be cowed by the Muslim protesters at its gates and to behave as if it was subject to the blasphemy laws of Pakistan, with scarcely a word of protest from our political parties, unions or any other body. Young Muslims will be inspired by the confident clerics not the craven representatives of mainstream British society.

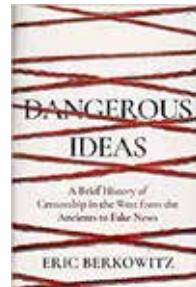
Husain argues that most influential people seem intent on not promoting what is good about this country to its ethnic minority citizens and instead apologising for it. Long term stability can only be guaranteed by the proper integration of Muslims. Otherwise ‘We are becoming separate tribes with different and opposing identities.’ He provides a telling example of where this leads when he visits the Nationalist and Unionist communities of Belfast and quotes Mountbatten on the problem he faced in India: ‘There can be no question of coercing any large areas in which one community has a majority to live against their will.... and the only alternative to coercion is partition.’

Husain is serious about the British qualities he wishes his co-religionists to embrace. Not for him the giggly self-effacing suggestions of John Major with his warm beer and elderly spinsters on bicycles. The definition he proposes rests on the rule of law, individual liberty, gender equality, and racial parity which he needlessly shoehorns into a mnemonic: rigour.

Uniting under such a programme ought to hold wide appeal, but our politicians have other agendas – and not just the Muslim Labour MPs who Husain accuses of ‘playing a dangerous and divisive game’ by seeing themselves as ‘elected to represent ‘Muslim interests’ and Muslims at large.’ In 2018, an All Party Parliamentary Group issued a definition of Islamophobia which included such offences as accusing Muslims of being more loyal to the ummah, the international Islamic community, than their own countries and drawing attention to the demographic threat posed by the concentration of Muslims in certain areas.

Perhaps well-meaning efforts to shield Muslim communities from criticism and scrutiny only serve to empower the branches of the religion which are most at odds with the values of tolerance and equality. As the author of *The House of Islam*, a history of the religion, he guides us through the bewildering mass of denominations which make up the religion yet even he is shocked by the sentiments expressed in books openly for sale in British cities which foster extremism. Too many people in power in Britain see Muslims as an undifferentiated mass though there are signs that in France, President Macron is learning the value of the right kind of discrimination.

Husain is well-connected for he thanks two former Prime Ministers in his acknowledgements. Yet one can only doubt whether his warnings will be heeded given the determination of the political class to deny there is even a potential problem, shown by our most senior Muslim politician.



From Free Speech to Fake News Anthony Daniels

Dangerous Ideas: A Brief History of Censorship in the West, from the Ancients to Fake News, Eric Berkowitz, Beacon Press, 2021, \$29.95.

Men are not by nature tolerant, and therefore tolerant political dispensations stand in greater need of explanation than intolerant ones. For those who think they possess absolute truth, and who also possess power, it seems only common sense that they should seek, for the good of humanity, to suppress dissent, which in their opinion can arise only from misguidedness or malice.

Not surprisingly, then, censorship has a long history, which the author of this book relates with gusto, even delectation. The title is slightly misleading, unlike the subtitle, since he includes in his book the censorship of obscenity and pornography, which are not really ideas. The framers of the first amendment to the American constitution could hardly have had the protection of dirty postcards or snuff movies in mind, but this is a small quibble.

A book that tries to cover two and a half millennia in 256 pages, from the Hebrews to Facebook and Twitter, the author’s historiography is hardly subtle. Indeed it reminds me of the history essay I wrote when I was 14, which began ‘Louis XIV was not a good king’. From the great height of my experience of life, I thought I was qualified to pass global judgment on a man of whose life and situation I was almost wholly ignorant. The author is nothing if not certain in his judgments.

He is hostile to censorship on two grounds: that it is an assault on the human right to self-expression, often involving great injustice, and that it is in any case futile, all the oppression necessary to enforce it never achieving its end.

It seems to me the author is too categorical. Perhaps

in fifty years, expression will be as free in North Korea as in the most liberal of countries: but that would not prove that censorship during the rule of Kim Il-Sung had been ineffective. A policy does not have to be successful for all eternity to be counted successful; it has only to be successful enough to meet its immediate object. And no one could say that censorship under Kim Il-Sung had been futile.

The author does not acknowledge that freedom is as much a habit of the heart or a manifestation of a culture as a matter of statutes and constitutions. When he writes of eighteenth-century trials in England, for example those of Wilkes, he does not appreciate how far the salience of the concept of freedom must have advanced for those trials to take place at all, especially as the verdicts were often in favour of the accused. Under real dictatorships, trials, even if allowed, are in kangaroo courts with preordained verdicts and penalties. Political caricatures in George III's reign were of a vicious scurrility not remotely equalled by today's cartoonists.

Because the book is a romp through the ages in search of examples of censorship in action, the author sometimes gives serious misjudgements. He says, for example, that, 'in the [eighteenth] century's closing years, while the British government was officially appalled at developments in revolutionary France, it often appeared to emulate the Revolution's murderous elimination of dissenters.' This, it is like comparing McCarthyism, reprehensible as it was, to the great terror in the Soviet Union. A sense of proportion is needed when writing about these matters.

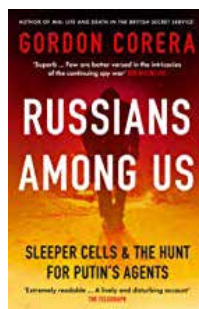
Nevertheless, the book contains much interesting information, particularly from the twentieth century. Total war, which began with the First World War, required strong censorship, for populations might not have tolerated the slaughter otherwise. Oddly enough, the author fails to mention the way in which all democratic governments classify information so that its release will be relatively anodyne. No doubt this is done for national security, but more often to save the rulers' faces and reputations. The author does not ask whether there is ever some justification for this, because without a degree of trust that would be destroyed if every last detail about every last decision were known, government itself would become impossible – a situation that only anarchists would welcome.

Nor does the thought that nearly all great art has been produced in conditions of censorship ever occur to him. Since the sole object of life is not to produce great art, this is not an argument in favour of censorship, nor could one design that kind of censorship in which great art could or would flourish. But in a history of

censorship, it might have been worth considering the types of censorship compatible and incompatible with worthwhile artistic production.

In the last chapter, unsurprisingly the longest in the book, he approaches the vexed question of censorship in the present day. The author, being a West Coast liberal, thinks that the greatest threat to freedom of expression comes from far-right extremists. Furthermore, he downplays the degree of non-governmental censorship exercised in universities by various pressure groups, and the necessity for all university teachers now to subscribe to politically correct pieties. It is not enough for them to remain silent; they must swear fealty to such principles as racial discrimination, for example in applications for jobs. Fear of obloquy at best, failure to advance in one's career or even of dismissal at worst, now inhibits free discussion profoundly. Trump's bluster, which the author takes seriously, was a minor threat to freedom by comparison. I always thought that Trump's presidency would lead to a strengthening of political correctness, not to its reduction or demise. Crude invective is not a solution and only invites a reply in kind.

After some vacillation, the author comes down finally on the side of freedom. Thanks to the Internet and the so-called social media, vileness had never before been expressed in such industrial quantities, but, says the author, 'striking at speech to eliminate a dangerous idea is not only ineffective – it will cause worse mischief in the long run.' I hope he is right.



The Search for James Bondski Martin Dewhurst

Russians Among Us: Sleeper Cells and The Hunt for Putin's Agents, Gordon Corera, William Collins, 2021, £9.99.

Last year, for the first time, I read a novel (one of his most famous) by John Le Carré. It is very well written, but I struggled to reach the end, because I periodically came across scenes that didn't ring true. I never worked in a secret or security service, but I occasionally met people who have, and I always took advantage of the chance to ask some of them what they thought of Le Carré's creations. Not a representative sample, of course, but they burst out laughing and said something like, 'if only' their work had been so exciting.

I found Gordon Corera's new book much more compelling and convincing, and raced to get to the end of the main text, perhaps because I prefer reading straight history to historical novels. His latest page-turner is built around the July 2010 exchange in Vienna of ten people (most, if not all, of them Russians) who had been working as *agents* for the USSR and/or for the so-called Russian Federation, for four Russians, generously defined, three of whom including Sergei Skripal' had been based mainly in Moscow and had been working as *spies* for the West. The fourth, Igor' Sutyagin, had enjoyed no access to classified sources of information, but, being very intelligent, was able to put two and two together from openly available books and articles and, without realising it, revealed things which were of interest to a few people who read him in the West. Not being a spy, he only very reluctantly agreed to participate in this murky exchange to prevent it from collapsing altogether. Although superficially so lop-sided, it was a very good deal for the West, because those expelled from America without trial had done far less damage to that country than the three or perhaps the four who unexpectedly arrived in the West had done to the Soviet and/or the current neo-Soviet regime in Russia. Perhaps the greatest hero behind this swap was, and I hope still is Alexander Poteyev, (an intelligence official) who had tipped off the West about all or nearly all the ten Russian agents after returning to Moscow from a stint in New York at the beginning of the century. He slipped out of Russia and reached Germany via Belarus' and Ukraine shortly before the exchange in Vienna took place. This appears to be the first time his courage and achievements have been made public. I would guess that he heads (or headed) the list of those in the USA whom the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) would like to poison.

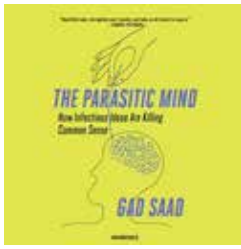
Perhaps the most interesting couple travelling East that day were Andrei Bezrukov (known in America as Donald Heathfield) and Yelena Vavilova (aka Ann Foley), graduates of the University of Tomsk who married each other twice, first in Siberia and then later, after a 'chance' meeting in North America. They appear to have entered Canada in 1987 and moved to the USA in 1999. Whether Gorbachev was aware of this is unknown, but this couple was equally ready to spy for the socialist USSR as, after 1991, for the new capitalist regime in Russia. Our country, right or wrong, seems to have been their motto.

Throughout the book which also reminds us of people like Alexander Litvinenko and Boris Berezovsky but also introduces us to several other interesting characters like Alexander Zhomov, Corera refers countless times to the 'end of the Cold War'. 'What's in a name?', you might well ask. He takes it for granted, without

specifying when 'the end' occurred. Presumably he thinks this was shortly after the KGB-organised coup and counter-coup in August 1991, when the new regime suddenly switched from building state-controlled socialism to laying the foundations for state-controlled capitalism without severely punishing *anyone* who had committed serious crimes under the previous regime. I have suggested elsewhere that the Cold War was followed by the Gold War, promoted by people all over the world who believe that money is the root of all good and also think that due diligence when investigating the origins of what might prove to be filthy lucre should be largely a formality, not to be taken too seriously. 'Golden passports', enabling buyers to become citizens of one or another of an array of none too scrupulous countries including, alas, the UK, can now be bought.

Corera, like other experts, has a better idea, and he begins to explain it towards the end of this book: what has been happening since at least 1996 is a *Hybrid War* coupled with Cold and Golden elements, much of it taking place in cyberspace and involving, on the Russian side, large investments in spreading disinformation not to be confused with misinformation around the whole world. Those running Russia so far this century do have an ideology, neo-Eurasianism, and a long-term strategy. They refuse to even try to turn the Russian Empire into a mere country. Indeed, they are set on making their homeland an even bigger dinosaur, regardless of the costs. If you haven't the time to read the whole book, just look up 'Ghost Stories' in the Index and follow the page numbers. These days the West has to prioritise counterterrorism over counterespionage, and the Kremlin is currently using 'dark power', rather than hard, soft or smart power, to weaken, and influence the West rather than to steal any of our remaining secrets. I would add that the number of Russian open and concealed supporters of Putin(ism) living all around the world, whether legally or illegally, is vastly greater now than when the 2010 spy exchange took place than in Soviet times. The current President of Russia, an unrepentant volunteer for the KGB, is repeatedly suggesting that Stalin did far more good than harm. Putin still claims that it was the end, not the beginning, of the Communist experiment that was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century.

Corera's book is a fascinating read. The ongoing Hybrid War, which may well continue after Putin leaves the scene, is *more* dangerous than the Cold War and could easily lead to another Hot War, indicated recently by Russian military manoeuvres very near to and even in the Ukraine, especially the Russian-occupied Crimea. We can't say we haven't been warned.



Mind Worms

Alexander
Adams

The Parasitic Mind: How Infectious Ideas Are Killing Common Sense, Gad Saad, Regnery Publishing, 2020, \$28.99.

Gad Saad is an evolutionary psychologist who has specialised in examining how our instinctive urges and subconscious rationalisation influences us as consumers. He is a devoted opponent of identity politics and noticed the implications of a Canadian law which permitted enforced speech (Bill C-16), early, which meant that refusing, or simply forgetting to use a person's preferred pronouns even invented ones could be deemed a breach of human-rights legislation. It effectively compelled unwilling people to play a game of Simon Says with words they instinctively resisted, with the penalty of official reprimand, firing or financial penalty for a slip.

Saad's new book treats the wave of woke, socio-religious cults as a phenomenon of idea pathogens unleashed and cultivated by higher education. Many of the idea pathogens covered in this book are examples of a form of runaway selection of insanity spawned by leftist professors..

His logical critiques of social justice activism have left him an isolated figure. His experience as a Jewish refugee from Islamist death squads in Lebanon explain his tenacity and implacable opposition to radicalism. He sees in Western progressivism two threats: the destruction of rationality and moderation through polarisation that could topple Western society and the rise of Islamo-Leftism, which offers inflexible certainty in a stew of relativism and timidity. Criticising progressivism and warning of the dangers of Islam make Saad doubly unwelcome and the refusal of the West to limit immigration of Muslims to the West has left the managerial elite paralysed and in denial, claiming that Islamism is nothing to do with Islam.

The origins of the anti-factual tenets that undermine tradition and truth telling are well known to *Salisbury Review* readers. Saad explains them crisply. Post-Modernism lends itself to denying the existence of objective truth, not quite what its founders intended but, regardless, that is how it is used by followers; feminism equivocally acts as a lobbying movement for one biological sex whilst denying the existence of biological differences in sex. Social constructivists

state that behaviour is learned not innate and that inherited characteristics do not matter.

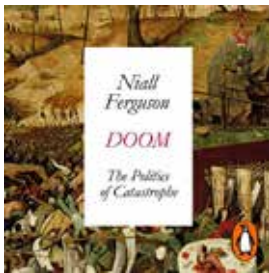
These parasitic authoritarian ideologies stifle debate and quash free speech. Saad puts up a spirited defence of both. Free speech has been undermined with the slogan hate speech isn't free speech. The press, politicians and the managerial elite grant Islamists *de facto* sharia by supporting their violent reprisals upon apparent blasphemers, excusing them as regrettable but inevitable responses to hate speech. Saad writes about the climate of fear in universities: 'Ideological Stalinism is the daily reality on North American college campuses. Any freedom-loving person should be appalled by this, and yet most academics yawn in complicit apathy and cowardly inaction. They are too worried about their selfish, careerist considerations to care. Many professors have excused such complicity by suggesting that in vague terms they are protecting the feelings of students and minority groups, as if this excuses the flight from Enlightenment principles of truth seeking and intellectual liberty.

Trigger warnings and safe spaces do not protect students but make them more fragile and anxious. Homeostasis, whereby an entity tends to adjust to maintain equilibrium, applies not just to physical and biological levels but on a psychological level.. Homeostatic processes can yield unwelcome consequences. Risk homeostasis theory holds that people will alter their behaviour to maintain a desired level of risk in their lives, which is why car seat belts, antilock brakes, and airbags make some people drive more recklessly. Anxiety about racism on the university campus, the most shielded of settings, is a consequence of both the cults of victimhood and safetyism. Medicalisation of justified periods of grief, stress and self-criticism has turned pampered lives into traumatic ones.

Ideologies trigger emotions by appealing to moral foundations of care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation, liberty/oppression. We all have these foundations in different proportions according to our temperaments, which tend to be liberal (American definition) or conservative. For example, a situation that a liberal finds unfair, a conservative may not or may assess its unfairness as less important than the maintenance of liberty. Emotionally satisfying ideas are infectiously appealing because they cause people to view the world in morally binary terms. According to the ideology, flaws in society spring from single causes. If only the men/white race/capitalists/Jews/infidels could be stopped from perpetuating their patriarchy/supremacy/exploitation/Judaism/sinfulness, then utopia could finally be achieved.

The hysterical reaction to Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the US Supreme Court and the election of Donald Trump shows how emotion guides large groups of people. Saad quotes Theodore Dalrymple's coinage of emotional incontinence as a description of competitive victimhood. Of course, often no cause for distress exists and what one observes is learned exploitation. Saad describes how male feminists adopt non-threatening politics so that women lower their defences, a possible strategy for overcoming negative qualities like lack of good looks, low testosterone and low social status. Apparently, kleptogamy is the scientific term for mating under false pretences, a word to remember for a dinner-party conversation.

Saad agrees that the inherent weakness of liberalism ushered in by the Enlightenment, has allowed idea pathogens to flourish and are now almost unchallengeable because they have social respectability while lacking logical or scientific validity. Saad (an atheist) regards religion itself as an extended memplex that is parasitical, which may dampen some enthusiasm for his cause among Christians. He does not recognise moderate religion as an inoculating bulwark against atheistic progressivist cults.



Sunbathing on Mt Etna

Roger Watson

Doom: The Politics of Catastrophe, Niall Ferguson, Allen Lane, 2021, £25.00.

Niall Ferguson's new book is inspired by the Covid-19 pandemic but not primarily about it. Of course, coronavirus has more than a walk on part here, but it is more of a vehicle to take the reader to the reality of catastrophe. Most of it is local; global catastrophes, exemplified by Covid-19, are rare. Reactions to and reporting of the Covid-19 pandemic have ranged from the hysterical to the cynical, with a very underpopulated middle ground. I see elements of both extremes in Ferguson's approach but he presents a very balanced view of events, where the pandemic is the focus of his attention.

Contrary to the usual bimodal separation of catastrophes into those that are described as 'natural' and those that are considered 'man made'; Ferguson is

clear that there is no catastrophe that is wholly one or the other. For the reader wondering how this is possible or what he means, the book is replete with examples. Earthquakes and volcanoes are only natural insofar as they are not caused by human activity unless you consider them to be God's judgement for our sins. If an earthquake strikes or a volcano erupts and there is no proximate human habitation, then it is not really a catastrophe. Indeed, before we measured seismic activity, it was like a tree falling in a deserted forest; nobody would even have known it happened. But, as Ferguson shows graphically in the book, humans have a remarkable propensity to build cities on geological fault lines and not to move them, even after disaster strikes. They also build near volcanoes and learn to live with them, and to die with them, because of the agricultural benefits of farming on the fertile soil created on the slopes and surrounding areas of volcanoes.

Conversely, very few catastrophes are purely human. At least, they are not purely the fault of the humans directly involved. Other factors are influential. In a chapter titled 'The fractal geometry of disaster', Ferguson considers several terrible disasters and explains the difference between 'sharp-end' error, that caused by those humans directly involved and 'blunt-end error', or an existing error not in the control of those humans. Of course, other humans may well have been involved at some point through commission or omission in creating the blunt-end errors. As a health professional I was not surprised to see James Reason being referred to in this chapter. He is famous for his seminal treatise *To err is human* where he explained how mistakes are made, for example in operating theatres and by airline pilots, and that they are very difficult to prevent entirely.

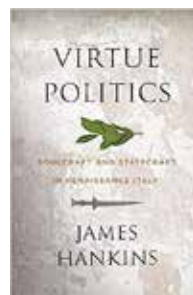
Reason is probably most famous for his 'Swiss cheese model' of error. A Swiss cheese is full of holes, analogous to errors, but rather in the way the holes in a Swiss cheese do not normally penetrate the whole cheese, these errors are prevented by a range of checks and balances. Systems are put in place in operating theatres to ensure that the environment and the equipment are safe, and the surgeons and nurses have a series of procedures to prevent sharp-end error. Sometimes there is an accumulation of unseen errors, each alone not fatal because there will be a procedure to prevent it. But occasionally the errors are simultaneous and cumulative and impossible to stop, leading to a near miss or fatal error. In other words, the holes in the Swiss cheese align and the error penetrates. Ferguson does not refer directly to the Swiss cheese model but his account of the collision of two jumbo jets with huge loss of life on Tenerife in 1977 is a

description *par excellence* of the Swiss cheese model. The Hindenberg and the Titanic are both covered in this chapter and this single chapter makes the purchase of *Doom* worthwhile.

Otherwise, across eleven chapters, preceded by an introduction and tailed off with a conclusion, *Doom* is a dense, meticulously referenced and very well written book. Ferguson has an enviable ability when interviewed to assimilate and weave disparate and fascinating facts elegantly and without hesitation to make or refute an argument. This skill is amply displayed in his writing, except in writing he has had even more time to consider his arguments, muster his facts and assemble his thoughts. He is both easy to read and very amusing at times with an eye for irony and contradiction. Who would have thought that the Covid-19 pandemic and its almost manic concentration on the development of vaccines would be detrimental to other vaccination programmes across the world. Already there has been a rise in cases of diphtheria in the developing world.

Ferguson does not say that there have been opportunity costs in our obsession with Covid-19 which is mostly mild and from which the vast majority of people recover, for the effective treatment of diseases we know to have high mortality. Nevertheless, Ferguson does repeatedly indicate, with reference to Covid-19 and other historical plagues that sometimes actions intended to alleviate a situation have exacerbated it. In *The science delusion* Ferguson explains how one phenomenon can have contradictory consequences. The economic prosperity offered by the Empire allowed Britain to make advances into the causes and cures of infectious diseases while, simultaneously, increasing international trade and movement, thus ensuring the spread of those diseases.

In Ferguson's conclusion, titled 'Future shocks' I could see both Ferguson's good sense about Covid-19 but also, his toeing of the 'party line' on the pandemic. He is pro-face mask against a background of very little evidence in their favour. He is clear that our public health response has largely been disastrous, but I am not sure we would agree on why or on the consequences. Everyone is now an amateur epidemiologist and virologist but, whatever the reasons leading to the pandemic, the economic and unintended health consequences have in my view been disproportionately disastrous. One of Ferguson's suggestions is that governments should have 'official Cassandras' who can take the pessimistic view and present them with the worst-case scenarios. I disagree vehemently; we have these already in the shape of his epidemiological homonym, the 'other' Neil Ferguson and his colleagues at SAGE. Just see the mess they made and where we are now.



Machiavellian Advice

Sean McGlynn

Virtue Politics: Soulcraft and Statecraft in Renaissance Italy, James Hankins, The Belknap Press, 2019, £36.95.

How do you make a minor publishing sensation out of a massive, erudite volume on Renaissance humanist political thought? First, give it a snappy title such as *Virtue Politics* to add resonance to our contemporary scene in an era of Trump, Orban and virtue-signallers. Then give nasty Machiavelli lots of attention in the press publicity, even though he accounts for less than 20 per cent of the book's content, but it is written with sparkling lucidity and elegance that will engross the reader throughout, in spite of its esoteric contents

Hankins sets out his argument that the quattro- and cinquecento humanist movement in Italy, initiated by Petrarch, had a novel political agenda. In reference and deference to the world of antiquity, and the writings of Aristotle, Seneca and Cicero, they advocated a new system of governance based on a moral education in the classics, focusing on literature, philosophy and history. Many humanists such as Petrarch, Dante and Biondo Flavio argued for 'innate Roman virtue and piety' and claimed that 'the Romans had a kind of epigenetic superiority in virtue'. Princes should tap into this and rule through personal and intellectual virtue rather than through outmoded scholasticism and desiccated legalism, for the health of the body politic was mirrored by the virtuous integrity of its head. This education overseen by the humanists themselves as tutors would restore fragmented Italy to its former, imperial greatness, everywhere reproaching its current leaders through the impressive grandeur of its neglected ruins. Hankins cleverly calls this 'virtue politics', a reform programme which 'focuses on improving the character and wisdom of the ruling class with a view to bringing about a happy and flourishing commonwealth'. Thus 'the humanists saw politics, fundamentally, as soulcraft'. If that sounds too good to be true, it was.

The times called for something more robust. Recurring outbreaks of the Black Death; constant warfare, famine, the Great Schism of the Church, corrupt tyrannies domestically and the threats from

both European powers and the Ottomans externally all required something more than looking for inspirational solutions in what we would call the liberal arts. Delving into Cicero might be enlightening, but it only went so far into the real world of poverty, disease and war. Later, Machiavelli recognised this and reacted accordingly. Besides, the classical era could provide as many negative exemplars as positive ones; Thomas Aquinas had already remarked on the tendency of Roman emperors to be tyrants.

Of course, the humanist programme failed, as idealism always does. It is good to think that our leaders are educated people, but is that a sufficient qualification for the top job? Mussolini was very well read and drew his main inspiration from ancient Rome. He even wrote a biography of Jan Hus, the medieval founder of a heresy. We know today that an elitist education and upbringing can create a snobbish, out-of-touch ruling class. The Renaissance humanists in this book were not ignorant of this, taking a meritocratic viewpoint. True virtue and nobility were qualities that anyone could possess; they could be inherited, but they were not the preserve of the rich.

Hankins says the humanists' 'overriding goal was to uproot tyranny from the soul of the ruler [...] and to inspire citizens to serve the republic'. Was it? It could equally be the kingdom, or however the polity was arranged. They were rather guarded about this: to renounce a monarchical form of government was to limit their job opportunities. Along with genuine altruism and naïve optimism, there is also a healthy dose of self-interest at play. Rulers should follow the programme set out by humanists; the latter, becoming the self-appointed tutors to the great and good, then become indispensable. It suggests elevated and convenient idealism propounded for material gain as the humanists sought patronage and a place at the high table. *Plus ça change...* Hankins underplays this. The historian Noel Malcom has also made a similar point about the humanists: 'a man has to earn a living, and one thing that came easily to men trained in classical rhetoric was churning out great quantities of worthy-sounding advice, historical examples and platitudinous generalisations'. Alarming those in the humanities have been elbowed out by the scientists who now have our rulers' ear. I am sure their motives are different, being pure and selfless; Machiavelli might take a different view.

Hankins is rather sniffy about Machiavelli's scholarly skills, yet it is the Florentine's cynicism that captures the practicalities of power more perceptively than the good intentions of the humanists. For many, Hankins's closing chapters on Machiavelli will be the greatest highlight in this volume. Hankins demonstrates the

revolutionary break that Machiavelli marks from the humanists, his *virtù* representing craft, guile and power achievement as much as anything more virtuous. Results mattered more than morality for the practically-minded Machiavelli, whose military doctrine, for which he was most famous amongst contemporaries, was 'the root of all his later political doctrine'. Surprisingly, Hankins barely mentions the late fifteenth-century humanist Aurelio Lippo Brandolini, whose work he has edited elsewhere, calling him 'the most interesting humanistic writer on politics before Machiavelli', and who prefigured some of Machiavelli's own thinking. Of course, Machiavelli's *The Prince* shared this in common with the humanists' works; it was similarly written to win favour and influence. As Machiavelli confessed, he was a 'doctor of the art' of lying.

Despite Hankins' lightness of touch, the subject matter makes this a challenging read, but a rewarding one. It offers an inspiring guide to an esoteric aspect of the past, from antiquity and the late medieval period, and shows us that in the human affairs of governance and political thought, the concerns of our ancestors are also our own.

Don't wait for the next paper edition of the *Salisbury Review*, visit us online!

When was the last time *The Telegraph* or *The Times* allowed you to comment online about subjects they don't want to hear your opinion on?

We do!

Each week we blog important topics other magazines or newspapers will not touch, such as immigration. Go to our webpage and write a comment, take part in subsequent discussions, join all those out there the government is not listening to.

Come and join us! www.salisburyreview.com

Film

JANE KELLY

Nomadland, Director Chloe Zhao

Nomadland begins in the quixotically named town of Empire, Nevada, population sixty-five in the 2021 census. Behind it we see a range of cold craggy mountains before the even craggier face of Oscar winning actress Frances McDormand fills the screen.

The nearest town, Nixon, is sixty miles away on an Indian reservation. From 1948 to 2011, Empire was a 'company town,' owned by the US gypsum Corporation, with a population of nearly a thousand. The mine and a Sheetrock factory closed in 2011. Despite the end of heavy industry in the UK, this is a shocking level of desolation and dispossession, as the people only lived there, in what seems to be the middle of nowhere, because of the mine.

'Home is somewhere you take with you,' a folksy voice tells McDormand, playing Fern, 61, the widow of an Empire miner. She quits her 'Company track-house,' a pre-fab backing on to a desert, to take to the highway in a small white van she calls 'Vanguard,' with a few keepsakes from her previous life, to join a tribe of aging, American nomads, crossing the plains like their ancestors, but this time without any clear idea of where they aim to go. It seems they just want to get away from everything to do with the past, and keep moving.

A particularly appealing aspect of the film is that many characters are played by untrained actors playing themselves, such as Bob Wells, the backwoods bearded leader of the convoy, in real life a traveller, famous for YouTube videos about 'Cheap RV living.' There is Charlene Swankie, 'An experience kayaker' who in the film has terminal cancer, on her way to Alaska to kill herself. Audiences were glad to see her looking quite healthy at the Oscar ceremony when the film swept the board for awards. Most popular has been Linda May, hitting the road aged 67, a penniless grandmother who befriends Fern.

'Dave,' played by David Strathairn, 72, an Oscar nominated professional actor, becomes attracted to Fern, after they bond over a box of can openers. We see her spending Christmas alone in her cramped van, with a bit of tinsel in her scraggy hair. There is a problem coping with the cold and sanitation. 'You've got to learn to deal with your own shit,' someone advises,

showing her fellow travellers some two-gallon buckets. We later see Fern using one and relieving herself by a roadside. The materiality of the film is fascinating; we see rough fabrics, gadgets, cigarettes, broken china, and ravaged faces, against the sub-text of the great American wilderness. 'Swankie' says she would have been happy to die the day she first saw the beauty of nature in a national park.

Half an hour in, one starts to wonder; is this journalism, or a nature documentary? It's interesting and pleasant to watch but there's no dramatic tension. None of the characters seems to want anything in particular, there is no quest among them. Are we seeing something like the *Grapes of Wrath*, a response to dire poverty, or more the cosy, optimistic, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*, the 1962 travelogue by John Steinbeck? Bishop Richard Harries on BBC Radio 4 *Thought for the Day*, in June, said he had seen the film and was puzzled by Fern's 'otherness.' He couldn't understand her motives or why she needed to be always on the move.

It's also puzzling that despite their poor teeth, white beards and scuzzy hair, none of the characters are actually destitute. When Dave gets diverticulitis, he immediately receives abdominal surgery, unlike almost thirty million Americans who have no insurance and cannot pay for basic hospital procedures. When Fern's van breaks down her sister gives her hundreds of dollars to get it fixed. These are not red-neck Trump supporters, they are educated, middle-class. Fern hums Green-Sleeves as she drives and on two occasions recites a Shakespeare sonnet. Dave's grandchildren enjoy a sumptuous family Thanksgiving dinner. So, who are these travellers? This is not *Easy Rider* with its message of Hippie freedom on the open road. It seems that they are all the baby boomers who grew up in the 1960s and expected a little too much from the world, or at least from American capitalism.

A piece is missing in the narrative which may be due to a failure of nerve by director Chloe Zhao who adapted the film from the excoriating book *Nomadland*. Investigative journalist Jessica Bruder travelled 15,000 miles across America to write it, taking a forensic view of the effects on ordinary people of economic upheaval, unemployment, lost pensions and collapsing house prices. Folks like you or me, driven

to work long hours in Amazon warehouses during the winter holidays or take summer jobs paying ten dollars an hour in national parks. That troublingly harsh side of American life is unknown to most of us safe in cosy Britain, and Zhao doesn't show it in *Nomadland*, merely hints at it. Instead, she focuses on the luridly fascinating particulars of vagabond life, while her characters demonstrate the good ol' virtues of resilience, solidarity, kindness and thrift needed to get people through.

This road film is really a vehicle for Oscar-winning Frances McDormand who made such an impact in 2017 as a vengeful mother in *Three Billboards Outside*

Ebbing, Missouri. That was a risky black comedy full of amusing vignettes. In comparison this one is as dry as a jack rabbit's droppings. McDormand is a master of meaningful pathos and the film avoids the usual American film tropes of a searing sound-track, and happy ending. Fern and Dave almost return to domesticity together but that is avoided in favour of what the *New York Times* called, 'A fine Emersonian spirit,' of adventure. Instead, the ending is more nuanced than most US films provide, dedicated, bleakly to, 'The ones who had to depart.' But why did they go, are Fern's problems economic or emotional? The film is afraid to tell us.

IN SHORT

Charles Saumarez Smith, *The Art Museum in Modern Times*, Thames & Hudson, 2020, £30.

Charles Saumarez Smith's *The Art Museum in Modern Times* is a well-illustrated summary of notable art museums of the last century. It is 'a journey of historical discovery, set out sequentially in order to convey a sense of what has changed over time' Saumarez Smith has plentiful experience at the top of the museum sector as former director of both the National Gallery and National Portrait Gallery and former Chief Executive of the Royal Academy. He takes a tour of new art museums from MoMA, New York (1932) to West Bund Museum, Shanghai (2019). Chronologically arranged 2-6-page case studies show the rise of Modernism (and later Post-Modernism) as the architecture of museums parallels the aesthetics of the art those museums were to house. The architectural philosophy, character of collections and revisions to the projects are outlined, with photographs of buildings. There are too many photographs of architects and collectors and not enough views inside buildings. The entry for the Menil Collection, Houston has photographs of architect, collectors and a design sketch, but no view of the museum.

Some of the museums are brilliant, such as the unobtrusive, classically inflected Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth (1972) and the airy original Saatchi Gallery, Finchley (1985). David Chipperfield's Neues Museum, Berlin (2009) incorporates much of the original 1850 neoclassical building, displaying the ravages of Allied bombing, inserting a modern concrete double staircase in the central hall under scoured brickwork. The author is reticent about criticising functionality and aesthetics of landmark museums. The spiral ramp

of Guggenheim Museum, New York (1959) makes a lousy space for art displays while the Pompidou Centre, Paris (1977) has suffered greatly from having services conduits and escalators exposed on the outside of the structure, subject to weather and atmospheric corrosion. This needed a currently ongoing \$235M (three-year) renovation. To the author's credit, he covers the controversy of the relocation of the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia (2012).

At times entertaining and diverting, this book includes a misrepresentation of how the canon operates and is more revealing about the values of the art elite than the museums discussed. Some traditionalists may consider Saumarez Smith offers a lukewarm defence for the Enlightenment position on museums.

Alexander Adams

Jewish Humor: An Outcome of Historical Experience, Survival and Wisdom, Arie Sover, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021, £67.99

Question: What is the difference between a religious and a schizophrenic person?

Answer: A religious person speaks to God in a synagogue while a schizophrenic speaks to him in the street.

There are plenty of jokes sprinkled throughout this book for those of us who enjoy jokes as well as theories of humour, and the text is easy to read. This is a thoughtful book, tracing the developments in Jewish joke-telling and humorous writing from biblical times down to modern Israel. It does not cover the humour of Jews in the East, the Mizrarchim. There have been

large Jewish communities in Iran, in Arab countries and in India. But the research for this book has been focussed on Eastern Europe, the US and Israel, and given its wide scope it would be churlish to complain that it does not cover the entire world.

Sover begins with the Bible in which it is a struggle to find humour. Apart from Sarah laughing when she was told she would give birth in her old age, the Bible does not provide any incidents of laughter. I found the suggestion that Abraham being about to sacrifice his son would have caused Isaac to laugh quite simply unbelievable. '...He must have cried at first but, later, he burst out laughing to release the immense tension he had experienced. Isaac's laughter is part of a psychological-cognitive process through which he could face a harsh situation and maintain sanity.'

This is reading more into the biblical account than is actually there. But what is of interest is the theme that runs through the Old Testament of mankind having a discussion with God. Abraham tries to argue with God about the destruction of a city: it should be saved for the sake of righteous people living there, even though they were surrounded by the wicked. It is this ability to argue that then gives rise to humour.

Faced with constant oppression, Jews have over the centuries used humour as a coping mechanism. Particularly when dealing with an oppressive regime, humour becomes a means of protest, a reassurance that oppression is not permanent. The oppressor, whether it be Stalin, Hitler or simply a local tyrant, can be cut down to size by making jokes about him. Jokes are an important means of criticism, as well as a means of reducing mental stress. Democratic societies have no need of jokes, and consequently with the collapse of Communism joke-telling also declined.

Humour from the Bible to modern day Israel is placed in its historical and cultural context. The medieval period is covered, as is the rise of secular anti-Semitism. Traditional anti-Semitism was religious in origin; modern anti-Semitism is based on supposedly secular ideas: Jews have too much influence and power in the world, they start wars, they don't care about any group other than their own. In modern times we have seen this type of hatred expressed by Muslim immigrants in Europe. 'Being anti-Israeli has become the new semi-respectable front of modern anti-Semitism.' Weird conspiracy theories abound, such as that Jews were responsible for 9/11 and more recently for the Covid-19 pandemic.

The chapters of the book dealing with Israeli humour will provide the British reader with information he will not easily find elsewhere for a contrast is drawn between the style of humour in Israel where Jews feel secure and the humour brought from Eastern Europe

where there was a constant risk of persecution. This book will certainly increase our understanding of how humour has been a tool of survival for Jewish people over the centuries

Jan Davies

Swifts and Us. The Life of the Bird that Sleeps in the Sky, Sarah Gibson, William Collins, 2021, £16.99.

Some 50 million years ago, swifts were already circling the skies in hundred miles journeys following the summer. We know this from a fossil in a German museum. Here are the curved wings and the delicate frame of the extraordinary birds that hunt, eat, mate and sleep on the wing. Today's common swift flies without ceasing for ten months out of the year, only coming down to earth to breed in natural cliff cavities and man-made buildings.

Swifts were a puzzle to earlier generations. That such small birds could fly huge distances round the world from one continent to another seemed impossible. In a 1602 book Richard Carew wrote that 'as summer weareth out, they clap mouth to mouth, wing to wing, and leg in leg, and so after a sweet singing fall down into certain great lakes or pools... from whence in the next spring they receive a new resurrection.' Even the Reverend Gilbert White, the otherwise good naturalist believed this unlikely explanation.

Most of us earthbound humans don't even notice the swifts above us. Some of us may pay attention to the swallows that skim low over the countryside or the house martins that nest under our eaves. They are easier to see than the swifts, who nest high up, because they need to swoop down and then soar upwards to fly into the nest cavity. Even birders who pay attention to bird songs may miss the high-pitched screams of swifts high in the sky on a sunny evening.

The problem that faces this amazing bird in Britain is twofold. Not only is paving covering ever more green spaces where insects, their food, can flourish, but insulated modern buildings rarely have cavities where they can nest. Even the cavities in older buildings, church towers and Victorian houses are being frequently improved and renovated. Builders and owners rarely think of adding a swift box or, better still, a swift brick with an inbuilt nest box.

The author of *Swifts and Us* interviews the swift lovers who are trying to change this. These dedicated enthusiasts spend time consuming hours with local planners, church committees, and builders repairing and 'improving houses'. I would have put a swift brick into my new kitchen extension, if I'd known they existed. As it is, I put up two swift boxes high up and

a robin nested in one of them!

Celia Haddon

How we need to stop being told what to do, Quentin Letts, Constable, 2021, £16.99.

‘The most important words in British English apart from ‘Please’ and ‘thank you’ should be ‘Stop bossing me about.’

The Parliamentary sketch writer and theatre critic has written two best sellers on our current woes: *Patronising Bastards* and *Fifty people who bugged up Britain*. Letts has a talent for going for the jugular and making you laugh at as well; certainly, derision is a better way to slay our foes than reports written by think tanks. The foreword is ‘written’ by his dog Flip who reckons that many people will have become inspired by Fenton, the black Labrador scattering deer in Richmond Park.

The wagging finger has long been with us: Cromwell’s bossocracy started a seesaw of bossy periods and merry ones and the Puritan legacy can be detected in many aspects of British and American life throughout our history. Many inhabitants of these isles hide a Puritan waiting to burst out, to prevent other people having fun.

Many beneficial reforms have resulted from the Health and Safety movement but the risk factor has been exaggerated: Seat belts have saved lives in car accidents but stopping children from climbing trees takes it too far while our puritan bureaucrats are too

heavy handed with rules, spoiling many innocent activities. Letts thinks right-wing bossiness is as bad as the left-wing variety; remember Mary Whitehouse. The Temperance movement started in the 19th century and its proponents nowadays drive us to drink: Dame Sally (Nanny) Davies claimed that moderate drinking was an old wives’ tale for Puritans cannot distinguish between mild intoxication and drunkenness.

The lumpen intelligentsia is in love with banning free speech and claim it’s a virtue not to offend people but jobs have been lost while personal freedoms have been inhibited. Letts is right when he explained on a Zoom meeting of the Free Speech union that generous salaries provided by the tax payer in public bodies has gone a long way to encourage the woke movement.

Covid has brought a surge of Puritan, even Stasi-like attitudes; I have never known a sadder time when ordinary social life stopped while trust was destroyed between families and friends. We used to have a Prime Minister who believed in liberty, a concept always needing passionate defence. Now he seems to be controlled by the doom (science)merchants whose rules are based on faith rather than evidence. The most depressing feature is the degree of unthinking obedience: the streets remind me of Orwell’s and Huxley’s dystopian novels, with people walking around muzzled like dangerous dogs.

Merrie Cave

The
Salisbury
Review

*The quarterly magazine of
conservative thought*

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 .

Single issues £6+p&p

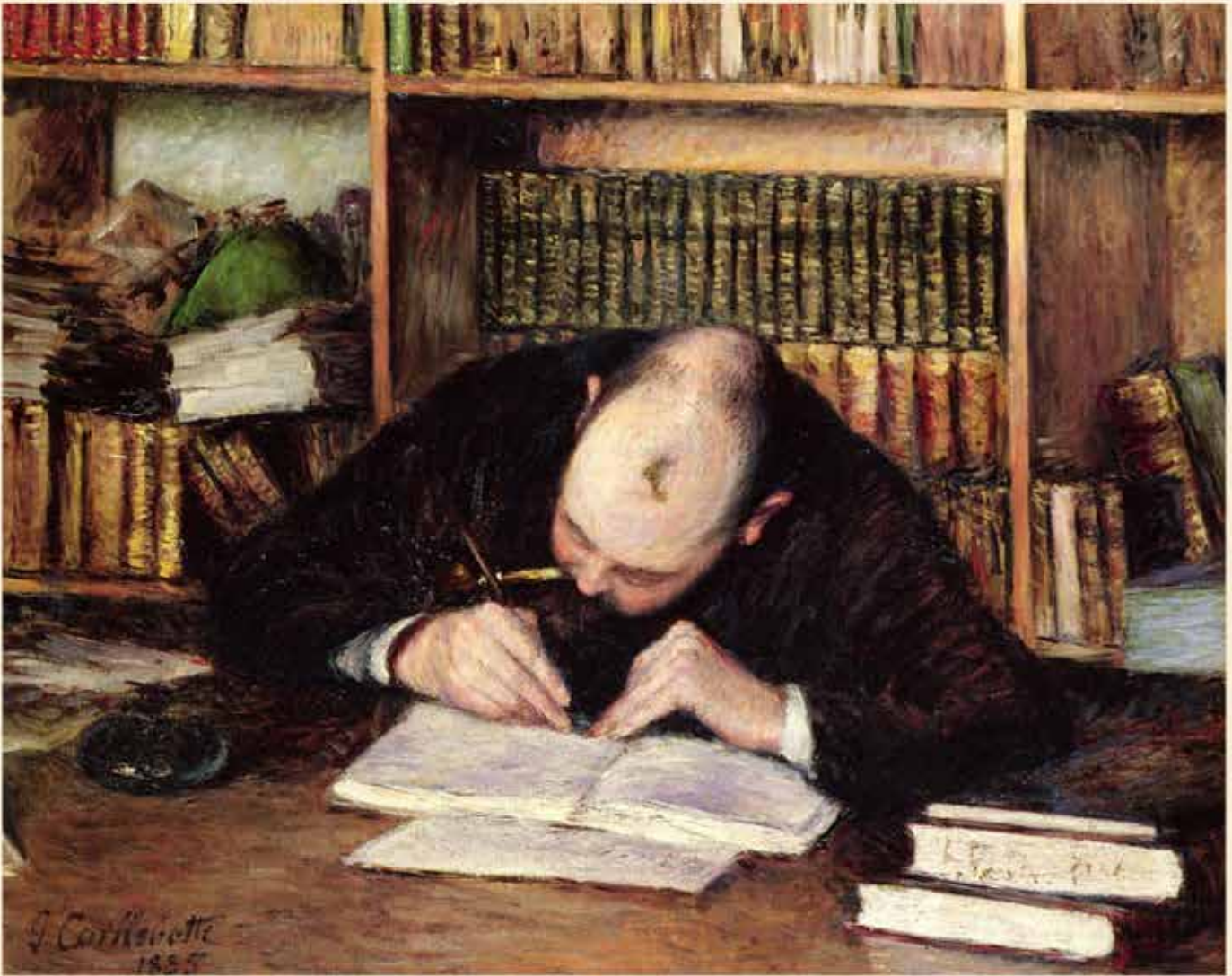
ISSN: 0265-4881. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or other without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright ©The Salisbury Review

Printed in the UK by The MANSON Group Limited

Typesetting — DASH

Graphics — Lindsey Dearnley



Would you like to write for the Salisbury Review?

We accept articles of between 1000 and 2000 words, written in non-academic English on original subjects about politics, science, medicine, the arts etc but not rehashes of the news. An outline is not required. Book reviews are also welcome but please let us know about the book you wish to review.

The Salisbury Review

PO Box 81

Shefford SG17 9AP

Email

info@salisburyreview.co.uk