The
Salisbury Review
Absolutely the wrong opinion about everything

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought

Spring 2021 | Vol 39 No 3

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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

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The
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You will find pictures of my relatives in various rooms in our house: Kate who died aged nineteen of the Spanish Flu, Jim aged 23 blown apart by General Kressenstein's guns at the second battle of Gaza, William his father who volunteered aged 40 for the Western front and a poison gas platoon and came home in 1919 out of his mind. Two other sisters, Floss and Luce, survived never to marry or have children because there were no men. My grandmother Bella lived until 1963, remarking occasionally over the top of her *Daily Telegraph*, 'The only good German is a dead one.' It did little to cover the horror of it all. Like a family who set out for a drive on a summer's afternoon they were to be victims of a terrible road crash, one moment talking and laughing, the next their bodies scattered dying or wounded on the road.

1914 was preceded by a fabulous period of peace and prosperity. One day everything was normal, there was ample food, lots of work, crime was at a minimum, new houses and roads were being built. Then the mad generals on both sides sounded their war drums and millions of men rushed to their deaths. Afterwards came plague, that camp follower of war, in this case the Spanish Flu, killing more than the millions who died at the front.

It was a war of the machines, machines which killed so efficiently and in such vast numbers that the generals lost control. One side might lose 19,000 men in a morning, the other 20,000 and on and on until after four years one side ran out of food and men. Yet, unlike our modern machines, theirs were not very complicated; bigger guns, better bullets, stronger metals for their barrels, heavier machine guns, mass produced rifles, string and paper aircraft, telephones, steel boxes on tracks called tanks, mines and poison gas. The most important invention was the chemical toilet so millions of men could be packed into trenches disease free while they awaited death.

The mad generals are at it again. Research into autonomous drones that can choose their targets without reference to their human masters, is going on apace. Such machines do not have to fly. Mechanical creatures that can scramble over ruined landscapes in search of human prey will be the inevitable consequence of advances in biomechanics and artificial intelligence. Only happening in America? No. If you are a mad general in China and Russia you won't need permission for any of these, indeed your masters will demand much worse. We have already had Novichok, Russian for 'The Newcomer'.

'Worse' means further advances in military bacteriology and virology. Scientists have learnt a lot about manipulating viruses from Covid 19, itself the product of American and Chinese carelessness and laboratory mishandling. How about a virus that can sniff a spike protein on the surface of *your* cells, that seeks out *your* race, or a protein that if adjusted makes you just ill enough to stay alive and eat but not get up?

We should by now have had enough of machines. Covid was brought to us by a machine, the passenger jet, an unforeseen side effect of moving 4 billion people each covered in one and a half kilograms of viruses and bacteria around the world every year. Far from freeing us to travel anywhere it has locked us shivering in our houses. Are we going to sit waiting behind our masks for another technological blunder to destroy us while the scientists who invented it tell us to stay in our homes? There are many unknowns in a world overburdened with people. How long will it be for the West's top soil harrowed by vast machines to degrade beyond fertility? Some say 60 years.

I write this on a spring afternoon. After a year of lockdown London's air has become breathable, its rivers are clear, you can hear birds rather than the whine of aircraft. The crocuses are out. Will a time come when the latter don't return? Is this the year we must choose: technology, the way of death, or Nature and the way of life?

Up yours, General Secretary Xi!

Daryl McCann

An unanticipated consequence of Covid-19 has been China's trade war against Australia. Canberra earned Beijing's ire when Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne, subsequently backed by Prime Minister Scott Morrison, called for an international inquiry into the genesis of the novel coronavirus. That was back in April 2020. President Xi Jinping has responded by incrementally placing restrictions on key Australian exports to his country. Almost forty percent of our total exports, including coal, wine, beef, barley, wheat, wool, cotton, copper, timber and lobster, is threatened by Beijing's belligerence. Xi and his wolf warriors have gone for the jugular in order to 'teach Australia a lesson'. However, the Morrison government has not run up the white flag and, at least to this point in time, Australia still refuses to bend the knee to General Secretary Xi.

The PRC, despite being the regional behemoth, is not invincible. In 1979, for instance, Paramount leader Deng Xiaoping sent his army across the border to 'teach Vietnam a lesson'. Beijing's wrath had been provoked, as far as we know, by Hanoi's decision in 1978 to overthrow the Khmer Rouge regime in neighbouring Cambodia. The genocidal Khmer Rouge were, as it happened, sponsored by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the imperialist-Leninists in Beijing did not take kindly to the impertinence of 'upstart' Vietnam, previously a tributary state of the Qing Great-State. Nevertheless, on this occasion the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) routed the People's Liberation Army (PLA) resulting in some 25,000 dead Chinese soldiers. Deng summarily claimed victory and ordered his surviving troops to withdraw. Some lesson.

But Xi's PRC is a different proposition from Deng's China. The PRC we are faced with today has been a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for two decades and its economy is not just a regional powerhouse but a global one. Besides, over the past three decades, Australia's political class has convinced itself that we could ride on the coat tails of Beijing's economic transformation and all would be well. Take the comprehensive 2015 China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. The deal allows for China's companies to invest in Australia, but our businesses were not granted reciprocal rights. No matter. Few in Australia appeared worried because our export industries were benefitting so much from their access to China's market. Australia had been the 'lucky country' in the 1950s when its prosperity rode on the sheep's back and post-war Japan bought all our iron ore and coal. Now China was making a lucky country all over again.

The souring of Beijing-Canberra relations is the result of a great misunderstanding between the two countries. Though grateful to be selling our primary resources at premium prices, few Australians believed that 'selling stuff to China' – Prime Minister Morrison's way of saying it – meant a downgrading of our national security. Beijing, we now know through the release of its Fourteen Grievances in November last year, sees things differently. It turns out that Australia's call for an international inquiry into the origins of Covid-19 was just the final incitement. The Fourteen Grievances go back to the 2012 decision (by a Labor government) to exclude China's telecommunication companies from our then-embryonic National Broadband Network to a more recent parliamentary enquiry into the CCP's meddling into our domestic politics. President Xi,

additionally, had seen Australia's criticism of him interning a million Uighurs in Xinjiang and the suppression of the democracy movement in Hong Kong as hostile acts.

Australians have almost grown immune to the PRC's Cold War-era invective. The lead writers for the English-language *Global Times*, for example, have been threatening Australia with 'lasting punishments' ever since April last year. It is as if we are back in 1950 and the so-called People's Volunteer Army is about to swarm over the Yalu River. What is gradually dawning on many Australians, however, is that Xi Jinping has already carried out most of the threats promised by his wolf warriors. Meanwhile, the Australian economy is surging, partly because our island nation has not been affected by Covid-19 in the same way as Europe, the UK and North America (see Aussie Flights to Nowhere, *Salisbury Review*, Autumn 2020). Another reason, paradoxically, is the astonishing rise in the price of iron ore, the one Australian resource for which Beijing has no alternative (so far).

Perhaps the most important reason Canberra has not apologised to Beijing is because Xi's trade war against us has fostered a profound patriotic spirit in Australia. The strength of it is unprecedented. We are not exactly talking 'Blitz spirit' but it is resonant enough to put some spine in our government. Large mining and agricultural interests, in concert with the establishment media and the Labor Party, might have been expected to launch a concerted campaign against Morrison's administration – Mao called this a 'tongue war' – and yet the advocates of appeasement are careful how they chose their words. There is little attempt on their part to conceal or excuse the hostility and spitefulness of Beijing's trade war against Australia. Our China apologists are no doubt aware of the 'Streisand Effect', the social phenomena that can occur with an attempt to hide the truth, in this case, Beijing's withering contempt for Australia's independent voice on the world stage.

Early indications are that General Secretary Xi's attempt to 'teach Australia a lesson' might be backfiring. Although his trade war against Australia has made us realise how dependent we have become on the PRC, it has not cowered us. Quite the contrary. In August 2020, Beijing suddenly announced an 80 per cent excise on barley. Things looked bleak for many Australian famers given that over the past decade China became a mainstay for our top-quality barley. Yet new markets were soon enough found in places as far apart as India and Mexico. Because of poor harvests in Russia and the Black Sea region, new possibilities for our wheat unexpectedly opened up in the Middle East and North Africa. None of this is to suggest Australia is not faced with enormous economic challenges in the future, and yet there have been lighter moments, including news footage of ordinary Aussies buying lobsters off the back of fishing boats in Fremantle in the weeks before Christmas. Over the years, lobster had become unaffordable for most Australians because of high demand from China. Not any longer.

We tend to think of Mao and his successors as aficionados of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, brilliant strategists who are always outsmarting their foes. Xi Jinping's declaration of war on Australia's economy, and by extension Prime Minister Morrison and our political independence, was meant not only to teach Australia a lesson but also the entire world. Xi identified Australia's vulnerability, our dependence on 'selling stuff to China', and attacked it without mercy, flouting all the rules of the WTO and the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. In doing so, he has exposed the PRC – in the eyes of the vast majority of Australians – as a rogue state bent on global conquest. His failure to break us, moreover, has only made us more defiant. Morrison, in November 2020, signed an 'in principle' Australia-Japan military pact. Australia, in the same month, also participated in the Malabar Naval Games off the Bay of Bengal for the first time since 2007, having passed up on the opportunity in 2008 out of deference to Beijing's feelings.

In August last year, President Xi put a 200 per cent duty on imported Australian wine, much of it at the quality end of the market. China's estimated 55 million committed drinkers have developed a taste for Australian wine in the region of £1/2 billion a year. Some of them, apparently, are prepared to pay three times the old price to enjoy their Clare Valley Sauvignon Blanc or Coonawarra Shiraz, but there has to be a limit to their brand loyalty. Not coincidentally, perhaps, Australians duly noted that the UK officially left the EU on December 30, 2020 and that Prime Minister Johnson is looking to sign a UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement before this year is out. Given the fate of China-Australia Free Trade Agreement, it could not have come at a more propitious moment.

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

A Tidy Little Stretch

Roger Watson

Driving home recently I had to swerve to avoid a couple who stepped out in front of me. They were getting off the pavement to avoid being next to another couple walking in the opposite direction. Out walking I witnessed this behaviour in another pedestrian ahead who repeatedly stepped on to the road, with oncoming traffic, to avoid other walkers. It is safe to assume that these were individual social distancing measures taken by people trying do the right thing in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. But what on earth has happened to our assessment of risk that leads people to avoid a negligible risk and take a nearly fatal one?

If not taking drastic measures to avoid coming near me, others peer over the top of an array of face coverings, refuse to speak, and look at me with steely eyes, daring me to come any closer. I found it notable and pleasant that some people seemed happy to remain on the same pavement as me and even to exchange a smile and word of greeting. But why has that become remarkable?

In retrospect a short 'three-week' lockdown seemed sensible, although some of us (*Salisbury Review passim*) cast doubt on the proclaimed brevity of the lockdown. And we were right. As I write we are eleven months into lockdown, with a few spells of remission for good behaviour, with the earliest prospect of release three months hence. Some politicians and commentators suggest we will experience a further year. The obvious analogy with incarceration is almost impossible to avoid. As an experienced mountaineer another analogy comes to my mind, that of false summits. We are continually being enticed with short-term estimates of when freedom will ensue, or a vaccine will permit a return to something approaching life (I refuse to prefix that with 'normal'). Now, even with an abundance of vaccines and some modest success in inoculating the vulnerable and frontline workers, we are effectively informed by the deputy chief medical officer that it will make no difference. Surely the cork is being forced ever tighter into a smouldering powder keg. While I could not advocate breaking the law, if our political masters cannot see that they risk an explosion of social unrest which would require the widespread application of police or military brutality to suppress, then they overestimate the ability of the population to withstand another prolonged period of lockdown.

Of course, we all know that lockdown is having deleterious effects; even the lockdown enthusiasts know this but consider it acceptable. The economy is destroyed, which will have an effect beyond our lifetimes. Mental illness, domestic abuse and suicide rates are all reported to have increased. As with deaths from coronavirus, each case is tragic, but the absolute numbers are small relative to the whole population. What is far more widespread is the general effect of lockdown which, potentially, is having an adverse effect on every member of the population. In my experience this is already evident and all it takes to demonstrate it is a short time out of doors.

Less than a year ago we were rubbing shoulders in public places, visiting our friends and family and inviting people into our houses. Now we are being arrested and fined for ridiculous offences such as walking in the middle of nowhere, holding a takeaway coffee, or threatened with arrest for sledging in a new fall of snow.

One of my youngest grandchildren is pining for his schoolfriends and his older brother is having nightmares about the pandemic; their mother is busy with a younger sibling and their father must confine himself to the bedroom all day to keep the business in which he works afloat. The problem is clear, with the prolonged closure of schools and all other means of social contact being prohibited, there is simply nothing happening to dilute the issues that build up in the heads of children, nothing to look forward to and parents are in almost the same predicament.

The effects of prolonged incarceration are well known; we do it to sufficient prisoners to have the data in abundance. People become sensorily deprived and, as a result, disoriented in time and space; social skills are lost, substance abuse increases and the institutionalisation, so skilfully described by the sociologist Erving Goffman, sets in and people end up fearing a return to society and normality.

Will this happen to us? You can be guaranteed that it will and, in fact, already has. Watching old programmes

on television or films portraying a range of social situations is already making us squirm when people do not maintain their distance. I cannot be alone in having a frisson of anxiety at the thought of returning to my office at work or going out to a restaurant. And I am not especially concerned about the possibility of catching or dying of coronavirus; I just wonder what I am going to say to my work colleagues who, for the past eleven months have only been talking heads on my desktop computer. When social intercourse has consisted of nods, grunts and grimaces to the few people we encounter – mostly joggers – on our walks to the newsagent, it is remarkable how rapidly communication skills deteriorate and a return to normal social intercourse has become a matter for concern.

It is hard to question any aspect of what has become 'Covid-orthodoxy'. And orthodoxy is the perfect word to describe this as it has all the hallmarks of a religion. As a Roman Catholic I cannot accept the Resurrection and deny the Virgin Birth and legitimately call myself a Roman Catholic. The same applies to Covid-orthodoxy. Questioning the efficacy of lockdown, which many consider a disproportionate response to viral infection when the bulk of evidence does not support it and less drastic measures are at our disposal, leads to assumptions and labels of 'Covid-denier' and 'anti-vaxxer' with absolutely no justification. As many have found, it leads to excommunication from the High Church of public opinion, the social media platforms.

It is impossible to know when lockdown and the ensuing social isolation will end because it is impossible to know when we will have reached the appropriate criteria to relax restrictions. If the government know what the criteria are, they are not telling us. I strongly suspect that they do not have a clue. This will not be the last pandemic; we can be sure of that. But it must be the last time we enter one without a clear idea of what the best ways of dealing with it are and how we know at what point we have succeeded.

Roger Watson is a Professor of Nursing.

A Land of Spectacularly Beautiful Women

Frank Haviland

Ten years ago things were not going so well. To say the credit crunch had hit hard would be an understatement: my small business had been destroyed, and my house repossessed. At 33 I was prematurely washed up, freezing my nuts off in an ill-constructed shed in one of the least salubrious parts of south east London.

You would have thought my white privilege and patriarchal affiliations would have saved me, but like the PPI scandal I appeared to have been 'mis-sold'. Despite my public school education, master's degree and city experience, I was getting turned down for cleaning jobs. It was decidedly last chance saloon time, not least because the dole office was now insisting I attend a health and safety course to collect my giros, and the gigolo agency still hadn't returned my calls.

Seeing me in the midst of Dante's first circle, my brother suggested I go abroad to teach English – a notion I initially scoffed at. 'What the hell do I know about teaching English?' I remember saying. A week later, with my only job offer that of an orderly in a mental hospital, I decided it was time to bite the bullet.

A quick Google search verified there were indeed jobs for those like me who couldn't cut it back home. The three principle ESL destinations for Brits were Thailand, Japan and South Korea: Thailand for those wishing to seek paradise on earth, Japan for those more financially orientated, and South Korea boasting the most welcoming people; South Korea it was then.

Within a week I had contacted an agent, interviewed and been accepted for a teaching post in Andong (a small city in Gyeongsangbukdo, considered the cultural heart of the country); available almost certainly because most foreigners wanted to be in the big cities. Clutching a one-way ticket (thankfully all paid for), I threw my one good pair of trousers into a rucksack and, if you can imagine a pansified version of Homer's Odysseus,, set sail for distant shores. I had no idea what to expect, except it had to be better than what I was leaving behind, assuming I didn't take a wrong turn at customs and end up an unwanted guest of Kim Jong-Il.

After 48 hours on the move, including a stopover in Shanghai just long enough not to get my card stamped, I was greeted by a wonderful lady who took me into the first shop we passed and bought me a cup of *sikhye*, a chilled, sweet rice digestif, which remains one of the best tastes to ever pass my lips.

One of the first things the *waygook* (foreign) eye notices about South Korea is how similar it all looks. Thanks to the heavily mountainous Korean topography, even the very wealthy invariably live in cramped, high-rise apartments – the notion of living in a house an apparent anathema. The high streets meanwhile see rival franchises living harmoniously cheek by jowl: Tous Les Jours and Paris

Baguette for bakeries, LG and Samsung for electricals, all accompanied by the purr of Kia and Hyundai cars.

Not just apartments, but schools and office blocks also appear built from the same architectural blueprint – with creativity coming a distant second to speed of construction. This is a feature of the *balli balli* (hurry hurry) culture which defines so much of Korean life: deliveries that may show up same day, mechanics who fix your car for you right now, and even an efficient postal service.

My first few weeks here were admittedly tough: struggling with the language, overtaken only by Mandarin and Arabic in difficulty, not knowing anyone, and the inevitable culture shock – not bowing I learned, is considered very rude. I was also so mesmerised by the daunting range of side dishes on offer, I was subsisting on a lonely diet of eggs and bacon.

A month in however, having mastered the art of the bow, and dipping my chopsticks into the silkworms and the live octopus, I was beginning to find my newly-sandaled feet. My unheated shed had been given a serious upgrade to a 6-pyeong *one room* apartment (literally one room, consisting of around 20 square meters) – and while most of the foreigners whine that they're shoe boxes, they're not wrong, it was clean, warm, and free!

I was teaching English predominantly online to rural schools who couldn't afford or find their own foreign teacher, and despite technological problems, it was lovely to be useful again. A large part of the job was simply trying to get the kids to speak – something they had had precious little experience of. Usually, this involved bombarding them with inane questions, but sometimes the responses were fantastic: Q: 'What's the most dangerous thing in your house?' A: 'My mum'.

My initial Google search had been correct, Korean people are certainly friendly, if not a little inquisitive: they delight in inspecting your shopping basket for instance. Moreover, plastic surgery statistics notwithstanding, Korean women are spectacularly beautiful and feminine to boot, which makes a refreshing change.

Nevertheless, surviving long-term in Korea is not for everyone, and the high turnaround of foreign teachers is attributable to more than just gap-year logistics. Korea is a nation of extremes, epitomised by the weather. During my first winter I was wearing shorts in –18 degrees Conversely summer highs regularly exceed 40 degrees, which is nothing compared to the humidity; so high you need a second shower before you've made it to the car. And while Koreans love to boast they have four seasons, there's no Vivaldian crescendo, just sudden leaps of 10 degrees.

The drivers are either grandads or maniacs, with absolutely no room for equivocation. Friendships meanwhile, are one of the strangest phenomena. As a heavily Confucian culture, Koreans are only truly able to be 'friends', if they are *exactly* the same age. Even a one-year gap places demands of subservience upon the junior, such as looking away when drinking, and largely determines who pays. As safe as Korea is, the best way to get into a fight is to rob your senior of his 'right' to pay.

Coupled with its extremes, South Korea is also one of the most ethnically homogenous countries on earth – one that is not going to pass a Sadiq Khan diversity inspection. I always feel Korea should be considered primarily a family rather than just a nation, and like all families it has its own idiosyncrasies.

Driving for instance is governed much more by the age of the driver, than by irrelevances like traffic signals or lane discipline. Red lights are optional (as are green ones for that matter), and TV/phone use is *de rigueur*. I have seen cars U-turn across 6 lanes of a dual carriageway, narrowly avoiding the *halmoni* (grandmother) walking unconcernedly down the middle of the fast lane; she was there before the advent of cars, and she ain't moving now. No one complains.

Food too has its own rules. You can *ask* for sauce to be removed or put to one side, but you won't get it – that's just the Korean way. And if you don't like gargantuan quantities of sugar in your cereal or bread, what's wrong with you? If you haven't got diabetes by the time you're 30, you're just not trying.

Korea is extremely advanced, both technologically and economically, and it is easy to forget that the ravages of the Korean War are well within living memory. It is more remarkable still that despite the terrible atrocities of the Japanese and their own government, the Korean people remain almost universally peaceful. They are also among the hardest working I have ever met. Many still work seven-day weeks, with holidays considered something of a luxury. On retirement the men sit around drinking *soju*, while an army of supergrans who presumably receive their matching pink hiking jackets from some secret government sect, run the houses, pick the kids up, cook, clean, collect the recycling, and quite frankly put the rest of us to shame.

Teenagers are obliged to undertake community work, and do so without grumbling. Young men still undergo military service, and are afforded certain privileges upon completion. The children play outside in complete safety, and are routinely chastised by each other's parents without issue.

It's easy to over romanticise comparisons, though a decade into my residency I still believe South Korea offers a window on to our own past – an unabashedly conservative country, which however idiosyncratic, somehow finds a way to make everything work.

I consider Korea a family before it is a nation, and indeed the concept of *jeong* (which cannot be accurately translated into English, but is something approaching 'collective social responsibility'), is the fabric that glues Korean society together. Such societal glue renders Korea a low-tax, traditional, family-orientated, education-focussed, dutiful nation with a high level of trust. There has been no panic buying during the pandemic, and no

serious lockdowns either.

There are caveats of course. A highly conforming society demands that authority is not always questioned, sometimes to its cost. The *Sewol* ferry disaster of 2014 is a tragic reminder, whereby hundreds of school children were told to stay put, and drowned as a consequence. Because of the respect automatically accorded by age, Korea has a problem with bullying, as well as the terrible pressure on students to succeed which places it atop teenage suicide tables.

As an outsider, it is perhaps a little sad that one could never fully assimilate even if one wished to do so. You may be married to a Korean, live here for decades, but you will never *be* Korean. Koreans commonly refer to their motherland as *Oori nara* (our country), an utterance no foreigner could ever make without ridicule.

Despite all its contradictions, Korea (and particularly Andong) will forever hold a special place in my heart – for saving me when I was at my lowest. And while teaching has lost its initial *frisson*, there are moments when it truly feels worthwhile. I received a message just last week from one of my first pupils, a very intelligent but shy boy I helped gain confidence, informed me he had been accepted into one of Seoul's best universities. I couldn't help feeling a surge of pride.

It's been ten years now, and according to strict Odyssean tradition I ought to be making the arduous voyage back to Penelope, or Blighty as I prefer to call her. Given I have a decade to make the journey however, I'd say the olive tree is in no immediate danger.

Frank Haviland lives in South Korea and his latest book is Banalysis: the lie Destroying the West.

High Wokery

George Hopewell

She has the correct attitude to cotton buds, diesel cars, plastic particles, makeup, meat, coffee pods and bananas. She has an enviable monochrome position on transgenderism, HS2, the Union Jack, Heathrow, veganism and Africa. She knows which books, films and which newspaper to buy and which businesses and governments to hate. She loves black music, organic wine, refugees and any sentence containing the word 'community' or 'democracy'.

She is my friend. Of course, I share most of her values, any decent person would. She buzzes with a thousand fluorescent Post-its, each felt-tipped in bold letters advertising her ethical position.

All this is not a problem.

She seldom speaks a sentence or types an email without publicising her moral Post-its. She rarely eats without disseminating her ethical food choices. She cannot even unwrap her parent's gift of home-grown apples, without cursing the *Daily Mail* they are tenderly wrapped in.

This too is not really a problem. She has passion, a commitment to causes, a hatred of injustice. Deeply felt values. A political perspective steeped in tolerance, zeal and justice.

But there is a problem.

My friend, who I have known since school, has nothing left of herself. She has constructed her 'self' out of so many ethical building blocks that there is no longer any room for who she is. There is certainly no room left for ribbing, for self-deprecation, for jokes. Creativity is absent – she has become an avatar of herself, entirely constructed out of Post-its, dedicated to proselytizing her perfect ethical standpoints.

She has embedded her Post-its so deeply into her very being that they have become her self-definition, the sum total of her self-worth.

And self-worth is fragile. As we all know, you have to be big to handle criticism of yourself.

If, for a moment, I want to query one of these building blocks, I am hurtful, a callous person unaware of the reality of injustice. She flares up with intolerance and tears off a Post-it to thrust it in my face. If I even gently question any part of her ethical orthodoxy, I am a heretic, labelled instantly with expedient terms such as 'unthinking', 'right wing' or 'out of touch'.

But, as her friend, I do not wish to be solely a sounding board/audience for a stream of ethical and political standpoints. The last walk we did in the countryside left me with a headache, as she bombarded me with a continuous salvo of her ethical views.

She is supported by news organisations that have discovered the formula that guarantees my friend, and those like her, buys their products. They give her a daily dose of moral indignation that fuels her self-definition. She is addicted to this newsfeed, because she is addicted to feeling good about herself.

This leads to a second problem. One-upmanship (ouch – did I say man?). Not, of course, new Teslas with personalised number plates on the neighbour's drive, but the one-upmanship of moral indignity. She has more moral indignation than anyone else. And no one can utter any word that doesn't pass her exacting standards of language. If you do not use the right term, you are condemned to hell.

I write this because I am sad. I cannot talk to my friend

because she becomes hurt and antagonistic if I upset the equilibrium of her perfectly poised ethical centre. She can and does become vicious. Any relationship that doesn't immaculately mesh with her self-definition has to be rejected.

Parents. Grandparents. Boyfriends. Girlfriends. Me. All lost.

So, she cycles away in her fair-trade cotton coat, her Post-its flickering in the wind, feeling good about herself.

But she is no longer herself and we can no longer be together.

She only has organic friends.

George Hopewell studied philosophy at Oxford and lives in the West Country.

The Russian Cage

Artiom Hildebrandt

February 2nd, 2021 marked one of the most shameful days in modern Russian judicial history. After being poisoned with a chemical nerve agent by the Russian intelligence service FSB, the opposition leader Alexey Navalny was sentenced on fabricated charges to serve three and a half years in a labour camp. As the verdict was delivered, rumours surfaced that the ruling elite seeks to incarcerate him for decades. To put it in the words of the late Russian Nobel Prize winner and political prisoner Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 'Navalny was sentenced to three and a half years, will have served 13 years, but then will get lucky and be released ahead of time.' But in 21st century Russia, such jokes get you into trouble. Aftr the trial the editor-in-chief of an independent Russian media outlet retweeted this joke. A judge sentenced him to 25 days in jail for it.

The Russian poet Igor Guberman once wrote, 'Sitting in prison I felt that the country in all its vastness is an immense prison cell.' While the repressive power of intimidating, poisoning, and imprisoning Alexey Navalny comes from the Kremlin, perhaps the more decisive power is anchored in the Russian mind – the normalising, invisible power, that Foucault described as 'The disciplinary power that is everywhere and always alert; functioning permanently and largely in silence.'

In consequence, the case of Alexey Navalny is much bigger than himself. It's about creating discipline within the Russian mind; generating an invisible cage to demonstrate to the Russian people that they are nothing but eighteenth-century Russian serfs – though better educated and fed than their predecessors. Correspondingly, in his speech in court Navalny said, 'The main thing in this whole trial isn't what happens to me. Locking me up isn't difficult. What matters most is why this is happening. This is happening to intimidate large numbers of people. They're imprisoning one person to frighten millions.'

It does not necessarily require a lot of violence – though the pictures of peacefully demonstrating children who were beaten up by security services in Moscow and all across the country were truly shocking – but by creating a precedent using a popular politician such as Alexey Navalny, the Russian people are supposed to learn to discipline themselves and behave in ways expected of them. In the past, dictatorships tended to imprison and kill a million people. Think of Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution in China, or the Great Terror under Josef Stalin. That is history. Today, dictators only need to imprison a handful of people every once in a while, kill a few of them, and with full government media control broadcast their punishment a million times on TV, the radio, and the internet.

Some are already used to it in the West, others believe it's just a Netflix reality show. At a press of the remote, we can turn off the news and get busy with other things. Why should we even care about the future of the Russian people? There's a simple reason.To think only of our own freedom is short-sighted and selfish. Can we – after what we see going on in Russia – really be free as long as we refuse to stand up for the freedom of others?

While we should provide moral support, the ultimate sacrifice must come from the Russian people themselves. Will they have the courage to escape from Foucault's cage?

Navalny, a patriot who puts himself at the service of the Russian people, closed his speech in court with the words, 'The very best are the people who aren't afraid — people who don't look the other way. Long live a free Russia!'

Artiom Hildebrandt worked on the Justice for Sergei Magnitsky campaign, and international campaigns to free political prisoners ie Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

Blubbing Britain

Jane Kelly

At the time of Princess Diana's death, I shared a lift with the editor of the *Daily Mail*. 'This is not my country anymore, Jane,' he said mournfully. 'I don't recognise it.' While he proudly retained his own stiff upper lip as far as I know, his paper asked me to go over to St James' Palace where a portrait of the late Princess was said to be weeping real tears, and crowds had gathered, jostling to see. I refused to do the story, unable to accept a culture where even the paintings were weeping, but since then we seem to have been gradually engulfed in a tsunami of tears.

Whatever the programme, from Radio 4's *Today* to *Strictly Come Dancing*, there's hardly a dry eye in the house. People, even prize-winners, are either clapping or weeping, usually both. There's now no acceptable excuse for not doing it, as politicians, like the Health Minister, Matt Hancock, who last December broke down on *Good Morning Britain*, after seeing a man receive the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine, and members of the public all 'Take the hanky'.

The pandemic has compounded this craze for hysterical emotionalism. Endless, incessant news reports focus on people in intensive care units; we see them, all staring eyes, gasping for breath, even dying on screen. A BBC news report showed the feet of a recently dead man and his corpse being loaded into a box. We have had interviews with mortuary technicians, who had the usual pause before they broke down and wept like young girls. The public invitation is out to 'share' bitter personal experience and give vent to your grief. A recent *Private Eye* cartoon showed a radio presenter apologising to his audience because no one had cried in the previous interview.

This desire for a display of pious tears and the ramping up of grief, has driven out the possibility of news editors taking a measured approach, for people want to wallow in the worst of it, but paradoxically now that we have lost our stiff upper-lips, humour has to be very carefully edited. Forget the days of *Beyond the Fringe* and the Cambridge Footlights, when clever, cynical young people wanted to be outraged. Some popular comedians, including Jerry Seinfeld, have publicly condemned the oversensitivity of college students, saying too many of them can't take a joke. Even for some 'comedians,' not just the female ones who bang on about menstruation, jokes don't exist. A recent stand-up show on BBC Radio 4, using performers who before Covid would have been at the Edinburgh Fringe, included a young woman who told us about her sister dying of brain cancer several years before. She broke down as she recalled it and received huge applause at the end. I tweeted to say that while her sister's death was sad, where was the comedy? That term now seems to cover most areas of 'lived experience,' including the heartrendingly terrible delivered without any detachment or irony. Her response took me into the new British culture of trembling lips and terror of emotional discomfort. She sent me her 'deepest apologies' that 'The subject matter moved you so much.'

She was also sorry that there was no 'trigger warning' at the beginning to protect me from distress. A 'trigger' warning would have got me reaching for the tissues. They are alerts, originating on US campuses, that professors and now broadcasters are expected to issue if something might cause a strong emotional response, 'exposing someone to past trauma'. This is supposed to, 'create a safe space'. American Students have called for warnings about *Huck Finn*, (racism) *Mrs Dalloway* and *Madame Bovary* (suicide) and *The Great Gatsby* which portrays misogyny. Shakespeare's

Titus Andronicus has been given a trigger warning by Cambridge University English faculty, as it includes lots of nasty stuff which will probably give everyone watching apoplexy. More seriously, in 2015, *The New Yorker* reported that law students at Harvard were refusing to be taught the statutes on rape in case it triggered distress. Old radio comedy shows are now regularly given these warnings by the BBC, and on TV channels such as *Talking Pictures*, which plays old films, there's a fear of being sued for upsetting someone by using a wrong choice of words. Few seem able to stand up to this woke bullying, and displaying incontinent emotion is now the equivalent of wearing a disabled badge; only really wicked people will challenge you about it.

I had said I was upset about her lack of humour. How did she interpret that as my being upset about her sister? She then said she'd been 'performing adequately,' and 'refused to feel anymore shame for it'.

I had not mentioned that. Not being a 17th century Puritan, shame doesn't seem relevant; I was trying to make an objective criticism of her act. Others tweeted in her support: 'It was simply that the grief that overcame you, overcame me too, (and probably many others), in the middle of a comedy show.'

This desire for a display of pious tears and the ramping up of grief, has driven out the possibility of news editors taking a measured approach, for people want to wallow in the worst of it

There was a time when performers, such as Edith Piaf and Judy Garland, were expected to step out on stage putting all their worldly griefs behind them. Not now as personal emotion has become an art form in itself.

Who would have thought that in a secular society where few go to church, we are now creating secular saints, gushingly adored without restraint, like Princess Diana and Sir CaptainTom Moore, who has now unfortunately died, is inspiring headlines in the *Sun* imploring its readers to 'Pray for Tom,' with the PM joining in. This new 'spirituality,' has coincided with us becoming more Americanised through the internet and streaming, so we are adopting a kind of globalised verbal and emotional hyperbole.

During the recent Holocaust Memorial events, I was reminded of how things used to be, in my parents and grandparent's day, and when I was growing up in the sixties. A *Times* journalist recently referred to, 'Our parent's fake stoicism,' but it seemed real enough to me. A programme about Anne Frank included an interview with Miep Gies, who risked her life every day for two years to hide the Frank family and four other Jews in her office building in Amsterdam. She had to supervise getting all their food on the black-market while protecting them and her staff and doing her normal job. After the war, she housed Otto Frank for several years and encouraged him to publish Anne's diary which became an outstanding document of the 20th century.

In the interview about those terrible years, she didn't weep once but calmly described her horror when she had allowed herself, at the time, to think about the responsibility she had taken on. She'd received no state honours until 1994, but now has a planet named after her.

Until recently people, no matter how valiant or clever, didn't expect recognition. Miep Gies always maintained that while she appreciated the honours, they embarrassed her: 'I am not a hero,' she said. 'I am not a special person. I don't want attention. I did what any decent person would have done.' Prince Philip said the same of his mother who saved Jews in occupied Greece, 'She just did what any decent human being would have done.' He's never shed a tear on camera either and it's unlikely that he will.

Stoicism often meant being 'buttoned up,' that now despised condition regarded as dangerous to health by our therapy-culture. It's better of course that people should be able to express their feelings without shame and that the emotions should be understood, but we seem to have gone to the other extreme, where putting one's own feelings first is the norm.

People may have sometimes been too austere and demanding with children, but the idea of composure was rooted in the idea of politeness to others, and not putting yourself first. Some politicians have always been emotional but when Matt Hancock broke down on TV, he said he'd tried to hold his composure but, 'it had been a tough year'. No one could look at him blubbing and feel confident about our future, 1940's newsreels didn't show lurid scenes of bodies in mortuaries; they played down misery to keep up public morale, but they did show Churchill sometimes tearful as he walked around London during the Blitz. He wept out of pity for other people, not himself, and he never asked that he or they be shielded from reality.

Jane Kelly was a celebrity editor for the Daily Mail.

Money Never Sleeps

Catherine Blaiklock

For the last four decades, the only decision that really mattered was whether you owned a house and where. If you bought a modest terrace in Wandsworth or Brixton, you are now a millionaire. If you did not buy, you probably have trouble paying rent on a pension and have been priced out of even the worst parts of London. It's the same in most Western cities.

The young, particularly in Britain, are unable to buy houses – even the most modest flat opposite the sewerage works or above a rowdy pub. Young professionals with 'good' jobs – junior doctors, country solicitors end up living with Mum and Dad. The lower paid end up living in rooms in shared houses for decades. Many work two or three jobs on minimum wage just to survive. Meanwhile the rich buy ever more private jets and spend thousands of dollars on single rolls of wallpaper.

Last year America's eight hundred billionaires increased their net worth by 40 per cent. Elon Musk, the founder of the electric car manufacturer Tesla, although he lost money making cars in every one of the last four quarters, is still worth an astounding $186 billion. He became a billionaire because Tesla's share price (even after issuing many more new shares) went up from $100 to $880 a share in a year – the year when the rest of the world was crushed by a global shutdown.

Similarly, Nancy Pelosi, the Democrat 'Leader of the House', Trump's socialist nemesis, together with her multi-millionaire husband, spent over $1m buying stock options in January. If stocks go up, they will multiply their money many times, if they fall, Pelosi will lose a million which, at these stratospheric levels of wealth, is pocket money.

Meanwhile on 'Main Street' America, life for the average Joe and Jane (and for John and Mary on High Street England and elsewhere) looks rather different. By December 2020, 25.7 million workers in the US were officially unemployed, otherwise out of work or have experienced a reduction in work hours and pay. Forty-six per cent of lower income adults have trouble paying their rent or mortgages: Consequently, millions face eviction, food bank use has skyrocketed and crime increased in all major cities.

This phenomenon is not new; inequality, especially in terms of assets, has been rising exponentially for two decades, with Covid exacerbating trends that already existed. It is

the same in all western economies, just more exaggerated in America. We are no longer talking about the rich 1 per cent but 1 per cent of 1 per cent ie 0.1 per cent of the population. By January 2019, this tiny fraction owned as much as the lowest 90 per cent. Since then, Bezos' Amazon, Musk's Tesla and the Zuckerman's Facebook have grown even richer whilst half the country cannot afford to pay rent – hence the thousands of working poor who now sleep every night in their cars in Californian parking lots.

How can this be? It's not that these billionaires are all geniuses although they are certainly clever. It's not that technological change has created miracles although technology has helped increase wealth at a faster rate than in all previous history. (It's not a miracle to create the glorified messaging system that is Twitter). Neither is it globalisation, although globalisation has the allowed the 'winner takes all' tendency of capitalism to be worldwide rather than national thus allowing companies like Google and Amazon to become global monopolies rather than just large companies confined to national boundaries.

These factors have helped make billionaires but they are not enough on their own. It is the central banks who have made them multi-billionaires by printing money – $3.38 trillion dollars in 2020 alone. This is a number impossible to comprehend – a trillion is a million times a million. The Federal Reserve in 2020 printed an amount that is equal to 20 per cent of all dollars already in existence – in a single year, (effectively devaluing every dollar in your pocket by 20 per cent). It also engineered interest rates to zero whilst the European Central Bank has managed to get many interest rates to negative – where a bank pays its customers to borrow its money.

Every single Central Bank in the Western world has been printing and borrowing – giving these wheezes nice names like Quantitative Easing, Stimulus Packages, Covid Support, helping bank reserves, Government Bond Buying, Asset Purchases and financial grants. Many of these newly created dollars out of thin air: Euros, Pounds and Yen have no home – nor anywhere to earn interest – so where did they go? Into speculative stocks, particularly technology, start-ups, bitcoin and cult companies such as Tesla. It does not matter if the latter earn money – only that they are going up in price.

Last week, a small, almost bankrupt firm called GameStop whose shares were trading at $20 a share on January 12, finished last week at $325 a share and briefly hit $500. Only in an era of free speculative money could such a 'tulip' type mania have developed. Now it does not even need the Federal Reserve to even print more dollars – just the thought that they might is enough to make asset prices worldwide go up.

A recent podcast suggested that the young in Britain were becoming Marxists and socialists because they had only been taught about Nazi history and had never heard about all the deaths under Stalin, Mao or Pol Pot. I doubt such history teaching has made such a difference. Young people are being taught that things are unequal and unfair. They are. It is what is causing them that they are not being taught – it is not the capitalist system and free markets but the exact opposite: rigged and unfair markets. Few people ever think about what makes an ordinary terrace house in a London suburb go up from £30,000 to £600,000 in a few decades. Those that own them think it is their hard work or 'luck'. It is neither. It is asset inflation caused by money printing and no interest.

The young are voting for radical left-wing politicians such as Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders or influenced by the British writer and left-wing radical Ash Sarkar – the latter revitalised the idea of 'fun' communism – because they believe that they will never be able to afford to buy a house and see no way out of student debts – however hard they work. Rather than saving the world's economies, money printing is creating explosive divisions in Western societies: what people cannot get by work or legal means, they will eventually get by revolution and destruction.

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

Bring back the Rope

Adam Callaghan

We need to bring back capital punishment and we need to bring it back, first and foremost, for ethical reasons.

The primary argument of those who oppose the death penalty is compassion, and it does tend to be the liberal left who make this argument. OK, (sigh), let's first talk about the rarity of crime in general. Only about one in a thousand people is criminal. So we are talking about a very small number of people deserving of the death penalty who are not only antisocial but antisocial beyond any hope of reform: cold blooded killers such as terrorists and psychopaths who, if they have a chance, if they are ever let out of prison, will kill again.

Prison is hell. Those who oppose the death penalty think it's a great injustice for the state to take life away, but are perfectly happy putting a convicted person in a cage for decades,

Apart from the death penalty the only answer for them is a Whole Life Order; lifelong imprisonment with no chance of parole. Prison is hell. Those who oppose the death penalty think it's a great injustice for the state to take life away, but are perfectly happy putting a convicted person in a cage for decades, providing just enough food to keep him going – it is almost always a him – at great expense to the tax payer.

Is that compassionate? I don't think so. I've never thought so. I strongly believe it's more evil to take away a man's hope than to take away a man's life. It's diabolical. Yet I'm supposed to believe that capital punishment is evil? Please!

I don't advocate the death penalty for retributive motives; I believe prisons should be about reform not retribution. It sounds well and good to treat a criminal harshly, so they will be deterred from criminality in the future; but that simply isn't how people work. If you treat most prisoners harshly, they are only going to become bitter and antisocial.

'So what?' you ask.

Because when they get out of prison they're just going to lash out at society And someone we love could be robbed, someone close to us could be assaulted or worse. These are criminals who if treated humanely have the possibility of being reformed.

But there will always be those on who reform will not have any effect. For those people the death penalty is the only logical solution. I propose a maximum prison sentence of about 20 years, any longer than that is just cruel and stupid. And if someone has committed a crime so heinous it deserves a longer sentence than that, then they don't deserve to exist at all.

Amongst the many compelling arguments for the death penalty, I'm always shocked that the ethical argument in favour of capital punishment is never raised, especially to the leftists who tend to use the argument of compassion *against* capital punishment.

It is typical of liberal left-wing blather to criticise the death penalty which is ostensibly hard, but once you scratch beneath the surface, it is the most practical and humane solution. Capital punishment must be restored, it is more economical, more sensible and chiefly more ethical to bring it back.

Adam Callaghan is a hopeful journalist living in Lancashire.

Ireland gets the six counties back

David Kernek

On my study wall there's a Railway Map of Central Europe. It's the work of the Edinburgh Geographical Institute, the map-making and publishing company which was created in 1888 by John Bartholomew, which for a century until 1989 made significant contributions to cartography, and which now can be glimpsed somewhere on the organization map of the HarperCollins corporation. Bartholomew's cherished name endures as the trade name of the publisher's cartographic database reference department in Glasgow.

With distances given in 'English Miles' – so as to avoid confusion with foreign ones – it's a map drawn, I would guess, at some point between the 1800s and, most certainly, 1918. Bits of it are familiar: there's tiny Belgium; the petite Netherlands (but marked as Holland); Switzerland within in its unchangeable borders; and England's south-east coast, there perhaps to let students know the names of the ports from which their inspiring journeys to the continent would begin.

But from west to east, I am reminded of how many adjustable national frontiers our continent has had in a mere century and a half. Strasbourg is not in France on this map – it's a German city shown as Strassburg; there's a fully and perhaps over-grown Germany, not the 37 kingdoms and principalities that were yanked together by Prussia's *Bismark; there's no Poland – Germany's eastern neighbour is Russia, so that's where Warsaw and Cracow are shown; and to the south, we see no hint of* Czechoslovakia and Slovenia, just a quite large empire called 'Austria Hungary', which has an annexed region called Bosnia and where the last of the Habsburg's slumber before getting around to hurling coal into the fire that will destroy their empire and bring Europe down with it.

This is no time, though, for smugness or complacency on our off-shore realm. Due in part to the seismic shocks of Brexit and the Covid plague, two of England's three tribal borders – those it has with Northern Ireland and Scotland – are in the sights of people whose aim is to help us tidy up the constitutional dog's dinner that is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland by taking Scotland out of the 313-year-old parliamentary union and gliding, or tugging, the UK's six Ulster counties into the Irish republic. Would I be bovvered? Not for half a moment, except one would very swiftly tire of the clueless BBC's Commentariat bewailing what it would see as a cataclysmic break-up of the UK, impeded as they are by the tenuous notion that England – with Wales, if it wanted to hang on to what it's got – would be unable to survive without the priceless input we presently get from Arlene Foster and Nicola Sturgeon.

How likely are these map-changing projects to succeed by, say, 2031? Are they realistic objectives, or have the chattering classes simply run out of other things about which to chatter?

Let me – please let me! – put Scotland aside, and for as long as possible. Let us, for now, fret about only Ireland, England's second colony, and wonder if the wretched 310-mile border partitioning the UK in the north from the European Union republic in the south might in the more than somewhat unforeseeable future be wiped off the map by

history's ever-pitiless frontier eraser. I've got ten bob that says without the slightest ambiguity or hesitation, absolutely no ifs or buts, that it's not at all impossible.

Britain's – or England's – Brexit decision and a UK-EU trade agreement that puts a border between Northern Ireland and Britain, with the shambolic consequences for imports and exports we've seen this year, have turned up the noise, and understandably so, given the Prime Minister's promise: 'There will be no border down the Irish Sea – over my dead body.' Well, there is a border of some sort somewhere, and unionists see it as a betrayal by a government that for all its talk of the 'precious' union will not need any time soon to rely on the eight votes they have in the Commons. *Sinn Féin* and its friends in the north will welcome in the current border fiasco chickens coming home to roost, as foreseen last year by Sean O'Grady in *The Independent*: 'We see that Boris Johnson, in signing the Northern Ireland protocol, is the real architect of Irish unity, pushing the unionists out of the union. More than Mary Lou McDonald, more than Gerry Adams, more than Eamon de Valera … it will be this blundering English imperialist who will make all of Ireland a nation once again.'

The 1998 Good Friday agreement, on which Brussels in the Brexit negotiations spent so much time weaponizing, provides some but not much assistance in settling the United Ireland question one way or the other. It says the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland shall call a border poll 'if at any time it appears likely to him [sic] that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland'. There is, though, no guidance as to how the Secretary of State should gauge public opinion – a consultation with Mystic Meg, a tea leaf reading, or a series of opinion polls indicating consistently a clear majority for union with Dublin? Some recent polls put the split at close to 50-50, while the Life and Times Survey – said to be polling gold standard – done by Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University finds support for a united Ireland runs at about 22 per cent … It's Mystic Meg, then.

The uncertainty in the process – if it is a process – doesn't end there. How is the question to be worded? Would it be a straightforward majority vote, as in the Brexit plebiscite, or would there be a turnout threshold? The agreement says consent for a united Ireland would need to be given 'concurrently' in the north and south, which means there would have to be separate referenda in both jurisdictions. If both voted for unification, a negotiation involving the British and Irish governments and the political parties in the north would follow, as would a referendum in the republic, since embracing the North would require an amendment to Ireland's written constitution.

That little lot would keep the opinion pollsters, politicians, and lawyers busy for five, probably ten, years, which would suit both the British and Irish governments, the former because it would probably be embroiled in a hopeless struggle over Scottish independence, the latter because it wants unification but, as with St. Augustine and chastity, not quite yet. Archbishop Eamon Martin, leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, doesn't want a border poll any time soon. 'I feel there is a huge amount to be done in terms of conversations on health, education, and infrastructure on this island … on the way we can co-operate better. Conversations have not even begun in any real manner, and I would be encouraging people to think, converse, to share their differing perspectives. How can we even think of going to the polls before we have those conversations?'

So, that'll be a decade of dialogues and an abundance of talking shops – citizens' assemblies, policy forums and think tank studies – during which Sinn Féin's charm offensive will target the province's young voters who are a feature of a discernable trend towards an eventual Roman Catholic majority, who might see in the republic the very model of a modern almost secular state. With same sex marriage, a relaxed divorce procedure, and legal abortion, not greatly unlike, oddly, the one to which the loyalists cling, many would be open to the suggestion that the ultimate answer to the interminable border problem would be the frontier's eradication and Home Rule from Antrim and Derry to Cork and Kerry.

Would the England care? Not a bit; its feelings of relief would be immense.

David Kernek is a freelance editor and writer.

Bang 'em up

JOHN BEVERIDGE

Yesterday, I noticed a news item that up to four out of ten criminal courts are idle, at any one time, because of delays and inefficiencies in the prosecution system. The Prime Minister's recent assurances that serious crimes would be more punished, by increasing sentencing levels, came to my mind and I mused on how much more work is needed than that, to provide an adequate criminal justice system. I started practice, at the Bar, in 1963, when I spent two years working in the criminal courts. Prosecutions then were efficiently brought and courts imposed adequate sentences. From my personal experience, I can say what happened to degrade the system, slowly, down the years, to the miserable situation today.

After two years I increasingly practised civil and commercial law. In 1973, about a month after I became legally qualified to be appointed to the bench, I received a request from the Lord Chancellor to sit as a part time judge in the Crown Court, trying crime. As far as I know, this was the earliest anyone had been offered such an appointment, so I was flattered, but worried that I knew little of criminal law, and I replied that I would be happy to sit, but would be better trying civil law. I got no reply, but, a month or so later, I received another letter, asking if I would try crime. I replied, referring to my previous exchange, but, as before, had no reply, but, after a month, another letter asking if I would try crime. I thought that if it were me, or the Lord Chancellor, who must back down, it had better be me, so I accepted. In due course, I borrowed a standard judicial summing up and the principle criminal law text book and set off for Gloucester Crown Court, with the plan to warn the clerk that I knew little or nothing of criminal practice, or procedure, nor the role of a judge with a jury, and ask him to keep an eye on me. I arrived at court, early, and called for my clerk. Before I could say anything, he said that this was his first day in court and would I forgive his errors. I explained the problem and asked if anyone else was sitting in the court building, that day, and was told, Judge X, with the Chief Clerk, so I told my clerk to approach the Chief Clerk and inform him of the situation and ask his judge if we could swap clerks. The answer came back 'no'. I then sent my clerk to the robing room, to tell the bar of my ignorance and to say I would be happy to be corrected, or helped, when necessary.

I sat for ten working days, during which time the Bar was wonderful in its gentle helpfulness and I thought things went well. By chance, I had to deal with a series of young men who had been involved in brawls and violence in pubs. From my text book, I knew that I was entitled to send them to Borstal, which meant about two years in a young offender's institution. Lesser penalties were available, but I thought Borstal was right and sent them all there. On the morning of my last day, I was told that a very senior policeman – I forget his exact rank – wanted to see me. I paled, wondering what horror I had committed, but put on a brave face and asked him in. He was covered in silver braid, with a companion, wearing almost as much, with their caps under their arms and holding smart brown gloves. 'Good morning', I said, tremulously. 'Oh, Your Honour, I just came to thank you. Fifteen violent youths and every one locked up. We have had increasing trouble in public houses, in Cirencester, during past years, and they always come back, from court, laughing and going to the same pubs and causing trouble, again. After five days of you sitting, we had no trouble at all, in the pubs, nor on the streets.' When I am told that punishment does not work, I remember that moment.

A little while after I was appointed, I was called to attend judicial conferences, annually, which turned out to be educational classes. I quickly understood why many judges were extraordinarily slow to impose a custodial sentence, as must have been the case with the Cirencester courts. I would have before me, offenders who had been before the courts even ten or twelve times for a variety of crimes, often for numerous crimes on each occasion, but had never been punished, except by fines which they had not paid, or probation, for which they had been bad attenders, or a sentence which had been suspended. These seminars were residential and consisted of a series of lectures, usually on 'liberal' themes, such as the association between crime and a poor childhood and

the undesirability of prison, by 'experts' provided by the Home Office. Much of what was preached seemed, to me, to be unsupported by evidence and to disregard common sense, but other attendees, especially the full-time judges, who were, after all, employees of the Home Office, seemed much readier to accept the instructions.

One reason given for the avoidance of custodial sentences was the shortage of prisons. This is a bad reason, in principle, although a good one, in practice. There are votes in building houses and hospitals, but none in building prisons, which may account be why the prison situation is even worse, now. After over forty years of shortage, not only has the position not improved, but it has been allowed to become worse. Sentences which need to be imposed are not, or are shortened unduly. It is worse that those who are imprisoned are subject to conditions which they should not have to undergo, especially when inmates impose their own law on the weaker, when drugs are readily available and when Muslim gangs impose Muslim tenets. It seems to me axiomatic that when the state arrogates to itself the right to punish by incarceration, depriving individuals of the power to run their own lives, it has a moral duty to ensure that the conditions under which they are obliged to live, are controlled and amount to reasonable punishment.

I sat, for about six weeks a year, as a part time judge, from 1973 to 1995, when I retired from the Bar. During that time, I noticed an increasing weakening of the system of prosecution. I believe that it is, and has been for some time, recognised that the Crown Prosecution Service is a poor performer. Papers are lost, witnesses fail to attend court because they were not asked to do so and there are failures of process of many kinds. I recall that one lecture I attended, in the judicial seminars, was by the then head of the CPS, who said that she accepted that the conviction rate was unacceptably low – because of the inadequate skills of the representatives of the CPS – so intended to remedy this by providing that no prosecution should be undertaken, unless it had been adjudged that there was a more than 50 per cent prospect of success. Not only was this solution based on a misdiagnosis of the causes of the failures, but it meant that a shoplifter, with a 51 per cent chance of conviction, would be prosecuted, whereas a child molester, with a 49 per cent chance, would not be.

I forget who pointed out that if one pays people to do something, they will do it. Thus, when one pays people to make rules, they will make rules, even long after there is a need for more rules. The same applies to the analysis of statistics. In consequence, the CPS imposes on the police paperwork which interferes with the performance of their primary functions. I suspect that there is a temptation on weak prosecutors to demand that the police find more evidence, before agreeing to bring a case, when such is not strictly necessary. All this comes on top of the undermining of the police by 'liberalism'. The result is that we have lost a police force and gained a police service.

In the early years of my criminal work, the CPS did not exist. Criminal prosecutions were in the hands of numerous local solicitors, who knew the local judges, police, probation officers, and even criminals. They were modest people doing work of a modest scale and, in my memory, doing it well. Major crime was dealt with by a national figure, a senior QC, with a long experience of work at the criminal bar. The CPS is necessarily a huge entity and needs highly capable people to run it, but has no hope of attracting such people, as the incomes attainable by highly capable lawyers, in private practice, are way beyond the salaries payable by a public body.

What, then, does Boris need to do, to make good his word that he will impose more law and order? I suggest the following:

1. Build new prisons, designed to punish, but to allow a basically decent way of life. Employ enough warders to enable them to control the prisons, rather than the inmates.
2. Provide judicial seminars which offer sound and evidence-based views, not those based on a general, liberal wish to sympathise with criminals. Recognise that prison does have a necessary role to play in deterrence and restraint, if not improvement, if classes are made available. It is hard to force judges to sentence against their instincts.
3. Reform the CPS, if not abolish it, and establish a system in which people of modest ability can do work of modest scope. Just outsourcing all advocacy would strengthen both the criminal Bar and the CPS and free the Police from providing statistics.
4. Re-identify the Police as a force, not a service. Establish an officers' training college. Give them more say in decisions as to prosecution. Free them from over-sensitivity to political aspects, for example, in stop and search, which should be directed to those most likely to be carrying knives. It would be ridiculous, for example, to stop and search little old ladies, when, overwhelmingly, knife carriers are young men, even if this means especially black and brown young men.
5. Accept that if the death penalty is not reintroduced, there are criminals who need to be locked away until death, or when old age renders them harmless. Jihadists believe that it is their duty to kill and, once such an individual has demonstrated the capacity to do that, they should never be released, save in the most exceptional cases, not because there should be an absence of mercy, but because the duty to protect society should be paramount.

There is a lot to be done and it needs to be done, now, but extra police and longer statutary sentences alone will be ineffective.

John Beveridge is a QC.

Rhodes IS History

Robert Innes Smith

The ignorant brainwashed 'students' who mouthed this silly slogan did not realise it contained a fact. Rhodes IS history – a very important part of the history of the greatest empire since Rome and therefore of the world. Andre Maurois' biography translated from the French, tells us all we need to know. But let us have a left-wing view.

I refer you to Frances Countess of Warwick, known affectionately as 'Daisy', a famed beauty of the Edwardian age and friend of Edward VII. In spite of this background Daisy Warwick was an early Socialist and spoke against the peerage and 'stately homes'. She would certainly be a 'hit' with modern day's 'wokes' and 'snowflakes'.

She had her own views on Cecil Rhodes. In her amazing autobiographical book *Discretions* we get to see a very different aspect. She was born in 1861 and died in 1938, having stood for Parliament for Warwick and proclaimed her Socialist views widely.

One of her friends was Cecil Rhodes for whom she had the greatest admiration. She noted that when Winston Churchill was in a dilemma he turned to Rhodes for advice. Rhodes gave him things to think about without telling him which way to turn. From what he deduced Winston became a Liberal, Rhodes's comments on that were 'Poor boy – to him it seems such a big problem; but to those who see Empires that grow because an Empire is something bigger and better than possessions, it is more than any material thing. It is a dream. There is no such thing as an Empire in the strict meaning of the word. When an Empire grows great enough it becomes a Commonwealth – England is going to have the greatest Commonwealth that has ever been seen. It has been dreamed of by a few – just a very few – and me.'

He went on to say 'I am an imperialist in the sense that I want British ideals, British justice, British education to permeate to the farthest outposts of the earth and I think the establishment of British control is the easiest way to ensure these things. I am an imperialist because I want to see a Commonwealth of Nations, the symbol of which will be the British flag.'

Lady Warwick was with him during his last holiday in Scotland. He was close to death but they sat together on the moors and for hours they would discuss world politics and the Rhodes scholarships which he had founded to benefit colonials. 'Like most great men' she wrote, 'he sought the promotion of education with an almost religious fervour.' She admitted that they clashed on some points. 'Once I accused him of being a dreamer. Quick as a flash he retorted, "it is the dreamers who move the world! Dreamers and visionaries have made civilisations".'

After many decades Lady Warwick's ideas of Socialism have been shown up for what they are but Daisy was no fool as her readable and enjoyable memoirs reveal.

Cecil Rhodes is indeed history in its most significant form. To denigrate his name is the worst form of ignorant prejudice. Few can claim to have a country in their own name. The name RHODESIA will never be forgotten.

Robert Innes Smith has written many books, mainly on notable houses; including Inverary and Pembroke castles.

Daisy Greville, Countess of Warwick, The Lafayette Studio, Public Domain

Chinese Legal Takeaway

Tom Spencer

Why in the world does the British Government continue to maintain the facade that the Rule of Law still exists in Hong Kong? On the 16th January, *The Times* reported that several British judges had been sitting on cases in the former British colony. This included Lord Hoffman sitting on a case upholding the ban of face coverings at public gatherings that was protested by democrats.

Ever since Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, Britain has maintained a tradition whereby judges from the Supreme Court sit in Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal. The British legal system, with its reputation as a strong protector of the rule of law, lent legitimacy to Hong Kong's independence.

This was of huge importance to Hong Kong's success. In *Why Nations Fail*, economists Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson showed that the rule of law is an essential factor in creating a successful economy. Indeed, a 2014 survey by the *Economist's* Intelligence Unit found that 88 per cent of senior executives consider the rule of law to be a key ingredient in determining their foreign direct investment. Hong Kong benefitted demonstrably from its reputation, held up by British judges, that the rule of law exists in the city-state.

But the rule of law in Hong Kong is dead. In the days of the National Security Law, the CCP's projection of justice is merely a facade. By continuing the legal tradition in Hong Kong, British judges aid a tyrannous regime through tacit endorsement.

The National Security Law features extensive but *vague criminalisation* of almost any form of public dissent against the Chinese state with barbaric sentences. Most worryingly for the rule of law, this statute features severe clampdowns on freedoms of expression, assembly and the right to a fair trial. This includes the notorious clause 44, which allows Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, to choose any judge to oversee a case concerning the National Security Law. This is clearly an intolerable affront to judicial independence, and it's something with which Britain should brook no association.

The rule of law is the central principle of the British constitution. It was recognised as early as 1215 in Clause 40 of the *Magna Carta* detailing that 'to no one will we sell, to no one will we deny, or delay right or justice'. This principle should be recognised not just by the Government, but by anyone representing Britain at home or abroad.

This issue is not just confined to former judges like the *Times'* article lists, but also to current members of the judiciary. For example, the President of the Supreme Court, Lord Reed, continues to sit in the Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong. Whilst a statement that he gave in July 2020 detailing his worries with the National Security Law is comforting, it did not go as far as saying that he would refuse to sit on these courts until it was repealed. The statement appears rather naive. Reed correctly recognises the efforts of many sitting judges in upholding the rule of law; however, he does not acknowledge that Clause 44 of the National Security Law takes the power of enforcement away from the judges and hands it to the Party. The CCP can appoint any sympathetic judge to any case they claim concerns the National Security Law to receive a judgment that suits their political goals. This has allowed mass arrests of pro-democracy politicians like Joshua Wong as recently as January 6th. It's entirely inappropriate that Lord Reed would consider going through with his scheduled sitting in Hong Kong's courts in September 2021.

In November, it was revealed that senior Government ministers had written to Lord Reed raising concerns about British judges providing 'a veneer of legitimacy' to the city's legal system; they were right to do so. By continuing to sit in Hong Kong, British judges are recognising as legitimate a system no longer compliant with our most basic values. This in turn helps maintain the errant system's reputation as a good place to do business. In the light of further arrests of democrats in Hong Kong, the judiciary must respond by abandoning what is now a dead legal regime.

Tom Spencer is a student of law and a Young Voices *contributor. He is the Chief London Organiser for the Neoliberal Project and sits as Vice-Chair for International Chapters of its steering committee. Tom writes for* 1828 *and* Exponents Magazine, *among others.*

Confessions of a Climate Change Fanatic

Alistair Miller

Traditional conservatives have a healthy scepticism of fashionable beliefs, especially when these assume cult-like status and involve utopian dreams or apocalyptic visions. They prefer to put their trust in traditions, customs, habits, and instincts that have stood the test of time. It is no surprise then that many traditional conservatives are sceptical of the climate change movement, especially when voiced by screaming anti-capitalists and fanatical vegans.

Yet scanning the articles and comments sections of the conservative media – mainstream liberal, traditional Tory, and libertarian – I am uneasy. I have no problem with those who question the scientific consensus, or question whether there is a consensus at all on climate change and global warming. But when I read of globalist scams, mass hysteria, brainwashing, 'groupthink', and of lies based on bogus data, in other words, that a great conspiracy is afoot, I begin to worry. When I see that almost *every* contributor or commentator adheres to this view, I worry even more.

I would like nothing more than to see the anthropogenic climate change thesis proved a hoax. For one thing, I like cars too much, especially classic British ones, the hum of a well-tuned engine and the smell of oil. Nor do I wish to share a cave with anti-capitalists, vegans and Lycra-clad cyclists. I have no desire either to see our green and pleasant land turned into African savannah, or the Earth into planet Venus.

However, none of this has any bearing on the truth of the argument. What is one to believe? I could 'do my own research', a euphemism for surfing the net in search of handy arguments and evidence that confirm one's prior opinions. But unless you are versed in atmospheric and environmental science, encompassing geology, geophysics, meteorology, climatology, atmospheric chemistry, and atmospheric physics, which I understand are central to the field of 'climate science', then culling made-to-measure facts and theories from this or that website is about as scientific as donning a white lab coat and doing a TV commercial. Unless you understand how the balance between incoming solar radiation and outgoing thermal radiation is determined, or how traces of carbon dioxide and methane might affect the transmission of heat radiation through the atmosphere, or how carbon dioxide might act as a regulator of water vapor, and therefore ultimately regulate global temperature – to name just a few of the processes involved – you are shooting in the dark.

Lacking this expertise, all I can do is choose which group of climate scientists to believe, and then trust in their expertise and judgement. How do I choose? There are no valid arguments or inferences available. I can only go on the balance of probabilities, gut instinct, and what I see happening outside my window. So, for example, if I see spring bulbs coming up ludicrously early, read about record temperatures and unprecedented extreme weather, and then hear that 97 per cent of actively publishing climate scientists believe that recent global warming is caused by human activity, then I am inclined, pessimist that I am, to believe that the arguments for anthropogenic climate change are the more compelling.

But what if the figure of 97 per cent, which is

publicised by NASA, is fabricated, and that there is, in fact, no such consensus – as climate change deniers claim?

The source of NASA's 97 per cent figure is a paper published in 2013, in the open access journal *Environmental Research Letters*, by John Cook and eight others, evaluating 'the scientific consensus on anthropogenic global warming (AGW) in the peer-reviewed scientific literature'. Cook's paper found that of abstracts expressing a position on AGW, 97 per cent endorsed it. The figure has been hotly contested by climate change deniers, with the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a libertarian group funded by ExxonMobil, going so far as to issue a formal complaint against NASA for publicising it, and branding Cook's study 'fundamentally dishonest'. But a subsequent 2016 study 'Consensus on Consensus' co-authored by the authors of seven independent climate consensus studies, including Cook, confirmed the original result, concluding that 'the finding of 97 per cent consensus in published climate research is robust and consistent with other surveys of climate scientists and peer-reviewed studies'. That all the world's leading scientific organisations and national academies of science endorse the AGW climate consensus might also be weighed in the balance.

But even if there is a consensus, what if all these climate scientists are the victims of groupthink, of an orthodoxy whose denial would lose them their jobs? What if there is a worldwide conspiracy, a globalist scam based on bogus data – as is also claimed?

It is *possible*. The problem is that precisely the same charge could be levelled at those scientists who deny the climate change orthodoxy. Indeed, a suspiciously large number of the latter appear to be funded, directly and indirectly, by fossil fuel energy corporations with a vested interest in denying the existence of anthropogenic climate change. Moreover, NASA are the villains according, not only to climate change deniers, but to flat earthers who charge them with doctoring satellite images of the earth from space to make it appear round, and to those who deny the moon landings ever took place. If NASA is a fraud, why not believe the earth is flat and the Apollo moon landings were faked? Remember the waving flag (there is no wind on the moon) and the curious absence of stars? Then it is but another small step to believing that an ancient alien city exists on the far side of the Moon.

But it is not merely that abolishing the scientific consensus opens the door to every conspiracy theory going. As Thomas Kuhn argued in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, there is always a current orthodoxy in science. Indeed, science cannot be carried on *unless* there is some agreed body of knowledge, theory, and procedure with which to conduct experiments and organise our perceptions of the world. No 'groupthink', no science. From time to time, the orthodoxy is upset by a new paradigm that better explains the natural phenomena we can observe, particularly when new observations and data come to light that the old theory cannot accommodate. The time is then ripe for revolutionary change. But under normal circumstances, the paradigm can be relied on, and within its conceptual frame progress can be made in our scientific knowledge and understanding. So it was that Newton's universal law of universal gravitation passed muster for over two hundred years, until displaced by Einstein's theory of general relativity. No doubt a time will come when Einstein's theory proves inadequate and is replaced, perhaps by the physicist's dream of a grand theory that will unify 'the four fundamental forces of nature'.

Besides, is the very essence of conservativism not conservation of what we know and what we love? And does that not include our green and pleasant land *and* its climate? It is depressing to see prominent conservatives, even the sainted Charles Moore, lined up as trustees of The Global Warming Policy Foundation, whose mission is not so much to contribute to rational scientific debate, as to publicise any argument, any evidence, any source, that might undermine the scientific consensus in the eyes of the public. The great scientific heretics of the past – Galileo, Einstein, Lavoisier – were not spoilers out to destroy the prevailing paradigm. Nor did they accuse the scientific community of being engaged in a grand conspiracy. They had simply come up with an alternative paradigm that better explained the known facts, and which in time would gain acceptance.

There may well be honourable individual scientists who dissent from the prevailing consensus, the orthodoxy, and who consequently have a difficult time. There may even be a future Galileo among them. Such is the nature of science and consensus. Nevertheless, there is a consensus among climate scientists. And I fear that the powerful lobby groups who seek to undermine it have interests and motives that have little to do with the quest for scientific truth, or with preserving our green and pleasant land.

Alistair Miller is a teacher.

Pasteur: without Honour in his Own Country

THEODORE DALRYMPLE

When the first wave of Covid-19 struck France, the government informed the public that the wearing of masks was ineffective as protection against its spread. The science of masks is still not entirely clear, but it turned out that the advice had nothing to do with the science. Rather, the government said that masks were of no use because there weren't any to be had anyway, and there were no factories to make them either. Everything had been outsourced years before to China.

When after a delay masks became available in France, they were suddenly found so effective that the wearing of them was made compulsory in certain circumstances. This about-face was not such as to create confidence that the government knew what it was doing, at least in those who retained some faculty of memory.

Like most people, I hesitate to be fair to politicians, or to find extenuating circumstances for their bad decisions, but often they are put in a position in which they are damned if they do and damned if they don't. In 2009, fearing a dangerous epidemic of the new influenza virus, H1N1, the French government stocked billions of masks; but in the end, the epidemic failed to materialise and the masks, which have a limited life span, had to be destroyed. The Minister of Health of the time, Roselyne Bachelot, was criticised, or ridiculed, even by the official auditors, for the waste of a billion euros on masks that were never used. This was not an error, or experience, that any subsequent government was eager to repeat. Critics often forget that their criticisms may themselves have unfortunate effects years into the future.

History, in slightly different form, repeated itself when the AstraZeneca vaccine became widely available in Britain but not in the European Union. First the French government, among others, expressed outrage that Britain, which had signed a contract with the company three months earlier than the European Union, seemed to be receiving preferential treatment from the company. This was taken as a symptom of almost psychopathic nationalism and lack of 'solidarity', that moral quality in the name of which politicians and the bureaucratic apparatus seek to equalise something by means of redistributive fiat.

However, blaming the company and Britain did not entirely convince many people in Europe for the delays in the vaccination programme in Europe. Britain, for once, seemed to have been bolder, swifter and more sure-footed than the European Union (though crowing, which is never a good idea in any case, would be premature, for the game is by no means over). The European Union seemed to be more interested in ensuring that the proper procedure, according to its own rules and regulations, was followed to the bitter end than in the safety or welfare of its population. It was like the grandmother in the Romanian peasant saying: the whole village is on fire, but grandmother wants to finish combing her hair.

Having failed to secure a supply of the vaccine, and having failed to convince the French population or press that this was not the fault of his government or that of the European Union, Macron did the obvious thing: he said that the vaccine wasn't very effective in any case. He said that it was *quasi-ineffective* in those aged 65 and over, precisely those, of course, most in danger from the disease. So really the failure to secure a supply of the vaccine was not so very serious after all, almost a benefit of European wisdom, avoiding yet another waste of money, with the implication that the British were being precipitate or reckless in employing it despite its inefficacy.

It is difficult to believe that a man of M Macron's intelligence was not aware of the flimsiness of his reasoning in the strict sense, though what he said might have been politically effective at least for a time (and politicians these are mainly concerned to survive the next few days intact, relying on the public's capacity for amnesia thereafter). It was true that evidence of the efficacy of the vaccine in over-65s was lacking, but absence of evidence was not evidence of absence, and such evidence as there was suggested that the vaccine would be effective in those over 65; moreover, even partial efficacy would be better than no efficacy at all, which for the moment was the alternative, and in many people might be the difference between life and death.

The French lead was followed by other European countries which, of course, had suffered from the same bureaucratic inertia as France.

The French president's words, if taken seriously,

could have only reinforced vaccine scepticism, especially in a country whose population was already, according to polls, the most sceptical of that of all advanced countries, although France is the land of Pasteur.

Immunisation, the most successful of all medical procedures from the public health point of view, is also the most distrusted. The reasons for this mistrust are probably multiple, but one surely is that, while the hypothetical prospect of a future disease that immunisation may prevent is not very vivid in the mind, the prospect of immediate harms done by the immunisation itself – side-effects which on rare occasions may be serious – is very vivid.

I have spoken to a few anti-vaccinators in France and in England. Some are out-and-out paranoid, believing that microchips or sterilising substances will be deliberately introduced into their bodies in the course of immunisation. These beliefs are usually incorporated into a wider paranoid system of beliefs, such as that there is a hidden group of people attempting to take over the world by means of a deliberately-fomented epidemic (if they don't believe that the illness doesn't even exist). Such outlandish ideas are certainly not the consequence of lack of intelligence: indeed, insofar as intelligence is necessary to incorporate or rationalise seemingly contradictory evidence into the system of beliefs, flexible intelligence may reinforce paranoia.

Some anti-immunisation feeling may arise from comparatively rational considerations: for example, that the procedure is not wholly effective, especially against new variants of the disease, and that a better vaccine may come along, or alternatively that its long-term effects cannot be known. Immunisation could conceivably favour the emergence of new variants, which might be worse than the original; ten or more years later, unsuspected long-term effects might emerge, much as post-polio syndrome emerges decades after an infection. Applying this principle, of course, all human action whatever would be impossible, for the unknown consequences of every action stretch indefinitely into the future. The Promethean bargain is a necessity of our lives.

According to surveys, about fifty per cent of the French population says that it would not agree to vaccination against Covid-19 if offered it. I suspect that when vaccination becomes more easily available in France, as presumably it will, many more people will opt to have it. If I am right, this should, but won't, have an effect on the seriousness with which we take polls of opinion as a guide to the state of people's minds and to their future behaviour. Happily, mankind remains incalculable

Theodore Dalrymple's latest books are Around the World in the Cinemas of Paris*, Mirabeau, 2020, £9.94 and* Embargo*, Mirabeau, 2020, £7.65*

Men, a Footnote in Women's Lives

Mary Sidney

Like many people I've been watching more TV. Since the lockdown it goes on at 7pm rather than 9. I have even allowed myself some afternoon viewing, when an interesting film is offered. If it doesn't star Margaret Rutherford it's usually not worth staying awake for, but I was intrigued by *The Wife*, a US film from 2017, starring Glenn Close.

It told the uplifting story of Joan, secretary at a publishing house, who notices how the all-male editors dismiss women writers. When she criticizes her boyfriend Joseph's work, he threatens to end their relationship on the grounds that he is 'just a hack'. She rewrites his novel and it becomes a bestseller. By 1968, they are married and Joan is busy writing all his novels. He has several affairs, and tells everyone, 'Joan does not write'. He wins the Nobel Prize for Literature but after the awards ceremony drops dead. On the Concorde flight back to the US, we see Joan opening her journal to a blank page, she runs her hand over it, gazes contentedly at the camera and we know her life of acclaimed genius has just begun.

The film was based on a novel by Meg Wolitzer, which the *Washington Post* called, 'Important' and 'Courageous'. Another critic, Seaman, praised its, 'Kung-fu precision moves to zap our every notion about gender and status and marriage, deftly exposing the injustice, sorrow, and sheer absurdity of it all.' Close was nominated for an Oscar and a BAFTA.

The problem shared by Wolitzer and the people who made and praised that film is that History refuses

to show any wives like Joan, getting out from under the evil white husband. Incredibly few women seem to have had the courage to do it, or put their talent before anything else. History of course is written by the barbarous victors, white men, so it doesn't have to be taken seriously. If victimhood requires it, it's best to just make it up.

A lack of female genius over the centuries must be due to suppression, and without that they would no doubt been not as good as, but better than any man. This is the message now regularly disseminated. *In Our Time*, BBC Radio 4 on Feb 4th, was about Emilie du Chatelet, a French aristocrat who translated Newton's *Principia* from Latin into French. In 1733, she became the mistress of Voltaire. Dr Patricia Fara, of Cambridge University informed us emphatically that 'She was far, far better at maths than he was'. This was emphasised again by David Wootton, Professor of History at York; 'Voltaire was not competent to understand Newton. She made sense of Newton with him and for him.'

No one asked how good she was as a writer and I was reminded of another edition of the programme about Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Emma Mason, Senior lecturer in English at Warwick, told us; 'Dorothy (his sister) had a huge influence on Wordsworth', followed by Oxford professor, Stephen Gill, assuring us that, 'Wordsworth had a huge influence on George Eliot and Mrs Gaskell,' someone else added, 'and other women poets we no longer read'. (Since that broadcast in 2007, publishers have stopped using Eliot's chosen pseudonym and put her back to being, 'Marian Evans,' and Mrs G is now strictly called, 'Elizabeth Gaskell.')

Wikipedia tells us:

> *The Grasmere Journal and Wordsworth's other works revealed how vital she was to her brother's success. William relied on her detailed accounts of nature scenes and borrowed freely from her journals… In his poem, Daffodils, he describes what appears to be the shared experience in the journal as his own solitary observation. Her observations and descriptions have been considered to be as poetic if not more so than those of her brother.*

You don't have to look far to find ideas like that on line. Marie Eberle, recently wrote rather hilariously in *Feministly* magazine, of Tolstoy's wife Sophia:

> *She turned Leo's illegible manuscripts into publishable copies. The final draft of War and Peace measured 3,000 pages before Sophia went over its spelling and grammar, and edited large parts of the plot. We owe much of the romantic storylines to her rather than to Leo, and it is also her influence that prevented the book from containing even more excruciating details about military strategies.*

Think too, of all the terrible paintings men might have produced if women hadn't stopped them! American critic Morton D Paley, writing twenty years ago, noted that 'In the 19th century Catherine Blake was, considered a perfect wife because she was a faint copy of William.' Times have changed; according to Amy Concannon, who curated an exhibition of 300 of Blake's paintings at Tate Britain in February 2020, his work was inspired and often executed by Catherine. The *Guardian* published a prominent article quoting Concannon.

> *We have not sufficiently trumpeted Catherine's involvement before. It makes it clear how she worked by his side. Catherine was central to Blake's printing and colouring processes, and the importance of her work at his side has been neglected. She was an assistant when he was printing, which was a critical part of the process. We know she must have been responsible for a lot of the work.*

If Blake himself may be allowed a quote: 'Let Man wear the Skin of a Lion, a Woman the Fell of a Sheep.' He once made Catherine kneel before his brother after she had offended him 'and beg pardon, or you never see my face again.' Friends noted that she would 'Sit up all night with him, waiting for him to be inspired.'

Artists & Illustrators magazine recently had a feature about Josephine Hopper. You might not have heard of her but her husband, Edward, is famous for his 1942 painting, *Nighthawks*, showing lonely figures in a late-night diner. He put her into every work, but her painting career declined as his rose. Hopper said she had 'a pleasant little talent'. In 2004, Gaby Wood in the *Guardian* agreed that it was a small talent. Such views could never be expressed now.

'Jo Hopper's legacy is being rebuilt,' said the magazine article. A biography is coming in an effort to wrest her name completely from his. It probably won't be long before she is talked about as the better artist; art historian Elizabeth Colleary says she was 'Much more of a modernist,' than Edward, implying greater originality and experimentation, even though it isn't at all obvious in the work.

Whether she was talented or not belongs to the old canon of judgement; that she was female is more important. Obvious truth and academic discernment need no longer apply. The RA is showing the Emin/Munch exhibition, until Feb 28th. Note the placing of the names. Nancy Durrant of the *Evening Standard* felt, 'The sheer heart-stopping clamour of her paintings was almost too much for Munch's quieter anguish'. The Norwegian master of Expressionism would have done better not to show up.

Art catalogues, now mainly written by women, reiterate the line taken in *The Wife*. Lee Krasner, shown at the Barbican gallery in 2019, had the misfortune to

hook up with Jackson Pollock. Apparently, in retrospect, his dibbles lacked the vigour of her dabbles. Following lucky Joan in film, the catalogue quipped 'In fact, his death in 1956 marked her renaissance as an artist.'

For the Tate Britain *Aftermath* exhibition in 2018 about post-war painters, curator Emma Chambers got around the problem of too many male artists on the walls, by 'Doing a Trotsky,' simply putting work by women into the catalogue which were not in the show, blotting out work that was. The dreary Gwen John has long eclipsed her flamboyant brother Augustus, at least in the view of current curators, who have largely removed him from view.

If historical evidence, evidence of the eye, or even common sense contradicts what all *bien- pensant* want to be true, then it must be expunged. In the art world men are now so outpaced by women that they may soon disappear. Of four curators appointed to the Tate in 2012 three were women. In 2019, things were not so clear as jobs went to Nabila Abdel Nabi, Osei Bonsu, and Dr Devika Singh.

The Wife hit the zeitgeist; and no one questioned why she, with all that talent, never told any of the numerous feminists in publishing about her plight, or quietly slipped one of her works to Virago. None of the critics was uneasy about a woman who lived a very good life as the wife of a famous man, and only succeeded as a writer because she had the good luck to see him drop dead. It's almost 19th century in its attitude that women are powerless. Wolitzer and the people who made and praised that film honestly believe that women, and what they would call 'other marginalised groups,' are automatically victims, who cannot possibly be expected to have any moral integrity or courage of their own.

A few women have always chosen not to be, as Martha Gellhorn put it, 'A footnote in someone else's life,' but there is a price to pay for that independence, which most have chosen, perhaps wisely, not to pay.

Mary Sidney is a social commentator.

The EU awaits our return

Andrew Tettenborn

The one benefit of the market in drugs, said the columnist P J O'Rourke, was that it had taught a generation of American kids how to use the metric system. If the protracted Brexit process over Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union taught the British people anything, it was surely about the workings of EU law. But there still might be room to go further. There is a good deal more to the workings of the EU law from which we have now disengaged ourselves than meets the unpractised eye.

Shortly after the United Kingdom gave its formal notification under Art.50 of an intention to head for the exit in two years' time, Remainer lawyers immediately saw an opportunity for a rear-guard action. If as a matter of EU law the UK's notice was merely provisional and could be revoked at any time before it expired, then a programme to stop the process in its tracks through parliamentary skulduggery or otherwise had a chance. The 2016 referendum and its aftermath could be portrayed as merely a bad dream, a fleeting episode – much as the referendum would, one suspects, have been pictured had Remain won it. The political ruling class could sink back to business as normal; meanwhile inertia, the desire for political quietude and an impressionable youthful population which had never known anything other than life as a member state of the EU would in practice guarantee no repetition of the 2016 aberration. So there was everything to play for when, at the behest of a group of diehard Remainer lawyers including Jolyon Maugham and Joanna Cherry QC, the European Court of Justice was asked for its opinion. Given Article 50 said nothing explicit about whether a notice to leave could be withdrawn, was such a notice revocable or not?

What was interesting here was the media coverage of the episode before the decision was given. News outlets quickly realised, entirely correctly, that there was nothing worthwhile to report. The result of the case was to all intents and purposes a foregone conclusion. It was clear that the EU was solidly in favour of stopping Brexit if it possibly could. More importantly, it was pointed out that the EU Court of Justice, while doubtless studiedly impartial in cases about such things as the details of the common agricultural policy or the minutiae of customs nomenclature, was by no means politically naive, especially in cases regarded as existential by the EU. It would, put bluntly, oblige its masters. And so it proved; at the end of 2018, in a brief judgment, it did

exactly that. Following the view of its Advocate-General (more about this below), it confirmed that a written revocation of an Article 50 notice, provided it was given in conformity with UK constitutional norms, would be perfectly acceptable.

This was in interesting contrast to the experience on this side of the Channel. It is true that before this, in January 2017, the UK Supreme Court had also aided the Remainer cause immensely; it had, as readers will remember, decided that an Act of Parliament was necessary before an Article 50 notice could be served at all. But what is significant is that this decision, while foreseen by some, surprised others and very arguably broke new ground. Unlike the situation in Luxembourg, there was no suggestion that the result was likely to be a formality.

In other words, there is, to English ears, something strange about the way the EU does law. Now we are free from the organisation it is worth taking a slightly closer look at why this might be. There are actually several reasons.

The first point is how people are appointed to the Court of Justice which interprets the EU legal system. By treaty there must be one judge from each member State. Essentially a judge is nominated by his government, though he cannot be appointed without agreement from the governments of other member States. A body appointed by the EU Council also has an effective veto over particular appointees, which has been exercised a number of times in the last few years. What this means is that in practice it is most unlikely that anyone with Eurosceptic tendencies will get past this stage. The court exists to apply EU law as against any national system; experts in EU law, especially in academia (from which large numbers of judges on the Court come) are overwhelmingly committed to the European project.

The second point is a peculiarity (at least to English ears) of the way the Court of Justice conducts its business. The judges in the Court take account not only of the arguments of the parties before them, but also of so-called Advocates-General, employed by the EU. This slightly curious office is derived from the *rapporteur* in French procedure, who was historically a *commissaire du gouvernment* charged with giving his view of the issues arising in a case before an administrative tribunal. The modern Advocate-General is appointed from the same pool as the judges, though theoretically separated from them. He can ask questions of the parties, and is charged with advising the court of his view of how the case ought to be decided. In the majority of cases his view, which is reported officially and indeed often cited by later judges and lawyers, is accepted.

Theoretically this should not amount to political pressure: formally the Advocate-General duty is bound, 'acting with complete impartiality and independence, to make, in open court, reasoned submissions'. In practice such people, with their considerable influence over decisions of the Court, are appointed from EU enthusiasts, and are likely to promote an expansive interpretation of EU legislation and of the powers of the EU to promote what is seen as the common European interest over that of the member states. The results can be predicted.

The third factor is the way the actual EU laws are written. Our own statutes are hardly exciting bedtime reading, but they are relatively straightforward documents. Drafted fairly closely, they pretty quickly get to the point. Furthermore, by common consent they fall to be interpreted by our judges according to what they say on the printed page; even if the orthodoxy is that they should be interpreted in accordance with the intention of Parliament, that intention falls to be extracted from the actual text.

EU legislation, by contrast, is rather different. Reading the average EU regulation can be not only tedious, as with all legal texts, but positively exasperating. Before you get to what the law actually says, you have to plough through numerous short sentences preceded by a grand 'whereas' (or 'considérant', 'in Erwägung nachstehender Gründe', or whatever, depending on the language). There can be anything up to 100 or more of these, depending on the complexity of the provision you are reading.

Theoretically these brief statements are there for an impeccable reason: namely, to explain the background to the law, in accordance with EU doctrine that all its laws are to be interpreted expansively and 'teleologically', that is according to what will best promote their objects. And indeed, it is true that many such recitals do just that. Nevertheless, you also quite quickly notice that the preambles to particular pieces of legislation regularly serve the additional function of reinforcing, and reminding lawyers and judges of the need to promote, the official aims and values of the EU. You will find, for example, statements of the importance of establishment of the single market, or the need to harmonise the laws on whatever-it-is (a typical instance, taken from the Euro-law on data protection, refers to the need to contribute 'to the accomplishment of an area of freedom, security and justice and of an economic union, to economic and social progress, to the strengthening and the convergence of the economies within the internal market'). Of but not exactly in the written law, these recitals are undoubtedly taken into account by courts interpreting the law, and by commentators expounding it. They give to EU legislation a slightly disconcerting air of a mixture of legal doctrine and political exhortation, with no particular effort made to distinguish

the two. This may be natural to European lawyers bred in the tradition of laws written by the civil service on instructions from an ultra-political Commission and Council and then rubber-stamped by a parliament to provide a veneer of democratic respectability. But it is nevertheless disquieting.

There is also a further, final, feature that contributes further to the curious air of subliminal but nevertheless very powerful connections between law and EU political aims. Once English legislation has been passed, it is not surprising that law professors frequently comment in detail on its meaning and significance: that is their job (or part of it). The status of their views is what you would expect. Reflecting the natural separation between legislature and academy, there is nothing official about what they say: it may or may not be believed by lawyers and judges, its acceptance depending on such matters as the eminence of the person producing the opinion and how convincing he sounds.

In the EU domain, by contrast, things can be rather different. It is not uncommon for EU legislation to be produced together with a pre-prepared report from a favoured professor, paid by the EU to produce an official commentary on it, and what it should be taken to mean. And the legislation will state explicitly that this commentary is to be taken into account by courts interpreting the text of the law. Some academic views, in other words, are to be taken as privileged, by order of the body that passed the law and commissioned the opinion in the first place. Not surprisingly, those out of sympathy with the ideas behind the EU aren't likely to find themselves invited to take part in this process.

All this is regarded as par for the course by European lawyers. It may not necessarily show blatant bias, or lack of impartiality. But it sure gives some UK lawyers a sense that on the other side of the Channel (not to mention the Irish Sea) law, judging and politics are bound together in a highly unsettling way. For them, and for the rest of us worried about the tank-like political project embodied in the constitution of the EU, getting away from this uncomfortable mixture of the political and the judicial gives rise to a big sense of relief and a return to normality. To that extent at least we can say that Brexit has meant a return, not perhaps to business as normal, but at least to legal business as it ought to be.

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Scexit

Brian Ridley

Britain decided to become a sovereign nation outside the EU, and got Brexit done. During that process, Boris Johnson's government thought long and hard on the consequences of change, and was ready when change happened. Predicting future problems and planning accordingly is naturally expected of government. Given the continued popularity of the Scottish National Party in Scotland, it is reasonable to suppose that the Scottish government under Nicola Sturgeon has detailed plans for the country becoming independent of the United Kingdom. We in the UK are naturally curious about her plans, but, more important, the Scottish people surely need to know her plans in detail. We are also curious to know about the planned response of our government, but the silence about all of this from both governments is deafening.

Surely, with the current pandemic likely to become endemic in our islands including Scotland, the Scots must be deeply interested in how their health and social care will be organized, especially the improvements that accompany the creation of the Scottish National Health service. Education in Scottish universities and schools is unlikely to change, but they will be aware that there must be a Bank of Scotland to look after Scottish monetary affairs and oversee the new Scottish currency. People will want to know if there will be your actual cash or sort of virtual. If there are the actual equivalent of pound notes, whose picture would it carry? Woke probably rules out David Hume and Adam Smith or anyone famous like Maxwell. Might not the necessary revision of the constitution mean that Scotland becomes a republic, and the pound note will carry the depiction of its President.

Scotland will be responsible for its borders and its defence. It will need an army, a navy and an air force, along with the equivalent of MI5, MI6 and much else. But as Brexit has shown, trade need not be seriously affected by Scexit. There is much of interest to hear about this restructuring, not only from the Scottish government but also from the UK government. How will the UK repatriate its defence establishments now on Scottish soil or in Scottish waters? How will devolution be phased out? We wait in vain to switch on the box and learn what the contingency plans are. It will make riveting TV.

On the other hand, while Brexit is not an immensely

ugly word, Scexit is. It is suitably ugly to describe an ugly situation – the break-up of an extraordinary successful family. In my own field, science, England had Isaac Newton, Scotland had James Clerk Maxwell, Ireland had William Rowan Hamilton; England had John Locke, Scotland had David Hume; it had Magna Carta and *habeas corpus* and shared royal blood with Scotland. Admittedly, as Sir Walter Scott reports, the Ridleys and the Erringtons on one side of the border, and the Johnsons and Armstrongs on the other, persisted in murdering one another for a period. But it got better. What more evidence of that can there be than my own existence – a mix of English and Scottish parents that makes me half Scottish; a common-enough situation for many who were born in the North East of England. I look back on those occasional trips to Edinburgh with pleasure. It was interesting to be told by my father that, at the outbreak of the great War, then an apprentice shipwright, he joined a group of fellow apprentices who went up to Scotland to enlist in the Black Watch. Not the Northumberland Fusiliers, but the Black Watch! They were all firmly told to go back to the Tyne and build ships. I remember my father recounting the peak of his achievement as an amateur footballer, playing in the great Hampden Park in Glasgow. And he was not even half Scottish, rather solidly English. So, however riveting that TV may be, there will be real sense of loss in English, Welsh and Irish breasts.

It doesn't get better when one thinks further: Will the English gentry need permits to shoot Scottish grouse? Will the Queen still visit Balmoral? Will there still be bonny Scottish lasses with delicate Scottish accents on the BBC? One understood Brexit – government by unelected technocrats in Europe was not for us. Nor was the ideology ('ideology' a foreign concept at the best of times) of an invented state of different nationalities remotely practicable in the opinion of the Brits. But Scexit? Like the United States of America, the United Kingdom consists of nations that have decided to be united, speaking the same language, loyal to the same flag, pragmatic, not ideological. It hosts a Labour Party, a Liberal Party as well as a Conservative Party. What more is there? The answer is Communism. Can Scexit be inspired by Marxism? Surely not! Or, if not Marxism, a yearning to be governed by technocrats? At present nobody stops anybody wearing a kilt, tossing the caber, or eating haggis. But who knows about technocrats, even Scottish ones. Even a technocrat must worry about the effect of his performance on the people who appointed him, even if he can ignore the general electorate.

It's sad. 'For Auld Lang Syne' appears to be irrelevant. Let's hope, in the grip of covid pandemic, it doesn't end up in tiers, with different rules for different parts of the UK.

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Race, God's Bar Codes

James Monteith

Am I, too, the victim of historic injustice and colonial oppression? Some of my ancestors were transported to Australia in chains as convicts. I stood in front of the gravestone of one of them in the churchyard at Windsor just outside Sydney, and it was a moving experience. Another ancestor was lynched in Edinburgh. More injustice. More wounds to bear. I just need to locate a child factory worker or street urchin and I will be well on the way to the status of historic victim. However, my other ancestors went out and cleared the land of Aborigines to found sheep stations, cattle ranches, and gold mines. My grandmother, who was born on the goldfield, used to refer to the natives as 'bloody Abos', and that was on a good day. And the Edinburgh ancestor, Captain Porteous, *had* ordered his guard to fire on the mob and killed six of them, provoking riots in the city. So that must make me the historic oppressor. According to Sir Walter Scott's account of the affair in *The Heart of Midlothian*, Porteous was also a brutal husband, and so that also makes me a historic misogynist too.

It is all very confusing. Of course, according to critical race theory, all whites are historic oppressors, and all blacks are historic victims. But what is black? Are the Chinese and Japanese, traditionally cast as yellow, also black? Are the Arabs, Turks, and Mongols black? And if they are, where does that leave the theory, given that in the annals of imperial conquest and oppression, no-one can hold a candle to the horrors inflected by Genghis Khan and his Mongolian hordes, or the Moguls in India, or the Arab slave-traders. Besides, where was the white man when the Turks committed genocide against the Christian Armenians during the First World War, or the Hutu against the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994, or the Japanese committed unspeakable atrocities against the Chinese during the rape of Nanking in 1937-8, or Pol Pot murdered millions of his own people in Cambodia? Set against this backdrop, the British empire seems a remarkably civilized affair. No mention of genocides is complete without reference to the Holocaust. There is no doubting the race of the perpetrator on this occasion. But are the Jews to be categorised as black?

What if you are of mixed race, which nowadays is

almost a badge of honour. Despite the teachings of critical race theory, whites and blacks of the opposite sex get on surprisingly well, especially in bed, which is why there are so many mixed-race children running around. What is their status? If you are one quarter black, does that make you one quarter victim and three quarters oppressor? And if, like Kamala Harris, the first vice-president 'of colour', you are also descended from a white slave-owner (Hamilton Brown), is your status of historic victim cancelled altogether?

According to critical race theorists occupying academic positions in our universities by sole virtue of their colour, Britain today is *institutionally racist*, whites continuing to exercise their historic privilege. Yet a cursory glance at the relevant statistics reveals that the most successful ethnic groups in Britain, on measures of educational achievement and socio-economic success, are Chinese, Indian, and West African black – and the least successful are white working class.

There is no doubt about it. If critical race theory were judged on strictly empirical grounds, by its explanatory and predictive power, it would be laughed out of court. But then it was never intended to have scientific validity. It is an ideology, pure and simple, born of hatred and resentment at the success of the West, with the added attraction that it appeals to the guilt-complex of white liberals, who, unlike imperialists of other ethnicities, have inherited a moral code centred on the universal rights of man.

But what is this alternative history of the world, this golden age that – according to critical race theorists and white liberal guilt-trippers – was put paid to by Western civilization and Western hegemony?

Suppose that the Mongols, the Moguls, the Moors at Tours in 732, and the Turks at the Gates of Vienna in 1683, had been victorious and swept European civilization aside. We would all now live under the Salafist Caliphate, either as converts or infidels. In some ways this is quite an attractive proposition, at least for converts. For those of us whose interest in art, music, literature, philosophy, poetry, politics etc is severely limited, who do not drink, who think homosexuals are perverts, who would like to administer to our wives the occasional 'light beating' lest they get too mouthy, who believe a woman's place is in the home, and who are prepared to live in blind submission to the laws of Islam, there are considerable compensations. The prospect of a harem of nubile young girls, for example. But given the Arab tradition of enslaving black Africans – a tradition that goes back over a thousand years and survives even to this day in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa (it was only ended elsewhere by British missionaries and the Royal Navy) – it is unclear why those of Afro-Caribbean descent would have very much to look forward to.

Alternatively, we might imagine that the Europeans and Arabs had, out of some superstitious fear of the unknown, or perhaps under the influence of some early version of white liberal guilt, never ventured beyond their homelands, and left whole swathes of the world to survive in their pristine tribal and stone age form, untarnished by civilization and the ambiguous forces of progress. For the cultural anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, author of the classic *Stone Age Economics*, life in pre-industrial pre-capitalistic tribal society, at least in the Pacific Islands, was positively idyllic. Such was the bounty of nature that only a few hours a day were needed to provide for subsistence, leaving islanders free to laze around the rest of the time and engage in cultural pursuits, like grooming each other, and fertility dances.

Such Rousseauesque paradises hold obvious attractions. Robert Louis Stevenson and Paul Gauguin were certainly enchanted, as was James Mason in the popular sixties film *Tiara Tahiti*, and the gullible American anthropologist Margaret Mead. But they hold their dangers too, as Captain Cook discovered to his cost in Hawaii. Romantic primitivism can be carried too far. Cannibalism (a Maori speciality), infanticide, human sacrifice, temples flowing with blood, grisly initiation rites, gruesome torture, inter-tribal warfare, slavery etc were all widespread in tribal society, as was the shadowy world of witchcraft, shamanism, demons, taboos, and evil spirits. An interesting example of witch-doctoring occurred recently in Tanzania, where a spate of killings of albino people was driven by the belief that albino body parts conferred 'wealth and good luck'. A complete set of albino body parts can fetch up to $75,000.

In pre-Christian, pre-Roman Britain, our own Celts were not to be outdone. The druids' practice of human sacrifice is well-known, but it is now thought that they practised ritual cannibalism too, possibly on an industrial scale, which only confirms the earlier suspicions of the Romans. Julius Caesar had remarked that the Celts 'believe that the gods delight in the slaughter of prisoners and criminals, and when the supply of captives runs short, they sacrifice even the innocent.' Pliny the Elder suggested that the Celts engaged in 'monstrous rites', the practice of eating human flesh securing 'the highest blessings of health'. This is quite something coming from the Romans, who could hardly be described as squeamish.

Faced with the prospect of living under the Caliphate, or in what Roger Sandall described in *The Culture Cult* as an 'ethnographic zoo', I shall stick with my alienated capitalistic Western lifestyle, far removed from harmonious nature and its vibes. I shall stick with Western civilization, its literature, its art, its music, its fine wines, its philosophy, its town and country life, its technology and its medicine, vaccines included.

Perhaps the cultural hegemony of the West is not such a bad thing after all.

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The Internet's Iron Grip

Niall McCrae

You can believe whatever you like, but utterance is not so licensed. Dissent is intolerable to authoritarian rulers, who see themselves as guardians of truth and morality. In an encyclical letter in 1854, amid popular unrest in Europe, Pope Pius IX denounced free thinkers: 'the absurd and erroneous doctrines or ravings in defence of liberty of conscience are a most pestilential error – a pest, most of all others, to be dreaded in a state.'

Pius was on the losing side, because The Enlightenment, founded on Judaeo-Christian principles but later misused as a stick to beat the faithful, promotes freedom of enquiry and expression. Western liberal democracies established individual rights, in stark contrast to the collectivist totalitarian experiment of the Soviet Union, although communism was idealised by liberal academic and literary figures, just as the Covid-19 lockdown has most support from the progressive middle class.

the prevailing orthodoxy is 'the science', which is really a pseudoscientific moral discipline. Sceptics are labelled as 'deniers', a term that instantly conveys an absolute truth beyond debate.

The internet promised a global citizenry free from government control, but this was naïve. We were warned by the 'Arab Spring' of a decade ago, when a series of popular revolts in the Maghreb and Middle East were facilitated by unchecked subversion on social media. *The Guardian* enthused on this very modern movement, but sadly the internet proved to be less of a liberator than a tool for oppressors: a highly effective means of propaganda, and a trap for online activists. As predicted in Orwell's *1984*, the tentacles of state surveillance now reach into our homes.

Replacing God, the prevailing orthodoxy is 'the science', which is really a pseudoscientific moral discipline. Sceptics are labelled 'deniers', a term that instantly conveys an absolute truth beyond debate. Anyone who doubts climate change alarm or gender fluidity is not only mistaken but deeply immoral, if not dangerous. Puritanical zeal has spread across the worldwide web, reprising the witchcraft hysteria of the sixteenth century. Steven Pinker wrote an optimistic treatise a few years ago, arguing that the human race becomes ever more enlightened and humane, but how long before cancel culture becomes a Maoist 'Year Zero'?

Having embraced identity politics and the climate change agenda, Pope Francis is using the Covid-19 crisis to promote the Great Reset, a transformational, technocratic strategy to impose a 'new normal'. To take this to its logical conclusion, an atomised society will get everything it wants online, and mass gatherings, pubs and the high street will be confined to social history. Collateral losses will be community spirit, candid conversation and debate – although these are primary rather than secondary effects. For leaders of nations or global institutions, building back better means consolidating power.

Facing the creep of censorship on the internet, dissidents might be forced to return to old ways of communicating. In Moscow, *samizdat* was the medium of resistance: pamphlets produced on a secreted typewriter and passed from one trusted person to another. The *Salisbury Review* was illicitly taken behind the Iron Curtain by founding editor Roger Scruton, and distributed by hand. His successor Myles Harris is keen to maintain a paper edition not only for the legacy readership, but also because it is less exposed to censors. Similarly, *The Light*, a bulletin presenting a sceptical view of the Covid-19 pandemic and draconian lockdown, is published and propagated on paper.

Dogma has always been more about control than ideas. It is irrelevant whether you believe in a climate emergency, transgenderism or vaccine passports – you must comply with the taxes, laws on hate crime or 'no jab, no job'. Despite following orders, anyone who doubts the merits of rules and regulations risks being demonised. As deviant minds elude control, totalitarian regimes reserve the harshest punishment for thought criminals. But like 'whack-a-mole', the inquisition's work is never done. Was the French revolution a success? It's too early to say.

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The Covid 19 Tango

Larissa Preuss

I live seventy kilometres north of the city of São Paulo. With a population of 12.33 million in the city itself and a further 21 million in its surrounding suburbs it became the epicentre of Brazil's Corona outbreak

It was in São Paolo that a power struggle took place between São Paulo's governor João Dória and Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro over whose vaccine should 'win' the race to be the country's vaccine and therefore the winner of Brazil's next president election in 2022. Mr Dória backed the *CoronaVac* vaccine, developed in partnership between the Butantan Institute of São Paulo's State University and the Chinese lab Sinovac. President Bolsonaro bet on the AstraZeneca vaccine, referring to the CoronaVac as the 'Chinese vaccine'. Mr Bolsonaro is notorious for his criticism of the Chinese regime and one of his sons, also a congressman, caused a diplomatic incident between Brazil and China by alleging the Corona Virus was an invention of the Chinese Communist Party and accusing, but later retracting, an accusation of espionage against Beijing – even though it is something the Chinese are not unknown to engage in.

Mr Dória won the vaccine 'race' by getting himself pictured beside the first person to be vaccinated in Brazil, a black nurse working in the ICU in one of our state-run hospitals. But since then things have not gone well for him. Since the first death from the coronavirus was registered on March 12, 2020, we have passed 9.5 million cases (the third highest number of cases in the world) and remain the country with the second highest number of deaths. Dória has received many death threats as a result of his mismanagement, and so bad has been his record that his face recently appeared on billboards on my city's busiest streets with the big bold letters with 'DÓRIA OUT' stamped on it.

We started vaccinating on January 17, but only healthcare professionals and people 90 years old and above are eligible for the time being. That means that only 1.2 per cent of the population has received the first dose of the vaccine and it may take at least six months before the majority of the population receive it.

Recalling the start of the outbreak, it wasn't until August or September of last year that we saw a major increase in infections. For a while with all non-essential businesses and services ordered to close in mid-March, its streets fell silent and empty.

This did not last. By the fourth week, local shop owners encouraged by the President's Bolsanoro's downplaying of the gravity of the virus and his lack of understanding of the pandemic began gathering in the city's parks to protest against the closing of their businesses, protests that were repeated in many cities around the country.

In addition, Brazilians, a nation of huggers and kissers, found social distancing extremely disconcerting. In such a tactile culture as ours the slightest notion of personal space doesn't even occur to most people. Came the holiday season and the streets were full, shopping malls insanely crammed, supermarkets overcrowded. It was summer in the southern hemisphere, and although some chose to stay home instead of vacationing at the beach, the beaches were still pretty full. Crowds also filled the night clubs and partying venues. From fancy private parties at resorts and yachts to the multitude of young people who gather in the streets of the favelas for funk parties, people partied on as if the pandemic was over and the virus harmless.

We are now beginning to feel the undertow. In the first days of 2021 the number of COVID-19 cases has grown exponentially and we are now recording 1,000 plus deaths per day. The healthcare system in the state of Amazonas, that harbours the Amazon rainforest, collapsed as the hospitals filled to capacity and ran out of oxygen. Meanwhile, local businesses are struggling to remain alive and employees are fearing for their jobs. They have bills to pay, families to feed and one of our perpetually crammed buses to catch to or from work. People are growing tired and frustrated as no real solution is presented. After the local municipality ordered the closure of all businesses for two weeks, a banner hanging on the porch of a traditional pizza palace proclaimed, *'Our 45 employees are essential. They have the right to work. We are taking all the necessary precautions to ensure everyone's safety.'* The other day I heard a lady at the dry-goods shop at the public market: say, 'I already told my boss, I have to work. I don't care if you don't give me a lunch break, I can stand here all day, but I need to work.'

It has hit our family business. It is back to school time in Brazil. For almost three decades this has been the busiest time of the year at my husband's stationery store and bookshop. Our family-owned business is the only independent bookstore in town and its gross income comes from the sales of textbooks and school supplies. This year things will be different. Parents, caught in the limbo between the state government mandates and the federal court decisions about the reopening of schools, must keep their children home, so things will be tough for our shop and my husband is thinking of changing his job. It pains me to think that this could become true in the very near future. First because of the six families who will be directly impacted by the loss of a job, but also because books are silent reminders that times do change. Let's hope so, for the better.

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Imperial Pride

Ralph Berry

Collective guilt is an invention of the Left, one of their finest. Guilt is of course of primary concern to the individual. Chambers gives it as 'the state of having done wrong; sin, sinfulness, or consciousness of it'. In the law courts guilt is charged against the individual or specific individuals, and it is tried and measured in the scales of justice. Nothing like this applies to the claims of the Left, that certain episodes of the historic past leave a nation's inheritors with a permanent stain of wrongdoing. We are enjoined to partake in a deep sense of unproven guilt for events that occurred before our birth. This is nonsense, but is repeated as if it were divine revelation.

On 6th January 2019 the *Daily Telegraph* published an article by Ed Husain (b 1974), in which he said 'Britain needs to rediscover its confidence'. What caused this alarming loss of confidence? 'First, an abiding sense of imperial guilt gnaws away at our national confidence', and it never did. But Husain is repeating Leftist propaganda trusting that the act of repetition alone will subjugate scepticism into acceptance and then belief. If you resist, you will be charged with 'false consciousness', against which there is no defence. This 'abiding sense of imperial guilt' is a myth, now a fixed part of the Left's mythology and universe. Anyone who cares to revisit the past in any kind of detail soon discovers that this myth has no foundation in the contemporary acceptance and approval of the Empire. Hollywood admired the achievements of the British Empire, and celebrated them in successful films of the 1930s: *Lives of a Bengal Lancer, Gunga Din, Sanders of the River*. The tradition continued to the 1960s. Had Husain seen *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), David Lean's much-awarded paean to Empire? The scene in which Allenby takes Lawrence down to the Officers' Mess for a drink is a superb cameo of imperial splendour. *Zulu*, directed by the American Cy Endfield, paid handsome tribute to the imperial defensive victory of Rorke's Drift, as late as 1964. The Zulus were much admired, and their leader, Cetewayo, was played in the film by his descendant Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a friend of Margaret Thatcher. The idea that Britain should be ashamed of its empire had no place in the popular mind and approval of the Empire held sturdy ground well past the mid-century.

Here is a robust text from the past, from Leslie Charteris (1907-1993) in one of his Saint novels, *The Saint to the Rescue*, which he puts into the mouth of Simon Templar:

> *I damn well am an imperialist colonialist. I think the British Empire, on the whole, was one of the best things this world has ever known. The good old colonialist went out into the wilderness and tamed a lot of unsanitary savages, brought them down out of trees or up from mud huts, taught them to wash themselves and stop eating their elderly relatives for dinner, and with a few exceptions left them a hell of a lot better off than they would have made themselves in another three centuries, just in exchange for exploiting some natural resources that the benighted heathen didn't know what to do with anyhow.*

The date of his novel was 1959 and Charteris

evidently felt that he wanted to resist the incoming tide of anti-imperial propaganda. It would be impossible for these sentiments to get into print today. The publishers and editors would veto such antediluvian views, as sullying the pages of their works and being offensive to the descendants of imperial territories now resident in Britain. And yet The Saint was wildly popular in his day, which the author extended for seven years (1962-69) into a long-running TV series with the debonair Roger Moore, and then Moore's Bond movies followed. Was Leslie Charteris out of touch with his public? What remains of Husain's 'abiding sense of imperial guilt'?

What remains is the abiding determination of the liberal Left to fix this mythical stain on the statues, dwellings and memorials of past figures so that history is dragooned into backing false doctrine. The current champion of this nonsense is the National Trust, which might as well be re-named National Distrust. It brought out a gazetteer listing 93 of its buildings as having links to 'colonialism and slavery'. Winston Churchill's home, Chartwell, is included in a dossier of such sites along with other country houses including the Powis estate of 'Clive of India', and the houses of Rudyard Kipling and William Wordsworth. Churchill has become the focus of historical reassessment following the Black Lives Matter protests, during which the Cenotaph and Churchill's statue in Whitehall were boarded up to protect them from the ravages of the inflamed moralists trying to re-set history on the right lines. These monuments were subsequently de-boarded and are now guarded by the police. The mésalliance of slavery and colonialism is the mark of the intellectual nihilism promoted by the National Trust and as the *Telegraph* remarked of the buildings under their care, 'Of course [Churchill] was linked to colonialism; Britain had colonies.' Like other institutions with ambitions beyond their powers, the National Trust had extended its core business — the care of houses and land — to the imperial over-reach of high liberalism. The Secretary of State for Culture, Oliver Dowden, was obliged to take part in the controversy, even it meant criticizing a quango: the National Trust should be concentrating on 'preserving and protecting' heritage and not making Winston Churchill the subject of controversy. The Trust's criticism of Churchill in its review of links to slavery and colonialism 'will surprise and disappoint people.' Not those who have followed the National Trust's form of recent years. It is a byword for championing the Left's causes, including anti-hunting and anti-badger culling. (Farmers have it in for badgers, and with reason.)

The National Trust is yet another redoubt of Establishment liberalism, which rules over so many quangos in the name of the State. Their leaders know no failure, being safe in liberal herd immunity. After Dame Helen Ghosh, Director-General of the National Trust, had made its name a hissing through her attempt to make it a citadel of Gay Pride, she left the Trust to become Master of Balliol College. There she dwells in the Master's Lodgings, a fine Grade 2 listed building most unlikely to be shamed by past association with imperialism. Of that era, John Bright said in 1858 that British foreign policy was 'a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy.' Quangos are a gigantic system of indoor relief for the priviligentsia, whose beneficiaries are the lineal descendants of the imperial Establishment. These Bourbon liberals have learned nothing, forgotten nothing, and kept everything. Collective guilt is safe in the hands of its devotees; their shame will be assuaged by the rewards of denouncing it.

But these rewards are now being trimmed. For the National Trust operates as a charity under the oversight of the Charity Commission, which has announced an inquiry into the Trust for straying from its 'clear, simple purpose' to preserve historic buildings and treasures. It was important that the Trust did not lose sight of what its members expected, and a tide of public complaints had borne heavily against its standing and wealth. Even more ominously, the Charity Commission has asked charities to submit information on all salaries above £60,00 in bands of £10,000. The Commission aims at curbing executive pay in government-sponsored organizations that must now deal with Covid-driven austerity. Immense losses have been suffered by the Trust from tourist visitors and membership cancellations — many have transferred their membership to the National Trust of Scotland, which has reciprocal benefits and no kind of liberal agenda. The field is full of sacred cows, lowing to be fed. Some will be put on short commons; some will be put down. Collective guilt, which has launched so many careers, has peaked as a high-dividend investment for Establishment liberals.

Ralph Berry has written widely on Shakespeare.

Conservative Classic - 80

Notes towards The Definition of Culture, T S Eliot

Alistair Miller

TS Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* remains the classic defence of the conservative idea of culture. Eliot's central thesis is that for there to be culture or civilization in any meaningful sense, there must exist a common culture founded on a shared religious inheritance; that high culture, necessarily a minority interest, can only arise, and be transmitted to, future generations within a stratified society; and that high culture and popular culture form integral parts of an organic whole. Conversely, the pursuit of the romantic egalitarian ideal of a classless society, of universal education and equal opportunity, will lead to cultural and social disintegration, and, in the end, barbarism.

It seems extraordinary now that seventy years ago Eliot was already lamenting our cultural disintegration, for Britain then was still a culturally and ethnically homogeneous nation. The ravages of mass immigration, multiculturalism, postmodernism, and the rest lay in the future, but for Eliot, the writing was already on the wall in the fashionable dogma of equality of opportunity, now universally accepted as gospel truth among the political class.

Modern cultural theorists regard Eliot's vision of culture beyond the pale, his defence of social hierarchy and social class reactionary and his notion of 'high' culture as preposterously elitist. Yet Eliot would have regarded the very notion of 'cultural theory' as a contradiction in terms, the essence of culture being 'lived' experience, and an understanding of culture being 'imaginative understanding'. Eliot skewers the political and educational theorists of his day, whose familiar and fatuous slogans – creating a classless society, promoting equality of opportunity, educating for democracy – are exposed as vacuous and contradictory. Few nowadays would dare question these dogmas, and that includes conservatives, so making Eliot's assault all-the-more devastating.

For Eliot culture is 'high' culture that has been refined and made 'more conscious', as opposed to the everyday pastimes and interests that make up the 'popular' culture of most people. 'The repository of this culture' needs a dominant or elite social class who can transmit it to future generations but is only possible if high culture forms an integral part of the wider common culture, a 'commonwealth' from which it can draw vitality. The popular culture of the lower classes is essential to the generation of this high culture, and benefits from it.

This *common* or *national* culture binds all members of society together; and though there are cross-cultural influences – the nations of the West enjoy a common patrimony – national cultures are nevertheless unique. 'The artist, the poet, the philosopher, the politician and the labourer will have a culture in common, which they do not share with other people of the same occupations in other countries.' Moreover, this national culture is an organic fabric encompassing 'all the characteristic activities and interests of a people', which for Eliot might include 'Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, etc.'

Eliot is not advocating aristocracy or denigrating democracy, for his society envisages mobility between the classes, not a caste society but 'healthily *stratified*' as Eliot puts it, in that social positions are, initially at least, inherited, and that different social responsibilities and concomitant cultural interests are ascribed to different social positions. This outcome is inevitable if families, the ultimate bearers of culture, are to be allowed to transmit their advantages to their children. That social classes are made up of groups of like-minded families follows naturally.

Eliot attacks those who, motivated by envy and resentment, or romantic egalitarian visions, would change the apparent injustice of social class inequalities, and institute the dogma of equal opportunities as the organising principle of education. Would the acquisition of wisdom, knowledge and learning not serve better as educational aims than the realisation of whichever social or political ideals are most fashionable – for example, democracy today and despotism tomorrow? Is the educated person necessarily happier than the uneducated? Is education something that everyone wants? Will the institution of education for all not inevitably lower standards? Is there some infallible method for detecting intellect? Should people be judged solely according to their intellect? For Eliot, the problem with a society in which everybody 'will find his way, or be directed, to that station of life which he is best fitted to fill', a society

ruled by a meritocratic or cognitive elite, is not that this is undesirable *in itself*; but that by trying to realise it by actively instituting equal educational opportunities for all, the mechanism by which the cultural fabric of the nation is sustained is destroyed.

Ironically today's meritocratic equal opportunities society is as segregated and stratified – occupationally, geographically, socially, even genetically – as any past society; and the lower classes are still despised. Except for a reverence for the NHS, there is nothing to hold society together. Any semblance of a common culture has been replaced by multi-culture and diversity, a vacuous political ideology. Although high culture survives as a minority interest, its abandonment in schools and universities, and by the political class, gives little hope for the survival of a common culture.

For Eliot, culture is inseparable from religion. In Europe, 'it is against a background of Christianity that all our thought has significance'; and this is true even for the non-believer, for whom 'yet what he says, and makes, and does, will all spring out of his heritage of Christian culture and depend upon that culture for its meaning'. As well as our religious faith, it is through Christianity that we have inherited the ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome, and Israel. Therefore, 'if Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes'.

By Eliot's standards, our national culture is in terminal decline in every sense. It was already disintegrating in 1948; one shudders to think what he would have thought today. Eliot warns that by 'destroying our ancient edifices', by sacrificing the transmission of our cultural inheritance in the name of a classless egalitarian society, we are preparing 'the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future will encamp in their mechanised caravans'. Earlier in the book, Eliot notes that although we might dare speak of 'Christian culture as the highest culture' if ours were 'a really Christian society', such is the state of our culture today that this is debatable, 'any religion, while it lasts, and on its own level, gives an apparent meaning to life, provides the frame-work for a culture'. If some other religion than Christianity came to prevail, then it is quite possible that we 'might blossom into a culture more brilliant than we can show today'.

Readers can judge for themselves whether this prospect offers us any hope.

Eternal Life

Sam Aldred

Each morning I pass the house once occupied by Kingsley Amis. It was here, during his stint lecturing at Swansea University, that Amis produced *Lucky Jim*, quite possibly the funniest novel in the English language (the obvious contenders being *Scoop* and *Carry On, Jeeves*). Amis's other great comedic contribution was written three decades later. His spectacularly fogeyish essay *Sod the Public* was published in the *Spectator* in October 1985. It was, he wrote, 'an alphabet of annoyances perpetrated on the public by those who should be serving us'. Architects, dentists, government departments, and the manufacturers of toilet bowls all came in for their share of Amis' superbly sustained polemic. His is the cry of disgruntled conservatives down the ages: why must things be changed when they are manifestly unbroken?

The Church does not escape criticism. The *New Bible and Prayer Book* are, Amis laments, 'a big one, sodding congregation, Church and people at a single stroke. Nobody except those in the trade wanted it.' Four decades on we see how right Amis was. The scrapping of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, with its much-loved and majestic liturgies, has dealt a mighty blow to the soul of this nation.

This is not the place to quibble about Archbishop Cranmer's theology: was he a Calvinist, as some fashionable church historians insist, or a high churchman, as the fathers of the Oxford Movement contended? I do not even wish to hymn the poetic virtues of the Prayer Book, which speak for themselves. The principal virtue of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer is revealed in its name: it is – or at least was – *common*. This pocket-sized volume contained all the liturgies that a member of the Established Church required. From baptism to burial, the BCP had you covered, and once you had returned to the dust from whence you came, it would be perfectly serviceable for your children and grandchildren, world without end, Amen.

Nor was the Prayer Book's influence limited to the pious. Cranmer's phrases permeated the English language: peace in our time; ashes to ashes, dust to dust; to have and to hold; in sickness and in health. The collect for the final Sunday of the Church Year, which begins 'Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord', was the general cue to get start stirring up the Christmas pudding. The Prayer Book's sublime cadences, its collects, its Coverdale psalms, were the shared inheritance of all Englishmen, living, dead, and the yet unborn.

So it continued until the 1960s, when liturgical innovators decided that the BCP was no longer fit to serve a modern world. Its language, they contended, was outdated. Its services no longer met the needs of an increasingly urban and diverse society. The BCP was side-lined by the Church hierarchy in favour of liturgies that were rendered in (often

banal) modern language, and which could be adopted to fit the needs of different localities and different groups. This decision was no doubt well-intentioned, but its consequences have been disastrous. By banishing the BCP in favour of an ever-expanding choice of new liturgies, the modern Church of England has been cut-off from its heritage, and each congregation from every other.

This is a cultural and devotional inheritance of which Anglicans have been cruelly deprived. In the Church in Wales, where I minister, the 1662 Prayer Book was replaced in 1984 with what is popularly known as the 'Green Book'. I rather like it. It retains the 'Thees' and 'Thous', and though it exorcises some of Cranmer's more purple passages, it maintains the principal of one liturgy for one Church. Like the 1662 Prayer Book, one could be baptised, married, and buried with the same user-friendly book. In that sense it was a true 'book of common prayer'. Sadly, it did not last long.

Today, the Church's liturgy has been cornered by those who are, as Amis put it, 'in the trade'. Liturgists, many of them with little discernible talent and all of them leagues below Cranmer, have taken prayer away from the people. The contemporary liturgies of the Church in Wales have multiplied like Japanese knotweed, consuming all that came before. These liturgies are so vast and varied that I have never seen a physical book which is capable of containing them all. Our liturgies exist on a corner of the Church in Wales' website, which looks, incidentally, like something for an NHS trust, and they are more-or-less impossible to navigate. The English equivalent – *Common Worship* – is similarly unwieldy. There is nothing common about these books of prayer. They contain so many options and alternatives that one could visit twenty different churches and encounter twenty different liturgies, none of them with the poetry and precision of the BCP.

The destruction that this has wrought on the soul of this nation cannot be overstated. Imagine a faithful teenager, used to the liturgy of her family church, who heads off to university in some new city and seeks a place of worship. The liturgy she encounters is entirely foreign to her; she does not even know the version of the Lord's Prayer which they use, which substitutes sins for trespasses, and addresses God with a pushy and familiar 'you'. Gone the comfortable words, gone the lived-in phrases. Now her nose must be jammed in the dog-eared service booklet she was handed at the door, and there is the ever-present threat of a raised eyebrow from the harridan in the next pew if she confuses Eucharistic Prayer B (on p 2169) with Eucharistic Prayer P (on p 2872). That girl will most likely not return to any church, because it is not *her* church, its prayers are not *her* prayers.

Church attendance has of course plummeted since Amis wrote his alphabet of annoyances, which suggests that my imagined scenario is not mere fancy. Without common prayer our Church becomes a collection of inward-looking parishes, each subject to its vicar's whims. This is no way to nourish the soul of the nation.

I realised the scale of this problem at a confirmation just before the first lockdown. There were seven confirmands, mostly students or schoolchildren with a maturing faith. I wanted to get them each a little present. They already had Bibles, and the traditional gift would be their own Prayer Book. But that was not physically possible. The bishop would have refused to sign a 1662 BCP, and the 'Green Book' has been out of print for years. There was no version of the church's liturgy that I could give to these young Christians that would stay with them and nourish them in their faith; certainly nothing that they could pass on to their children and grandchildren. That is a very great problem. Sod the public indeed.

The Rev Sam Aldred is curate at the Parish Church and Collegiate Church of St Mary, Swansea

Reputations - 65

Thomas Sowell

Dinah Kolka

Thomas Sowell is an outstanding figure in American public life who showed how people from the black society can succeed with hard work and perseverance. His many books cover the issues of race, economics, education, and social policy. Despite having to drop out of school because of family problems, he returned to do night classes at Howard University, while working in the civil service. Later he transferred to Harvard and graduated *magna cum laude* with a degree in Economics. Sowell was drafted during the Korean War, and became a photographer in the US Marines, but was stationed at home.

Sowell's economic career was fuelled by his doctorate at the University of Chicago, where he studied under George Stigler, a Nobel Prize winner in Economics. Later he became a Rose and Milton Friedman Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the

Hoover Institution. He wanted to make economics accessible to everyone so his book 'Basic Economics' doesn't include any charts or jargon. Sowell is a fierce man, not afraid of arguing when he believes he is right. This was also because of his upbringing when despite his being picked on at times, he grew a thick skin, long before joining the army or going to university.

In his twenties, Sowell was a Marxist, just like many others in his peer group. His first professional publication covered Marxist themes. Interestingly though, Sowell remained open-minded and when working with the federal government as an intern, he saw first hand the negative consequences of minimum wage laws. This changed his outlook on political issues. Later in life, he also wrote a critique of Marxism in his book *Marxism: Philosophy and Economics (1985)*.

Sowell was strict as a teacher. In his biography, *A Personal Odyssey*, he describes an incident at Howard University where there were mainly black students who were lagging behind .Sowell recalls that to keep his standards high, he kept his students' assignments from Douglas College, a school he briefly taught at before Howard. Now and then, he would check if he still gave the correct grade for the same quality of work. This habit led to a serious improvement of many Howard students.

When he decided to resign from a high school where he was teaching one of the students asked, 'How are we ever going to advance if people like you come here for one year and then leave?' Sowell's teaching changed a lot of people's lives for the better for he certainly practised what he preached. Sowell is a colourful character with a lot of experience in menial and academic jobs, in different places. So he never shared the liberal belief that affirmative action would work because he saw the damage it caused and the severity of its economic consequences. He hoped to change people's mindset, not a change enforced by others. This brought him many enemies as his ideas are often opposed angrily by the liberal media and the 'progressive' element of the general public.He has been accused of betraying his own race, which has brought him personal danger. Many progressives enjoy leading a witch hunt to get anyone who disagrees with them and Sowell would certainly be on that list. Persecuted by the establishment and smeared in shoddy hit-pieces, his supposedly safe job as an economist becomes a dangerous profession.

His work on wealth and inequalities covers subjects that are rarely discussed. He does not believe that the inequality gap is widening and explains how rivers and geography are a big factor in determining which group develops faster and becomes more prosperous than another. The charts covering the income gap don't indicate that plenty of people start on the bottom, in poverty, and many of them then progress higher up as their income and living standards improve. The people in the top 1 per cent often see their income decreasing during their lifetime.

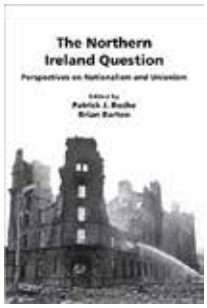
Thomas Sowell is able to empathise with the black community whilst understanding the economic reasons for the inequalities. His books read well and are easily understandable for most and that makes him a great writer. He is aware that he says things that many consider controversial, but he understands the value of truth – he knows they need to be said.

Sowell he noticed that his child wasn't talking until he was four. This caused him a lot of anxiety and confused him greatly but after his son graduated, Sowell wrote a column where he explained what was wrong with his son, and that he found it curious that his child turned out to be extremely intelligent and analytical. He had many letters from parents who had had the same experience with their children so he tried to do his own research but later started a group for parents who had a similar problem. His book *The Einstein Syndrome: Bright Children Who Talk Late* led to a medical professional getting in touch with Sowell and taking over the research bringing interesting findings about late-talking and bright children.

At 90 Sowell still writes articles for various outlets and continues to write books. His recent piece on the 12th January 2021 written for *Townhall*, a conservative outlet, covers the issue of truth or lack thereof, in society and especially in the media. He speaks against the idea of victimisation or privilege while pointing out how universities are becoming 'indoctrination centres' and he's rightly calling out people for misunderstanding 'achievements' for 'privilege'. Much of the social history of the Western world, over the past three decades, has been a history of replacing what worked with what sounded good, he concluded in his book *Is Reality Optional? And Other Essays*.

He doesn't like labels; he doesn't like self-promotion. Yet, he is considered one of the greatest Black conservative thinkers of this century and I believe he deserves that label.

ARTS AND BOOKS



The Good Friday Disagreement

Ian Wood

The Northern Ireland Question: Perspectives on Nationalism and Unionism, Patrick J Roche & Brian Barton (eds) Wordsworth 2020, £15.99.

Northern Ireland may have become a post-conflict society but within it is a war of conflicting stories in which historians must decide which side they are on. Brian Barton and Patrick Roche have no doubts, and in this book they provide powerful support for those who think that the gospel according to Gerry Adams and his acolytes should not go unchallenged. According to that story, Northern Ireland was a one-party, apartheid state, but it was neither of these things and Catholics there never had to 'sit at the back of the bus'. Graham Walker shows that it was a good working model of devolved government within the United Kingdom, but one strangely ignored by Unionists in Scotland during the 1979 and 1997 referenda in which they opposed any change to the constitutional status quo.

Roche and Barton have assembled other contributors who address many other issues; publication is close to the centenary (2021) of the formation of Northern Ireland, at a time of uncertainty now because of Brexit.

David Park's haunting novel *The Truth Commissioner. (2008)* shows us a future when a truth and reconciliation commission, based on the post-apartheid South African model, is in session in Belfast. Its remit allows it to compel the attendance of indemnified witnesses who can throw light on the many unsolved murders committed during Northern Ireland's Troubles. One of its cases involves the death of a teenager from West Belfast who was drawn into supplying the RUC with some low-level information for a paltry cash reward. At the public hearing things go badly wrong for a former detective who had been the boy's handler and for a Sinn Fein minister who has special responsibilities for children in the power sharing Stormont executive. He is named as the boy's killer by a key witness, something that was never meant to happen to maintain the peace process. The novel ends with the republican movement in turmoil and the former RUC detective traumatised by his treatment at the hearing and on the verge of suicide, feeling that his testimony on the savage reality of police service in the Troubles has been disregarded and that 'he had been used, then spat out and pensioned off.'

Park illustrates the hazards of any truth telling-process and how it can be manipulated for political purposes. The Irish republican movement and those within it who were active in the Provisional IRA, were adept at this skill while their self-serving narrative still deceives many who should know better, especially in the media.

Ruth Dudley Edwards dared to challenge the simplistic praise heaped upon John Hume arguing that while he was a good and tenacious man, his unintended achievement was to hand political power to men like Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. In return they destroyed the electoral base of the party Hume had helped to found in 1970, as a standard bearer for constitutional and non-violent Nationalism.

Catholics always had votes at elections to the Westminster and Belfast parliaments, (or Stormont parliament as it became after 1932). Early in the devolved state's history however, proportional representation was ended in elections to its parliament to reduce the Catholic presence there, when they would have been a minority under any system. This was an ill-judged move by the Unionists but the legislature was one which the minority community's political leadership did everything it could to disrupt and de-stabilise in its early years as well as excusing or supporting the IRA's rejection of the right of the six-county state to exist at all.

Catholics were victimised by a ratepayers' franchise which excluded many of them from voting in local council elections, but so too were almost as many working-class Protestants.

Graham Gudgin shows there was some well-publicised discrimination against Catholics by small Unionist councils west of the river Bann. Yet the Northern Ireland Housing Trust, set up towards the end of the Second World War, was never accused of treating Catholics differently from Protestants and Catholics arguably fared better than them over access to social housing.

Unionists certainly manipulated electoral ward

boundaries to achieve control of some councils, notably in Derry where they would have had no majority, while formidable powers were given to an armed and predominantly Protestant police force, which can reasonably be called part of a siege psychology. However, Roche and William Matchett, a former RUC Special Branch officer, point out there was a siege of Northern Ireland at the time of its creation which the IRA could have lifted. Instead, they renewed it in further offensives, culminating in the one launched in 1970 without regard for the Catholic lives this would cost when the Loyalists began to fight fire with fire.

Understandably Unionists deeply feared being incorporated within an Irish state which as David Trimble remarked was a 'cold house' for Protestants. Thousands of them left the new Free State in its early years because of intimidation and a more general alienation from an clerical regime which forbade divorce and birth control, censored literature and the arts and fully supported Church demands that children of mixed marriages be brought up as Catholics.

Robin Bury reminds us that in 1935 sectarian violence in Belfast prompted a wave of attacks on Protestants in most of the Free State's twenty-six counties. Today's Irish republic is barely recognisable from the Ireland of de Valera and Archbishop McQuaid, but this owes little to the IRA whose myopia led them to be so dismissive of the fears of Protestants whom they thought they had the right to bomb into a united Ireland.

They were myopic too after 1970 about a war they could never win. Matchett argues that the IRA could have been crushed by 1990 thanks to the degree to which the RUC's Special Branch and army intelligence had penetrated it to a high level within its leadership. Only the fall of Mrs Thatcher, and her successors, John Major and Tony Blair, espousing the peace process averted this. He has of course been accused of special pleading for the Special Branch which had its enemies within the force, especially the CID. Some of them thought the Branch's handling of agents and informers was often callous and counterproductive.

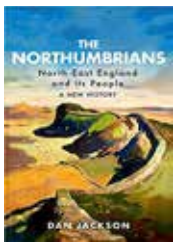
This debate will continue. Thomas Leahy, in his book *The Intelligence War against the* IRA, thinks the key to the Provisionals' 1994 ceasefire lay within their own divergent unit structure and to highly localised differences in how they operated as well as to the growing ascendancy of the organisation's political wing over the militarists. Through endless funerals and commemorations as well as on its murals in Belfast and elsewhere, the republican movement never ceased to promise outright victory to its supporters.

Certainly Unionism's shortcomings and blunders often worked in the IRA's favour. Their exercise of power from the grandiose and hubristic Stormont building could be mean spirited and stupid. Its leaders presided complacently over shocking levels of poverty and deprivation. In 1932 they had no qualms in letting loose the RUC with its guns and truncheons on Belfast's unemployed workers, Protestants and Catholics alike, who had the temerity to march in protest against near-starvation rates of pay for outdoor relief labour set by the city's Unionist-controlled board of Poor Law Guardians. They also failed abysmally to prepare the city for the German air raids in 1941, an episode superbly covered by Brian Barton in his book *The Belfast Blitz.*

For all too much of its time in power, Unionism remained faithless to Sir Edward Carson's advice in 1921 when the partition he never wanted became a reality: 'From the outset let us see that the Catholic minority has nothing to fear from a Protestant majority. Let us take care to win all that is best among those who have been opposed to us in the past. 'Had his words been heeded, necessary reforms might have come sooner rather than seeming a grudging response to the turmoil unleashed by the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s.

Arthur Aughey and Esmund Birnie try to unpick some of Brexit's implications for Northern Ireland as well as addressing its rapidly changing demography. Neither this nor Brexit necessarily means majority opinion shifting to support for Irish unification. What will be more decisive will be the way in which the last census points to new conceptions of their cultural and political identities which people in both communities are feeling their way towards.

Boris Johnson has offered some fatuous observations about celebrating the centenary, but doubts are no longer confined to the nationalist community. Alex Kane, a thoughtful unionist commentator, has already asked what exactly there is to celebrate. A forum to plan appropriate events to mark the centenary has now been set up and while some historians have already declined to be involved, its advisory panel does include Brian Barton and Graham Walker. Sinn Fein and the Social Democratic and Labour Party have declined to join the forum although the SDLP has said it will 'engage with the debate and the discussion about the impact of partition in good faith, seeking to build a more shared and united future for our communities.'



Right Gradely up North

John Jolliffe

The Northumbrians, Dan Jackson, Hurst, 2019, £20 and **The Good Sharps** Hester Grant, Chatto & Windus, 2020, £25.

Some regions of England seem to stamp those who live there with their own distinctive characteristics. Climate can play a part: the weather in Devon and Somerset is affected by the damp Atlantic breezes that blow in from the west, often retarding the general tempo of life. By contrast, the ancient kingdom of Northumbria, which included Durham and part of North Yorkshire, is chilled by bracing winds from off the North Sea, but also enjoys much longer hours of sunshine. Historical experience has also affected an area where raids to and fro across the Scottish border involved cattle rustling and the burning of farm houses, often with their owners inside.

Dan Jackson is a true born Northumbrian, and a wonderful witness to the nature of the region. In a very rewarding way, he briskly explores its astonishing achievements over the past three hundred years. The prosperity of the region was based on the coalmining, shipping and engineering industries, and not the least of the area's successes has been its recovery from the virtual collapse of much of that world, and a determination to switch to electronics and other up to date enterprises, achieved with a fair amount of well used government help.

Far the biggest of the new industrial groups was that of the first Lord Armstrong. From 1868 to 1927 it was responsible for 42 per cent of all British warship construction. Among much other business he had supplied both sides in the American Civil war, and also the Japanese fleet that annihilated the Russians at Tshushima in 1905. From the profits he endowed hospitals, schools and public parks. His mansion at Cragside was the first private house to be equipped with electricity. But when he died in 1900, the *Newcastle Chronicle,* in a fulsome tribute also noted that 'there is something appalling in the application of a cool and temperate mind like Lord Armstrong's to the science of destruction. By 1918 Armstrongs were employing over 60,000 men.

Among the great ships built on the Tyne were the *Mauretania,* the biggest and fastest ocean liner in the world after her launch in 1906. Three capital ships from Tyneside fought at Jutland in 1915; and in the next war HMS *King George V* caught the *Bismarck* in the Denmark Strait in 1941. Later, the landing craft on D Day were designed by Susie Auld, the first woman graduate from Armstrong College in Newcastle; and these were only the tips of a huge ship-building iceberg. Incidentally, the fascinating Russian novelist Zamyatin, whose novel *We* prefigured Huxley's *Brave New World,* spent part of 1913 in Newcastle working on icebreakers for the Tsar's fleet. Coalmining, requiring exceptional muscle and stamina, was catered for by large quantities of Newcastle Brown Ale, a feature which has survived the end of the mining industry.

Recently, wind turbines, however unreliable, and solar panels on the roofs of former miner's cottages are further examples of the ability of the area to move on from what had been its chief mainstay. The miners had been 'the highest paid proletarians in the world', and regarded themselves as the aristocracy of the labouring classes. The hardness of the work, and the dangers to health and even survival were appalling; but very few of them would have dreamed of following any other profession. It was not for nothing that Harold Macmillan, who sat for Stockton on Tees between 1924 and 1945, said that there were three institutions that you should never take on: the Brigade of Guards, the National Union of Mineworkers and the Vatican. The first two certainly had something in common.

Local achievements go back a long way. William Hutchinson had invented parabolic reflectors for lighthouses, and by 1766 he found that 'traffic, arts, sciences, manufactories and navigations have taken the place of the brutal warfare' which had till then distinguished the area. Its fame had already spread far and wide. Robespierre had called his dog Brown after a prominent Radical in Newcastle. Believe it or not, Marat had worked there as a vet, and the surveyor Jeremiah Dixon was responsible for the Mason-Dixon Line between Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Women were very much to the fore. Mary Astell, a coal merchant's daughter from Newcastle, wrote *A Hundred Years of Rights of Women* in 1694, a hundred years before anyone had heard of Mary Wollstonecraft. By 1820 Annabel Carr was lecturing on mechanics and hydrostatics, and Ada Countess of Lovelace, born Milbank, daughter of a High Sheriff of Durham and Byron's mother-in-law, was working with Charles Babbage on the world's first computer. Later, Josephine Butler, who was educated at home near Wooler and in Newcastle, was joined in her social work by Emily Davies, Founder of Girton College, Cambridge, and

daughter of the Rector of Gateshead.

To any one of these great names, many more could be added, but not in a short review.

Since about 1950, nearly all of Northumbria's great industrial boom began to falter. By 1971 63 per cent of all employment was in the public sector. But the software company Sage has created 2,500 new jobs; the Go-Ahead group has a fleet of 721 buses in the North-east alone; and in the 1980s oil rigs from Newcastle were put up all over the world, 'from Aberdeen to Azerbaijan'. But what would happen if Nissan cleared out of Washington, and 3,000 jobs were lost?

Indeed, after Brexit, who knows? What is certain is that no body of men and women will seek out new opportunities, whatever they may be, more than the people of Northumbria. Many of them are keener on looking forward rather than back; and no one will work harder or more effectively or more cheerfully at turning them into real achievements.

Before leaving the area, it is worth mentioning *The Good Sharps* by Hester Grant. It is the story of nine brothers and sisters, the family of an 18th century rector of Rothbury, a small town on the Coquet. John, who had the living at Bamburgh, turned it into something of a welfare state, with a pioneering school in the castle, and what is claimed to be England's first lifeboat; also, an infirmary and a general dispensary for the sick. William made a a very successful career as a surgeon in London, and was particularly strong on vaccination. He also held splendid musical parties and boating picnics on the Thames. There is a detailed, but inevitably rather cramped picture of them all in their boat by Zoffany, at present on loan to the National Portrait Gallery. But he also held free surgeries, matching his prosperity with a determination to help the poor in their troubles. Another brother, James, became a pioneer of the industrial and agricultural revolutions. But the best known of them all was Granville, a self-taught lawyer who after several court room dramas played a crucial part in the abolition of slavery.

The story of the brothers is told with great warmth, and inspires both admiration and affection for the whole harmonious family

Petrol Drinking Fungi

Celia Haddon

Entangled Life, How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds and Shape Our Futures, Merlin Sheldrake, The Bodley Head, 2020, £20.00.

The wood rot fungus can search around for new wood to eat and on finding it move from one piece of wood across a non-wooden surface to a new piece of wood. Its behaviour is just like the tentacled hungry substance of the horror movie *The Blob*, except that it devours wood, not humans, and moves more slowly. With some memory of where it came from, it will move back again to the original site without having first to search around with its tentacles.

When two roads diverge, fungi do not have to choose which to travel. The fungal mycelium or network simply forks and goes down both, leaving neither road untravelled. Fungi do not put food into their bodies to eat it but put their bodies into food to eat. They can eat rocks, digest petrochemicals, and send messages from one plant to another. They are neither plants nor animals, and the mushrooms we pick and eat are merely their fruit: below in the soils is the invisible majority of their anatomy.

You might think the subtitle of this book was a writer's exaggeration. Not so. Below the surface of the earth are countless webs of fungi. These networks, together with the roots of plants, hold the soil together so that the earth is not washed away by wind and rain and for many plants this fungi network is essential for their health. Fungi thrive everywhere – in the bad lands of the wrecked nuclear reactor at Chernobyl unphased by the radiation, in the kerosene fuel tanks of planes, in the sediments of the deepest oceans, as flattened rosettes on rocks by the shore, as tufts of lichen on Stonehenge, and in the gaps between the cells of plants.

The Wood Wide Web is the nickname given to the fungi networks in forests. Some plants have given up feeding themselves by photosynthesis and, instead, totally rely on the fungi below earth to feed them. These are shaped like plants but without the green pigment that absorbs light for photosynthesis. In the UK two of these are the common broomrape, which I see often on walks, and the yellow bird's nest which I haven't come across. Other plants, like orchids, take

nourishment from fungi in their youth and then pay it back when they get older – in a 'take now, pay later' relationship. For the fungi networks are not just passive helpers of plants; they can regulate the flow of material from one plant to another, taking or giving according to circumstances. In the case of honey fungus, a mycelium can stretch for miles and live for thousands of years. One researcher has found the honey fungus networks have electrical impulses, like a brain's nerve impulses or action potentials, that seem to carry messages from one part of the network to another.

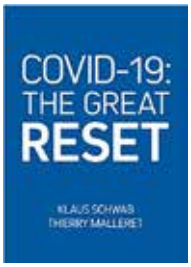
Leafcutter ants cultivate fungi in their nests feeding them bits of leaves; termites chew up wood into a slurry that they feed to a fungus to digest for them; we cultivate yeast fungi in vats of barley to make whisky, or feed them with flour to make bread. Some fungi are predators, hunting nematode worms or carpenter ants. Others eat decomposing matter including plastic and paper like waste disposal experts. Researchers have grown the fungi *Pleurotus* on a dirty nappy and on discarded cigarette butts, from which have flowered edible oyster mushrooms, turning rubbish into food. Photos in the book show this at work and also demonstrate the wood rot fungus moving from one 'dish of wood' to another.

Traditionally humans use wood for building furniture, but could we do better by building with fungi? A factory in New York makes fungi into building or packing materials; they feed the fungi with sawdust or agricultural waste and then dry it. Mixed with sawdust it makes bricks and on its own it can make a leather-like material, a vegan product which Stella McCartney has used for fashion garments. Could we even use fungi instead of matches? Some dried tinder fungus, *Fomes fomentarius*, a large horse-shoe fungus growing on trees, was carried by the Iceman, the prehistoric mummy found in the Alps. As it is inedible, he must have carried it to help him start a fire.

Fungi can also influence the mind. When the fungus *Massopora* infects a cicada, the insect becomes hyperactive and hypersexual even though its genitals have crumbled away and the rear end of its body is disintegrating spraying out fungus spores ready to infect the next cicada. Better known is the effect that LSD, made from the ergot fungus, and psyilocybin, made from magic mushrooms, have on the human mind. Sheldrake suggests that the latter opens minds to new ways of thinking and claims it has 'an astonishing ability' to cure a wide range of human problems, which I rather doubt.

Even without being ingested fungi seem to infect some humans with a wild enthusiasm. Sheldrake himself has hunted truffles with dogs, taken a Japanese fermentation bath in rotting wood shavings, tried LSD in a clinical setting, and scrumped apples from an apple tree grown from a cutting of the original tree that inspired Isaac Newton so that he could investigate its natural yeast. (Its cider was excellent). There is also a global community of people writing guidebooks, growing fungi in their kitchens and doing DIY experiments, a movement which grew out of the l960s hippie search for ever more mind-altering substances. Every two years enthusiastic growers, artists, ecologists, and fungal nerds roll up at a Radical Mycology Convergence (calling it a conference would be too dull) to listen to addresses with titles like 'Liberation Mycology.'

One of the upsides of the study of fungus, or mycology, seems to be the way it invites speculation, not least in Sheldrake's book which discusses how fungi networks might change our Darwinian metaphor of the tree of life, with humans at the top of a graduated hierarchy of species below. If our metaphors changed, our thinking would become less fixated on hierarchies, and more interested in inter-connections, so maybe we could study nature differently and better. This book has excellent footnotes, some wonderful colour photos of fungi and could almost be titled *Travels with a Fungus*, as Sheldrake describes his searches for mushrooms, truffles and myceliums. The sheer variety and mysterious nature of fungi is the best part of this book, his speculations are often engaging and his enthusiasm for all things fungal is unending. If there is a downside to radical mycology, Sheldrake doesn't notice it.



World Government?

Mark Griffith

Covid-19: The Great Reset, Klaus Schwab & Thierry Malleret, World Economic Forum, 2020, £7.99.

A new phrase has appeared since last spring: *The Great Reset*. The book published in July 2020 pairs The Great Reset with what my Hungarian doctor calls 'just another respiratory disease'. The World Health Organisation calls the same disease Covid-19.

Schwab argues that the outbreak of Covid-19 in the final weeks of 2019 showed us a world) unprepared for a global emergency. Furthermore, fighting the pandemic globally is a golden opportunity to reorganise the entire planet, politically and economically. The world should be reorganised so quickly that nobody

will have time to oppose the new controls: ideally the new order of things will suddenly appear in a matter of months, a *fait accompli*. This is 'resetting' the planet: in the electronic-appliance sense. Klaus Schwab and his admirers (people like David Attenborough or Prince Charles) hope to override current traditions and power centres, leaving a uniform, centralised source of order from which there is no refuge or deviation: powerful, unopposed global government.

Schwab's book phrases this delicately, using the repeated phrase that Covid-19 has 'revealed a global governance deficit', in other words, an unfortunate lack of a global government. Schwab and Malleret nowhere describe what a 'global governance surplus' might look like. Someone in the centre of a vast empire, a place from which the edges of the empire are not even imaginable, might have some inkling of how a surplus of global governance feels.

Klaus Schwab in the 1970s was a talented mechanical engineer who in that decade wrote a successful management textbook, founded the World Economic Forum (WEF), and became a consultant guru for large corporations. Born just before World War 2, he is now a hale and hearty man in his early 80s – exactly the age range where the bulk of Covid-19 deaths, indeed most deaths occur. The WEF since around 1990 became increasingly known for its annual meetings each January at a ski resort in Switzerland. Davos has just over 10,000 permanent residents, and by some measures ranks as the highest town above sea level in the whole continent – the rooftop of Europe. To Davos each January come a growing cross-section of world leaders, senior government officials, and CEOs of major firms and non-governmental organisations. They come to meet Schwab, but of course also to meet each other.

The book has a third writer, Mary Anne Malleret, only credited in the acknowledgements at the back; her role might have been revising the style. Though Klaus and Thierry both have very good English, one or two odd sentences slip through. They have a stiff, misjudged feel which anyone who reads UN or EU documents will recognise. Curiously, Thierry and Mary Anne together wrote a completely different book in 2017 where she is given full co-author credit along with Thierry, a gentle feel-good guide to improving your daily life by going for walks. The foreword for the couple's *10 Good Reasons to Go for a Walk* was written by Klaus Schwab.

The Great Reset mentions global warming frequently. Several times the authors suggest that if the distressing 'world governance deficit' could be ended to bring the Covid-19 pandemic under control, the new world governance could do other things. Freshly empowered by its pandemic role it could soon busily set about imposing policies on every country across the whole planet to reduce human-caused carbon-dioxide emissions. This seems to be the task Schwab would most like to address, once a pandemic has conveniently created the excuse for a world government with real power.

The book frequently mentions earlier plagues. A paragraph will begin mentioning the Black Death, recalling that it killed 3 out of every 10 people in huge swathes of the earth, then introduce Covid-19 with a carefully-worded comparison. Of course, the authors demur, Covid-19 (during most of 2020 it was killing closer to 3 people out of every *10,000*, most of *them* already dying with something else) is not *quite* the same, but 'in our world of instant communications, interconnected economies…' etc, the Covid virus has 'disturbing implications' for our 'tightly co-ordinated international networks', and signals the birth of an 'urgently refocused' new era, from which 'there is no turning back'. With these obscure handwaving terms, Schwab and Malleret make the tone of the text reasonable, yet vaguely menacing.

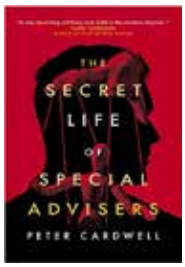
Plagues from previous centuries are contrasted with our age of air travel to make Covid still sound worrying. The disturbing opening credits to Terry Nation's 1970s television series, *Survivors*, come to mind: an understated succession of airport scenes and passport stamps from world cities over dark swelling background music, stressing how quickly that drama's fictional disease circled the globe. Past plagues are also invoked, interestingly, to emphasise the sneaky selfishness of merchants, always resisting the sensible quarantines mediaeval authorities introduced during outbreaks. *The Great Reset* insinuates traders are devious, and should be firmly under state control. Schwab seems to have a special bee in his bonnet about share buybacks, and a general dislike of small business people. He criticises the 'unfairness' and 'inequalities' of what he calls 'capitalism'. He helped popularise the term 'stakeholder capitalism' and he appears to resent entrepreneurs actually *owning* businesses – at least not without the permission of governments.

Large corporations are much more welcome around the big table, along with governments, international bodies, and NGOs like Greenpeace. No-one should be surprised if counter-measures against Covid-19 restricting people's movements, increasing censorship, closing down venues where people meet also wipe out small firms and impoverish the formerly independent middle classes. Most economists praise individual entrepreneurs as the catalyst for all true innovation, but not Schwab and Malleret.

Perhaps the oddest omission in this slightly rushed

book is how little is said about Schwab's interest in pandemics before 2020. Schwab in May 2018, together with the John Hopkins School of Public Health, held a seminar ominously titled 'Clade X', to simulate how world governments would co-ordinate responses to a pandemic. Then in October 2019, again with John Hopkins, he led another WEF-linked seminar about how a pandemic could be used to trigger an irreversible shift in world power. This second simulation also had a stylishly sci-fi name: 'Event 201'.

Much of what happened during 2020 to shut down most of the planet and its freedoms – on the premise that a respiratory disease with a 99+ per cent survival rate and an average age of death above 80 signalled The End of Days – seems to have been rehearsed in advance among many of the officials in governments round the world who regularly attend Davos. His book strangely doesn't mention these previous dry runs. Anyone seeking deeper insights into Schwab's rather unsettling ideas should obtain *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (Penguin 2017). This trumpets growing use of Artificial Intelligence, people merging with machines, imposition of digital money everywhere, human minds directly linked to the internet, as both desirable and unstoppable. I hope to read it soon.



'No Minister!'

Lindsay Jenkins

The Secret Life of Special Advisers, Peter Cardwell, Biteback Publishing, 2020, £20.

Peter Cardwell's life as a Special Adviser certainly had its ups and downs. When advising the Housing Minister his too casual comments on Persimmon, the house builder, led the *The Times* to write the headline 'Help to Buy house giant faces loss of contract'. When the stock market opened, Persimmon Homes fell 4.9 per cent, with £387 million knocked off its market valuation. Cardwell had to scramble to restore equilibrium whilst noting that every word counts, any mistake can have dire consequences. Arguably advisers should have had extensive experience which perhaps Cardwell was lacking. But let that pass.

Cardwell writes engagingly, entertainingly and with some insight of the workings of Whitehall. Well worth reading with the bonus that as a page turner it will not take long. His previous career as a journalist focuses his prose, while time spent with ITV and *Newsnight* adds perspective. His Ulster wit sings from the page so he sounds as though he would be entertaining company. He did well to survive three and a half years and help four secretaries of state as a media adviser, from the time of Mrs May, past the arrival of Boris as Prime Minster, and up to the reshuffle after the December 2019 general election.

Unlike civil servants, Special Advisers do not pretend to be politically independent. They form a layer between their ministers and the permanent civil service. From a solitary start in 1964 under Harold Wilson, their numbers have multiplied to over one hundred. A dozen earn around £100,000 or more, yet few have meaningful experience and skills; with little rigorous employment they make up for those deficiencies with youth, energy and drive. Their short lives are well paid. Cardwell started on a salary of £62,000 a year, 'more than I had ever earned as a journalist', and he lasted over twice as long as the average of under two years.

Over time, the average age of Special Advisers has dropped while their role has become more 'political' and less 'expert'. Usually in their early 30s, they put in long hours, as Cardwell testifies, but can be dismissed on a whim. Inevitably most are male, childless and mortgage free – or the few of experience and age are already financially secure. Cardwell claims that it is a good apprenticeship for a life in elected politics. Some ten per cent become MPs but those who do go up the learning curve fast as did Ed Ball, David Cameron, and both the Milibands.

Boris Johnson's arrival as Prime Minister also saw the arrival of Dominic Cummings as a kind of super-adviser who immediately became line manager of all the departmental Special Advisers across Whitehall. Cummings had clearly negotiated a good deal with Boris, while Special Adviser as a class had risen high up the ranks.

For a time it seemed that a weak Prime Minister and an even weaker Cabinet were allowing government policy to be dictated by a small group of advisers in Downing Street, most of whom had worked with Cummings at the *Vote Leave* campaign. Some claimed that Boris Johnson had allowed Cummings and his young team to become the *de facto* government. Cummings had a blacklist. Work for the wrong man like Greg Clark, the former Business Secretary, and Cummings ruled against his associates claiming that Clark had frustrated 'the will of the people' over Brexit. All his advisers were thus on his black list

Yet Cardwell survived the change of Prime Minister and his patronage of Cummings. Robert Buckland, the newly appointed Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor, liked Cardwell enough to appoint him,

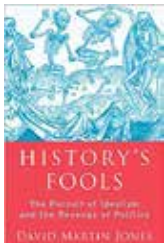
sight unseen, to be his media adviser after a single but lengthy telephone call from *Disney World* in Florida.

Autumn 2019 proved to be the high point for Cummings and his advisers. For example, Treasury advisers were in future to be managed with the Number 10 team, thus cementing Cummings' control. That incidentally led to Sajid Javid's resignation as Chancellor of the Exchequer after less than six months in the job.

Cardwell's end was not long in coming and was as brutish as he noted others had suffered. At the reshuffle after the great election victory, Buckland survived as Justice Secretary but it was Cummings who decided which advisers were to stay and which to go. One fifth of them went including Cardwell so it was left to the Justice Secretary to act only as a messenger and pass on the news. The formal sacking was by Cumming's close friend Lee Cain, Head of Downing Street Communications, with the words: 'The Prime Minister no longer has confidence in your ability to do your job.' Cardwell noted wryly that the Prime Minister probably scarcely knew who he was. Both Cummings and Cain did not last long, both were sacked in November 2020 and day to day management of Special Advisers was transferred back from Number 10 to their appointing ministers.

Cardwell's final comment on Cummings is curiously phlegmatic:

> *He 'is a strategic genius and probably the best living campaign strategist in world politics. And I'm afraid it was absolutely his prerogative to hire and fire whomever he wanted, whenever he wanted. That's the game. Accept it, move on, you had a good run and don't be bitter, because nobody cares.'*



A political dog's breakfast

Bruce Newsome

History's Fools: The Pursuit of Idealism and the Revenge of Politics, David Martin Jones, Hurst, 2020, £25.

At the end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama declared the triumph of liberal democracy and the end of history, so progressives and neoconservatives alike lapped it up. Afterwards, Tony Blair and George W Bush co-operated in making the noughties the most belligerent decade since the Second World War. They thought they were liberal interventionists and democratisers, but their main targets (Afghanistan and Iraq) remain today weak democracies and failing states. Even more perversely, they left their own countries less wealthy and cohesive.

Both Blair and Bush described themselves as liberals; this makes classical liberals bristle for their liberalism was full of contradictions: rights at the expense of freedoms; free trade internationally but bail-outs nationally; deference to international institutions but not local institutions; privileging minorities over the majority and centralising control in the name of freedom.

David Martin Jones, a political scientist from Wales who has taught mainly in Australasia, takes the unfashionable risk of separating classical liberalism from progressive-liberalism. His latest book achieves the monumental feat of tracing progressive-liberal failures back decades, at both the domestic and international levels.

Jones defines the 'progressive liberal worldview' that emerged in the 1990s as 'shared norms, open markets, open borders, and an abstract commitment to social justice.' Its exponents were progressives, 'cultural Marxists and post-structuralists'. The actors in the consensus included academia, mainstream media, business, finance, and government, with their own selfish interests (such as immigrant cheap labour and welfare-dependent voters). Achieving these 'universal values' involved 'multiculturalism at home and military intervention abroad'.

Internationally, Western progressives expected authoritarian states to be liberalized by trade, but China wrote its own rules. It built a global empire by purchasing critical infrastructure (including British nuclear power stations), exchanging products (such as Huawei telecommunications) for commodities, and loaning money for local construction of things that China ends up owning if the repayments fail, like ports in South Asia.

Domestically, Western progressives turned a blind eye to Islamism. They pretended that multiculturalism was working and that extremism was arising only in illiberal countries. They denied failures of assimilation and pandered to extremists often for convenience: the Muslim Council of Britain is easier to deal with than all British Muslims, even though the latter are more moderate than the former. Worse, they encouraged resistance to assimilation, by pretending that bigotry was confined to whites and non-Muslims, that the problems in current Muslim countries were attributable to past Western behaviour. They were hypocrites for curbing Christian symbology and cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed which most Muslims tolerate. Muslim extremists were allowed to protest where they

wanted, while counter-protesters were arrested.

In the same period, big corporations got the upper hand by embracing progressive dogma and colluding with progressive parties. Social media companies did the same, with the advantage that they operated in an essentially anarchic (lawless) space. The big corporations were bailed out in 2008, while small businesses and their employees suffered worst, furthering the wealth gap and undermining the legitimacy of democracy.

Meanwhile, democracies turned over more governance to unelected bureaucrats and advisers, increasingly selected by woke-ness over ability competencies. Political parties coalesced around the same consensus and became undifferentiated. They tried to appeal to everyone ('catch-all parties,' Jones calls them) and ceased to appeal to any particular group (except the progressive elite itself). At times, Jones seems to think the progressive trend is self-correcting and that the progressive worldview 'brings nothing but distraction and moral and ultimately political instability.'

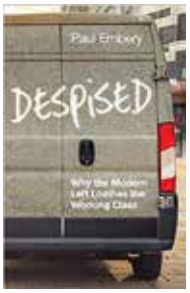
On the other hand, perhaps the progressive trend is self-reinforcing. Income inequality rises, and with it comes disproportionate influence; and with disproportionate influence comes more wealth. Think of the monetisation of influence through social media, and the professional rewards of being on the side of the woke. With separation from the plebs comes ignorance. The success of populism at the polls in 2016 was misrepresented and denied, and the elite redoubled its tricks. Trump won in 2016, but the Democratic Party went woker still. Brexiteers won the referendum in 2016, but did not get any sort of Brexit until 2020, and still didn't get exactly the Brexit they wanted in 2021.

Jones acknowledges that the West has faced relative decline before, and its institutions have triumphed. On the other hand, the West is not as (classically) liberal as it was. Progressives have undermined the liberal institutions that made the West best, like free speech. The welfare state has undermined the virtue of self-reliance while New media have undermined the autonomy of the individual's observations and communications.

One of Jones' findings is that the West stumbles through: 'It is perhaps this capacity, along with the return to a more sceptical politics of balance, practised by free citizens in their national states, that may still give them an edge over their politically religious progressive transnational and illiberal authoritarian rivals.' This is not a confident expectation.

I spoke with Jones, a year after he had submitted his final manuscript. He said he was more pessimistic about classical liberalism for three reasons. First, artificial intelligence is taking away our autonomy, leaving us with less freedom (and encouraging learned dependency). Second, relatedly, the filtering and censoring of social media and online search engines is suffocating classical liberalism under progressive liberal agendas. Third, Western handling of Covid during the intervening period has ruined our economies and normalised authoritarianism, which will take years to correct.

He doesn't have any material solutions. What we need, he said, is more privately-funded outlets for discussion of conservatism and classical liberalism like the *Salisbury Review*.



Labour's Gentrification

Brian Eassty

Despised: Why the Modern Left Loathes the Working Class, Paul Embery, Polity, 2020, £15:99

The Labour Party wants us to believe that it has changed. Despite its centre of power moving from Jeremy Corbyn's Islington to Sir Keir Starmer's Camden, they would argue that, in ideological terms, these men are different. Paul Embery would beg to differ for he would see the geographical metaphor as bitterly apposite because he thinks the Labour Party will not be revived by Starmer's tentative tempering Corbynism of its worst excesses. For him, the rot set in under Blair's leadership.

For this lifelong Labour supporter and trade unionist, the watershed moment was Blair's 'forces of conservatism' speech at the 1999 party conference in which he attacked not just the Conservative Party but much of Britain's history and traditions. Many of his supporters, particularly among the working class, felt proud of them. Taking a wrecking ball to one's own brand, resembled the 'nasty party' speech of that other political Ratner Theresa May, though Blair ushered in a much more radical change.

The Labour Party, with which Embery wishes to revive, lies beyond Starmer's tinkering and the relaunches of Corbynism and New Labour. The mainstream media has forgotten the Labour party and sees 1997 as Year Zero. The party and the people it represents have had to absorb huge changes in less than a quarter of a century; David Goodhart and Matthew Goodwin have commented on these

extensively. Embery gives an insider's perspective to the subject. Much of what he writes might once have been dismissed as anecdotal evidence but nowadays, rebranded as 'lived experience', it has a new respectability and, when discussing the views of working-class people on immigration, there is a certain power in being able to say: 'I know it, because they told me so.'

Embery knows Dagenham well. It has much in common with the 'red wall' seats that Labour lost in the north and Midlands in 2019. If only one in ten of its Brexit Party voters had switched to the Conservatives, it could have been as impressive a gain as any of those. There is evident affection in the depiction of the tight-knit, homogeneous community which Embery lists in such detail; he even recalls the names of all the neighbours in his street when he was growing up. There is probably no street in this country, apart from Coronation Street, where neighbours know each other so well. Embery shows us that this is not sentimental, but emphasises this community's cohesion and stability which compensates for its lack of wealth. Many people rehoused from areas such as Bow and Stepney 'felt they had struck gold'. Though not palaces, if there were homes fit for heroes anywhere it was here. Embery shows how much was lost when mass immigration changed the character of the area so radically and so rapidly that in the first decade of this century the non-UK-born population of the borough increased by 205 per cent. Unfortunately, one fears that most people in the Labour Party will inevitably accuse him of a racist dog whistle for even mentioning immigration. It is a good tactic in a debate, when one has no arguments against one's opponent, to pretend he is saying something else and argue against that instead.

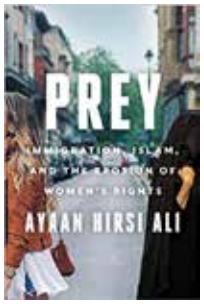
The same change has happened to the Labour Party as has happened in its streets for it has become gentrified. Roughly three-quarters of the party's members are now middle class, nearly half live in London and the south east and more than half are graduates. Such people like immigration because they do not suffer from its consequences and they have little understanding of the impact it has on the working people the Labour Party was created to serve. Embery reminds us of the memorable metaphor of Suzy Stride, unsuccessful Labour candidate in Harlow, who described her campaign workers as 'middle-class Ryanair passengers having to stomach a couple of hours' flight with people they had little in common; it could be uncomfortable but it got you where you wanted to go.' Bertolt Brecht spoke of dissolving the people and electing another; the current Labour Party seems to want to do that to its own supporters.

What a difference may have been made to the Labour campaign by a week in March 2014, when Tony Benn and Bob Crow, two of Labour's most prominent Eurosceptics, died within three days of each other. If they had been around, there would have been substantial figures on the left to argue that Brexit was not an exclusively right-wing, nationalist, racist project and that there were good reasons for working-class voters to support it. The whole campaign might have had more of a cross-party appeal as it did in 1975. Instead, there was Corbyn, unable to challenge the pro-EU group-think of his party, coming out of hiding to give the EU a mealy-mouthed 'seven out of ten'.

Embery devotes a chapter to the 'new national religion – liberal wokedom'. The frustration of being compelled not to acknowledge scientific facts about sex identity for instance extends well beyond the working class. So fluid are developments in this area that he is over-optimistic and over-pessimistic in a few pages. His account of the case of Harry Miller, harassed by the police for retweeting a 'transphobic limerick', doesn't mention the judge's powerful ruling that we do not live in 'an Orwellian society', yet Embery's advice to only voice unfashionable opinions 'behind closed doors' may soon be outdated if the Law Commission's proposal to outlaw 'hate speech' in private is approved.

Embery outlines his manifesto for making Labour an electoral force in working-class areas once more. In his economic arguments there is some standard Labour fare with criticism of the austerity policies of the past decade, although if there had not been such a focus on sound public finances by Conservative chancellors, Rishi Sunak would not have been able to implement one of the most generous furlough schemes in Europe. There is also the familiar cry that everything would be better if we had a Scandinavian economy, but there is too great a risk in taking our economy to Scandinavia because we would pass through South America on the way. But it is hard to argue with the rest of it. He sees the family as a force for good and family breakdown as a serious problem, welfare should be 'a safety net not a comfort blanket' and he favours an English parliament to overcome the unfairness of the West Lothian question.

Many of the policies he proposes are not only opposed by the party but taboo within it. If they cannot be discussed, they are unlikely to find their way into a manifesto. Rather than embrace them, the party will probably just hang around and wait for the working class to catch up. One wonders where Paul Embery will be in ten years' time; although he would hate the idea, he would make an excellent Conservative MP.



Muslims above the law

Catherine Blaiklock

Prey: Immigration, Islam and the Erosion of Women's Rights, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Harper, 2021, £20.

Is it controversial to talk about a thirteen-year-old girl, screaming in pain, being raped in a railway station toilet? Is it controversial to write about hundreds of women being openly and grossly sexually assaulted (hands up skirts and rape) in a public square in Cologne?

How about discussing that the rapist above, an Iraqi born 23-year-old married man with just three years' education, said in court that he was not concerned about the girl's virginity – and that for the most violent rape of a child, he was only given three and a half years in prison – 'reduced by the German judge because he was intoxicated and his victim was too traumatised to appear in court.'

You can write about these cases on two conditions – do not mention that the perpetrators are Muslim or that they are either asylum seekers or first- or second-generation immigrants from majority Islamic countries.

In her book *Prey* Ayaan Hirsi Ali writes fearlessly and unashamedly about all these things, despite being subject to constant death threats, seeing her film maker partner killed, fleeing Somalia, suffering FGM and being a black immigrant herself.

On the other hand, Jill Filipovic, a middle-class, white, privileged, wealthy young New York lawyer, reviewing Hirsi's book in the *New York Times*, implies the Somalian is an Islamophobe, a multiple hypocrite, an anti-Muslim extremist and an underminer of Western Liberalism. Although Hirsi's book has pages of statistics and hundreds of densely packed references and the author is an acclaimed Hoover Institute academic, Filipovic is sneering and condescending – condemning the book for its 'limited evidence'.

'If readers did not know any better,' intones Filipovic, 'they would come away with the impression that most sex crimes in Western Europe are committed by Muslim men against European female strangers'. 'They aren't,' she writes.

You are right, Miss Filipovic, in pure statistics, but wrong in essence. Where there are many whites there will be many white rapes. What is different, Hirsi says, is the 'type' of sex crime: the constant degrading harassment of women on the streets of Europe by groups of sneering men, the extreme demeaning violence of the attacks and gang rapes where the victims are passed around like pieces of worthless meat. One chapter is called 'Taharrush Gamea comes to Europe.' (Taharrush Gamea is Arabic for 'the rape game'.)

Why have *The Times*, *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian* to date not reviewed this book? Surely they should be concerned about the erosion of womens' freedom and rights? Complete silence or total denial exists in many official and media quarters. 'Niklas Langstrom, a professor at the Swedish National Board of Forenisic Medicine has argued that figures such as '93 per cent foreign born or first generation migrant offenders do not indicate any causal relationship'.

This is the premise of the book – if we don't do anything, if we castigate every person who raises the issue as far-right and an Islamophobe, women will be forced off the street and out of public spaces. It has already started in poor areas of European cities. Hirsi Aayam talks about an instance where a Swedish politician was taken to such a location and asked: 'What is missing here?' He could not see anything until it was pointed out that amongst the hundreds of people on that street, there were no women.

The reason why books like this are either ignored or the author attacked – not just by Islamists but by so called feminist left-wing women is because Muslims have become a 'protected population' – all behaviour is excused, all behaviour is equal. Politicians, media, judges, civil servants do not want to talk about it, let alone do anything, for fear of hurting this privileged group that to all intents and purposes not only stands outside the law – but knows that it does. It is the same reason that 'Fondlegate' in the rape capital of the world, Sweden, happened and why the British government still will not release the full Muslim grooming gang report.

Women are paying the price. In working-class areas of Europe, they are regularly called slags and sluts just for dressing in Western clothing and pushing a pram on their own. Police now patrol the main railway station in central Rome and women have been warned not to go out at night alone in Sweden, Finland, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Instead of immigrants adapting to their new homes, their own culture is becoming dominant: many parts of Western Europe are starting to look like the sexist, violent, lawless mess of their home countries.

If nothing is done by our law enforcement, judiciary and politicians and soon, all women except the rich, high class feminists worrying about glass ceilings will suffer everyday walking the street, in the supermarket and at the take-away – terribly – and for decades to come. We must speak up and support those like Ayaan Hirsi who do.

Bashing the Beeb

Jane Kelly

The War Against the BBC: How an Unprecedented Combination of Hostile Forces Is Destroying Britain's Greatest Cultural Institution ... And Why You Should Care, Patrick Barwise and Peter York, Penguin, 2020, £10.99.

One of life's current puzzles is that for some the BBC is 'right-wing,' and 'pro-Brexit.' For many of us these assertions are incredible but York and Barwise have written a detailed book hoping to prove them. They aim to 'enrage', and they certainly irritate as with quotes from socialist commentator Owen Jones, they write furiously to dispel, 'A campaign of right-wing myths and deception,' about their beloved BBC.

These 'myths' include many people not using the BBC but still having to pay the licence fee or go to prison, doing things that should be left to the market, overpaying its managers and presenters, being left-wing and anti-Brexit. They come armed with, 'academic content analysis,' graphs, polls, five appendices, copious notes and some spectacular maths: 'The average UK adult consumes 18 hours (of BBC output) per week. Assuming an average programme length of 45 minutes, that's equivalent to 24 programme choices a week or 3.4 per day. With 52 million UK adults, that's 178 million BBC programme choices every day.'

This unjustified hostility to the BBC originated with 'dark money' from 'right wing think-tanks,' such as News Watch, set up by Kathy Gyngell, who now runs the *Conservative Woman* website. This site 'regularly attacks the BBC, the *Guardian* and the EU,' while the 'Hugely partisan media' are represented by Rupert Murdoch, Paul Dacre and hostile Tories like the Dominic Cummings, who they call 'untouchable'. Worse, there are sinister collusions between the likes of Putin and Trump, whom they believe now control democratic elections and brought about the Brexit catastrophe.

The BBC's financial problems are clearly explained: Gordon Brown looted its coffers by making it fund the switch to digital; George Osborne sold off the old analogue spectrum for £2.34 billion but didn't give them the money. The over 75's free licence was given out blithely by Blair, the cost then foisted on to the corporation. 'Without the huge cuts since 2010, the BBC's annual income would be £1.4 billion higher,' but they don't explain the Corporation's 'Creative Diversity Commitment,' spending £100m from this April, the biggest financial investment to 'Inclusion' in the TV industry, with 'a new mandatory 20 per cent diversity target in all new network commissions. 'Diverse (black) stories and portrayals on screen, diverse production teams and talent, diverse-led production companies.' June Sarpong has a £75,000 salary for a three-day week as their first Director of Creative Diversity

The original charter listed five aims, including, 'to serve the diverse communities of all the UK's nations and regions'. But according to the last census only three percent of the UK population is 'diverse'. 'Right- wing' critics sometimes believe that the BBC, like the Labour Party, now flatly ignores Englishness and in particular the white working class. The nearest it gets to addressing traditional English life is perhaps *The Archers*, but Ambridge is a village now so woke that its pensioners hire buses to London for Gay Pride rallies. Somehow the impoverished BBC can afford to employ a special 'LGBT correspondent'.

York/Barwise show how the BBC has been hampered by its competing outlets: FAANGS; Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google drive up costs when their money outbids the BBC for talent and production costs. The current Charter requires its board to consider 'The impact on the rest of the market of all service innovations.' The BBC cannot change or bid freely enough in this competitive market. It wanted to improve its iPlayer and video on demand services but was prevented by cumbersome bureaucracy and lost out to Netflix.

The book hardly mentions Radio 3 or 4, the most important part of the BBC for thousands of people but the authors love *Saturday Live,* with its gay vicar and diverse presenters, and listeners sharing their experiences of family breakdown, drug addiction and illness calling it, 'Very BBC with its something for everyone.' They boast about its 2.23 million listeners, enjoying a 'positive version of modern Britain, but that also means that 62.77 million listeners, probably older and better educated, switch it off or switch over to BBC Radio 4 Extra which plays old BBC comedy, panel games and drama, from a time when Auntie's output was still witty, erudite and very English. The authors don't approve of those old Reithian days, 'skewed toward high culture, and "paternalistic".' Such a remit now would be, 'Of little sense to most viewers and listeners.' Reith's prophetic words are ignored: 'He who prides himself on giving what he thinks the

public wants, is often creating a fictitious demand for low standards which he will then satisfy.'

The BBC is supposed to be a Public Broadcasting Service but now the most are more important than the discerning few. They reject or perhaps aren't even aware of once loyal listeners now frustrated with the BBC output, from dreary crime series to politically skewed adaptations of Dickens. As the authors say, the BBC is left in an untenable position, neither a commercial nor distinctively public service, trying to 'hold the centre,' funded by a licence fee which needs to be made relevant to modern times. They suggest using general taxation which is unlikely because of the outbreak of the 'Culture Wars,' 'progressive against conservative,' in which the BBC has taken a position firmly among the 'progressives,' but of course the authors insist that the opposite is true.

According to them, 'Evidence from independent academic research is that the BBC constantly strives to be impartial in its news coverage, and when it departs from this it tends to over represent the right-leaning view. The only evidence that it's anti-Brexit, comes from the opaquely funded *News-watch*, which never publishes its methods and never debates them.' They are extremely unfriendly towards a pro-Brexit journalist Isabel Oakeshott, noting that, 'At the time of writing, she is in a relationship with the Brexit Party chairman.' They call writer Milo Yiannopoulos a 'notorious troll'. That kind of spite, worthy of Twitter, suggests that for all their graphs they themselves are just another weapon in the Culture Wars. How else can they believe that Andrew Neil was ever, 'Central to the BBC's political coverage, its top political presenter and interviewer,' or that on his show there was, 'significant evidence of right-wing bias in the choice of guests.' To attack him they quote Owen Jones again, 'He reserves his ideological assault for the left.' Can that be the same Neil who was wastefully marginalised by the BBC for years and recently left in disgust?

The book is both irritating and fascinating with its potted history of the changes wrought by the internet and globalisation. It's good to be reminded of Cambridge Analytica and the resignation of Sir Kim Darroch, British ambassador to Washington, after Oakeshott published a leaked document of him saying that Trump was, 'inept,' and his 'career would end in disgrace'. Also good to see again that 1993 *New Yorker* cartoon showing a dog in front of a pc 'On the internet, no one knows you're a dog,' ably summing up the duplicitous digital world where truth often gets lost and the BBC now has to find an identity which will allow it to survive.

The Russian Soul

Martin Dewhirst

Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk: Selected Stories of Nikolai Leskov, introduction by Donald Rayfield, New York Review of Books, 2020, £14.99.

Which great Russian nineteenth-century prose writer is the least read and appreciated in the Anglo-Sphere? I would propose Nicolai Leskov(1831-1895. Certainly Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin helps us to understand Russian politics and corruption. The recent documentary film about a huge palace built at enormous cost and furnished in the worst possible taste for President Putin could easily have been inspired by one of Saltykov-Shchedrin's satirical works. Leskov helps foreigners to understand not only Russian politics but the diverse inhabitants of Russia as human beings past and present.

Born in the Russian provinces, without much formal higher education, but with a great deal of *practical* experience in a variety of professions, he was always something of a loner, putting himself neither on the far right nor on the far left, and critical of both extremes. Russian life and individual people were for him far more interesting and important than politics.

The two short and best-known of his stories: The *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (a small town south of Moscow) became famous in the mid-1930s when Leskov was forgotten. Shostakovich, not by chance, chose it as the blood-curdling basis for the libretto of the opera that almost cost him his life. The anti-heroine suffers from a loveless marriage and the dreadful monotony of nineteenth-century provincial life, a boredom 'so profound that it makes even the thought of hanging yourself seem like fun'. This Russian Lady Macbeth, driven to distraction by the hopelessness of her situation, gets away with murdering others who get in her way before committing suicide in melodramatic fashion – a topical subject a century later when the opera was premiered and promptly banned in the USSR for decades. The other well-known tale here, known as *The Steel Flea*, also has links with the U.K. The deliberately artificial attempt to reproduce direct speech reminded me of *The Daily Telegraph*'s 'Way of the World' columns when they were written by the great Michael Wharton. This brilliant translation even

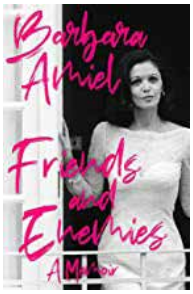
mentions 'a columnist on the *Daily Telegraft'* (*sic*). The Russian left-handed craftsman from Tula (also south of Moscow) adds a tiny, if useless, detail (small is beautiful, on this rare occasion) to an English-made steel flea, is sent to London, and while there learns a better way of cleaning rifles. Returning to Russia, he suggests that his fellow-countrymen adopt this new method, but his advice is not taken and as a result (supposedly) Russia loses the Crimean War.

Two longer works, with rather mystifying adjectives in their titles, *The Sealed Angel* and *The Enchanted Wanderer*, reveal Leskov's distrust of 'conventional' novellas and novels. Many of his longer works might lack structure for the Western reader: where is the turning point or climax, how satisfying is the conclusion, is it too long or too short, what 'lesson' can be learnt from the narrative? But that's Russia, which is also lacks structure and balance. Russian has two concepts of lying, and one of them is best translated as 'blarney', so these two stories remind me of Irish-English writers, intentionally told by their narrators to pass the time to a chance but receptive audience. The first tale shows that after the schism in the late seventeenth century, the Russian Orthodox Church has been badly split with the traditionalist Old Believers refusing to accept certain changes in the Establishment-controlled church. It would take a miracle to heal this division, but might the odd Englishman or woman be willing to help?

The second novella is told during a long, dreary northward journey that begins in St Petersburg, but soon after the travellers leave this 'Western' city's limits, they find themselves 'where no freethinking or radicalism could withstand the locals' apathy and the boredom of the scenery, so depressing and impoverished'. Why go to the trouble and expense of sending unreliable people to Siberia, when they could be forced to live just outside the Russian capital? Not everyone in Russia is condemned to lead a life of tedious monotony, and the travellers make good use of the offer of Ivan, a member of the group that happens to find itself together on this journey, to pass the time by giving them a truthful account of his experiences in other vast expanses of the Tsarist Empire. Russian also has two words for 'truth', one of which requires strict adherence to the facts. So readers have over a hundred pages of an oral account of a wayward life in parts of this amazing and still expanding multinational country. The bigger it got, the greater the number of non-Russians, especially 'Asiatics'. Are Byzantine, Mongol and Tartar influences in Russia's development and the Russian mindset as significant as Western influences? Russia's heartland is in Eurasia. Ivan is an Orthodox Russian and is now on his way to pray on the Solovetsky Islands but has a worrying premonition that war is nigh.

The last two works in this anthology are *The Unmercenary Engineers* and *The Innocent Prudentius*. The first tells us about three righteous, Russians in the first half of the nineteenth century – genuine, but not widely recognised, let alone imitated. 'Heroes of Their Time' – they are dissenters who take their Orthodox Christianity seriously and are therefore in a tiny and unpopular minority. The latter work, is set during the early period of Christianity when it was gradually gaining ground on the shores of the Mediterranean. Should one try to feel 'a common love for all humanity' or believe that there is 'no higher love than a love that is content with its chosen object, warmed and occupied by it alone, and not concerned with anyone else'?

Leskov leaves it to his readers to answer that question. I don't know whether he had read Shakespeare's Sonnet No. 116: 'Love is not love Which alters when it alteration finds…'.



Lady Black

Jane Kelly

Friends and Enemies, Barbara Amiel, Constable, 2020, £25.

In 2019, President Trump gave his friend and media tycoon Conrad Black a full pardon. His tax bill was also reduced from $18 million to a mere $500,000, leaving his wife Barbara able to continue collecting Hermes bags and Manolo Blahnik shoes, and decorating their 'Homes of monumental size in London, Palm Beach and Toronto.'

'In Manhattan, we bought a $3 million apartment on Park Avenue,' she writes. 'One of the first things I did was apply for credit cards, Saks, Bergdorf's, Bendel's, Bloomingdale's. I did this largely because it was fun to go into the customer service office and, when asked for my address, say 'Park Avenue' very casually.'

The description of her extraordinary life, manages to be both despicable with its litany of useful rich men, but admirable; her $35,000 a year spent on jewellery was at least partly funded by her own earnings as an excellent writer; so she needed to reward herself 600 pages. As a Jewish girl in a 'battle-scarred house in

Hendon,' she suffered from phobias and anxiety but doesn't think that makes interesting reading. She always knew she'd get out to something better; 'I took it for granted,' she says, 'that I would grow glorious breasts like London's Windmill girls.'

When her father was accused of fraud, at fourteen she was bundled off to Canada with her neglectful mother. She supported herself working in a shop but her burgeoning bosom quickly became useful. She married four times and had generous admirers: Kerry Packer, the Australian entrepreneur twice gave her £100,000 to accompany him to a casino, while a 'Very famous Canadian industrialist' thrust her $5million as a gift. Being a modest girl, she only took one million.

Lord Black calls her 'preternaturally sexy'. As his wife she achieved high social success and took pains to fit in with his set, mainly billionaires with second and third wives. She began to live on salad to try to acquire 'limousine legs,' and found herself surrounded by 'frenemies'. 'If you wanted to pal around with the Kissingers which Conrad did, and the philanthropist Jayne Wrightsman, you had to take the whole package,' she writes ruefully, 'which included the spiteful.'

Her dinner invitations where she sat with Dukes, leading politicians and international bankers, came to an abrupt halt in 2007 when Black was accused of fraud. Appropriately she sensed bad news coming whilst shopping. 'The sales lady, who had just complimented me on my Hermès handbag, announced, with a note of slight triumph, that my card was declined. I managed to wheedle out the info that my credit limit was cut to $100 but didn't twig what was going on, let alone that this was just the start of twelve hellish years to come.'

Black got six years, later reduced to three and a half, and Barbara was no longer invited to share lettuce leaves with the Manhattan Xray ladies. She and Conrad have bounced back; he's still in the Lords and worth about $80 million. Like many eighty-year-olds, she is reflecting on it all, asking, 'Where did my life go? I thought I would find it in these pages.'

But these memoirs are not written by a wise old lady reminiscing. Plastic surgery now makes her appear to be wearing the Guido Fawkes mask, and she is writing for revenge. She ends her tome with four pages listing, 'friends and enemies'. Not all became enemies because they dropped her when Conrad was in trouble; some get a kicking for other crimes such as criticising her dining room.

'I have no forgiveness in me,' she writes. 'Should I have the opportunity to do harm to a clutch of people named in this book, I would, just as they did to me and my husband… unforgivable and deserving of capital punishment.' Wielding her pen like a sword she entertainingly decapitates them one by one.

Art

Alexander Adams

Making the Modern Artist: Culture, Class and Art-Educational Opportunity in Romantic Britain, Martin Myrone, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (distr Yale), 2020, £45.

The opening of *Making the Modern Artist: Culture, Class and Art-Educational Opportunity in Romantic Britain* is unpromising. The subject is the social and financial conditions of Royal Academy School students in the Georgian period (1769-1830), emphasising the class backgrounds and relative success of these artists. Setting out a Marxist class analysis and quoting Weber and Adorno, Martin Myrone is clear about his slant. Fortunately, his analysis is not as political as he threatens. Nonetheless, *Making the Modern Artist* is an uneven read and sometimes a trying one for the general reader who will grit his teeth (or skim passages) when they encounter social justice, Bourdieu or other sacred monsters of academic literature.

Marxist analysis is like a broken compass, the needle of which does not rotate. Wherever one is and wherever one looks, Marxism always indicates the inevitable rise of the proletariat and its seizure of the means of production in an age of socialism. Neo-Marxist critiques of art concentrate on production and reception; they dematerialise the artist, erasing pesky individuality in an effort to reduce art to the barest of materialist transactions. This reflects neither reality nor personal experience and makes for unsatisfying history; the human brain and heart are not wired correctly for materialism.

When Myrone sets aside his class-warrior scruples he is a competent historian. The subject matter is worthwhile and there is plenty of fascinating material in the best passages. When it was founded, the RA School provided a uniform arts education for professional painters, sculptors, engravers and architects. Individuals like Jeremy Bentham put

forward the Utilitarian case for the provision of art education to most talented youths as a social good. Part national endeavour, part collegial enterprise, the RA School – distinct from the body of members, who were established artists who obtained exhibition rights from membership – was initially free for students. The school provided models, plaster casts, books and access to instructors and lecturers while the students bought their materials and paid their own living costs.

The information about how the Royal Academy School operated and the illustrations of pieces produced by students during the 1769-1830 period, are among the book's attractions. There are scenes of students working in the life room with models. In the few life rooms that one can find in art schools today – lockdown excepted – the settings are the same. We learn about the few occasions when RAS students were disciplined or expelled. Students were usually treated leniently but women were not admitted to the RAS until 1861, though they were served by other art schools in London, including a government one in Kensington.

Both students and artists complained about the erratic quality of the teaching which was not especially rigorous and compared poorly to the practices of the French Acádemie (and later the École des Beaux-arts) and the workshops of master painters. Some students – including a superannuated William Etty – attended the school mainly for access to models. The constant variety of sources, subjective assessment and short periods spent on each drawing meant that students developed inconsistently. The few British artists of distinction tended to develop despite their education not because of it. There seemed little by way of 'school' to unite British artists; instead, we see connections through media (watercolour) and subject (landscape, marine). Artists at the time lamented that the personal link between master and pupil was broken and that the RAS produced such disparate and opposing atomised individuals while the chain of artistic lineage was irrevocably sundered. This deficiency would later encourage the founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Arts and Crafts Movement, in an effort to bring closer bonds between artists.

Forty-three per cent of students came from London; later, as the rail network expanded and the outskirts of London became suburbs, artists from the Home Counties increased. The Midlands and West Country were well represented, with few students from further afield. A handful of foreign students attended the school, including a few from the colonies. The proportion of RA students coming from the labouring poor and agricultural classes was (understandably) low, with the bourgeois and commercial classes dominating.

Myrone shows that the establishment of the RAS accelerated the 'middle-classification' of the fine-art professions, by producing more RAS graduates who would compete against artisans and aristocrats. The professionalisation of art replaced the already defunct guild system with annual cohorts of RA-certified painters, sculptors and engravers, reducing social mobility in the field. Myrone never explains why social mobility (or social instability) is in itself a benefit; so it's hard to be convinced by Myrone's arguments in favour of it.

Benjamin Haydon is taken as an example of an artist attempting to work outside the system as he established his own studio-school. Although he attracted some of the most talented pupils of the era, he failed partly because of his heavy drinking and reckless spending leading to his suicide; he is best remembered for his autobiography. Myrone shows that Romantic artists were not necessarily prone to suicide: Out of the 1,260 deaths of RAS students, fewer than 30 were suicides which were related to financial ruin or poor health. On the whole, life expectancy for artists and architects was good and suicide rates were normal.

But Myrone discovers plentiful examples of poverty including a single example of an artist starving to death in a garret. Income could be irregular, competition could be fierce and fashion was fickle, so poverty was a real prospect for artists of middling-to-low talent and even occasionally for excellent artists. 'That most of those former students recorded as bankrupt were sculptors, and many others published engravers or print sellers, is an indication of their status as businessmen and employers who were vulnerable financially in a way that a painter running his own studio simply was not.' Sculptors and printmakers had more material and equipment costs and capital investment and required more assistants than did painters.

Film

Chernobyl – the 5-part TV series from HBO (2019)

Mark Griffith

In 1986, an accident in Soviet Ukraine blew open a nuclear reactor, killing thousands of people soon afterwards. But it was very nearly much worse. Had the open reactor core not been closed with heroic sacrifice from thousands of people, half of Europe might have been lethally contaminated.

HBO (Home Box Office) screened a dramatisation of the event in 2019. It captures the mood of the time. The cast of assorted British actors (miners with Scots accents, soldiers with English accents) prevent the drama being pinned down to one time or place. Had the cast been uniformly American, or had they faked Russian accents in English, it would have been distracting. Anyone who visited an East Bloc country at that time, or in the decades since, will recognise the dim lighting, ugly furniture, bleak tacky apartments and tower blocks. The colour palette is heavy with muddy greens, sickly browns, and brooding greys. The just-noticeable soundtrack is made up of long single chords based on industrial sounds; Hilda Gudnadottir's score powerfully evokes weariness, vague menace, and paranoia.

Craig Mazin adapted the script from the Nobel-Prize-winning book by Belarussian journalist Svetlana Alexievich, assembling eyewitness accounts. Only in episode 4 is there a scene with three people in a room talking about what to tell an international atomic-power congress which rings a little false as it slips over the line into explaining the plot. Numerous British and American thrillers have that same scene where three characters talk argumentatively to make some catch-up detail more interesting for the audience. Part of the problem might have been the only fictional character – a woman scientist created by screenwriters as a composite of the real team of scientists trying to unravel the puzzle of why the reactor exploded. Most scenes are gritty and convincing; *Chernobyl* also catches the petty pomposity and sly office politics so prominent in big organisations but especially socialist states

Some scenes dwelt on people dying in hideous agony from radiation burns. These verged on disaster porn, and a few times I wondered why I was watching a gruelling portrayal of a horrific event I already remembered very clearly. People should be informed about history, but is a five-hour television drama going to reach multiples of the audience any non-fiction book (even Alexievich's) might reach? And probably only a drama, using sheer horror, can impress on viewers that radiation sickness is a death you want to avoid at all costs.

The two characters who carry the story (real figures in the disaster) are the academic chemist Valery Legasov, and Boris Shcherbina, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. The communist apparatchik goes from initial hostility to grudging respect for the scientist, and together they personally oversee the clean-up operation at the reactor site, both receiving health-damaging doses of radiation as a result. Shcherbina died in 1990. Legasov died in 1988. He was found in his flat, hanged. The relationship between these two men is really what makes *Chernobyl* work as a drama. The disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in Ukraine in 1986 played some part in discrediting state socialism as a political system for a few years. It's interesting to compare two nuclear-power-plant fires from that time. The 1979 Three-Mile-Island disaster in Pennsylvania, by chance coincided with a major Hollywood feature film about a fictional reactor accident. It cast Jane Fonda as a courageous TV reporter filming inside a power station while, coincidentally, a crisis unfolds. It opened in cinemas

just twelve days before the real-life Pennsylvania event

That movie, *The China Syndrome*, was called by some an indictment of the misleadingly named 'capitalist system', with frequent references to the dangers of managers overseeing safety systems being motivated by profit while the far worse, more serious, disaster in 1986 Soviet Ukraine exposed the flaws of state socialism (genuinely a system) and took 33 years to be portrayed on film. The show-trial drama in the final episode, where Legasov testifies in the prosecution of three of the power-station managers in 1987, is as gripping in its different way as the horrible portrayal of the reactor fire itself in the previous four episodes. As Legasov's suicide, bracketing the story, might suggest, his heroic self-sacrifice was not rewarded by the Soviet apparatus.

Nobody was killed at Three Mile Island in 1979. No radioactive material was released into the atmosphere or ground water. At Chernobyl in 1986, official accounts admit 31 people died immediately in the accident, followed by thousands of other deaths in the following months from radiation sickness. The Ukrainian government still pays pensions to at least 36,000 women it judges were widowed by the disaster, although some health statisticians estimate total deaths were lower – 9,000 to 15,000.

It's hard to think of a clearer way to compare an open, self-critical society like the United States (at least then) and a closed, secretive, rigidly proud society like the socialist Soviet Union, than the contrast revealed by these two films. A US entertainment company made a drama about a reactor melt-down caused by human error, compounded by corporate secrecy, before such a thing had even been known to happen. Any normal police state would have cancelled the *The China Syndrome* before it even went into production, as opposed to Soviet officials trying hard to cover up a huge, lethal disaster. A subsequent dramatisation of that catastrophe would have been unthinkable within that system.

I couldn't decide whether the high acclaim for this TV drama is a measure of how well it was made, or a pious nod to the seriousness of the original disaster, finally portrayed on screen with suitable low-key dignity. Some of the gloomy colours and depressing visuals of an industrial Soviet town must make it seem like the product of another era to anyone young, like the black-and-white news footage distanced the world wars from people born too late to remember life before colour film. I wondered if *Chernobyl*'s rotary phones in mushy-pea green and Formica-topped steel frame desks have the same effect. Does this event and its lessons seem impossibly far back in the historic past for people who grew up with touch-screen internet access, born since the USSR closed down? I've seen students react like this. Stalin's mass murders don't seem real to many who find the cars and aeroplanes of the time laughably ancient or clunky; our weirdly foreshortened sense of removal from the recent past is an important topic. Did that reactor explosion help hasten the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991? Perhaps shamefully, other long-term problems were probably the real reason the USSR dissolved five years after Chernobyl.

IN SHORT

Clubland's Hidden Treasures, Sam Aldred, pbk, 2020, £11.99.

A snuff mull made out of a Scottish ram's taxidermy head, a Georgian water pipe made out of an elm trunk, an axe used by Gladstone for cutting down trees, a folding screen with cut-out pictures of women, some of them clothed, the wheelchair of Michael Faraday; a picture of *The Improved Essex Pig* – these are among the treasures of Clubland in, respectively, the The Caledonian Club, The Oriental Club, The National Liberal Club, Buck's Club, The Athenaeum and The Farmers' Club. This is clubland's version of *The History of the World in 100 Objects*.

In a light-hearted ramble round clubland, Sam Aldred explains and enlarges on objects, chosen for their insight into the character of the club and their anecdotal worth. Thus, in the Garrick Club, which has an impressive art collection, Aldred chooses to write about the Millais portrait of Henry Irving, an actor said to be the original of Count Dracula, who when his wife unwisely remarked: 'Are you going to go on making a fool of yourself like this all your life?' jumped out of their carriage and never saw her again.

Like John Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, this book is rich in stories about the men, some of them boorish club bores, who belonged to these clubs. The maker of the naughty folding screen in Buck's Club, for instance, was Sir John Willoughby, thrown into gaol for taking part in the Jameson Raid. In The Savage Club, Edwin

Johosophat Odell, was notable only for his second rate acting, scrounging and running up debt, but is still venerated with oil portraits and the chair he sat on while drinking at other members' expense.

In The London Sketch Club are to be found silhouettes of artists like Tom Browne, who created the man-about-town figure still found on Johnnie Walker whisky bottles and Phil May, an early cartoonist 'discovered' by my grandfather who complained about his prodigious drinking but subsidised it nonetheless. Indeed, most of the events in this book, as well as the Jameson Raid itself, occurred because the clubland members concerned were seriously sloshed, a fact surprisingly ignored by the author. I only hope his liver survived the alcoholic research which must have been required for this charmingly eccentric book.

Celia Haddon

The Great US-China Tech War, Gordon Chang, Encounter Books, 2020, £5.99.

The US and China are in the middle of a 'cold tech war' – and the stakes are high. Gordon G Chang does not waste time on unnecessary pleasantries for this is a very short book, spanning over only 52 pages, but Chang gets to the point straight away. He covers the basic differences between the US and China in the recent developments in the tech sphere by explaining both countries' successes, failures, and weak points and emphasizes the issues of 5G, AI technology, and quantum, by comparing both countries' progress in these areas. Links between the Chinese tech companies and the Chinese are described in great detail, thus dispersing any doubts that the state and companies do work together. Chang shows that the Chinese web of influence is slowly encroaching on more and more countries and will soon tighten. The tech war is real and if the US won't retaliate by developing and overtaking Chinese technology, they will lose.

I was hoping for more background and history on China's development, but Chang was focusing mainly on the current events and current problems. Had the book contained more background and detail, it would have made a more full-fledged read. Nevertheless, Chang gets his point across in an eye-opening manner. There are no baseless arguments and accusations – everything is backed up by significant research.

Chang provides clever solutions to the problem with China. Whilst understanding the limitations, he fleshes out a plan on how to 'Make America Great Again' in a tech sense. He presents solid arguments proving that if China overtakes the US in the 'tech race', they will not respect the international order in the same way other countries do. This was proved when China declared a 'people's war' on America as well as their hostile treatment of Taiwan, Hong Kong citizens and Uighurs Muslims.

Chang is in favour of placing restrictions on exports to China and reducing the involvement with the country. He explains that there are still ways in which this situation can be overturned. Having appeared before the US government in the past, he knows what to say and suggest. Is the Biden administration going to be as keen as Trump to ensure the technological advancement of the United States? Only time will tell.

Dinah Kolka

Memoirs of a Dissident Psychologist, Richard Lynn, Ulster Institute for Social Research, 2020, £25.

The development of Richard Lynn's thinking mirrors what journalist Frank Miele calls 'the intellectual odyssey of psychology in our time', for behaviourism and psychoanalysis have been widely discredited. The London School of Psychology, whose luminaries included Francis Galton and Charles Spearman, shows inborn differences in mental ability between individuals and races. Richard Lynn, the doyen of this school, has added sex differences in IQ to the list. Lynn considers himself '…a [born] dissident'. His father, the eminent geneticist Sydney Harland, was sceptical about religion and highlighted 'the ignorance and stupidity of public-school men…'. His mother, Ann Freeman, was a lifelong communist and republican. She refused to stand for the national anthem, causing her son acute embarrassment.

At Bristol Grammar School, Lynn despised team sports and the house system as he considered them pitiful attempts to emulate the public schools. There was evidently no shortage of intelligence on either side of Lynn's family. His maternal grandfather William Freeman was Director of Agriculture for the West Indies. But at Bristol Grammar, to which he had won a scholarship, Lynn initially languished in the C stream, '…a mortifying experience and a

serious blow to my self-esteem'. Having attained the A stream, he slacked again but was persuaded to apply himself.

Recalling his interview at King's College Cambridge, he was advised to be controversial, so he opined that the policy of appeasement was sound but that Britain should have kept out of the war and was duly awarded an exhibition in English and History, but as a grammar school boy felt socially uncomfortable at Cambridge. When fellow student Susan Maher told her parents that she was planning to marry him, her mother cried for three days. 'They regarded themselves as socially superior to me'. Meritocracy, not surprisingly, is central to his thinking.

In part two of his Tripos, Lynn majored in psychology but his verdict on the psychology department is merciless because hostility to Cyril Burt and the London School was *de rigueur*. The head of the department was Sir Frederick Bartlett and Lynn calls his magnum opus *Psychology and Primitive Culture* (1923) 'a truly terrible book'; Bartlett's successor Oliver Zangwill, a Freudian, fares little better.

These memoirs include amusing comments on some key episodes in British politics. He welcomed the Conservative Party's Commonwealth Immigration Act (1963) for leftists, as he notes, generally believe that people will ultimately get on but conservatives suspect that human brotherhood will founder on the rock of ethnocentrism. A convinced Thatcherite, Lynn regards Enoch Powell's predictions of racial conflict as prescient. He is 'temperamentally disposed to like big theories....' During his adolescence, he was captivated by Marxism and Darwinism but now regards J Philippe Rushton's r-K life history explanation of race differences as '…one of the most brilliant that has appeared in psychology'. Lynn himself has produced pioneering work on the higher IQ of north east Asians and a 'Cold Winter's' theory of race differences.

In 2018, the University of Ulster rescinded Professor Lynn's emeritus status. As he points out, 'It is impossible to overestimate the vindictiveness of academics…'

Leslie Jones

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.
Printed in the UK by The MANSON Group Limited
Typesetting — DASH
Graphics — Lindsey Dearnley