

The

# Salisbury Review

*Absolutely the wrong opinion on everything*



*The quarterly magazine of conservative thought*

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# The Salisbury Review

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**T**hey came, the rich and powerful, in four hundred VIP jets burning two tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> each for every hour in flight. Do not feel too righteous, the internet, used by 4.3 billion people, accounts for 3.7 per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions while private jets account for a mere 2 per cent of the 2 per cent burnt by all aircraft. Greta Thunberg wears trainers, 19 billion were sold in 2020, each emitting 7.3 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>.

They had come to tell us we were spending far too much money. The things we buy, the cars we drive, the houses we live in, unnecessary flights, produce much too much carbon dioxide and are causing the world to get hotter and hotter. In consequence the seas are about to rise and sweep all of us away,

Is it true? We have no means of knowing. If you want to know if something is religion or science enquire if it bans criticism. If it does it is a religion. The BBC long ago said climate change critics would no longer be invited on its programmes. This is Earth Worship and earth business is good business. If you question it, you will not be allowed at the great feeding table which is Global Warming. Some very large feeding tables there are too, such as replanting the world's forests promised at every climate conference. But forest continues to be turned into farmland, hardwood window frames continue to appear in our shops. The money continues to vanish.

The real cause of environmental collapse, (you don't have to believe in warming to see it) too many people, was barely whispered about. The world's population is now 7.5 billion (up 7-fold in 200 years) and set to rise to 10 billion by 2050. These billions and their children want what we have; a house, a car, foreign holidays, air conditioning, medical care, those trainers, computers and three square meals a day. The purpose of COP26 is to make sure they never do.

Here are some candidates for the carbon rich life. Nigeria, a country of persistently high fertility and falling mortality, is growing at a rate of 2.5 per cent a year with the average number of children per woman standing at 5.3. In 2050 the country's population will

be 400 million. Ethiopia's population was 40 million in the 1984 famine; it is now 121,743 334. South Africa's population, with an excellent network of family clinics left behind by the white regime, has grown by 10 million in the last ten years. Add India, the Yemen, the Sudan... etc.

Nothing will be done because at the sort of dinner tables the delegates attend, African fertility is a sacred taboo and birth control programmes originating in the West are regarded in the same light as 18th century slaving expeditions. So tender is the western conscience on the question of race we would rather live with the beasts in the fields than criticise Africans for having five children and then some more.

President Xi, demonstrating his indifference to western posturing, did not turn up at the conference, and has not got a tender conscience. He has a huge population to keep warm for the next twenty winters, which he will do with coal while building a planned network of 150 nuclear power stations in the next fifteen, more than the rest of the world has built in the last thirty-five.

The Chinese know the danger of a surfeit of babies, her history is punctuated by famine, pestilence, drought and war, thus their recent one child policy. While it has been paused following an unsustainable fall in births, they still use forcible birth control on ethnic groups like the Uighur Muslims who try to outbreed them.

China has no intention of being outbred. Unlike the west, she has a number of strategically placed expandable military industrial bases all over South-East Asia, Africa and further afield. Her immediate ambition is to extend her frontiers in the Pacific. Having taken Taiwan – America hasn't the will to go to war – Beijing will hold the Imperial Script, just as America did in the last century. She will offer Africa and her new colonies the goods that COP26 intends to deny them, along with, and if population growth threatens her interests, imposing fertility controls. She is the only nation powerful enough to do so and, given her history, she will.

# Back to the Trees

BRIAN RIDLEY

The *Enlightenment* has done as much as it could. Like a blazing comet, its brightness was observed in passing, here and there, in lands receptive to the need for clarity concerning liberty and equality. These lands were North America and Continental Europe, what are now the USA and Euroland. England's *Enlightenment* began three centuries earlier, with *habeas corpus* guaranteeing a certain sort of liberty. England was aware of Rousseau's Social Contract, but could not make sense of equality, nor of its law-making, that was more didactic than empirical. Such differences were subsumed because of the common religion, Christianity. A society, already primed by the classical tradition of Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes and Pythagoras, took the Enlightenment to heart, and so was born Western Civilisation.

Unique among the nations of the world Western Civilisation espoused democracy, and found itself inventing science and industrialization. These monumental achievements immediately benefited humanity – its health, its wealth, its freedom; but, naturally, those benefits were limited to that part of humanity sufficiently civilised. It seemed for a while that The Enlightenment had produced nothing but good, and it was properly extolled for that. If there was a bad side, few were unduly concerned, being healthy and well-fed, locally mobile in their petrol-

driven car, booking holidays abroad, in destinations carefully chosen to be well outside the still-barbarous world. Suddenly, we have lost faith in the tenets of the *Enlightenment* – the role of reason, the exercise of tolerance, the benefits of the secular, over the theocratic, society and we find ourselves 'on a darkling plain, swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, where ignorant armies clash by night'. We find ourselves in a new era, an era of Denigration, in which the belief in reason, the exercise of tolerance, and the benefits of secularity are abandoned.

If a female believes that she is a male, then that is exactly what she is; similarly, a male believing himself to be a female. There is now a word for it, transgenderism, disbelief of which is not to be tolerated. God has been replaced by 'Mother Earth', and, to save her, the human race has to dismantle progress, and return to the State of Nature, no mention of 'red in tooth and claw'. Every day, the Press and TV are full of denigrations of one sort and another, plus examples of ignorant history and scholarship. What it is all about is a mystery to the rest of us. We see, to our despair, that there are a lot of people who are dangerously out of touch with reality. Do I hear you say, 'So, what's new?' Well, one answer to that is the Internet, and the freedom to twitter.

*Brian Ridley is a Fellow of the Royal Society*

# Nature's Not For Pimping

DON BEECH

If the consensus amongst demographers proves to be correct and world population will reach 10 billion by 2050; the Conservative pledge of 'net zero emissions' by that date might well eventually go up in smoke! We'll have to wait and see! Yet whatever the future holds, COP 26 will doubtless close with grandiose calls to implement far reaching policies for the planet's salvation, as well as apocalyptic threats to frighten us into changing our ways – 'only fifty days to save the planet...'

But if David Attenborough has taught us anything

it's that human beings seem terribly resistant to meaningful change, especially in their habits of material consumption and excessive biological reproduction. So whilst the planet will of course save itself, whether there's enough of it left which is sufficiently habitable to guarantee future civilised existence might be a different matter. After all, the environmental catastrophe the scientific models are now predicting was philosophically already in place in 1637 when, in his *6<sup>th</sup> Discourse (on Method)*, Descartes' confidently predicted the new physics and

mathematics would provide all the means necessary 'to make ourselves...masters and possessors of nature'. But even before this, in his *New Organon* of 1620 Francis Bacon had predicted the 'Great Renewal' of learning which would follow when his novel experimental method eventually 'put nature to the rack'. If I've understood Descartes and Bacon correctly, then the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century signalled nature was in for a seriously good kicking. Furthermore, if, as the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin claimed, the job of science in the Space Age was to win its 'duel with nature', then even as recently as the 1960's Descartes's and Bacon's predictions and hopes were, regrettably, still very much alive and on course.

But in 2021, the *apparent* increased regularity of meteorological calamities across the world seems to prove the high price the world is now paying for mid-17<sup>th</sup> century ambitions. After all, nature is now striking back not only against overpopulation, impoverishment and corruption in 'developing' countries, but increasingly in the 'developed' world too – Germany, Belgium and North America. So whilst physics and mathematics have enabled man to objectify, calculate, expropriate, and utilise, that is *master* our understanding of the energy locked up in nature, the ruinous price for extracting that energy – of '*possessing*' it, putting it 'to the rack' and winning our 'duel' with it – is another matter altogether. As prostitutes' pimps tyrannically possess dispose of and ruin their girls' bodies, so modern man has succeeded in imagining nature's resources as a legitimate object of his possession, whim and tyranny. As Heidegger put it in his 1953 essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, modern man has recklessly and criminally 'set upon' nature where once he sought its consent and, successfully, nurtured it. But as things turned out, we moderns have behaved even worse than 'real' pimps; because whilst we have irrationally set upon nature, they have conducted their business rationally by 'taking care' of their girls in return for their cut. In effect, modern man has failed to consider nature's autonomy and limits, and therefore what rational people ought *not* ask of it. At least 'real' pimps sometimes allow their girls to rest, recuperate and perhaps on occasion, even to retire.

So the time seems to have come to urgently re-pose the question Heidegger asks in the title of his essay. Quoting from Holderlin's poem 'The Rhine' – 'where danger grows, so does the saving power' – he insists, rightly from a conservative perspective, that nature will only be saved by a crisis *so bad* that it shocks us awake to the price which will accrue to future generations. If recent scientific models are right, and let's not forget they are *only* models, then it has to be hoped we get

the message sooner rather than later.

But how should conservatives respond to this *now*? Two priorities come to mind. First, in the long term hopefully on an equal status footing with the effort which goes into promoting and delivering *Black History month*, what about setting aside a month each year especially for *Environmental History*? After all, trying to save nature without educating and involving young people has to be a *non sequitur*. And second, what's also really needed *now*, to complement COP26, is a space of calm reflection into which consciousness of the 'saving power' of traditional *stewardship* might enter the popular mind.

Luckily for conservatives, England has a long and respectable history of concern for the environment. In his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* of 1752, Burke points out the vulnerability of nature to its own destructive forces and to the inevitability of their human mismanagement. In 1799, Malthus's *Essay* warned of the negative effects on natural resources of overpopulation and the unfettered drive for economic growth. And during the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was deep concern for what the Industrial Revolution was doing to traditional ways of life, natural habitats and the aesthetics of the English countryside and its townscapes. But what's pivotal to stewardship, as it is in the relationship between children and parents, is the certainty that nature will never 'belong' to man. On the contrary, stewardship provides a component of caring which recognises nature's autonomy, extent and fragility; and in refusing to possess, torture or fight with it, potentially provides a foundation for loving and therefore preserving nature as an end in itself, whilst at the same time bolstering a desire in us to maintain as much of its beauty as possible. Although the clock will probably never be stopped on nature's ruin, at least stewardship might help *begin* slowing it down. After all, if Lord Salisbury was right that life is just 'delay', then for the foreseeable future delay might be all conservatives can reasonably hope for, and anyway, we have to start somewhere.

With all this in mind, about ten years ago I attempted some stewardship of my own. I joined the ranks of one of Burke's 'little platoons' – my local allotment society – intending (strictly organically) to *grow my own*. But parenting the soil rather than pimping it was trickier than I imagined; no sooner had I paid my first rent than I found myself mindlessly clearing the site of brambles, burning old wood, frantically poisoning weeds, squaring-off my borders to warn neighbours not to encroach on to my land, digging and planting like a mad thing, obsessively 'feeding' the ground with steroid-rich horse manure, and constantly worrying

about my ignorance. Yet for about three years my crops repeatedly emerged looking seriously unwell and fit only to be tossed straight onto the compost heap. It was obvious that if I wanted quality vegetables like everybody else, then like everybody else I would need to pimp my soil with all the toxic rubbish I could lay my hands on.

And so I abandoned my original aim. Self-evidently just having an allotment and doing what most folk with allotments do isn't the 'saving power' I imagined it to be, at least in the way I conceive stewardship. A re-think was in order. If my aim was to give more to my tiny bit of nature than I took from it, how should I proceed? So I asked myself why I would even *want* to grow my own when I can pop to the local supermarket for vegetables grown on land already poisoned specifically for that purpose? I realized that the last thing the site needed was even more sterile soil and

perfect vegetables; but rather someone holistically to encourage the return of life-giving *insects* which, over the years, had been so thoughtlessly and successfully purged. So for the last six or seven years this is what stewarding my plot has meant to me: belonging to a little platoon and working towards building a nectar-sodden habitat for insects to grace, and a refuge of peace and beauty for me and others to enjoy. If what I have done *is* a microcosm of traditional stewardship; and *if* traditional stewardship can help us begin to save, re-institute and foster a natural world we would want our children and their children to inherit, then we might be entitled to hope that bit-by-bit nature can begin to re-emerge in better shape than it is now.

*Don Beech taught sociology and history and is now retired.*

## The English Democrats

MYLES HARRIS

The Polish man sitting next to me in coach D of the Euston to Birmingham express gestured at the view through the train window, 'England!' he said. A wistful smile spread over his face as if he had just glimpsed the face of a friend who had seen better days. England rushed by at 100 mph; a medieval church, a manor house, rolling hills, cottages, a cricket match on a village green.

I looked back at our packed carriage. A family of Bangladeshis were arguing over a takeaway. A woman in a full burka, only her eyes visible, sat two rows up. The rest of the carriage was filled with Indians, Africans, Chinese and Eastern Europeans. I did not hear English and I was the only Englishman. 'How could you have done such a thing?' whispered my neighbour.

I had just read in my newspaper that 1200 illegal economic migrants had been ferried ashore in the last 24 hours at Dover. Who by? Our frontier force. In the last twenty years 10 million foreigners have been allowed to settle in Britain. Nor have things stopped at that. Now that sufficient numbers of foreigners are now settled here a concerted effort is underway to replace Englishness, English culture and the idea of England being a white country, by a modern mixed-race country with a black and Asian culture.

White English children are being taught to despise themselves and their heritage, to make way for their

dark-skinned betters. Great cheers go up when our statues are thrown into rivers and our universities demand the rewriting of our history.

While most people are too frightened to say anything about this attack on our nationhood, the English Democrats are not. For over twenty years they and their leader, solicitor Robin Tilbrook, have advocated an independent England with an English Parliament in control of its frontiers.

This August they held their first annual conference since lockdown on the site of a hunting lodge from where Richard III was told of the landing of Henry Bolingbroke, who became Henry IV and rode to meet his fate at Bosworth.

Those attending the conference were quiet, retiring in manner, and from every section of society, of every age, from young men to a very old soldier with bright blue eyes and string of medals on his chest. The speeches said the sort of things our politicians avoid at all costs.

The Chairman, Robin Tilbrook, ex-Coldstream Guards, ex-school teacher and now a solicitor, opened the meeting with a speech on how the established parties are by now merging into a common anti-democratic view of politics, with nothing to distinguish them, a theme he talked about to me later. Catherine Blaiklock, the main speaker, brought up the subject of Tommy Robinson, a modern Dreyfus, whom she visited in the high security wing of Belmarsh Prison

where she was searched by the guards but not a woman in a burka. How, she asked, had the establishment's idea of freedom of expression sunk so far into the gutter that they locked up their critics?

Catherine Blaiklock was followed by Therese Hirst the English Democrat candidate in two of the Batley and Spens elections, the first following the murder of Jo Cox 2016 when she got a thousand votes and the second 2021 election in which George Galloway was a candidate, when her vote mysteriously dropped to 200. The winner was Labour by 323 votes despite a Conservative vote being confidently predicted. Galloway came third. There were rumours of well filled bags of voting papers disappearing overnight to come back in the morning a good deal thinner. However, Batley and Spens is an unpredictable place. In the 2019 election the English Heavy Woollen Party led by a Polish immigrant got four times the votes of the Brexit party.

At the closing dinner ex-MEP Godfrey Bloom, notorious for smacking an annoying Channel 4 journalist over the head in front of cameras with a rolled magazine, spoke. He has had a colourful life for saying what he thinks rather than what he thinks he should say. He was thrown out of a session of the European Parliament for mocking a fellow member as a fascist and using the words 'Bongo Bongo' in a speech about UK foreign aid when he questioned the millions chucked at African dictators. Channel Four tried to take him down on Bongo Bongo, a crime far more important to them than stolen foreign aid, but Bloom kept returning to the millions stolen and, eventually when the interviewer continually tried to dodge the issue, walked out of the studio. We need more politicians like Bloom.

I asked Tilbrook later why he is so keen on England as an independent state. After all frontiers are crumbling everywhere. Germany let in a million migrants under Merkel, France is awash with illegals and Greece will soon be absorbed into the general anarchy of the Middle East. Italy may share the same fate.

He said while many European countries are relatively new, for example both Italy and Germany are only about 150 years old as single political entities, England and the English have existed as a nation since AD 927 when King Athelstan, great grandson of Alfred the Great, drove out the Vikings and united the country

under the crown.

Our long political existence makes us a key cultural force in the world. English is the international language and English ideas are everywhere. Our pragmatism, inventiveness, dislike of political theory, of grand plans, our love of common sense and mocking humour mark us out as different. While Germans laugh at pratfall jokes, and greed and sex amuse the French, the English roll in the aisles to social gaffes. Who we are and who we think we are are powerful social insights. It is why *Fawlty Towers* and *Mr Bean* are world-wide exports. It's not just our jokes. British jet engines power huge numbers of airliners, as do our microchips the world's mobile phones. From near bankruptcy after the Second World War we are now the sixth richest economy in the world.

Tilbrook fears all this may be coming to an end. We now live in a police state, in which the authorities get their way regardless of what people want. Witness the passing of public health legislation without the consent of parliament, the trampling of basic liberties such as freedom of assembly,

the right to be at the bedside of our dying relatives, the closing of our churches during the pandemic at a time when they should have been open. This latter, backed by the Church of England, told us how completely the establishment had sold out to materialism and monster capitalism.

Why did we sell out? To preserve the NHS, a bureaucratic monster beyond preservation. At what cost? The ruin of our economy. Lockdown also highlighted a much wider gap in the incipient death of England and English culture, the divide between patriots and globalists. It occurred to me that 'Frontiers are racist,' easily translates into 'English and England are racist,' a view reinforced by Tony Blair's government which made it impossible to become a judge unless you demonstrate a lifetime commitment to Equality and Diversity.

The first warning that the English were not buying the idea they were of no account came the night of the Brexit referendum. Who can forget the look of enraged disappointment on the faces of the BBC commentators? How dare, you could see them thinking, the public defy their instructions on how to vote! It is why Brexiteers are the very sort of people who the English Democrats hope to recruit to their banner. And why their election



material reads like a breath of fresh air:

*The English Democrats launched in 2002 are the only campaigning English nationalist Party. We campaign for a referendum for Independence for England; for St George's Day to be England's National holiday; for Jerusalem to be England's National Anthem; to leave properly and fully from the EU; for an end to mass immigration; for the Cross of St George to be flown on all public buildings in England; and we supported a YES vote for Scottish Independence.*

*The English Democrats are England's answer to the Scottish National Party and to Plaid Cymru. The English Democrats' greatest electoral successes to date include: in the 2004 EU election we had 130,056 votes; winning the Directly Elected Executive Mayorality of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council in 2009 and also the 2012 mayoralty referendum; in the 2009 EU election we gained 279,801 votes after a total EU campaign spend of less than £25,000; we won the 2012 referendum which gave Salford City an Elected Mayor; in 2012 we also saved all our deposits in the Police Commissioner elections and came second in South Yorkshire; and in the 2014 EU election we had 126,024 votes for a total campaign spend of about £40,000 (giving the English Democrats by far the most cost-efficient electoral result of any serious Party in the UK!). In the 2015 General Election we had the 8th largest contingent of candidates in England. In the October 2016 Batley & Spen, Westminster parliamentary, by-election we came second and easily beat all three British national parties. In the 2017 Greater Manchester Mayoral election we came 5th beating UKIP and beat the Greens in all but 2 boroughs. In the 2018 South Yorkshire Mayoral election we had 14,547 votes and saved our deposit and with a minimal campaign budget achieved 12.8 per cent of the First Preference votes in Doncaster. In the 2021 Police Commissioner election in Essex, we got 42,831 (10 per cent) First Preference votes, plus probably the same again Second Preference votes for by far the lowest campaign spending of all the candidates.'*

A by-election has been called for Southend West following the murder by an Islamic fanatic of its MP David Amess. The main parties are not contesting the seat, out of respect they say for the deceased MP, the same reason they did not contest the seat of MP Jo Cox murdered by an alleged right-wing fanatic who was mentally ill.

It is of course a lie. The election is necessitated by the single most important political question of the day, immigration. David Amess' alleged murderer is an Islamic terrorist who would not have grown up here had our major political parties not allowed thousands with similar views over the years to enter the country.

They can't even say that mass illegal immigration

is wrong and unfair on the native English population, because the words 'English', 'Wrong' or 'Native population' are unmentionable. Such words have been written out of our language. What freedom do we have when the Electoral Commission will not let a party that puts its objections to mass immigration on its voting slips into the election booth? Has there ever been such a betrayal? If you live in Southend West, look for the English Democrat candidate on the ballot paper and put your cross there.

### Puck's Song

*See you our little mill that clacks,  
So busy by the brook?  
She has ground her corn and paid her tax Ever since  
Domesday Book.*

*See you our stilly woods of oak, And the dread ditch  
beside?  
Oh that was where the Saxons broke On the day that  
Harold died.*

*See you the windy levels spread About the gates of  
Rye?  
Oh that was where the Northmen fled, When Alfred's  
ships came by.*

*See you our pastures wide and lone, Where the red  
oxen browse?  
Oh there was a City thronged and known, Ere London  
boasted a house.*

*And see you, after rain, the trace  
Of mound and ditch and wall?  
Oh that was a Legion's camping-place, When Caesar  
sailed from Gaul.*

*And see you marks that show and fade, Like shadows  
on the Downs?  
Oh they are the lines the Flint Men made, To guard  
their wondrous towns.*

Rudyard Kipling. 1906

*The most effective way to destroy people is to deny  
and obliterate their own understanding of their  
history.*

George Orwell

# Climate Hoax?

James Monteith

Two years of arduous diplomacy have culminated in the COP26 world climate summit agreeing a deal that, though predictably disappointing, offers at least ‘a lifeline’ to meeting the Paris agreement target of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C. At least, this is what most observers seem to agree. Summit president Alok Sharma said the target was still alive but ‘its pulse is weak’. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the planet was ‘hanging by a thread’.

Yet for many conservatives, the very notion that the countries of the Earth should be meeting to decide how potentially catastrophic climate change can be averted is absurd. The anthropogenic global warming theory is a hoax, a grand conspiracy, peddled by the world’s scientific community (or at least by 97 per cent of published climate scientists, according to NASA), who have succumbed to mass hysteria, to ‘groupthink’, which renders them incapable of rational thought, and puts them under the spell of a worldwide political movement to deprive us of our freedoms – the same movement, in fact, that concocted the Covid emergency.

Luckily, a very small minority of ‘climate change denial’ dissenters have escaped this spell, and, with the aid of a host of libertarian and neoconservative organisations, like the American Enterprise Institute, Americans for Prosperity, the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the Heartland Institute, and Britain’s Institute of Economic Affairs, have provided us with an alternative objective view. Although all these have in the past enjoyed generous funding from the likes of ExxonMobil and the Koch foundations (Koch Industries is an oil and gas conglomerate), more recent funding has been from ‘dark money’, that is, through intermediate organisations which conceal the original funder.

So, ranged on the one side, we have the anthropogenic global warming theory, according to which a dangerous warming of the world’s atmosphere is caused by carbon emissions originating from human industrial activity. And on the other side, we have the view that though there may be some global warming taking place, it is (a) nothing to worry about, and (b) not primarily caused by human activity.

Who are we to believe? For the 99.999 per cent of us who are not remotely qualified to understand the intricacies and complexities of glacial/interglacial cycle timescales, global glaciation thresholds, the comparative deposition of carbonates in geologic time periods, solar cycles and radiation variability, volcanic activity, changes in atmospheric composition, Earth orbital shifts, incoming and outgoing atmospheric radiation spectra etc (the list could be extended indefinitely) – let alone understand how

all of these interact to determine our climate – we have no means of knowing. And, so, we are reduced to latching onto websites that confirm our pre-formed view and chucking cherry-picked ‘How do you explain this?’ facts or statistics at each other.

So, for example, we hear from climate change deniers that humans contribute only a tiny per centage of annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and that CO<sub>2</sub> itself forms only a tiny per centage of the Earth’s atmosphere. Case proved. But if we read the rebuttal from climate change proponents, we hear an explanation which runs something like this: (1) Most CO<sub>2</sub> emissions form part of the natural carbon cycle, which ensures that what is generated by one process is absorbed by another – which explains in turn why, before the industrial revolution, levels of CO<sub>2</sub> had remained steady for thousands of years; (2) Because fossil fuel emissions are not part of this cycle, they are not absorbed, and the CO<sub>2</sub> builds up in the atmosphere; (3) Because this process is cumulative, the result has been an unprecedented increase in CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in a short time period; (4) The absolute level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is irrelevant to the argument – even ‘trace’ levels of CO<sub>2</sub> are highly significant in trapping radiation and contributing to global warming, just as they are highly significant in enabling green plants to photosynthesise.

Which is the real science?

The latter account sounds more plausible, if only because it hints at a complex process and deeper scientific understanding, whereas the former does not. Go on to the ‘SkepticalScience’ website <https://skepticalscience.com/argument.php?f=taxonomy> and see over a hundred such ‘climate myths’ (that is, climate change denial myths) rebutted in complex detail. Nevertheless, for all we know, the latter could still all be spurious, all part of a brilliant worldwide hoax perpetrated by the scientific establishment.

All we have left, it seems, is a balance of probabilities. Which is the more likely: that the worldwide community of climate scientists (the 97 per cent) are engaged in a hoax; or that the 3 per cent and their advocates are perpetrating a hoax of their own, aided and abetted by the fossil fuels industry?

Conservatives need not buy into the anti-capitalist dream of a world commune, or worship at the altar of Greta Thunberg. But they need to consider the *possibility* that (a) there is a scientific consensus, and (b) it exists for a very good reason.

*James Monteith is a teacher.*

# Down Among the Antivaxxers

JANE KELLY

After a sad lack of parties for over a year, I was delighted to receive an on line invite to a gathering held by a society hostess at her smart Islington home. I used to love going to her suppers; ‘bangers & mash,’ ‘fish ’n chips,’ rather relaxed things we never ate normally, sat around a large table in her garden annexe. There were staff, and a butler keeping us lubricated, the company was always good including MPs and well-established journalists. When I arrived last week, I mentioned that it had been boiling hot at *Leopoldstadt*, Tom Stoppard’s play in the West End, particularly having to wear a mask. ‘What were you wearing a mask for?’ she asked crossly. I didn’t think anything about that and quickly dived into conversation with a very attractive young man talking about conspiracy theories. I assumed that like me he despised them, but perhaps trying to find an answer to why people seem to be increasingly addicted to their paranoid absurdity. Then he said the words ‘Conspiracy Theory,’ had been invented by the CIA. I didn’t think that was odd, until he began going on and on about a US Intelligence conspiracy to force us all into lockdown, and worse, get us vaccinated against our will with some sinister micro-chip.

‘Well, that conversation went rather wrong,’ I laughed with a friendly, down to earth looking reporter from a tabloid paper. ‘That young man is an anti-vaccer!’ the tabloid journalist stared back at me in silence and it gradually dawned, he was one too. Perhaps because of Stoppard’s play I felt like someone in Germany in the late ’20s who had gone round to a friend’s house and found he had joined the Nazi party without mentioning it, and all the people there were wearing swastikas, and staring at me.

I still couldn’t believe that I was the only one there

who had been vaccinated and went around the room trying to find someone who shared my opinion. There had to be someone; when I pointed out to other guests that the people now dying from Covid were mostly the unvaccinated they said those stats were pure invention. Some seemed convinced that the vaccine caused serious side effects. A young man who told me his father had died from a Covid vaccination after a serious operation

blamed the vaccine. His father had clearly died of something else, but he was convinced. Someone else said the vaccine causes heart inflammation. But that is rare, and more likely to kill you, if you get Covid. Worse, I had people telling me, seriously, that people in Africa and poorer parts of the world, are LUCKY because they have no access to the vaccine. That sounded disgusting. They, wealthy people who had the benefit of

advanced medical science all their lives, were glad that Switzerland is refusing to share any vaccine with poorer people.

Where were all the Tories I usually met there? These people hated the government, accusing bumbling Boris, of all people, of being ‘Fascist’, trying to impose lockdown and vaccines on people for some nefarious power-crazed reason. ‘What kind of government do you want?’ I asked my hostess. No reply. Something libertarian I suppose where people just die off if they have to, and government is so small it cannot impose any kind of control.

My hostess, who I always thought was a rather cold, rational person, told me Bill Gates is part of a conspiracy, taking ‘money and power’ by giving people vaccines they don’t need. Why a man with \$128 billion in his bank account would want to do that she didn’t explain. Perhaps it was more like an episode of the



*Twilight Zone*. I sat eating my supper by myself. When I left, she closed the door rather firmly on me and I don't expect to be going there again. She has since sent me a couple of e-mails since, ranting about my views and about her hatred for the Tory party. I think she has succumbed to some kind of cult.

In a recent *Times* article, Melanie Phillips blamed the largely middle-class 'Wellness Industry'. In the old days this was referred to as the 'Nut-cutlet and sandals brigade', epitomised by wealthy socialists who embraced a back to nature life-style, including nudity, river bathing and vegetarianism, ideas of course also heartily embraced by the Nazis.

In the 1960s there was a resurgence of this 'back to nature' ideal in the Hippy movement, rejecting anything not seen as natural. Followers used homeopathy, ate only expensive organic food and started to shun vaccinations for their children. After the Thalidomide disaster and unease about the MMR vaccine we have also had the growth of hostility towards, 'Big Pharma,' evil drug companies ruthlessly poisoning us for big bucks. There maybe some truth in that, as in the US, a heavily drug-dependent culture, last year Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin painkillers, has reached a £6.3bn settlement and agreed to plead guilty to criminal charges to resolve a probe of its role in fuelling America's opioid crisis.

They admitted to enabling the supply of drugs 'Without legitimate medical purpose'. That deal with the US Department of Justice resolved some of the most serious claims against the firm, but it still faces thousands of cases brought by states and families.

*The Observer* newspaper recently reported that vaccine hostility is linked with the 'Wellness' industry and alternative lifestyles including Ayurvedic healing, meditation now called, 'Mindfulness', and a new one, 'Conspirituality'. This is a female dominated movement where there is an overlap between a belief in conspiracy theories and New Age spirituality, a toxic brew of paranoia, yoga, and juice 'cleanses', for women who feel that they and the whole world need radical 'inner cleansing', and 'de-toxifying'. Once a person has embraced this wellness pseudoscience there is nowhere their unscientific minds can't travel; Medical Science and vaccines created by and for powerful white men who want to control the universe.

In 2017, Saad Omer, a Yale epidemiologist, wrote in the scientific journal, *Nature Human Behaviour*, that vaccine sceptics tended to list 'Purity' and 'Liberty,' as their chief values. These desires exist on the Left and the Right. As a result, we now have both the sandals and nut-cutlet crowd who are passionate about human rights and have turned climate change into a religious doctrine, who believe Capitalism and Big Pharma are

in league to destroy them and the planet, believing the same as the extreme Right, largely not interested in climate change, but also believing there is a conspiracy by rich people out there somewhere, to enslave them, using the Covid vaccine to do it. This cross-fertilisation of deep anxiety goes back a long way. Hitler was fixated on organic food, personal health and 'natural healing'. He wanted to create a 'Pure culture, a nation of healthy vegetarians, far removed from the degeneracy promoted by capitalism.' For bloated, plutocratic Jews in those days, read Bill Gates now.

After my London party I walked back to the tube, wondering how can this have happened? Religion for most of us has gone, vilified for being allied to superstition, but in its absence we find a void filled by all kinds of fantasy. Science is still there but owing to declining education very few of us in the West really know much about it. Listening to *The Life Scientific* on BBC Radio 4 is about as far as most middle-class English people get to hearing about it. How good can science teaching in state schools be, if we consider that in July England's top midwife had to beg pregnant women to get the COVID vaccine after new data showed that the overwhelming majority of pregnant women with the virus had not had a jab? Figures showed that no pregnant women with both doses of the vaccine had been admitted to hospital while ninety-eight per cent of all pregnant women admitted to hospital with COVID-19 had not been vaccinated. No doubt the people at my smart party would have said that information was pure invention.

The divide in our society isn't about men and women, Left and Right, or even rich and poor, it's surely about education. We now have one group obsessed with what they can put into their mouths and bodies, enjoying organic food and fad diets, but a much larger mass, unhealthier and more obese than ever before in our history, deprived of even domestic science and unable to peel and boil a potato, let alone know how to cook a piece of line-caught sea-bream. But at least with the vaccine, they have the excuse of ignorance. The decline in our education isn't just about poor-quality teaching and de-skilling. It's now caught up in the Woke notion that irrefutable facts no longer exist. We junked God some time ago as unprovable, but now have the idea of relative truth, so that your truth might not be 'my truth,' and it's legitimate to pick and choose what to believe according to whim, identity group and social media information. In a major crisis, only the savvy, the cynical, and the increasingly narrow band of the stable and sensible will survive.

*Jane Kelly was a social editor for the Daily Mail.*

# The Virus Cult: Guiding the Masses in the Great Sneeze Forward

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SERGEANT COLDBEER

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They're back. The fanciful characters who bump elbows in greeting and converse from positions six feet and seven inches apart, their steps and signals performed diligently and enthusiastically in the manner of spiritual seekers on the subcontinent, under the unwitting influence of 'pseudo holy men working black magic'. At the first hint of another phase in the cycle of oppression, they have recommenced the pantomime they learned in the spring of 2020, when we were advised to adopt certain unconventional practices for dealing with a recently arrived flu. That advice evolved into a long series of legally dubious regulations, and the widespread observance of the regulations has in turn helped set the nation on course to catastrophe.

The present abuses, in almost every respect more severe than those effected during the worst days of Tudor, Stuart or Protectorate rule, are sustained through bribes paid for by future tax revenue, and through the fanaticism of the Virus Cult, which grows and thrives in equal measure to the collapse and disintegration of all that affords purpose, meaning and happiness to life.

Independent businesses are smashed to smithereens and whole industries brought to the edge of ruin, in a callous reorganisation intended further to concentrate wealth and economic power in the hands of the state and its giant multinational and supranational partners: Pubs and entertainment venues are shut down overnight after centuries of continuous patronage and enjoyment. Church festivals and ceremonies are disrupted because it is asserted that the younger congregants might accidentally kill the older.

Invasions of the freedom of the person, of property, of discussion and of public meeting, of the freedom to travel within the kingdom and to leave or return to it, although no restrictions on immigration, even of the right of accused subjects to trial by jury, and the right to vote in regular free elections – each interference executed in the name of fighting a mysterious pathogen which, despite having quickly become one of the most studied in history, has yet to be shown capable of causing historically remarkable patterns of illness and death.

The obsessive focus on a single, relatively minor

ailment has also transformed the socialised sphere. Total public health spending has multiplied, but the core services remain largely inaccessible. Vital examinations and treatments have been neglected, with devastating consequences for hundreds of thousands of subjects, while many other unfortunates have become the victims of unethical or inadequate procedures and regimens. Homes for the elderly and the disabled are administered as if they were prisons: universities, colleges and schools, when not instructed to be closed, as if they were detention camps.

And every minute in every corner of the land, an official or unofficial busybody browbeats some easy target for disregarding 'the rules'. Since the instruments in question are harmful and illogical, and entail devious stratagems for obtaining compliance and harsh penalties for noncompliance, an atmosphere of anxiety and suspicion has developed and now menaces cities, towns and villages like a flood of smouldering volcano smoke.

The principal belief of the Virus Cult is that the state has a godlike ability to micromanage epidemics; and that it *should* do so, through the arbitrary, permanent removal of individual rights, and the arbitrary, permanent supplanting of individual duties and responsibilities with a general duty to act as commanded. This grotesque creed disguised as a scientific approach to the matter of the public's well-being is practically and constitutionally unjustifiable, yet it retains currency, even as the bleak truth emerges that the years of life lost as a result of approving it will hugely outnumber the years of life it is alleged to be preserving.

Members of the Cult consistently agitate for goals still more preposterous than those put forward by the government. Whereas ministers speak of reducing transmission, for example, the Virus devotees demand nothing less than complete elimination of the dread microbe. Such clamourings nourish the fearful mood among a section of the general public, allowing the ministers to gesture towards this frightened group and proclaim that reluctantly they must tend to the wishes of 'the people'.

As well as providing a political cover, the cultists

naturally support the new system at the moral level. A private employee might doubt the virtue of confining himself and his family, and accomplishing an inferior substitute for his usual work, or no work, in exchange for a reduced income charged mainly to the national debt - actions obviously injurious both to himself and his dependents and to the wider society. The Cult's unceasing chants will remind him that there is no sin which the possibility of saving 'just one life' cannot expiate. In the absence of contradiction from the Church, he can be led to imagine that the system not only prolongs lives but offers a means of automatic pardon and salvation.

Subjects who, deprived of their employment and entire income, are found to be resistant to the phoney doctrine, pose a harder challenge. The solution? Let them acquire resentment of their fellows; or pay them, too, some type of bribe. In either event the old system is undermined.

When, inevitably, the government fails to achieve its official objectives, the Cult carries out its third function: laying blame on the steadfastly noncompliant and nonconformist. No shrewder method can be conceived for redirecting attention from the true cause of the failure: the unreasonable basis of the acts, regulations and instructions themselves.

Thus, the destroyers are enabled to run towards evil; and they are doing so, at an astonishing pace.

Acceptance of the initial abuses has cleared the way for progressively elaborate violations of personal security, liberty and property: repeated, arbitrary requirements to wear restrictive articles of clothing, to endure invasive tests and to receive experimental

injections; coercively implemented biometric 'health passports'; worn or implanted monitoring devices; 'social credit scoring'; universal income schemes; central bank digital currencies. The blueprint for a matrix of absolute control, far in advance of the existing array of surveillance structures, and furnishing the potential for the realisation of horrors and atrocities boundless in dimension.

New scares are already being designed, along with new cults to energise them. If these movements are as successful as the Virus Cult, one flavour of totalitarianism will follow the next, *ad infinitum*, and there will be no restoration of any part of the carefully ordered but free world which our forefathers toiled to build up, and gave their lives to preserve for us, only for it to be lost within decades.

Just the discordant, straining sounds of 'the great state machine', to borrow from Stalin's injudiciously phrased speech of 25th June, 1945; its operation animated by the 'people who are considered 'vintiki'' ('nuts and bolts', or 'cogs'; literally: 'little screws'), ordinary subjects. Man, family and nation, condemned to a programmed, stupefied enslavement, and easily disposed of at the machine supervisors' whim.

In such a future, none will be spared: neither those who agree to betray their higher nature by adhering to the rites of false humanitarianism, nor the courageous souls who refuse.

*Although we searched diligently for the author of this piece we could not find him or her. We invite whoever it is to come forward.*

**The Editor and Staff of the Salisbury Review wish our readers a happy and holy Christmas**



# Last Rites for the Church of England

REVEREND ROD HACKING

When Michael Nazir-Ali, formerly Anglican Bishop of Rochester announced recently his conversion to Rome via the club for other married Anglican clergy, the Ordinariate, he gave as his principal reason that the Church of England had become ‘faddish’. Here in Salisbury, the Cathedral recently announced a ‘Safeguarding Sunday’ and the following week an ‘Anti-Slavery Sunday’ (both true). I have suggested a ‘God Sunday’ and it has been pencilled in for June, though apparently it may lose out to ‘Electric Car Sunday’ which has the advantage of coming with sponsorship and the clergy of the Cathedral will lay down any belief for that (none of which as far as I know is true, but watch this space).

Last Sunday, as reported to me by my wife, a lady collapsed in the main service. A man nearby had been longing to do to face CPR and an ambulance was sought. I asked about the behaviour of the clergy, as to who had rushed over to where the sacrament was reserved for use in an emergency, and holy oils for anointing, about which priest came to offer the Commendatory prayers and to lay on hands and give a blessing. As I had suspected before asking, I knew I was wasting my breath, and as someone who had done such things on a large number of occasions as a parish priest, and who helped train any clergy, I want to say to each of those Canons and other clergy present, ‘What on earth did you get ordained for?’ I am appalled by such a blatant *trahison des clercs* but at least the holy angels arrived in their green garments and took the lady to hospital, even if no longer living but not even slightly assisted by those who should have done so and failed. Still the music is always nice.

I was trained and ordained by the mid-1970s. Concerned by falling numbers, we were largely denied access to the Book of Common Prayer but

I was doubly fortunate. I had worked with Dame Cicely Saunders in St Christopher’s Hospice who taught me it was my DUTY to be there with those whose lives were ending, to pray with them both before and after death, and I was privileged to do so many times. Then as a priest in the East End of Newcastle it was one of my tasks as curate to visit the home of the deceased on the eve of the funeral and to lead prayers with them around the open coffin. After my time with Dame Cicely I have never found the presence of the dead disturbing, though sometimes working with her, the living could be and one of my novels begins with the finding of a body in the mortuary of a hospice. Yet when I was training clergy 15 years or so later, I was saddened that hardly any of them had ever seen a dead body, which with the co-operation of the hospital chaplain and mortuary technician I put right.

So why did the cathedral clergy do nothing? I suspect that in their training this was never dealt with and in becoming Canons their main task is raising money, not the dead.

I hope not, but fear there may be a further reason that the Dean and Chapter of Salisbury Cathedral did not act, and do not visit the homes of those worshipping with them, and that is that they do not believe what they claim to profess about the ‘life everlasting’.

I do know that when my time comes, none of them will come to minister to my needs in my final moments. On the other hand, I’m pretty sure they won’t anyway!

*The Rev Rod Hacking lives 200 yards from Salisbury Cathedral and spends most of his time reading poetry aloud early each morning in the Close, and writing novels, all available from Amazon see [Salisburywriter.com](http://Salisburywriter.com)*

# White HGV Man

GEORGE HOPEWELL

I have a friend who drives an HGV. He works six days a week and starts early, I know this because he often texts at 4.15 am, and later, when I'm blearily prodding my Weetabix, he sometimes rings for a chat. By then he's already loaded, driven to the coast, tipped and returned to the quarry for another load. He'll do two more of these trips per day, hauling stuff to make the country work. One week it's sand or scalplings, the next week it's concrete pipes for Hinkley Point C. Our chats usually involve axles, tonnes, low bridges and thoughtless actions by cyclists.

Despite the recent concerns over recruiting HGV drivers and supply chains, for the *Guardian*-esters around me, 'HGV' remains a dirty word and 'diesel' an even dirtier word. The efficiencies of the Euro 6 diesel engine (less CO<sub>2</sub> than petrol) with AdBlue (less NOx) are lost on them. 'HGV' is tainted (like 'juggernaut', 'Amazon' and 'Boris') and gives them ample opportunities for virtue signalling. In the same way as they hate scum, the *Daily Telegraph*, independent schools and Jacob Rees-Mogg, they loathe HGVs and diesels.

Yet they know nothing of vans and trucks, pit stops and cafés, weighbridges and urinating in laybys. They inhabit a world where a man in a van invisibly does everything for them and HGVs mysteriously deliver all they need. My friend's HGV life is unseen by them, irrelevant except when they find themselves behind him in the middle lane of the M5.

Whilst cursing the world of trucks and diesels, they conveniently ignore that every item of food, every article of clothing, every stick of John Lewis furniture, every new kitchen and set of tennis balls has come to them by diesel van and HGV, usually after arriving from the other side of the world in a gigantic diesel-engined container ship.

Last Sunday, they organised a *Temporary Playing Out Road Closure Order*. This involves arranging with the council to close the road to allow children to play. Perfectly worthy, but it is not as if we live in some inner-city hellhole where children take their life in their hands when they open their front doors. Their sizeable houses have large gardens, there are acres of parks in the vicinity and their children go to schools with extensive sports fields. What they were doing, of course, was broadcasting their virtue – flagging

their moral stance, without any need for effort or self-sacrifice, effectively, giving two fingers to the diesel delivery driver.

We urgently need a pathway to a cleaner, better world, where no fossil fuels are burnt, no nuclear fission turns turbines and HGVs and Mercedes Sprinters run on freshly-squeezed pomegranate juice. But we are not quite there yet. Half a dozen solar panels on your roof does not mean Hinkley Point C can be scrapped. A new £30,000 Honda e will not prevent my HGV friend burning 600 litres of diesel a day. We have to act but we have to be pragmatic. My cousin, who works in lubricating oil, pointed out that all the fuel savings that could have been realised through his super-efficient oils have been cancelled out by the fashion for bigger and heavier SUVs. He also pointed out that smaller, less prestigious, electric cars would be lighter and far more battery efficient.

You may sense that I feel besieged by the middle-classes around me. I suppose it builds up over the years. There's the posters in the windows (SAVE THE NHS / THANK GOD FOR IMMIGRANTS / PLANET OVER PROFIT), which require nothing more than pressing 'Print' and recycling four blobs of Blu Tac. They are so routinely anti-government that they seem to be anti-governance itself. Here we are in the most beautiful country in the world with a reasonable democracy, where most things work and most politicians and civil servants are doing their best. Yet my neighbours are consumed with a self-righteous indignation about everything – a kind of sneering BBC *Today*/Channel 4 rant fuels their lives. Thank goodness that fuel isn't diesel or there would be none left.

Their need for point-scoring against HGVs and diesel means they are so out of touch with reality, they inhabit an alternative universe, a bit like the *Insulate Britain* tribe. They cycle to the farmers' market but voraciously ignore the fact that every single van in the market carpark is a diesel and that their whole lives are dependent on diesel. Sure, things have to change, but let us change things judiciously.

The major thing we can all do is cut down on our consumption. They may have had their traffic-free Sunday, but on Monday the usual convoys of Hermes, DPD and Ocado Mercedes Sprinters returned to deliver the mountains of goodies we all require today.

We forgive hypocrisy, it is built into everything. It is just extreme hypocrisy that comes across as vulgar. Transport is a valid but easy target, yet mass consumption is the real problem we can all tackle more easily. Consumption is bound up with fashion, status, self-worth and success and these connections are hard to break. Even an electric car is a trophy item when it's a 155mph TESLA. We must deal with the real wheel world, not inhabit the fizzy froth of life that makes us feel better about ourselves but requires no self-denial. My neighbours should not delude themselves – their pleasant lives are built on drivers waking at 4am and firing up their 16-litre Scania's and 40 tonne DAFs.

During lockdown, it was interesting to hear the BBC endlessly debate the merits of working at home.

Naturally, the young graduates of the BBC knew little of the real world of quarries, mining, factories, forklifts, tractors, warehousing and distribution. Like my neighbours, their idea of work was essentially tapping buttons on laptops and holding phones.

Maybe my friend's boss should have handed out plastic suction-cup steering wheels to each of his HGV drivers? They could have stuck them to their laptops and with accompanying noises of 'vroom vroom' – all children and grandchildren invited, worked at home.

Think of all the diesel that would have saved.

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

## Who Will Stop Red China?

DARYL McCANN

Former SAS captain and conservative Australian politician, Andrew Hastie, caused a stir back in 2019 when he likened the rise and rise of the People's Republic of China to the assertiveness of Nazi Germany in the lead up to the Second World War. Beijing complained that remarks like Hastie's were a danger to 'peace, co-operation and development' and yet all the evidence points to the likelihood that Xi Jinping really is set on a course for war and only awaiting the right moment to strike.

Consider, for instance, a recent report in the *Washington Times*, that China has launched a new anti-satellite weapon into space that is 'capable of grabbing and crushing American satellites'. What could its purpose be but a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of cutting the telephone cables between Warsaw and the Nazis prior to invasion? Now Beijing has tested a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile that flies around the earth before speeding towards its target. US officials, according to the *Financial Times*, admitted being stunned by the progress of China's hypersonic weaponry. Who will thwart Red China? And have we left it all too late?

Announced in September 2021, the Aukus trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States is an acknowledgement – a belated one – that we are in dangerous territory. Xi's bristling belligerence is apparent on every front. Thus, Red China has lately shattered ties with India, the Philippines and Australia, just to name three countries. For India, it was a violent skirmish in July 2020 on

their shared Himalaya border that sent relations into a tailspin. The PLA Navy's threat, earlier this year, to sink Filipino fishing boats encroaching on the PRC's ambit claim to the South China Sea put an end to the Xi-Duterte rapport. Finally, China's brutal 2020-21 trade war against Australia, as detailed in these pages, had entirely undone a half-century of rapprochement. Despite Canberra signing a Free Trade Agreement with Beijing as recently as December 2015, almost nobody in Australia expects Xi Jinping to keep his word on anything.

The fear in Australia is that Beijing has decided that our future, short of being invaded by the PLA, is to be a vassal state of their version of Imperial Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. That, in many ways, was the way things were going before April 2020 when the Scott Morrison government called for an independent inquiry into the origins of Covid-19. Australia, it should be noted, almost entirely averted the Great Financial Crisis (2007-08) and its painful aftermath because of China's demand for our iron ore, coal, liquid petroleum gas, timber, wool, dairy products, beef, seafood, barley, wine et al – and our equally insatiable appetite for inexpensive goods manufactured in the PRC, not to mention tens of thousands of fee-paying university students coming from China. It seemed like an economic marriage made in heaven right up until the moment our federal government suggested Xi's regime did some explaining about the relationship between the Wuhan Institute of

Virology and the genesis of the SARS-Cov-2 virus.

Most Australians have understood Beijing's message loudly and clearly: either bend the knee to Beijing or feel the wrath of Red Emperor Xi, possessor of the second most powerful navy in the world and quite likely the most effective one in the Indo-Pacific region. The very mention by the Australian government that Taiwan should not be forcibly annexed by the PRC was enough for Xi's regime, through its English-language mouthpiece, the *Global Times*, to warn that China's long-range ballistic missiles now have the capacity to target 'Australian soil'. Suddenly a half-century of reassurances from our political class that Australia could profit from our business dealings with the PRC while keeping its independence and democracy look absurd.

The announcement of the Aukus pact is an admission, at least from the Australian side of things, that mutual economic self-interest in the Indo-Pacific region could override the geopolitical imperatives of a country such as Communist China. The decision by Australia to acquire a fleet of eight nuclear-powered submarines, built with the assistance of the US and the UK, is welcome but comes very late in the day. It will be years before we take ownership of those submarines, long after the PLA Navy brings online its next generation nuclear-powered submarine, the 096 class, expected to carry up to 24 JL-3 missiles. The PLA Navy, according to Admiral Charles Reid, Commander of US Strategic Command, is currently modernising its nuclear and conventional forces at such a rate that 'breathtaking' may not be a strong enough term to convey the scale of it all. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's warning to the UK that it should 'think twice' about joining the Aukus pact because it 'could trigger an arms race and provoke confrontation' is up there with the most hypocritical pronouncements of the twenty-first century.

Xi Jinping gives every appearance of going for broke in his quest to make the PRC the hegemon of the Indo-Pacific. Conquering Taiwan would go a long way to achieving his ambition because it would not only critically undermine Japan's ability to defend itself against the PLA Navy but humiliate the United States and effectively eject it from the region. Pax

Americana in the Indo-Pacific would then be well and truly superseded by Pax Sinica. The invasion of Taiwan, unfortunately, is not beyond the capabilities of Beijing. The PRC was not a signatory to the 1987 US-Soviet INF Treaty and, consequently, developed its PLA Rocket Force into an integral feature of any effective invasion of Taiwan. Additionally, for the last three decades, according to Ian Easton, author of *The Chinese Invasion Threat* (2017), the PLA has focused 'like a laser beam' on finding a way to conquer Taiwan.

Who will stop Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in their 'unswerving historical task' to 'solve the Taiwan issue'? Democratic Taiwan, governed by President Tsai Ing-wen, has been investing in every kind of defensive technology, from Harpoon Coastal Defensive Systems to High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, in the hope of turning her independent

country into an island fortress. The idea is that a high-tech asymmetrical defensive capability might make Taiwan 'indigestible' even to an invasion force of a million PLA soldiers and dissuade Xi from invasion. The danger, of course, is that Ing-wen's evolving hedgehog strategy will only encourage Helmsman Xi to invade sooner rather than later. Another reason for Xi to go early is the capriciousness – for the want of sharper term – of President Joe Biden. At a



*Emperor Xi Jinping*

so-called Town Hall Meeting in October this year, Biden pledged to defend Taiwan if Beijing launched an invasion – and yet, after the debacle in Afghanistan, Xi's regime is not necessarily going to take any commitment made by Biden too seriously.

A further problem, disturbingly, is that in the Indo-Pacific, the PLA Navy might have grown more powerful than the US Navy, even if we add to that the UK's HMS Queen Elizabeth currently deployed to the South China Sea. If Xi decides to pull the lever and go for broke in the South China Sea, foreign warships are likely to be destroyed by the PLA Navy's anti-ship ballistic missile technology and sophisticated tracking capabilities. And that's only the start of it. For several years, it has been speculated that the PLA's Rocket Force could take out US naval bases throughout the western Pacific, including Yokosuka, Japan, in a matter of minutes. The latest report is that the PLA Navy and the Russian Navy are engaging in

their first ever joint patrol of the western Pacific, in this case circumnavigating Japan. Meanwhile, Japan's Self-Defense Forces are undertaking a nation-wide military exercise, involving 100,000 soldiers, the first in four years. The drums of war are beating if we have the ears to listen.

Some experts contend that talk of war is not only unnecessary but counter-productive, hastening the very thing that everybody wishes to avoid. Their argument is that the theme of 'peace, cooperation and development' has been the mainstay of the PRC ever since paramount leader Deng Xiaoping and his 'pragmatists' gained control of the CCP in 1976. The Party could not give the Chinese people freedom, but it did promise them a better life, something it has largely delivered over the past forty or so years. But those days are gone. For a start, enormous cracks are beginning to appear in China's economy, including power shortages and an end to the property boom. In any case, the ideological glue holding the PRC together since Xi Jinping took

over the reins of power in 2012 is not so much the prospect of a better life but an imperious form of xenophobia.

Bill Hayton, in *Invention of China*, refers to the Xi's creed as 'national socialism with Chinese characteristics'. It was, after all, Xi's ultra-nationalist rhetoric at the 100th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the CCP that drew the greatest roar from the crowd. The economic undoing of the PRC, now well underway, does not signal the end of Helmsman Xi's monomaniacal ambitions but, instead, the likely consummation of them. Greater glory on the world stage, he believes, will not only save the regime but elevate his status to that of Mao Zedong. The future of the world becomes murkier by the hour.

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

## How I failed as a Do Gooder

MARY SYDNEY

During a Zoom group I got a call from the organiser of a mental health charity where I have been a volunteer for five years. The quiet voice told me I was banned from going on any more of their group outings. Once a month I received a social calendar listing events which I discussed with someone I have specifically befriended, hoping he will come along. He rarely does, suffering from what's now called, 'Social anxiety'. But he did agree to join a visit to Tiggyswinkles, a refuge for abused hedgehogs near Thame. I took along an etching of a baby hog as a gift.

On the bus I told him it was difficult to get a flu jab and a woman behind piped up, 'Do you mind, your negativity is triggering me.' We were both surprised by her aggression but I tried to pass it off with a joke. 'I think we have free speech on the bus,' I said. Obviously, we don't. She reported me and I am off the bus for good.

'Negativity' and 'Triggering,' are two 'Woke' key words, and against them there is little defence. 'Triggering,' a violent term, of course imported from the US, is now one of the most powerful words in our language after 'race' and 'gender'. People these days can be astonishingly easily 'triggered' going off like a Walther P-38 at a proliferating range of words and

images, usually from the wicked pre-puritan past.

An espionage thriller on BBC Radio 4 extra, made in 1964, was preceded by a strong 'trigger warning'. I listened hard for a week but couldn't find anything offensive, except that the Scottish characters sounded crusty and eccentric. That presumably constituted racism or its lesser cousin, 'stereotyping'. *Dad's Army* now has a health warning as does *Rumpole of the Bailey* on Talking Pictures TV. That series really takes one back to the drink sodden days of the 1970s and recently included a crossword puzzle clue, 'Coloured Royals,' answer, 'Brown Windsor'. That shot out of the screen as something utterly 'offensive' another woke key word, which would never be included in a modern program.

I didn't return to Zoom after being sacked, feeling extremely 'triggered' myself although more deflated than anything. I felt like crying but didn't, as I was brought up not to. I was told I could take the matter up with the trustees, but what would be the point; the words used to attack me were right up to the mark. They meant: 'Your words have caused me damage.' Very hard to refute as no evidence is required. We often hear the same ones used to mean, those words used by someone in the distant past, or the speech about to be

made will create a 'dangerous environment' for such and such a protected group. Whichever way they're used, they're aimed at controlling other people's thought and language by use of an emotional sledgehammer.

The 'triggeree' had reported me previously. On a previous trip she had downloaded her life to me, lived mainly as part of a cult. I had been fascinated, but later she had accused me of 'asking intrusive questions'. The organiser in another quiet phone message, had advised that if anyone started telling me anything personal, I should disengage and change the subject. Since, I've always done that, although it feels odd. When a man told me he had been in hospital following a suicide attempt, (the word suicide is now non pc) I asked him if he had noticed the heron by the lake, rather like someone from my parent's generation who never talked about anything intimate with anyone.

Volunteering as a 'do-gooder', now involves negotiating the new rules of Woke, which has tentacles around the equality laws, Health & Safety, and an obsession with privacy so strong that even doctors cannot pass information to each other. I began my chequered career as a volunteer after surviving a serious illness in 2010. I had been treated at the Hammersmith Hospital and became a visitor affiliated to their Chaplaincy. It represented all faiths but as far as I could tell only the Catholic chaplain was really effective, visiting Catholic patients at any hour or day, regardless sometimes of police cordons around beds. He could do that because he knew who was there through information from his church. CofE chaplains were restricted by the Data Protection Act, lacking any cohesive group of church goers to keep them informed. We just had to potter around, during working hours, hoping someone might ask for attention. I covered a wide range of wards and found visiting long-stay patients, 'bed blockers', the most rewarding. Sometimes if they were discharged with nowhere suitable to go, I would phone the council on their behalf. I wasn't supposed to do anything extra but the hospital was so big and busy no one checked up on me.

When I moved to Oxford in 2014, things were very different in a much smaller town. There I found we were really in the new age of 'safeguarding', and 'patient centred care'. When I tried to visit a neighbour in hospital who had fallen and broken her wrists, I was told I couldn't do so without her consent. I could use my mobile to call her in the ward. She couldn't use one, so I wandered around until I found her and walked in. There were no nurses about, only one exhausted care assistant, and they were both pleased to see me. Later I became a visitor in a small unit for older patients

where I met a woman who didn't know her husband was in another bay close by. I told her and they had a happy reunion. A nurse told me that as she hadn't mentioned him, they hadn't told her. It was against his confidentiality. I asked a man of ninety who was about to be discharged and lived alone, if he wanted me to contact his church so they could know he was coming out and visit him. Then I was accused of breaking his confidentiality. I was also reprimanded for giving a man a glass of water, even though it was on the tray over his bed. No one can give liquids except an 'appointed person'. I felt disheartened that this new vigilance preferred someone to be at home alone and thirsty rather than follow what seemed to me to be common sense, but you might as well talk to a hedgehog about its fleas as a woke person about nuance and proportion.

Instead of kindness, also ironically and unjustly, a Woke concept, with 'kindness' in language an ideal, we seem to be engaged in a rigorous quest for ideal, virtuous behaviour, or 'behaviours' in the new parlance, and everything is now predicated on a dread of risk. The Harold Shipman case, when a lone doctor spent most of his career deliberately killing his elderly patients, had a huge impact on thinking about the role of doctors. It was a one off, but doctors, now mainly deprived of their white coats as that might make them look too powerful, are seen as a serious threat, while even chaplains and visitors are all possible wandering psychopaths with evil intent. The Shipman case has formed a toxic brew with Woke politics, obvious from the language that resulted from the case, including articles in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, which attributed that the lone disaster to, 'Paternalism', 'Patriarchy' and 'deference'. Those old cultural traits have been diligently replaced by the, 'Expert patient initiative'. and 'The patient as a source of control'. Or as vile, non-pc people might put it, handing the asylum over to the lunatics to run for themselves.

I do not believe that doctors, visitors or charity volunteers are much of a threat, indeed the majority of them are trying to do good. And as one of what is now the older generation, which once believed, in the optimistic 1960s, it had successfully embraced the emotions, it's hard to understand our new culture which constantly tries to trump reason with emotion, often based on fear. Charles Darwin wrote in his 1872 work, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, that, trigger warning here! Some of his language maybe 'offensive' – 'Savages weep copiously from very slight causes while Englishmen rarely cry, except under the pressure of the acutest grief'.

What would he make of BBC interviews now, where most of the interviewed can be guaranteed to break down apparently overwhelmed with personal

grief based on his or her, ‘Lived experience’? There’s hardly an aspect of life from miscarriage to shortages of petrol which doesn’t produce prolonged and much approved hysteria. I was recently invited to join a church discussion group about CofE attitudes to sex and ‘gender’, reassured that it would take place in a ‘safe space’, as opposed to the usual riotous church events where parishioners are regularly garrotted and knifed.

Two good things may have come out of my

banishment from coach trips; the befriended, so long unresponsive has said he won’t go on any trips without me, and has complained to the trustees on my behalf, so he must be getting better. And Tiggywinkles liked the etching so much they’re displaying it in their new museum next to my name. I wish I could be there when my ex-charity makes a return visit, to see just how triggering that will be.

*Mary Sydney is a social commentator.*

## Conservatism as a Disease?

FRANK FUREDI

Anyone exposed to Netflix and the Hollywood media or is even remotely familiar with campus life will know that conservatism is both culturally devalued and portrayed as toxic. Conservative characters are portrayed as mediocre and undistinguished individuals who possess outdated and unattractive sentiments. Though far more pervasive today than in the past, the cultural and intellectual devaluation and marginalisation of conservatism has a long history.

J S Mill, the 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal philosopher, who described the Conservative party as ‘the stupid party’ stated that his attribution of intellectual inferiority was not merely directed at the Party but also at people who possessed a conservative outlook. When criticised for his remark, Mill replied that ‘I never meant to say that the Conservatives are generally stupid. I meant to say that stupid people are generally Conservative’.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century Mill’s derision towards stupid conservatives has become integral to the modernists’ intellectual outlook. Its claim about the supposed intellectual inferiority of conservatives was often asserted because those who remained stuck in the past and insisted on retaining outdated customs and traditions, lacked imagination and the capacity to learn from new experience. From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, conservatives were said to be conformist with closed minds, so they were likely to be left behind in the intellectual stakes. Many intellectuals assumed that only those criticised the existing state of society could develop a capacity for abstract and sophisticated thought.

The intellectual and moral depreciation of

conservatism became worse after the Second World War. Right wing and conservative ideas have become marginalised within the key cultural and intellectual institutions of western society. In a frequently cited statement, the American literary critic Lionel Trilling declared in the 1949 *Preface* to his collection of essays that right wing ideas no longer had any cultural significance:

*In the United States at this time liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition. For it is the plain fact that nowadays there are no conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation.*

Trilling’s statement resonated with the Anglo-American cultural elites at the time. And his association of the conservative mind with irritable mental gestures indicated that it had become the target of medicalisation. Since the late forties, the social sciences in general and psychology in particular, has played an important role in providing scientific legitimacy to claims about the inferior intellectual and moral status of the conservative mind.

From the 1930s onwards, many mental health professionals assumed that right wing and conservative emotions and attitudes served as markers for psychological problems. Conservative personality traits were diagnosed like symptoms of a medical condition. Conservatives were not simply wrong but they were also ill. This argument was outlined in one of the most influential social science texts of the post Second World War era, *The Authoritarian Personality*. Theodor Adorno from the Frankfurt School and like-

minded colleagues claimed that there were personality traits that distinguished right wing and potentially fascist type individuals from democratic ones.

Although presented as a work of objective scientific research, *The Authoritarian Personality* should be interpreted as a moral critique of traditional forms of socialisation. Its research and arguments appear to be founded on the *a priori* assumption that authority distorts personality development. The authors were hostile towards conservative family values and practices such as the exercise of parental discipline, the value of obedience and the close identification of children with their parents. Their sentiments, which pre-existed the 'research' were then recast through the language of science.

The chapter on parents and children by Else Frenkel-Brunswik, is a moral critique of family life in psychological jargon. Its argument is based on the simplistic assumption that strict parenting breeds authoritarian personality types, who then turn out to be potential fascists

A few observers have criticized the politicized agenda that underpinned *The Authoritarian Personality*. Social critic Christopher Lasch argued, that by equating mental health with left-wing politics and associating right-wing politics with an invented 'authoritarian' pathology, the book's goal was to eliminate authoritarianism by 'subjecting the American people to what amounted to collective psychotherapy – by treating them as inmates of an insane asylum'.

During the 1950s and 1960s the arguments advocating the thesis of an authoritarian personality helped the cause of those wanting to devalue conservatism morally. Unattractive personality traits were added to the list of right-wing mental deficits. Often the term conformist was used interchangeably with that of authoritarian.

Distinctions between conformism and non-conformism and between an open and closed mind conveyed important moral and political differences. And these differences corresponded to the distinction between the left/liberal and the right/conservative. Psychology was harnessed to claim that the concerns of conformist right-wing people were expressions of emotional 'status anxiety'. During the Cold War,

leading American liberal commentators such as Richard Hofstadter and Lionel Trilling claimed that conservatism did not need to be taken seriously since it had no important arguments.

Psychological studies of personality often directed its fire against those possessing conservative psychological traits. University of Pennsylvania psychiatrist Kenneth Appel stated that conservatism was itself a personality disorder. The liberal political commentator, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr insisted that American conservatives were guilty of 'schizophrenia'. Leading social scientists, such as Riesman and Hofstadter 'defined, conservatism as a problem of abnormal psychology, a failure of intolerant, uninformed, and uneducated individuals to adjust to the complex modern world'.

In recent years numerous so-called studies have

been published purporting to prove the intellectual inferiority of conservative people. An example of this form of tendentious research is the study published by two Canadian academics recently. Titled 'Bright Minds and Dark Attitudes Lower Cognitive Ability Predicts Greater Prejudice Through Right-Wing Ideology and Low Intergroup Contact' it suggests that stupid simpletons go on to become prejudiced right-wingers. Some psychologists claim that their research shows that socially conservative people

feel more insecure than liberal. Others have discovered that liberals are far better at reorganising their thoughts in flexible ways than conservatives.

Advocacy research claims to have discovered that 'religious conservatives make poorer moral decisions than liberals'. Some psychological studies have concluded that liberals and conservatives differ in cognitive style. As you would expect, liberal cognitive styles are far more attractive than those of their conservative peers, 'liberals are more flexible, and tolerant of complexity and novelty, whereas conservatives are more rigid, are more resistant to change, and prefer clear answers'. Liberals also possess greater 'neurocognitive sensitivity' to cues than their far more rigid conservative counterparts.

The representation of conservatives as less intelligent than their left-wing counterparts is frequently communicated by 'research' on the so-called conservative syndrome. The hypothesis of



'we don't like this history.  
we want it changed!'

this syndrome is that conservatism and low cognitive ability are directly correlated.

A commentator in the progressive magazine *Mother Jones* wrote in 2014, that ‘Ten years ago, it was wildly controversial to talk about psychological differences between liberals and conservatives. Today, it’s becoming hard not to.’ This commentator gets it totally wrong. For many decades talking about the psychological contrast between liberals and conservatives has been far from ‘wildly controversial’.

The psychological devaluation of conservatism plays a significant role in influencing the way that people perceive political life. It is important to realise that the language of psychology permeates all dimensions of public life. Its values have displaced moral ones while the therapeutic ethos provides the normative framework through which individuals make sense of their self. Its pronouncement matters and its diagnosis of the conservative mind brands it with the stamp of intellectual and moral inferiority.

Once outside the psychological laboratory, this science serves as a cultural weapon used to invalidate the moral status of conservative minded people. As Mark Proudman stated:

*The imputation of intelligence and of its associated characteristics of enlightenment, broad-mindedness, knowledge and sophistication to some ideologies and not to others is itself therefore a powerful tool of ideological advocacy.*

Making fun of the ‘outdated’ views of conservative people and exposing their traditional ways to ridicule is one way of assuming the status of moral superiority. Using the authority of science to legitimate this ridicule further strengthens this claim to moral authority.

Psychology plays an important role in the workings of 21<sup>st</sup> century anti-conservative ideology. It provides important intellectual resources for the construction of unattractive conservative stereotypes. In an age where identity really counts it continually seeks to devalue and de-legitimate the conservative identity. In this way the appeal of conservatism – especially to the young – is significantly diminished.

Challenging psychology’s stereotype of the conservative mind is long overdue.

*Frank Furedi’s 100 Years of Identity Crisis: The Culture War Over Socialisation is published by De Gruyter.*

## A Sentimentalist

THEODORE DALRYMPLE

A sentimentalist,’ said Oscar Wilde, ‘is simply one who wants to have the luxury of an emotion without paying for it. We think we can have our emotions for nothing.’ To this definition, we might add a new twist: namely that a sentimentalist is one who wants the luxury of an emotion while making others pay for it. Let the heavens fall, so long as we feel good about ourselves.

Sentimentality allows or encourages us to want six impossible things before breakfast. In the sentimentalists’ world, there are, or must be, no tragic choices: we can have it all. *Desiderata* must be compatible and never contradictory. Thus, we can keep the lights and heating on and change to electric vehicles without generating electricity or other forms of energy, at the same time as producing no additional pollution. Collateral damage and the possibility, or inevitability, of unintended consequences play no part in the sentimentalists’ world-view, which completely

lacks a sense of irony. For the sentimentalist, what counts is the purity, or the purported purity, of his own intentions, before which he stands, as it were, in admiration. I mean well, therefore I’m good; and if I’m good, everything that I do is good.

It takes little by way of self-examination to know that motives are often mixed and seldom pure, which is why sentimentalists avoids self-examination. Even evident kindness may be admixed with less laudable motives, such the desire for the praise of others, or even the desire to humiliate the beneficiary. This does not make the expression of kindness any the less desirable, or its opposite any the more so, but we ought always to be aware, without thereby becoming cynical, that both the world and we ourselves are complex and contradictory.

No unbiassed observer of Greta Thunberg, for example, would conclude that she desired only to save the planet, and that no other emotions were present in her soul. She loves the planet in the same way

than Lenin loved humanity. Hatred and resentment are as clear as daylight in her expression, which are emotions by no means incompatible with the grossest sentimentality; nor does she eschew the pleasures of self-righteousness. When she said that her childhood had been stolen, she was in effect claiming a right to the pity of others, for what is more pitiable than a childhood stolen, like that of Dickens sent to the blacking factory? She was justifying her self-pity, that most common but delusory and deluding of emotions. As a self-proclaimed victim, she was pre-disqualifying criticism of her pronouncements, for to criticise a victim is to victimise him or her a second time.

The state of the environment is a legitimate cause for concern, of course: no one who has breathed the air of a polluted city or noticed the disappearance of songbirds, for example, could doubt it. But even now, if the childhood of an upper-middle class Swedish child had been stolen, it must surely have been by something other than the rising carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere in Scandinavia. This kind of exaggeration is sentimental. If her childhood was indeed stolen, she was pointing to a wrong cause, perhaps the better to avoid thinking about the right one, which must have been much more personal and therefore authentically painful; or she was simply lying, and her childhood was not stolen.

She has taken advantage of a quadruple pre-emptive lock against criticism: her status as a child, her status as a sufferer from some kind of mental disorder, her status as a victim, and her espousal of a cause deemed so good as to be beyond dispute by decent persons. To criticise a child for her views is like taking sweets from her; to criticise an ill or handicapped person is to lack the sympathy due to the suffering or difficulties caused by his or her condition; to criticise a victim, of all people, is to make him or her suffer all over again. To criticise the advocate of a cause is to deny all validity of the cause itself.

The cult of the victim is perhaps the most pernicious aspect of modern sentimentality. It stimulates false claims to victimhood, and its associated helplessness; it encourages victimhood not as an inevitable episode in life but as a career path; it discourages genuine self-examination, substituting self-exculpation; it suggests a false dichotomy between that of victims and perpetrators, with nothing in between. This latter is particularly disastrous in practice, for it leads to the search for scapegoats, always tempting when things go wrong, as they always do, sooner or later. This search soon turns to vindictiveness, if it does not start with it.

One of the reasons for the sanctification of the victim is the decline of the Christian understanding of the human condition. The desire to retain the Christian

virtues but without their Christian underpinnings, just as Chesterton said, leads directly to sentimentality. We must be kind, we must not judge, but equally we must not refer to Original Sin, which in the religious view makes each of us imperfect beings, each of in need of redemption from sin. On the contrary, our defects have discernible causes which do not include our propensity and capacity to do wrong knowingly because of our wayward nature.

A case in point is that of addiction, in which the agency of the addicted person himself is often downplayed, indeed denied altogether, so that he becomes a pure victim, without moral reproach. Addiction is then an illness plain and simple, like Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis. We want the addict to be the helpless victim of something that just happens to him because, being compassionate, we want to help him, for addicts often do suffer and suffer greatly; but we can only justifiably do so on our worldview if he is a *bona fide* victim. Therefore, we go through intellectual contortions in order to make him one, ignoring the most obvious considerations, for example that an injecting heroin addict, in order to become one, has many things to learn and obstacles to overcome, such as where to obtain his heroin, how to prepare it, how to inject it and so forth. The addict addicts himself because he wants to do so, not from ignorance, and there is no direct or unbroken mechanical link between the conditions of his life and addiction without the intervention of his human choice. The significance of this is deliberately lost on the sentimentalist for he wants his victim and he wants him pure so that he may rush to his salvation which, of course, he fails to produce or procure precisely because his sentimentality has blinded him to his radical impotence because he is dealing with a human being rather than an object. The sentimentalist is constantly running after soap bubbles in the hope of capturing them without bursting them.

To have the luxury of our emotions with paying the price for them, we are willing, indeed eager, to overlook the intractability of the world. We want cheap energy so that no one should suffer, but we do not want to produce it cheaply by any means available, so that we may congratulate ourselves on our care for the surface of the planet. We may soon discover just how deep is our commitment to saving the planet when we shiver indoors and have to resort to candles to see in the dark. Sentimentality is often closely allied to hypocrisy.

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

# An Old Soviet Soldier

MARK MANTEL

I'm not yet old enough to perk up my ears every time an old man dies. Yet I was saddened to learn that an old communist I had known gave up the ghost recently. I had visited his St Petersburg apartment about fifteen winters ago and we tossed back many tumblers of Ararat cognac. The Armenian stuff Churchill was fond of, and yes, properly called 'cognac' after it won a taste test back in the day (*See, Wiki*).

I will call him Vanya: Grim. Gray. Gaunthands resting on a carved cane. The graves of many comrades reclaimed by nature long ago. He was neatly dressed and had a certain Soviet kind of cleanliness that is somehow different from Western cleanliness. I believe he had been a military engineer.

He said things like: 'Poetry is food for the soul. A man who rejects it is a beast.' And he recited countless poems from memory.

I remember he mentioned how his teachers, when he was a boy, would take the classes on 'literary walks' to the places associated with the great masters of Russian literature and how everything was woven in with the books read in class. These peregrinations, through boulevards and alleys, hit every spot where the old, rarified culture still hovered. And all the important names stuck in little Vanya's cranium. 'Literature reconciles us to existence...' he added, 'Our people will never accept a relativistic education. For us, literature, music, even architecture, is a promise that the world is good. We will always be so, whatever way things go.'

He even hammered on a piano and produced a melancholic thunder of real beauty. And something he said stayed with me: 'I cannot, on principle,

accept official religion, yet I believe music comes to our world from another purer world. It is the highest form of Platonism. And, for good or ill, it is not possible for an artist to be an atheist.'

We talked more about Pushkin and Prokofiev than Perestroika and the former Politburo. But he did opine that Russia 'needed Putin' or it would fall into 'banditry, anarchy and financial feudalism'.

There was a photograph of a sturdy aproned woman in a flowing skirt, like a Gypsy's, on his row of endless books. 'That was my Tanya,' he said.

At one point, he put some drops on his tooth. Apparently, he'd had the same toothache since time out of mind. But when I asked if it was hard to get a dentist appointment, he only gave me a bemused look, like my whole civilization was made of soft stuff or something.

And what made it odd was his declaration that 'all disease comes from the teeth or the nerves'.

Anyways, what really confounds me about Vanya is: *Why did I like him?* It makes no sense!

The fact is, I can't bear progressives. When I was younger, I would 'exchange ideas' and all. But these days my brain is too full for that. I've got to forget something before anything new gets in. So how could I like a near Stalinist when I can barely stomach a deconstructionist? Was I some sort of perverse hypocrite? Am I really that unfixed in principle?

But soon I figured things out: It seems, deep down, I don't measure a man by ideology. Yet I have been contaminated by the leftist doctrine that the human person is only a mirage 'constructed' by the ever-changing flow of ideas, or else a bundle



*The abandoned Stalin Railway, Siberia, Part of the Gulag*

of biologically determined wants in the case of homosexuality. In America, this is especially so, because our entire national life is built on ephemeral concepts. And so, our common destiny depends, lopsidedly, on whatever dominant ideas happen to float in the air. Chesterton noticed this when he said that in England it isn't so much what a man thinks, since everyone knows how he spends his time: Lord So-and-So might be an anarchist, but he'll still dress for dinner, Cambridge spy cells notwithstanding.

Yes, I liked our Communist simply because he was a good man. He had a sense of personal honor as punctilious as that of any knight who had donned shining armor. And shall I say it? This Marxist was something *not* ideological (as leftist would have us believe): a Tory!

Now I know that for purges and gulags to happen, there needs to be an adequate number of scoundrels to do the dirty work. And I have never held a whit of sympathy for the Soviet experiment. Yet fairness compels me to own that many ordinary Soviet citizens were probably not unlike our hero. And, in any case, he is of the type I most often met in my travels over there.

How does our Vanya compare to the progressives that surround me now like flies? I no doubt could excavate some sufficiently noble contemporary to hold a candle to him. But that would not be a representative sample. The sort of progressive that usually comes my way is more like a man I will call Lance.

I am not sure how Lance got the job at my former company. From day one he gave the marked impression the whole place irritated him. He was the kind of guy who expansively proclaimed his sympathy for all the world's oppressed, not just people but even chickens and cows. Yet he was singularly hated by those most oppressed at our company: the clerks and janitorial staff. He even made the cleaning lady change some chemical she used, citing his allergies.

Let me tell you about Lance's *coup de grace*. Once, the boss called him into his office to discuss some business, but he did it while holding a bacon cheeseburger. And what does Lance do? He complains about being obliged to smell roasted flesh. And the boss was duly compelled to change his ancient practice. Yes, Lance cancelled a bacon cheeseburger.

Once, after his girlfriend hurled a book at him, Lance summoned the police and had her tossed

from her own leasehold, and he somehow managed to continue dwelling there without her. If I knew Lance's methodology, for all the frying pans that have flown at my head, I would have had several handsome residences by now.

But his own revolution turned around and ate him in the end. This happened after Lance told a black woman, who was engaged to marry, that she would be putting herself into 'domestic slavery'. All the blacks and women started a campaign against him. And the boss was onboard. So, one day, he was called into the Human Resources office and nobody saw him again. This was one instance that the PC Police really did some good.

Anyway, I bet this is the first instance that a communist was heartfully praised in these venerable pages. But this life is a variegated business, and strange things happen if only one lives long enough.

*Mark Mantel is an American lawyer. He was born in St Petersburg and left when he was a boy. He went there for long trips during his university years and during law school. He was christened into the Orthodox Church during Soviet times (in a village church) and still keeps to that faith.*

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# The Nixon Shock that Time Forgot

JOHN KALLINICOS

We are as a nation often said to be obsessed by house prices. But why do they rise so much, when the houses themselves stay much the same? Why would a house which cost £3000 in 1971, be worth £300,000 today? The answer may lie in a little remembered event which took place fifty years ago, on 15th August 1971, and came to be called the Nixon Shock. It was the day President Nixon ‘closed the gold window’, which is to say he ended the convertibility of US Dollars into gold, and with it ushered in a new era of what is called ‘fiat money’, which is money backed by nothing but the word of the government that it is indeed money. If you believe the word of a politician that might be fine. The rest of us have the right to be a bit more sceptical.

The system which President Nixon ended was named after the Bretton Woods hotel in New Hampshire where it was negotiated in 1944. The idea was to set up a new system for international trade in the era of peace which was at hand.

Historically, money had been backed by precious metals. This is why a £5 note has the puzzling inscription ‘I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of £5’. Try that now at the Bank of England and a cashier will exchange your £5 note for another one, perhaps slightly less crumpled. In the nineteenth century, your massive white fiver would have been swapped for five solid gold sovereigns,

which would now be worth almost £2000!

This sound, gold-backed currency was the basis for our national prosperity in the nineteenth century, and is the reason that goods worth £10 in 1850 would have only needed £11 to buy in 1900. Money held its value, because it could not be conjured up out of thin air. It had to be dug out of the ground first.

The two great wars of the twentieth century put paid to this, and the economists meeting at Bretton Woods wished to establish a new system which would allow trade to flourish. The distinguished British

economist John Maynard Keynes wished to establish a new currency for international trade to be called the Bancor, which would be administered by the International Monetary Fund.

His plan was elegant, but had a fatal flaw: the Americans did not like it. At the time, the USA had over 50 per cent of the world’s industry, and two-thirds of the world’s gold. They felt the US dollar would make a very good world reserve currency, and no-one was in a position to argue. And so a new system of fixed exchange rates was introduced, linked to the US dollar. The British pound sterling was to be worth \$2.80, and the dollar was to be backed by gold at a rate of \$35 per ounce of gold. In theory foreign governments could accept payments from the USA in dollars or gold, but the US government expected them



Photo Credit: The New York Times Archive

to take dollars, which were in theory as good as gold. And don't forget the Golden Rule: whoever has the gold, makes the rules.

To begin with, all went well, and the world recovered from World War II. But the Bretton Woods system was rigid. Britain started to have periodic balance of payments crises, because we could not afford the dollars needed to pay for our imports. Eventually in 1967 the Harold Wilson government had to devalue the pound to \$2.40. Despite Mr Wilson's claims at the time, this really did mean that the pound in your pocket bought less.

More dangerously for the Bretton Woods system, the USA began to feel the effects of what has come to be called the Triffin Dilemma, named after the economist Robert Triffin. The essential paradox is that a country which issues the global reserve currency must run a trade deficit with the rest of the world, to supply its currency to other countries. And under the Bretton Woods system, each dollar was meant to be backed by gold.

By 1959 the number of dollars in circulation already exceeded the 20,000 tons of gold at Fort Knox. During the 1960s the USA under President Johnson tried to institute a welfare state at the same time as fighting the Vietnam War. Other nations noticed this, and began asking for payment in gold rather than dollars. Unsurprisingly, the French under General de Gaulle were the first in line, and by 1971 Fort Knox was down to 10,000 tons. When even the British started to ask for gold rather than dollars, President Nixon snapped.

Over the weekend of 15th August, he went on TV to announce a 'temporary' closure of the gold window. From then on, America's creditors would have to accept payment in dollars rather than gold. Dollars that America could print at will. What could go wrong with that?

Experience has shown that allowing politicians to create money out of thin air is about as safe as giving Oliver Reed the keys to a pub. Goods which cost £10 in 1971 now cost £144.55. The goods are the same, it is the pound which is weaker.

When politicians begin paying their bills with money printed out of thin air, the usual result is hyperinflation. In Weimar Germany after World War One, they attempted to buy foreign currency to pay their war debts, using nice freshly printed

marks hoping no-one would notice. They did. Within a year, from 1922 to 1923, the price of a loaf of bread went from 160 marks to 200 billion. The hyperinflation only ended when a new mark linked to gold was introduced.

Other countries such as Zimbabwe and Venezuela have experienced destruction in the value of their currencies caused by inept or corrupt governments attempting to cover up their crimes and misdemeanours by printing currency. In Zimbabwe they ended up issuing 100 trillion-dollar notes, and found that an attempt to make inflation illegal did not work. Eventually in 2015, they gave up, and now use foreign currencies such as the South African Rand and US Dollar instead. Reality bites.

In the sad case of Venezuela, the country with the biggest oil reserves in the world was brought to its knees by the idiocies of communist economics, leaving their bolivar worthless after three major devaluations. The communists then attempted to issue a cryptocurrency, the petro, supposedly backed by the value of the country's oil reserves. Not surprisingly, there have been few takers.

After fifty years of fiat currency, we may be approaching the end of the line. With the introduction of quantitative easing, politicians have discovered they really can create money from nothing. In 2019 the balance sheet of the US Federal Reserve stood at \$4 trillion. By 2021 it was \$8 trillion. That extra \$4 trillion came into existence at the behest of politicians.

But if money can be produced at will, it cannot be given value in the same way, as the governments of Weimar Germany, Zimbabwe and Venezuela found out. Those 4 trillion new dollars do not buy what they did. Inflation is picking up all around the world, as too much money chases too few goods. The idea that central banks can print their way to prosperity has failed every time it has been tried, and it will fail again. If the era of fiat currency is ending, what will replace it? Some see a return to a gold standard, others foresee the use of cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin.

To think we only remember President Nixon for Watergate.

*John Kallinicos is a history graduate from Cambridge University, and having toiled as an accountant, now trades commodities.*

# France's Next President?

ALISTAIR MILLER

With the first round of the French presidential election set for April, Éric Zemmour – right-wing intellectual, polemicist, essayist, novelist, and television pundit – is taking France by storm. Although he is not even officially declared a candidate, his rallies across France to rapturous audiences chanting ‘Zemmour Président!’ are technically only book-signing events, he is already second in the opinion polls, ahead of his main rival Marine Le Pen, and only 7 per cent behind the incumbent, Macron.

To his opponents, which include the entire French political establishment and mainstream media, Zemmour is an extreme right-wing racist, fascist, xenophobe, and Islamophobe. Macron’s justice minister recently said of him: ‘He’s racist, revisionist, convicted of inciting racial hatred. What more do you want?’ Zemmour simply terms himself a Gaullist, whose self-declared mission is ‘to save France ... its people, its culture, its history, its nation’ from those who would destroy it, whether the deconstructionists within or the invading barbarian hordes without. If he can pull it off, the consequences for France, Europe, and the West will be seismic. But can he do what Marine Le Pen of the *Front National* failed to do in 2017?

Zemmour is still ‘a long shot’. He is not a politician and has no experience of government. He freely confesses himself to be an amateur – although, given the dismal state of mainstream French politics, this may play in his favour. But the ground has shifted radically since 2017, when Macron easily saw off Le Pen in the final round of the presidential election. Macron’s bungling has played its part, but much of the shift in the political climate, the dramatic swing to the right, is due to Zemmour, whose sustained assault on progressive ideology, whose proclaimed mission to ‘deconstruct the deconstructors’, has been broadcast to the nation every evening for the past two years courtesy of the alternative French news channel CNews. The hour-long chat show, *Face à L’Info*, in which Zemmour expounded his thoughts at length on the issues of the day, and then engaged in good-natured debate with mostly sympathetic journalists, pulled in record audiences and made him a media star.

Zemmour has been prosecuted on numerous occasions under French hate laws for inciting racial hatred, encouraging discrimination, racial defamation, inciting hatred against Muslims, and straightforward incitement to hatred, winning most of the cases on appeal. But this combat record has only enhanced his popularity. Zemmour recounts with relish that Serge Nedjar, CEO of

CNews, was reduced to a ‘little ball of worry’ at having to monitor his every televised word for fear of the authorities shutting down the channel – that is, until September, when the French broadcasting authority, the CSA, ended his appearances on the unprecedented grounds that although he was not officially a presidential candidate, he could be ‘regarded’ as one by his positions, actions and comments. But again, this barefaced gagging has only enhanced Zemmour’s cause and popularity.

In Britain, such is the censorship now imposed, in the name of diversity, inclusion and multi-culture, our new secular religion, Zemmour’s views would be neither published nor broadcast, let alone debated on prime television. Try these for size from his new book *La France n’a pas dit son dernier mot* (France has not said its last word):

*There is no village in France that is safe from savage bands of Chechens, or Kosovars, or Maghrebi, or Africans, who steal, violate, pillage, torture, and kill ... Not a day passes without acts of deconstruction, derision and destruction ... the police accused of violence and systemic racism ... cartoons deemed racist ... classical Greece and Rome condemned as vehicles of white supremacy ... television programmes documenting the crimes of French colonialism ... immigrants deified as a national treasure ... pride expressed in being raised in polygamous families ... new halal butchers opening across France ... films glorifying lesbian couples ... films where the man is always black ... not forgetting the obligatory transgender person ... teachers insulted ... doctors assaulted ... train passengers molested ... staff called ‘filthy French’ ... old women brutalised and murdered ... Muslims who try to assimilate accused of being apostates, service Arabs, or household negros.*

Adam Sage, *The Times*’s Paris correspondent, exemplified the liberal view in an article entitled ‘Éric Zemmour: far-right agitator wants to ban Muslim names’, which expressed horror at Zemmour’s suggestion that immigrants assimilate by adopting French names. Yet Zemmour’s message that immigrants should assimilate or get out is born of his own immigrant heritage. His parents were Algerian Berber Jews who settled in France after the Algerian war. He writes, ‘For me, who comes from a land conquered by France ... I have always considered myself immeasurably fortunate and privileged ... to have

become the compatriot of Pascal and Descartes, Richelieu and Chateaubriand, Bonaparte and Flaubert, Lavoisier and Hugo'. It is this deep love and heartfelt gratitude to his parents' adoptive country that fires his disgust at those who would 'spit on France'.

Zemmour's candour, his determination to say things as they are, his refusal to trade euphemisms and platitudes, often leaves his opponents non-plussed. Accused by veteran liberal journalist Alain Duhamel (*Le Monde* and *Libération*) of being cultivated but xenophobic, of 'hating foreigners', Zemmour responded calmly, 'I do not hate foreigners, I just prefer French people'. Duhamel looked as if he had been hit by a returning boomerang. When Jean-Luc Mélenchon, fossil of the Far Left, proclaimed that he was saving the planet, Zemmour responded that his ambition was more modest: it was merely 'to save France'.

But Zemmour also offers something that Le Pen cannot, and that is a convincing narrative to accompany his 'populist' rhetoric. He is immersed in French history, culture, philosophy, and literature; and he marshals this great tradition to his cause with ready quotations, allusions, and historical parallels. Unlike Le Pen, who is a political bruiser, not an intellectual, he can appeal to the prosperous and educated middle class, unite 'the patriotic bourgeoisie and the working class', whereas, according to Zemmour, Le Pen is 'locked into a sort of ghetto of workers and unemployed'. And central to his narrative is Renaud Camus's theory of 'The Great Replacement' – that the indigenous populations of Europe are being systematically replaced by non-European immigrants, and that France, Christian territory for two thousand years, is inexorably being Islamised, absorbed into the worldwide Ummah.

Camus's theory has long been condemned as a dangerous far-right conspiracy theory, beyond the pale of polite discourse. In 2018, fellow Gaullist Nicolas Dupont-Aignan was even prosecuted and fined for evoking it in a tweet, in which he accused socialists of compensating for a decline in the birth rate with 'a migratory invasion'. In Britain, the notion of a Great Replacement is deemed unmentionable, such is its incendiary nature in our diverse, inclusive multicultural society, even though the merest glance out of the window might suffice to confirm an unprecedented demographic change in neighbourhoods across Britain, and the mainstream British media's coverage of Zemmour (the *Telegraph* and *Spectator* included) has scrupulously avoided referring to it. Not even Le Pen dares refer to it. But for Zemmour, the Great Replacement is reality, an 'implacable process' unfolding before our eyes. You only need watch a film from the 1960s to see what has happened, he remarks; the world we once knew has disappeared. And this vital civilizational issue of *identity*, argues Zemmour, renders all other political issues secondary. For Zemmour, 'demography is destiny'; and the destiny of France is the

existential issue of this election.

We can only sympathise with poor Marine Le Pen, who has spent the past five years moderating her message to appear less toxic and more electable (she even rebranded her party the *Rassemblement National* in 2018), only for Zemmour to arrive on the scene armed with a trebuchet and steal the limelight with a tirade of verbal missiles. Moreover, there is every sign that Zemmour is winning the public argument. According to a recent Harris poll, no less than two thirds of the French population now fear that the 'Great Replacement' is underway in France – that is, white Christian Europeans are being replaced by Muslims from North and sub-Saharan Africa. Even 40 per cent of erstwhile socialist voters subscribe to the theory. If Zemmour is a xenophobic far-right extremist, then it seems two thirds of the French population must be tarred by the same brush.

Zemmour was summoned by Le Pen earlier this year to explain what was going on. As Zemmour recounts it, the clandestine encounter took place in a mutual friend's apartment. Le Pen began by warning him that political life was 'infernal'; she, for example, was all alone, deprived of any personal life. Then she told him that although he would win no more than 3 per cent of the vote, he could well spoil her victory. Finally, and bizarrely, she informed Zemmour that he was an ideologue, whereas in politics 'one had to like people'. Zemmour responded that although he was leading the 'battle of ideas', which no-one else in their camp was doing, he was no ideologue. Did she really think De Gaulle liked people; he loved France, but not the French. And did anyone believe that she, Le Pen, liked people? So ended the interview. If Marine Le Pen is to give way to Zemmour, so the vote is not split, it will only be by dragging her away kicking and screaming. But the momentum is with Zemmour.

Is Zemmour serious? Many suspect, understandably, that he is just a media phenomenon, whose toying with the presidency is an exercise in self-publicity. But in his latest book, the intention is clear enough. Zemmour writes with engaging honesty about his own doubts and misgivings concerning standing for the presidency. Politics had always, so it seemed to him, been a world of giants for which he was 'far too small, vulnerable, frank, and lacking in Machiavellian wile'. But confronted with the enormity of what is at stake for France, 'what value have my emotions, my hesitations, my doubts?'

Zemmour's mission, then, is no less than the 'reconquest' of France. 'We are', he writes, 'engaged in a fight to save the France that we know, and that we used to know ... the France whose beauty we cherish and that the whole world admires.' This fight 'surpasses all else and on it the future of our children and our grandchildren depends'.

One thing is certain: the stakes could not be higher.

*Alistair Miller is a teacher.*

# Whitey Goes Extinct

DAVID KAVANAGH

So, there we were at our son's university graduation day, proud son, proud mother, proud father. It was a beautiful day, too, a perfect rendition of September weather in a glorious English cathedral city. Sunny but not too hot with a gentle floral scent in the air. There was only one thing that disturbed my carefully prying eyes: among the hundreds of families and students gathered, I was sticking out like a sore thumb alongside a mere handful of others suffering the same terrible affliction. Why? I was white. Meanwhile, around me moved a veritable sea of black and brown-skinned gaiety: students in their graduation capes and mortar board hats, families in smart suits and dresses, some ladies even wearing glamorous ethnic outfits which would not look out of place in Lagos or New Delhi. Frankly, as I gazed around me, I could easily have been a traveller abroad in either of those two places. But as I constantly needed to remind myself, I was in England, at a middling university's annual celebration.

It was astonishing, not that the experience was largely anything other than delightful. Every single person I spoke to was unfailingly polite and courteous and I never heard a single swear word, apart from my own, or saw a cigarette smoked in the five exhausting hours we were there. No, this was the black and brown-skinned middle class at their finest, their sons and daughters reaping rewards for diligent work despite Covid's blight on the land.

This graduation event, perhaps I should add, was for students of biomedical science, a particularly attractive subject among ethnic families. And yet, whatever the reasons for it, I could not help but feel discomfited by the sheer scarcity of whiteness among us. When the spindly (white) university Vice-chancellor finally made his address to his beaming audience, I half-expected him to begin with a jokey observation along the lines: 'Bloody hell, did you lot eat all the Europeans again?'

Of course, he did no such thing. He simply beamed back at the assembly with all the benevolence of a colonial headmaster in downtown Dar es Salaam before embarking on the usual drone about his students' success which stuck in the mind as long as

a gnat's fart.

To be honest, and this is where full disclosure is necessary, I would have felt even more out of place there had I not been with my wife and son. My wife of almost 30 years is herself a dark-skinned Sri Lankan who came to this country in 1984, jumping through a variety of tough bureaucratic hoops to achieve a degree in electronics and citizenship. What she didn't do, unlike thousands of others these days, was simply arrive by dinghy at Dover, unchecked and undocumented but welcomed in nonetheless by our numpty Border Farce. This rancid modern development under Boris the Blancmange and Priti Useless causes her and other hard-working, grateful immigrants we know as much seething fury as it does me.

Our son and daughter are therefore 'mixed race' English which, to my mind at least, means they boast the kind of perfect light-brown skin I spent far too many sunbathing, skin-blistering summers failing to achieve. All of which brings me back to my main point.

Where were the hundreds of young white students and their white families I might have expected to see barely a decade ago?

I did see a few white graduates floating around but they were almost as rare as albino blackbirds and I certainly never spotted a single all-white family in the heaving crush, though there must surely have been some. No, this commemoration of educational excellence was overwhelmingly being enjoyed by foreign-born incomers and their offspring, taking advantage of the lavish opportunities Britain has given them.

And who can blame them? Perhaps, I mused to myself that day, native whites too often throw away the advantages they are born with and fail to push their children to success.

The insane, selfish destruction of most grammar school education by the Left must also have played its part. Whatever the truth, poor young whites today seem to be losing out and being replaced by their darker-skinned peers on the educational front, especially when it comes to science subjects. My own

coffee-skinned daughter is an example of what can still be achieved by hard work and determination. Now in her mid-twenties, she scraped into one of the last remaining grammar schools in the country, made it to Oxford University (Somerville) and now works for a big City firm in London.

At her graduation day reception, my wife and I enjoyed decent, meaty canapés and a generous flow of champagne. In contrast, at our son's graduation reception, no doubt in deference to Islam and other non-Christian faiths, there was no booze on offer whatsoever.

Instead, parents were greeted in the reception tent after hours of various faff and blether with the miserly offer of a single, tiny iced cake and glass of alcohol-free bubbly each.

Needless to say, I didn't bother with either.

I waited till we got home before uncorking a bottle of red and warming up some of my wife's excellent Sri Lankan chicken curry. Both took my mind off the day's unease and, despite my levity now, it was a real unease. As someone who shared a tiny council house bedroom with three brothers before I left home at 18,

I know how valuable good education is. Sadly, the Lancashire grammar school I attended is now long gone but, before the hysterical Left killed it, sent thousands of us poor white kids out into the world with a modicum of confidence.

What will become of the poor white kids of today? During his time there, I saw relatively few at my son's university but there were plenty of journeying Africans, Indians, and Chinese. Plenty of English-born black, Asian and mixed-race students, too. Even one white English student that did attend, and my son befriended, abruptly dropped out of his media course in his first year to work in a pub. Surely that's something he will live to regret.

Looking back on my son's graduation day, surrounded by ebullient black and Asian folk of various shades, I felt somewhat like a dinosaur must have felt circa 65 million years BC.

Noticing his friends anxiously staring skyward, he turns himself to see the deadly meteor hurtling down. Too late to do anything now. Whiteness, I fear, is becoming extinct...and maybe people like me are inadvertently speeding up the process.

## The Manners and Customs of the Modern Koreans

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FRANK HAVILAND

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It's not the hard-drinking or the kimchi soup which proves your downfall in Korea, 'The Land of the Morning Calm', but the etiquette system might get you. I would go as far as calling Korean etiquette a PhD in and of itself, at least to the outsider. *Faux pas* await you with the ubiquity of the cartoon series Mario Kart banana skins, and despite now being a well-seasoned waygook, as foreigners are loudly referred to, correct etiquette is still something that stumps me.

This is compounded by the fact that I'm undoubtedly the most stiff-upper-lipped Brit ever to grace these shores, living in the most traditional part of an already (genuinely) conservative country; something, clearly has to give.

The crucial thing to realize about South Korea

is that it is unquestionably the most Confucian society on earth – age really does permeate every single interaction you have. The first question you face when meeting someone new is invariably, 'How old are you?' This is not as impertinent as it sounds, but essential for Koreans – they need to know how they are supposed to behave with you.

As I have written in these columns before, Koreans can only truly be 'friends' with each other, if they are precisely the same age. They protest vociferously should you call them friends with someone who does not meet this requirement. Of course, they are friendly with those of differing ages; an age gap of even a year, places some demands of seniority with the elder, paying for meals, but also an element of subservience from

the junior. It is considered rude to openly refuse a request from an older person, and most Koreans find it extremely difficult to say 'no' directly.

Age plays a great role in settling disputes. Koreans almost never fight, and I have more than once seen road rage disputes resolved when either party realises they are outgunned by the contents of the other's birth certificate. Similarly, if you're having trouble with any red tape, it's usually best just to send your grandma in. In Britain, we play 'my dad's bigger than your dad'; in Korea, it's most definitely 'my nan's older than yours!'

Age also dictates how you address people – there are three distinct forms of language according to who you are speaking to: ban mal (casual, used for friends), jon dae mal (more formal, used with elders), and a deferential form of jon dae mal, used to show marked respect.

It's interesting that each of these levels require longer and more pleasant-sounding verb conjugations, literally forcing you to work for your right to speak.

To give an illustration of how important this is, I once referred to myself and my boss as oorinun (we), rather than jeoheenun (we, polite form), and nearly incited a riot.

Dining rituals in Korea are the most enjoyable in my view, because they are just so comical. For a start, you never serve yourself in the case of alcohol (which is drunk to world class proportions – South Korea bows only to Russia, Hungary and Lithuania for male alcoholism). Instead, you must wait for others to spot that your glass is empty. At which point, depending on the age balance, you will hold your glass meekly with two hands like Oliver Twist, or casually touch the glass to somehow protect it from the evil drink.

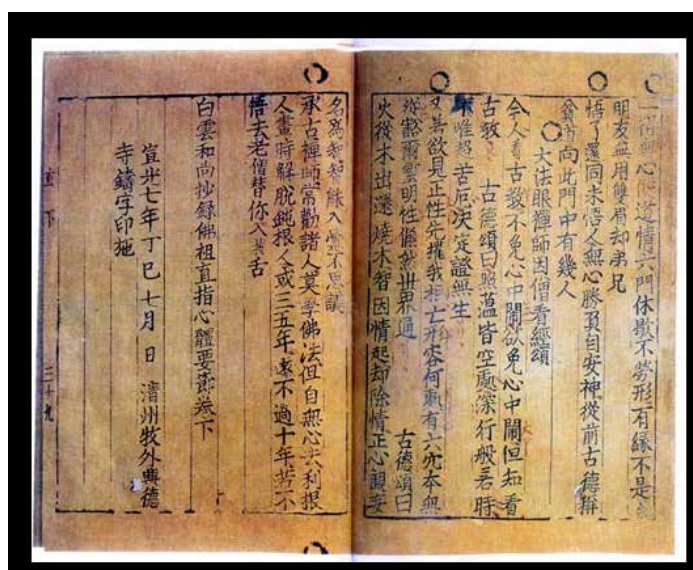
Indeed, the best moments of an evening out for me come when the senior member gets bored with the etiquette restraints and decides to pour his own

drink, at which point there will be an Olympic scramble from his colleagues to ensure his glass is given sufficient protection.

You must also ensure you hold your glass, and pour, with the right, not the left hand; that you hold your glass sufficiently lower when clinking, according to the age of your toasting partner, and even that you look away when actually drinking, presumably a sign of contrition at consuming alcohol in front of an elder. This is made more bizarre by the fact that he's not only the guy who just poured it for you, but will almost certainly object should you refuse to drink it.

It's very easy to mark yourself out a Philistine

by the simple use of gestures too. In Britain we think nothing of beckoning somebody with a wave, but in Korea that gesture is reserved for dogs, and is highly disrespectful. Instead, one must perform a complicated little manoeuvre by holding the hand wrist up, palm-facing inwards, and gently waving the fingers back and forth – I even do this with my daughter, a habit I



The world's first metal moveable type book the JIKI invented in Korea in 1377

may now never be able to lose.

Koreans are, as in many things, contradictory in terms of physical contact. The bow is the most common greeting, and in most settings they appear uncomfortable with anything more demonstrative – try hugging someone goodbye, and you'll find out what I mean. At the same time, friends will regularly be seen walking together arm-in-arm, and it is not uncommon to see grown men holding hands.

There is also almost no concept of personal space in Korea, perhaps unsurprising when 70 per cent of your nation is mountainous, but it does raise an eyebrow or too when people push you on/off public transport, or simply walk into you in the street. This is not something to get annoyed about, just a fact of life that Koreans take in their stride.

They also have a very unusual approach to public spaces: if you are the only car in a carpark, the odds are the next car in will park right beside you. This behaviour is reflected in doctors' surgery waiting room chairs, shower cubicles, and even urinals, which can be off-putting.

Perhaps the most dangerous thing in the public sphere, is the army of ajummas (older, married women), who seem to receive some kind of *carte blanche* from the government around the age of 60. In their matching perms, pink jackets and sun visors, they police the outdoor spaces, and will simply barge you out of the way if you are not on the ball.

Presents are a great way to go wrong in South Korea, as gifting rituals are very important. Visiting someone's house for the first time empty-handed is a big no-no, almost as big a no-no as bringing the wrong gift, which can simply be something too expensive. Koreans have a fantastic urge to reciprocate, and an expensive gift therefore may make them feel uncomfortable.

Give someone something, and you may find they return the favour before you have made it out the door. Don't forget of course to receive with both hands, or if giving, to gently touch your right arm with your left I am told this harks back to the days of long-sleeved robes, and would be performed to prevent the sleeve getting dirty.

Addressing someone in Korean is a nightmare. Not least of which, because you may need to guess how old they are, which can be tricky. Then you have the myriad problems that follow: firstly, people rarely address each other by name, and it may even be considered rude to do so. Most people are known in terms of their children, ie Jungmin's dad. I've known many close friends who genuinely don't know each other's name.

Most people are addressed by their titles: *sa jang nim* (boss), *yaksa nim* (pharmacist) and so on. The most common is *sung seng nim*, which is actually the correct address for teachers. The reason for its popularity, is that it means 'respected person', so you'll find almost everyone thus referred to, even those clearly undeserving of the title.

The language itself trips you up nicely too. Korean bows only to Mandarin and possibly Arabic in terms of difficulty for native English speakers, besides which, the language is littered

with the sneaky additions of Konglish (Korean English words, which often bear little or no relation to their English equivalent).

My personal favourites are 'eye shopping' (window shopping), 'Burberry man' (a flasher), 'fighting' (used when cheering someone on), 'cunning' (cheating), 'S-line' (describing a shapely woman), 'glamour' (a buxom woman), 'handle' (car steering wheel), 'skinship' (intimacy), and 'panty' (underwear for men and women).

Then there are the taboos. Writing someone's name in red ink is extremely offensive, because it was formerly used to write the names of the dead, and is considered a wish that the person dies. The number 4 is problematic, because the Korean word for four (*sa*) is a homophone of the word for death. This is taken seriously. Even apartments rarely acknowledge the presence of a fourth floor, preferring to replace it with the letter 'F', or simply going from third to fifth. The number 18 can also get you in trouble, because it sounds like our most popular swear word.

So if you're invited to your friend's 44th birthday party on the 18th of April, and you hand your host a jeroam of champagne and a birthday card in red ink with your left hand, you're unlikely to make it to dessert.

As an outsider attempting to navigate this labyrinth is always tricky. No matter how much you learn, your analysis of a situation often begs more questions than it answers. Is the older guy at work who insists on using *jon dae mal* just being polite, or deliberately keeping you at arm's length? Is the *nuna* (older Korean woman) who demands you use *ban mal* flirting with you, or desperate not to be reminded of her age? Of course, you have similar quandaries in any culture, but being an outsider in Korea really adds another dimension to it.

I have been here for so long now, it's hard to be objective about how strange some of the etiquette is, and how much I have just come to accept as normal. One thing is for sure however, I am still making many mistakes I simply haven't learned about yet. Wish me luck!

*Frank Haviland is in his 11th year in Korea, he came to teach English when the credit crunch bit hard. He runs a small school in Andong, the cultural heart of Korea.*

# The Fauna of HM Prison Durham

IAIN SALISBURY

Regular listeners to the BBC Radio 4 predictably left-wing sociology programme *Thinking Allowed* will have been recently treated to an amble down memory lane with presenter Lawrence ‘Laurie’ Taylor to his days as a ‘young sociology lecturer’ at Durham University. Little in his career since seems to have impressed him as much as the time he spent on E Wing of HM Prison Durham.

The idea, implausible as it sounds, was to teach sociology to some of the hardest criminals the early sixties had to offer. Only a few years earlier, many would have hanged. The cons proved harder to con than the average sociology undergraduate and the maunderings of Michel Foucault and Karl Marx soon as Laurie put it ‘fell on stony ground’. But this scarcely mattered because the pedagogue had become fascinated by the crooks in what was supposed to be long-term imprisonment.

For the Autumn 2021 series, listeners were treated to the E Wing reminiscences during the initial programme, on the first of September (BBC podcast available). We encountered what Laurie called the ‘country gentry’ of crime, including Charles ‘Charlie’ Richardson, whose ‘Torture Gang’ was considered sadistic even by the standards of London’s hoodlums: ripping-out teeth, removing toes using bolt-cutters, and attaching feet to the floor with six-inch nails. And there was Bruce Reynolds, the organiser of the ‘Great Train Robbery’. He was sentenced to twenty-five years in 1969 but released in 1978 – hardly ‘long-term’. Indeed, the sentence seems neither much of a deterrent nor a significant retribution for the savage beating of driver Jack Mills who, at the age of fifty-seven, could hardly have presented much of a threat to Reynolds or his gang. He was left with severe brain damage and suffered pain and ill health until he died. Equally brief was the incarceration of armed robber John McVicar, who was sentenced to twenty-six years on his re-arrest in 1970 but let out in 1978. Here, the deterrent quality of his fleeting incarceration may be judged from the enthusiasm with which his son, Russell Grant-McVicar, has since pursued the family business, graduating from cheque fraud in 1988 to fully-fledged armed robbery by 1993. McVicar senior may have hastened his own

release somewhat by at least pretending to take the sociological stuff seriously and acquiring a degree in the subject while inside. Following this, he assisted Laurie with his 1984 book, *In the Underworld*, the professor tells us that *Private Eye* once described him as a ‘criminal fancier’. This may be something of an understatement.

Laurie was joined on the programme by Emeritus Professor Richard ‘Dick’ Hobbs to discuss the latter’s work in this field. Again, we encounter such dignitaries as Charlie Richardson but much of the focus of Hobbs’s research has been on what he calls ‘the poor, bloody infantry’ of crime. These are the petty criminals who populate the underworld of Plaistow, a suburban town within the East London Borough of Newham. They are not seen by the sociologist as rats gnawing at the fabric of society but as salt-of-the-earth Cockneys; diamond geezers dependent on ‘nice little earners’ to feed their families. Indeed, Hobbs prefers the term ‘entrepreneur’ to ‘criminal’ and has participated with gusto in their activities. In his 1988 book, *Doing the Business*, he writes with pride about displaying what he refers to as the ‘entrepreneurial skills’ himself (p 7). ‘I found nothing immoral or even unusual in the dealing and trading I encountered.’ In the book, he acknowledges no ethical standards beyond those of the local hoodlums, or ‘citizens’, as he calls them.

Surprisingly, given the colourful nature of its denizens, the Metropolitan Police only rate Newham as the fourth most crime-heavy borough in London, after Southwark, Camden and, in pole position, Westminster. During a typical pre-pandemic month – January 2019 – 2,812 crimes were reported, including 1,144 for theft and handling stolen goods, 75 sexual assaults, hundreds of violent offences, but only five cases of fraud or forgery. More than 200 burglaries were numbered among the ‘nice little earners’ and this is the crime that is most likely to impinge directly on the lives of honest citizens.

Several British Crime Surveys have found little difference in the emotional response to burglary and to violent crime and both have a similar effect on the long-term mental health of the victim. It is not necessary for burglary to be accompanied by actual

violence for the consequent stress to inflict profound physical harm. And unlike an armed raider, a burglar may commit several thousand offences during a career and accumulate as many victims. I suggest that this makes housebreaking every bit as serious as most of the crimes committed by the 'gentry'.

Domestic burglary carries a maximum sentence of 14 years but this is seldom applied in the small percentage of crimes that are actually prosecuted. Much as Parliament may have wished for a 'hanging judge', to keep the swine, entrepreneurs, out of our living rooms and our children's bedrooms, the Sentencing Council had other ideas. It specifies no more than 2-6 years custody for Category 1, the highest. For the lowest, Category 3, penalties range from low-level community orders to 26 weeks' custody. These apply to all offenders, irrespective of previous convictions and around half of repeat offenders, even with as many as a dozen convictions, avoid jail. Indeed, absolute or conditional discharges are far from uncommon. Each year, thousands of burglars are found to have more than 20 previous convictions when they arrive in court.

The category of the offence is somewhat determined by the degree of harm that is believed to have been inflicted on the victim. One example of an aggravating factor is given as: 'Trauma to the victim, *beyond the normal inevitable consequence of intrusion and theft*' (my italics). But what, exactly, are 'the normal inevitable consequences of intrusion and theft'? There's little point in asking Professor Hobbs, who advised the Radio 4 audience that questioning his indifference to the victims of crime was 'like criticising Charlie Watts for not being a guitarist'. A bizarre and, some might feel, rather tasteless simile but we take the point. The collateral damage inflicted by his 'poor bloody infantry' can scarcely be expected to command much attention from a sociologist with Hobbs's moral compass.

Roughly three quarters of victims of domestic burglary are reported to be 'very distressed' and a similar proportion fear a return visit from the criminals. This is entirely reasonable. At least a quarter of homes are re-entered in short order, as Hobbs's 'entrepreneurs' and 'citizens' return for swag they were forced to leave behind or goods replaced through insurance. So it is hardly surprising that 40 per cent of women are afraid to be alone in the property, particularly since nearly 60 per cent of homes are actually occupied at the time they are violated. Generally, the injured parties feel shock, anger, fear, helplessness and panic, followed, longer term, by grief, despair, mistrust and vulnerability. Many develop much more serious psychological conditions, ranging from sleep disturbances, depression and anxiety attacks to full-blown post-traumatic stress

disorder. Some people feel compelled to move house, which is another highly stressful life event. These conditions are known to have serious, and even fatal, health consequences. It is no exaggeration to suggest that the average burglar is likely to be responsible for quite as much premature death and serious injury as 'Mad' Frankie Frazer or any of his fellow 'gentry'. And a low-level community order may be all that is deterring it.

Since the seventh century BC, when Draco first codified Athenian law, the argument has raged over sentencing, punishment and deterrence. Many of his fellow citizens felt that the death penalty for stealing a cabbage was a tad severe but Plutarch tells us Draco himself was unrepentant. The legislator insisted that nothing less would deter the lesser crimes and he was unable to come up with a greater penalty for the more serious ones. Judicial murder may be out of fashion these days but the plethora of conditional discharges and low-level community orders, for a crime that causes such misery and injury, suggests that contemporary magistrates have made little progress when it comes to disincentivizing these offences.

The problem hasn't changed much over the millenia. Burglary is only going to be deterred by a substantial custodial sentence for a first offence but the Sentencing Council clearly sees this as 'Draconian'. It would certainly be expensive, at least initially, although it would probably be a more effective use of public funds than HS2. And the prospect of a worthwhile 'result' in court might even motivate the police to break-off their relentless pursuit of 'non-crime hate incidents' (120,000 so far, including 2,000 children) and do more than merely hand out a crime reference number when our homes are violated.

Of course, I'm fantasising. Deterrent sentences are aimed almost entirely at honest citizens who occasionally make mistakes. It's too much like hard work to apply them to criminals. Here in Edgbaston, should I put my rubbish out at 3.29 pm on the day before collection, I will receive a 'fixed penalty notice' of £150. To deter any temptation to contest the fine, courts can increase it to £2,500. Attempt to steal goods worth less than two hundred quid from the local supermarket and I'm likely to be sent on my way with, if anyone can be bothered, a bit of an admonishment.

Mind you, in one respect at least, life has not become more peachy in the underworld. Draco himself might balk at the 'cruel and unnatural' nature of any punishment that included lectures on the likes of E P Thompson and R D Laing for those in chokey.

*Iain Salisbury is a retired physicist living in Edgbaston.*

# Has Reading Books Become Weird?

MARK GRIFFITHS

When I was at grammar school several decades ago, they tried to compensate us in the sixth form with some interesting optional classes of the kind I'd naively imagined we would be studying at age 11. As if they were compensating, or apologising, for the hundreds of dull weeks in the years just past learning French verbs and trig identities. One of the sixth-form option courses I regret not taking was one in buying and selling rare books for profit by one of the youngest English teachers. He used to cheerfully drive into school in a low-slung Lotus-like white sports car, wearing expensive-looking suede boots. At the time I was tempted, but there were so many other interesting options, in contrast to the four arid O-level years, the Valley of the Shadow of Boredom we had just crawled through, that I was, for one of the only times in my life, spoiled for choice.

I adored books then, and still do. I had an instinct I would be emotionally unable to let go of any rare copies to sell them back for profit once I had acquired them. This teacher's class, intriguing though it was, there was the unspoken suggestion that trading in first editions funded the flashy car, but of course it's quite possible it didn't, struck me as sacrilege. I was and am happy to make deals for profit, but somehow to trade books instead of reading them and cherishing them seemed immoral, disgusting even.

I have often had the impression that a few small bookshops are run by people who, like me, have difficulty letting go of a volume. When I go in and buy one, there's sometimes a brief poignant moment at the till when I have the impression the owner is silently saying goodbye to an old friend, before he gently hands it over to me in exchange for cash.

Revering books is perhaps too much, but is the habit of simply reading them now dying out? A 'Marxist' friend of mine with a 38-foot yacht claims he now increasingly meets clever people under 30 who are thoughtful, charming, but appear to have never read a book. At least not of their own volition, the way someone might go to a swimming pool or buy a pizza.

There seem to be graduates of 'universities' who regard them as tedious wedges of text they're required to trudge through in order to get a degree, and quite genuinely have only read one in their life when told to by a teacher. When I was nine, my mother took

me to Ghana in West Africa for three months, two months of which we were lucky enough to stay on a huge, sun-drenched university campus with empty Atlantic beaches and lines of palm trees stretching to the horizon. The university bookshop which we sometimes visited had a big sign over the door saying 'You too could own a book' as if having some at home was something strange or hard to imagine. This was not because of poverty. In our innocence we were startled by the sign, not realising what was coming. Yet at that time I was already impatient for what we would later call the internet. I'd read Alvin Toffler's 1970 bestseller *Future Shock* from the public library back home in Britain and was eagerly awaiting this promised time when from a special terminal in your home you'd be able to obtain any film, any piece of music, any artwork ...and any book. By the time I was 17 I'd given up hope this glittering future was ever coming.

The internet seems to be partly responsible, but so, many decades earlier, do free lending libraries. As a child I spent many evenings in the nearby public library and noticed that, even then, it was generally empty. Most nights I had this fabulous treasure trove completely to myself. I was fascinated when my mother told me that before the war there were libraries you paid a small subscription fee to borrow books from. More recently people paid quite happily in a similar way to rent discs or cassettes of films for a couple of nights from corner video stores. What's more, she told me that these paying text libraries were heavily used by ordinary people. Books were somehow more glamorous in the 1930s, and had gradually lost that prestige over the following fifty years – long before our post-1990s internet.

An American friend lectures at Delaware University. Early this century he sent me an article from a US higher-education magazine, an interview with a student bemoaning that her father still insisted the whole family accompany him to the public library each Sunday. Her words are hard to forget:

*He (her father) just doesn't get the internet. He's still into the whole book thing.'*

So I have two questions. Is this happening? And if it is happening, does it matter?

After all, some people are definitely reading a lot

each day, even if mainly articles in online journals. Some people claim they are able to read more on electronic devices because they're lighter and more convenient. It's not an easy question to study because many people acquire electronic-format works but never read the text, while of course many people equally obtained paper books in a burst of enthusiasm and never got past page 5.

My suspicion, and that's all it is without further investigation, is that there is a decline, and that reading ink on paper outclasses reading on screens. I have read maybe ten books on electronic devices, including my laptop, and felt I was taking in less. Research backs this up; some university teachers insist their students take notes in longhand, ban electronic devices from their lectures, and insist they see declining quality of reading, writing, and analytical thinking among students. I've met advertising filmmakers and technology start-up founders who want their own children kept away from

televisions or computers, and instead taught traditional reading.

However, many centuries it's been repeated, not all complaints by older generations that younger generations think more shallowly nowadays are false. Some centuries it's spot on, and this might be one of those centuries. More to the point, given today's shoddy quality of public debate, the waves of gullible panic and spiteful conformism washing over developed countries in recent years, it's important to find out what's happening. If we're in a historic crisis of confident ignorance, we absolutely must learn whether the dwindling practice of quiet, reflective reading, the slow vanishing of the book, is at the heart of this.

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

## Holy Wokery

IAN COOPER

It's hard to view the contemporary woke craziness on gender, race, and decolonisation etc. without getting down, but it's probably more useful to try and understand it, even at a basic anthropological level. Let's take some symptoms of the woke madness. There is the cultural self-loathing of the white western world. Instead of being grateful for our privilege the woke tell us it must be repented of. Well, the crimes and follies real as they were, are actually quite well known and regretted, thanks to a western tradition of self-criticism. More in danger of being brushed out are the great western achievements. At a basic material level, the health and wealth of the modern world are thanks to 300 years of Dead White European Males, plus Ada Lovelace, Mme Curie etc: the scientific and industrial revolutions. Most of us are alive today because of 'white' medicine, for instance, the polio and smallpox vaccines relatively recently. Are we grateful, is anybody? And then there are ideas of human rights, democracy, law, and some of the greatest art, literature and music which seem to be forgotten. Another odd woke example is the different standards by which we have to be judged. Europe is blamed for the slave trade,

Africa is not, though just as guilty. Stephen Lawrence, the black teenager, horribly murdered in 1993 by white Londoners has become an icon for anti-racism, but who remembers Philip Lawrence, the London headmaster with a wife and three children, who was murdered in 1995 by a Filipino teenage gang? Japan has limited immigration and remained Japanese, without being accused of racism. Why, when a western country doing the same would be? Somehow the white west is expected by the woke to have superior standards to other cultures. Certainly, to whom much is given much is expected but doesn't it go way beyond that now? Are the woke just neurotic about anything to do with race? It's true the 20<sup>th</sup> century record on the issue was grim but class probably killed more people, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot, but we can be rational about that and discuss it in a way we can't with race. Then lastly there is the sheer illiberalism of modern woke liberalism. It levels 'hatred' at any dissenting voice with a judgementalism and hatred all of its own. The old liberal virtues of reason and tolerance have fallen in disuse. It's a kind of dysfunctional liberalism.

Why is this? What's happened, especially when

many would feel that we are more liberal in practice than ever before? Well, we had the pieties of political correctness and now there is talk of woke religion. The ‘Great Awakening’. And this seems right. Something religious, in the worst sense, appears to be going on. Religion, and in a way, we are all religious, is essentially about two things, existential justification and moral justification, or moral atonement. We need meaning and purpose and we need forgiveness. Secular liberalism, our default worldview, and a leftover from the Christian past, has a problem here. Behind its façade of human rights and social justice there is a basic nihilism, a product of both philosophic materialism, we are just clever and nasty apes, and post-modern scepticism, all truth is a power claim. I believe in God etc in order to control you. So, back of all the high-flown rhetoric there is nothing. As for freedom, liberalism’s highest good, nobody really knows what it’s for, it’s just a void. And as for equality, well, equal to what, to what measure? Eg hetero and homo, just the same.

Now if nature abhors a vacuum, so do humans, not least on spiritual and moral matters, and nihilism just can’t be consistently lived with. Belief must then be manufactured, a sort of make believe. There must be meaning and significance and there has to be atonement. And this is where liberal woke religion comes in. If I’m not a racist and in anyway not ‘phobic’, quite a list, and, for the planet, even if rather uncritically, then I’m OK. My life has value, and I get forgiveness. This is important as I have my privilege to deal with along with my Sunday colour supplement lifestyle, and perhaps also the unease that goes with my commitment to sexual freedom: the adulteries, abortions etc. My cloak of public virtue then can deal with any unwelcome private stuff. And this morality is not too onerous. I can support immigration and the migrants etc and be pretty sure I won’t be practically affected. Perhaps the Red Wall people will be but er.... um. So, being woke makes me feel good and look good and gives me the further benefit of feeling I have moral authority, all without too much cost. Unhappily I begin to look a little like a certain pharisee. Remember the gospel story of two people going into the Temple to pray, the pharisee and

the publican or tax collector. Isn’t a woke today just a secular pharisee who carries the *Guardian* and thanks God he is not like the deplorable publican, the one who has the *Daily Mail*?

Moral vanity and hypocrisy are equal opportunity employers and virtue is difficult. We can recall the Victorian paterfamilias railing against vice at morning prayers and ignoring the plight of the poor. But wokeness, not all that dissimilar, is a confected creed desperately embraced with an earnest enthusiasm and even a degree of social contagion – remember the Black Lives Matter craze. It fills a big hole in people’s lives and they can brook no contradiction. Their very identity as good people and their psychological wellbeing is at stake. Its cultural self-loathing is a kind of mortification, the ‘higher’ standards it requires for itself, are a kind of moral self-elevation – getting at

times a bit close to a kind of supremacism, and its illiberalism – intolerance, irrationality etc. are just the usual products of a bad self-serving religion. It’s a parody of the real thing. Anyone for St Greta? Now, is everything it stands for wrong? Not all, but its intensity and unreasonableness are dangerous. It finds objective discussion almost impossible. This is worryingly clear on the transgender issue where basic biology is dismissed. Douglas Murray’s book surveying

the current woke culture is called, *The Madness of Crowds*. Well, it’s their religion wot dunnit. Some might complain that if it’s the emptiness of secular liberalism that is responsible for wokeness, why do so many in the church go along with it. They ought to have richer resources and be in no need. But isn’t their fear of being even further marginalised by the cultured despisers behind most of it? The church must be progressive too. So, the finger wagging wokers take over, while also anxiously looking behind their backs to see if they soon might be targeted, and the rest of us quietly despair?

*Ian Cooper is a writer in Cambridge who also does tours of the city and university.*



# Conservative Classic - 83

## *Hospital Poems* W E Henley

### Theodore Dalrymple

**W**E Henley is now mainly remembered for a few lines from his poem *Invictus*:

*It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.*

This is hardly in accord with the temper of our times, in which vulnerability is all the rage and considered either the highest virtue or at the very least a manifestation of refined sensibility, resilience being a kind of betrayal of the Self. Most people probably think that *Invictus* is merely a typical piece of Victorian uplift, but this poem shows how a knowledge of the biography of the poet is useful, indeed vital, to understanding. For not only was it true that Henley's screed had many undeserved punishments, but he really was master of his fate and captain of his soul. The death from meningitis of his beloved 5 year-old daughter, whom he always charmingly referred to as 'the Emperor', his only child, was a terrible blow to him, the sorrow never departing, but he continued his literary work to the end of his days.

In childhood, he began to suffer from tuberculosis of the bones in his leg and was rarely free from pain. One of his legs was amputated below the knee and he had a wooden leg for most of his life. His other leg was infected also, and amputation was advised. Instead, he sought treatment from Joseph Lister, then in Edinburgh, and stayed as a patient in the infirmary for two years, during which he read widely and learnt foreign languages becoming something of an expert on French literature. By his devoted care, Lister saved his leg, at least until a recrudescence of his illness a quarter of a century later. Henley never complained of his ill-health to others: other subjects were of greater interest to him.

Initially impoverished but endowed with a powerful personality which is believed to have inspired the character of Long John Silver in *Treasure Island* – he became a close friend of Robert Louis Stevenson and wrote four plays with him. He was a poet, essayist, critic and editor, publishing the early work of, among others, W B Yeats, Rudyard Kipling, Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw and Joseph Conrad. I doubt that many editors could point to so distinguished a record. He was also a discerning art critic, a friend of Rodin who, when he was unknown in Britain, did two marvellous busts of Henley.

Henley was conservative in his politics and also pro-imperialist which may explain the current neglect of his work, but he was an innovator in poetry, and his twenty-eight *Hospital Poems*, written between 1873 and 1875, were a landmark of modernism, though his innovation in form and style derived from the equally unusual subject matter, his experience as an in-patient in the hospital for two years. As with *Invictus*, there is nothing self-pitying in the *Hospital Poems* and they are exceptionally clear-eyed, not only about his own suffering, which he does not magnify, glorify, or protest against, but about the suffering of others. His deeply-felt concern for individual human beings rather than their abstract categories is obvious. Here he describes the victim of an accident at work brought to the ward in the days when, despite advances such as anaesthesia and antisepsis, little could be done for the severely injured:

*As with varnish red and glistening  
Dripped his hair; his feet looked rigid;  
Raised, he settled sideways;  
You could see his hurts were spinal.*

A visitor arrived:

*To his bed there came a woman,*

*Stood and looked and sighed a little,  
And departed without speaking,  
As himself a few hours after.*

*I was told it was his sweetheart,  
They were on the eve of marriage,  
She was quiet as a statue,  
But her lip was grey and writhen.*

Here, no demonstrative expression of suffering, and yet we know in the compass of a very few words, how deep it was. Indeed, the very absence of outer expression – no weeping or wailing – helps us almost to imagine it for ourselves, free of the distractions of outward show. This again is not much in accord with the temper of our times, in which suffering is measured largely by the vehemence with which it is expressed and nothing left to the imagination.

Such experiences as going under and coming round from anaesthesia have probably never been better described than in these poems, or the horrors of lying for a long time in bed. His depiction of the staff is sympathetic and nuanced, but a poem about Lister, the founder of modern surgery, hero-worship is frankly, and justifiably, hero-worshipping:

*If envy scout, or ignorance deny,  
His faultless patience, his unyielding will,  
Beautiful gentleness and splendid skill,  
Innumerable gratitudes reply.*

*His wise, rare smile is sweet with certainties,  
And seems in all his patient to compel  
Such love and faith as failure cannot quell.*

Here is no search for or desire to find feet of clay to reassure us that a great man is not so very great after all but really just like us. Henley is modest enough to accept greatness for what it is.

At the beginning of his cycle of poems, Henley says the hospital is ‘cold, naked, clean – half-workhouse and half-jail’. When finally he is discharged from hospital he writes a paean of praise to the ordinary things of life:

*Carry me out  
Into the wind and the sunshine,  
Into the beautiful world.*

Everything now seems wonderful to him, all that he would otherwise either have taken for granted or disliked:

*The smell of the mud in my nostrils  
Blows brave – like a breath of the sea!*

By graphically describing his prolonged residence in hospital, if we read the poems as a sequence rather than as individual pieces, Henley helps us to appreciate the world anew, to see the ordinary as miraculous, and thereby to place our discontents in perspective. Those who count no blessings because they see none are fomenters of disaster.

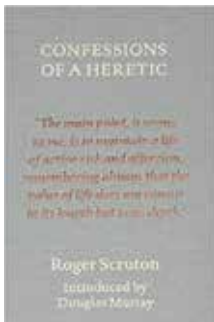
### Jimmy O'Connor, an Apology

We much regret that the review of Nemone Lethbridge's memoirs in our Autumn number contained various inaccurate charges against her husband Jimmy O'Connor, the most damaging being one of desertion from the army after his escape from France in 1940. He was in fact one of the survivors from the liner *Lancastria* which was bombed on the way back from St Nazaire with the loss of over 4,000 lives.

After weeks in hospital he returned to his earlier life of crime which did not however include a murder for which he was wrongly found guilty but later reprieved.

Much later he successfully wrote a number of television plays, one of which helped to sway public opinion against the death penalty.

# ARTS AND BOOKS



## The Still Small Voice of Conservatism Alistair Miller

**Confessions of a Heretic**, Sir Roger Scruton, Notting Hill Editions, 2021, £14.99.

This collection of general-interest essays, a revised edition of a work first published in 2016, with a poignant introduction by his friend Douglas Murray, reveals the remarkable range of the late Roger Scruton's interests, which extended far beyond those of the typical academic or intellectual, and encompassed farming, animals, wine, the nature of love and friendship, music and art, architecture, and conservation, as well as philosophy and politics. We are familiar with Scruton's eloquence and intellectual brilliance, the deadly wit that nails the pretensions of the purveyors of fashionable Left-liberal orthodoxies, for which Scruton was never forgiven; but what shines through gives these essays a rare luminous quality, is Scruton's integrity and humility – rare qualities indeed for an intellectual.

In 'Faking It', Scruton ridicules the pretensions of post-modern exponents of 'pre-emptive kitsch', the sort of 'art' favoured by the artistic establishment, and he reminds us that without a redemptive vision of beauty, an aesthetic sense, art has no purpose or value. It is hard to imagine how any reasonable or cultivated person could find fault with Scruton's argument, and yet the charade continues. In 'Building to Last', he castigates modern architecture, which instead of responding to human needs and interests, makes avant-garde gestures. Not only are the results ugly and ecologically unsustainable, but since the cities of Europe are a supreme record of 'civilized humanity', their destruction at the hands of modern architects is wanton vandalism. Richard Rogers and Norman Foster, 'modernist vandals', are notable targets of Scruton's ire. Roger's Lloyd's Building in London is 'a piece of polished kitchen-ware surmounted by a pile of junk, dumped in the City as though dropped there from

an aeroplane'. By contrast, Scruton extols the New Urbanist Movement of Léon Krier, the architect of Poundbury, Dorset – the Prince of Wales's model town. Although derided by the architectural establishment, Krier's humane philosophy, centred on creating 'the urban environment where we will all be at home', is just what is needed.

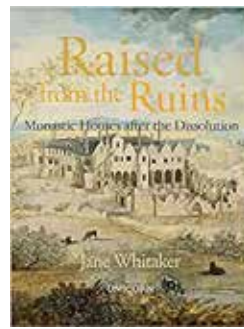
In 'Loving Animals', Scruton warns of the danger of over-sentimentalising our relationship with pets because they 'inculcate in us the desire for easy-going, cost-free and self-congratulatory affection'. Let loose in the countryside, our pampered pets, cats are even worse than dogs, merely wreak havoc, disturbing the delicate balance of nature. The observations are startling, perhaps a tad censorious in the exacting moral standards we are set, and yet they typify Scruton's passionate desire to get to the heart of the matter and speak uncomfortable truths. In 'Conserving Nature', Scruton goes on to warn of the 'secular religion' of environmentalism; but at the same time, he reminds us that 'the cause of the environment' ought to be a profoundly conservative cause, something most modern conservatives seem to have forgotten: 'It's not about 'progress' or 'equality', but about 'conservation' and 'equilibrium'.'

A trio of essays addresses the crucial political issues of our day. In 'Governing Rightly', Scruton warns of the deadening, stultifying effect of bureaucratic state control, both because it stifles individual freedom *and* something that is too often forgotten by modern conservatives: the state ceases to fulfil its necessary function, which is to embody 'the ethos of a nation' and win the shared allegiance and loyalty of the people. In 'The Need for Nations', Scruton produces both a magnificent defence of the nation state and a devastating assault on the pretensions of the EU to institute a 'multicultural utopia' by destroying the true cultural inheritance of Europe, which is none other than a 'civilization of nation states'. The supreme value of the nation resides in its instituting territorial loyalty, whereby it 'marginalises loyalties of family, tribe and faith' and enables people to co-exist as citizens in a democracy. Take away borders and national loyalties, and what remains is, as in the case of Somalia, a failed state, an 'assemblage of competing tribes and families'. Finally, in 'Defending the West', Scruton reminds us precisely *why* the West is worth defending, whether against those who would deconstruct it, or traditional Islam. Rooted in classical

Greece and Rome, and Judaeo-Christianity, the West has given us the concepts of democratic citizenship, secular law, the nation-state, self-criticism, the habit of free association, and, Scruton adds mischievously, drink – the indispensable lubricant which breaks the ice between strangers and sets ‘every large gathering in motion’. Islam, by contrast, offers brotherhood, tribal loyalty, and submission to the law of God. The latter are not without merit, just incompatible with the modern world. When it comes to defending our civilization, the ‘culture wars’, Scruton is uncompromising. We should make no concessions to those who wish to exchange the goods of our civilization for another; and ‘We should treat with scorn all those who demand these changes and invite them to live where their preferred form of political order is already installed’.

The most memorable essays, however, are those touching on our personal and spiritual lives. In his short essay ‘Effing the Ineffable’, Scruton reflects on those ‘moments of revelation, moments that are saturated with meaning, but whose meaning cannot be put into words’; those moments that occur as though ‘on the winding ill-lit stairway of our life, we suddenly come across a window, through which we catch sight of another and brighter world – a world to which we belong but which we cannot enter’. There is more to our world than science can ever explain; but no mortal words can describe it. Scruton goes no further than this. We are left merely with this memorable image of the stairway; and we are stopped in our tracks. ‘Dying in Time’ is a profound meditation on the nature of death, in which Scruton explores the classical, now largely forgotten – notion that living well encompasses dying well. Confronted, for example, with the prospect of our own mental decline, the appalling spectre of senility, our reduction to a human being who has lost all the attributes that ‘make us persons for each other and for ourselves’, what are we to do? Scruton suggests we take inspiration from Aristotle and fall back on the virtues, so that when the time comes, we do ‘what is worthy and honourable’. And perhaps this requires us, if not to fall on our sword, then at least to lead a life ‘of benign shabbiness and self-neglect, of risky enjoyments and bold adventures’. In short, to do whatever makes life worthwhile. The risks you take ‘should not damage your will or your relationships, but only your chances of survival’.

As our civilization hangs in the balance, and we pay the price of technical progress and virtual reality in the form of spiritual retreat and personal emasculation, I can think of no better or wiser companion to have at your side than Roger Scruton.



## The Stripping of the Altars

### John Jolliffe

**Raised from the Ruins, Monastic houses after the Dissolution**, Jane Whitaker, Unicorn, 2021, £35

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This book is an account of the lamentable fate of the great monastic buildings destroyed by the rapacity of Henry VIII and his upwardly mobile collection of ministers and favourites. To put the picture in focus, the fine jacket records that in 1535 there were about 850 monastic houses in England: five years later there were none.

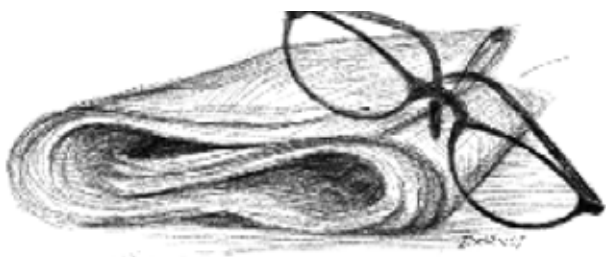
Bare ruined choirs indeed: Shakespeare knew what he was talking about. Yet, architecturally at least, all was not lost, and some of the replacements, such as Longleat and Wilton, and Vale Royal in Cheshire, were spectacular. A few of the monastic buildings survived in a mangled state, such as Malmesbury Abbey, and the more splendid St Peter’s Abbey, where the actual fabric survives almost intact in the form of Gloucester Cathedral: the great royal tomb of Edward II may have saved it from further depredations. It is surprising to find no mention of the Abbot’s Kitchen at Glastonbury, still almost intact; no doubt it had catered for some of the more respectable pilgrims who flocked to the shrine. There are other gaps. But the production of the book is of such high quality that a second volume would have been needed if they were to be filled.

There are many careful architectural plans reproductions of prints, and watercolours of the ruins, including Turner’s beautiful view of Malmesbury. There were others painted at much later dates, not least those by the elder Thomas Robins at Hailes Priory. Unlike Dr Pevsner, who concentrated almost entirely on the driest architectural details, Whitaker includes some interesting human touches. There is a fine portrait of Sir William Sherington, who acquired Laycock. He was arrested for debasing the coinage, but ironically pardoned in return for paying no less than £8,000 for the restoration of the lands which he had seized but then forfeited. All this is evidence that the Dissolution was basically about money, and how much the King could squeeze out of the process, sometimes, as here, more than once from the same property. Sherington is carrying a gilt-handled dagger

in his belt, and he certainly looks as if he might have needed it in a hurry. Even better armed is Lord Darcy of Chiche, Garter at his knee and jewelled sword in his hand. Perhaps the most repulsive of the profiteers was Sir Richard Rich (see Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons*), the persecutor of Sir Thomas More, who like him rose to be Lord Chancellor. The recumbent effigy on his tomb lies in the posture of a crocodile, that is to say a crocodile leaning on one elbow. In some cases, especially at Longleat and Wilton, the new men created masterpieces of their own, unconnected with the original buildings. Some of them, like Vale Royal in Cheshire, will be unfamiliar to many readers.

This is an architectural book, and that is how it should be judged and praised. What is now needed is a detailed account of the huge damage the Dissolution inflicted on the most vulnerable section of the population; the invalids, beggars, lepers, the homeless and hungry and destitute. Besides relief, the great monasteries, whatever their failings, provided widespread employment, all of it lost when they were destroyed. Many of the monks were also made homeless, and were usually unprovided for. An excellent novel by Lucy Beckett, *The times before you die*, tells the story of one such monk, and his pathetic fate. The monasteries had provided the first rudimentary elements of a welfare state and of education. Now it was all swept away. Apart from the few universities it was the monasteries, especially those of the Benedictines, which made a speciality of teaching. Henry VIII did admittedly found schools of a very different nature, at such places as Coventry, Abergavenny, and Chester; and later granted the status of royal foundation to others. He also completed the foundation of Christ Church, Oxford, which had ground to a halt with the fall of its original founder Cardinal Wolsey.

Henry had of course been a considerable scholar and theologian before his secular megalomania set in. His fall from grace has often been described before, but a detailed study of the terrible results of the Dissolution for those in need would be a valuable undertaking. Jane Whitaker must however be thanked and congratulated for the book she set out to write. In it she has succeeded admirably.



## Six Legs Good Celia Haddon

**Silent Earth: Averting the insect apocalypse**, Dave Goulson, Jonathan Cape, 2021, £20.

If there were no insects left in the world, three quarters of human crops would fail or would have to be pollinated by hand. Cowpats would smother the grass growing in pastures. Dead bodies would fail to decompose. There would be no honey from bees and no nectar for humming birds. Populations of insect-eating birds, bats, spiders, lizards, frogs and fish would crash. And in their turn the predators of these insect-eaters would starve.

The doomsday scenario sketched by some conservationists, including the author of this book, is that 40 per cent of the world's insects, including butterflies, bees and dung beetles, may be extinct in a few decades. Yet how likely is this likely to happen? Climate change sceptics are already arguing that this apocalyptic prediction is false: that insects will simply adapt themselves and while some may disappear, others will flourish even in a world overpopulated by human beings.

Already some insects have adapted well to the human world and as a result many of us humans spend a lot of effort trying to get rid of house flies and wasps. We use killer sprays on the clothes moths, cockroaches and ants that invade our homes. We regularly put toxic insecticides on our pets to get rid of adult fleas (often forgetting to use the sprays on the larvae scuttling round the house) and in our gardens we kill caterpillars, forgetting they will become butterflies, one of the few insects that we value. This unfettered use of insecticides in homes and on crops is, unfortunately, one of several reasons why insect life may be on the decline.

The evidence of an insect decline is not strong, mainly because conservationists have concentrated on beautiful furry mammals like the snow leopard rather than tiny unloved bugs. Nobody has bothered much about counting insects consistently, though a butterfly monitoring scheme in the UK has existed since 1976. Butterflies are large enough for volunteers to count! Goulson reports that common UK butterfly populations fell by 46 per cent in the first 41 years of its existence.

But there is a difficulty here – butterfly populations fluctuate according to warm or cold summers. When I checked the latest figures on DEFRA, too late for this book, the numbers had increased lately so that the decline in 2020 was now only 22 per cent. Perhaps the ‘conservation grade protocol’ whereby farmers are paid to plant wildflower meadows, as well as warm summers, is having some effect.

The general trend, however, is downwards, whatever sceptics claim. I did a quick flick through Google Scholar and most of the papers confirmed this. Aphids, greenflies and blackflies to you and me, are in decline, for example, good news for gardeners and farmers perhaps but nevertheless worrying to conservationists. Wild bees, both bumble bees and hoverflies, are also fewer in the UK and in Holland the caddisflies, whose larvae encased in a house of pebbles and sticks delighted my childhood, are dropping in numbers too. Yet the problem facing any forecaster is that we still do not know for sure how serious this may become.

Now that insects have caught the attention of conservationists, the entomologists are at last getting the grants they need to count insects, often by weighing ‘biomass’, the collective weight of insects caught, rather than literally counting heads. Dave Goulson takes the reader through the existing research with reasonable care in the first part of this book. Among other topics he examines are the problem of invasive insects and their effect on native species. The Argentine ant, for example, is spreading over the USA in such numbers that the horned lizard of southern California is now dying out. This rare lizard eats ants but won’t touch the Argentine invaders for some reason.

What is clear is that we just haven’t got enough information. If we plant wildflowers on traffic islands, will that help insects? Or will the flowers just lure butterflies to their death on the windscreen of passing cars. The traffic near these wildflowers may also disable bees mentally and physically. We know that diesel fumes ruin bees’ sense of smell and petrol fumes impair their ability to learn and remember the scents of the most nectar-rich flowers. Wildflowers on the sides of motorways may be just another mistake.

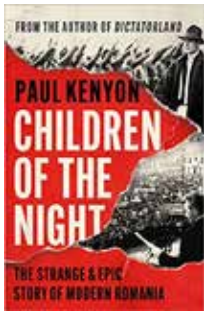
Dave Goulson paints an imaginary picture of a desperate future, in which humankind must pollinate their crops by hand and where pest species like slugs and mosquitos flourish at the expense of useful species like beetles, ladybirds and earwigs. This chapter in the book is the least successful, it seemed to me, as it extrapolated wildly from what the author had admitted was grossly inadequately information. Much more interesting are the fascinating gobbets of information about insects, which occur regularly throughout the book.

Ordinary people will only try to save insects if they learn to stop hating them. Maybe we could learn to love and cherish them if we kept them as pets. Charles Kingsley, author of *The Water Babies*, for one, had a pet wasp. Beekeepers care for and value their bees. People keep lizards and snakes as pets and feel ‘love’ towards them. Why not insects? Goulson doesn’t go this far but he does suggest a bee ‘hotel’ as well as wildflowers, log piles and meadows not lawns in the garden. He also lays out the actions needed by government and local authorities. Many of us know about these solutions already but not much action will be taken unless many more people demand change.

This brings us back to the biggest problem of all. Humans do not like insects. They consider them disgusting pests or irritating irrelevances. Would we value insects more if we saw them as food, perhaps even started domesticating them? The late Japanese emperor, Hirohito, for instance, had a favourite dish which was boiled wasps with rice. In South Africa about 1,600 tons of mopanie worms, (large caterpillars of the emperor moth), are eaten fried with onions and tomatoes, a dish not unlike our garlic fried prawns. And the eggs of an aquatic bug in Mexico are known as ‘Mexican caviar’ in that country. Only to us in the West do these food items seem repulsive, though I notice that cat food made of insects is now on sale. If insect farms become the future of farming, we might value insects more

While this book is a useful warning about the insect decline, the apocalyptic chapter on an imagined almost insect-free world weakens its message. Sceptics are already arguing that the absence of proof for decline means there will *be* no serious insect decline. These same sceptics ignore the old saying that absence of proof is not proof of absence. Nevertheless, the balance of the research so far suggests that books like *Silent Earth* should be taken seriously, even if its predictions into the future are still only guesswork.





# Making eggs out of an omelette

## Anthony Daniels

**Children of the Night: The Strange and Epic Story of Modern Romania**, Paul Kenyon, Head of Zeus, 2021, £25.00

Two months before the downfall of Nicolae Ceausescu, the Danube of Thought, the *Conducator* of Romania during its *Epoca de aur* (the Golden Age), I spoke to the press attaché at the British Embassy in Bucharest. We descended into a cellar, supposedly the only location in the building that was guaranteed to have been truly debugged. The city that was once known as the Paris of the East had come to resemble a permanent film-set for an adaptation of a Le Carré novel.

No one who experienced it will ever forget it, but Romania had long had the ability to capture the interest of the visitor. Its history during the twentieth century was among the most dramatic and interesting, but also the most disastrous, of any of the countries in Europe, at a time that was not exactly lacking in drama, interest or disaster.

Paul Kenyon has written an account of the many disasters of post-First World War Romanian history. He has been a visitor to Romania for twenty-seven years and is married to a Romanian and his in-laws have memories of the *Epoca de Aur* of which he is able to make occasional well-judged use. The story of Romania is such that it would be difficult to render it dull, and Kenyon is a racy, though not a stylish, writer. His book is an excellent introduction to modern Romanian history.

In conventional, though not fully accurate terms, Romania in the twentieth century veered politically between extreme right and extreme left. The extreme right in Romania was violent, anti-Semitic and xenophobic. The pre-second World War period was dominated by the extreme right, the post-second World War by the extreme left. It is difficult to say which was the more depraved.

There are certain things missing from the book, however. As readers of Olivia Manning will know, Romania before the war also had its charms as well as its horrors; everyone was agreed on the excellence of the food, something which no one would say of the

*Epoca de Aur*. There was a seductive loucheness and even sophistication about Bucharest, a cynical *joie de vivre*, not, shared by the impoverished peasant majority of the population. Kenyon conveys none of this charm.

Also missing is the intellectual history of pre-war Romania, which is both fascinating and horrifying, and which was very important in paving the way for the demagogues and psychopaths who were to dominate Romanian politics and society for decades. There is no mention of the three great intellectuals of Romanian origin, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran and Eugene Ionesco, who subsequently made their very distinguished careers in the West, the first two of whom were floridly and even fanatically fascist at a time when fascist thugs roamed Bucharest in search of Jews to persecute, beat up and even kill. Ionesco alone, a playwright in my opinion much the superior of Beckett or Pinter, did not succumb to the totalitarian temptation either of the right or of the left. Eliade, the famous historian or religion, never acknowledged his own past, while Cioran, who became an aphoristic philosopher of terminal disillusionment and an acknowledged master of French prose (French was his third language, after Romanian and German) might be interpreted as a repudiation of his past mistake and a determination not to repeat them, without a full or frank acknowledgment of them in the first place. That such intelligent and cultivated men as Eliade and Cioran fell for an extremism that in retrospect appears both obviously evil and absurd tells us much about the intellectual zeitgeist: the latter often being the determinant of a country's politics.

Romania having entered the war on the side of the Axis, with little choice in the matter, though the barbarity with which it prosecuted that war does not redound to its credit – soon found itself constrained to change sides. Its tiny Communist Party, whose thuggery and viciousness were scarcely any better than those of the fascists, was propelled into power by the Soviet Union. As the author makes clear, the post-war leaders of Romania thenceforth trod a fine line between slavish adherence to Moscow and implicit rebellion against it. Stalin wanted Romania to remain an agricultural country, its leaders wanted to industrialise; under communism either course of action was bound to be disastrous.

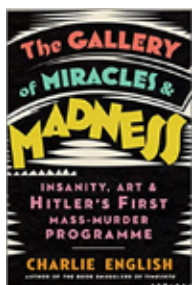
Kenyon describes the tragi-comedy of Ceausescu's reign very graphically, the amusing aspect evident mainly to those who did not have to live under the regime. The sheer preposterousness and effrontery of the elevation of his ignorant and frumpish wife, Elena, to the rank of eminent research chemist was not recognised, or at least not alluded to by obsequious people in the West who ought to have known better.

Her book, *The Stereospecific Polymerization of Isoprene*, which of course she herself did not write, was prominently on sale in almost every city in Romania (in Romanian and English) when I was there shortly after the revolution, infuriating the population when little else was available.

Ceausescu's head was turned by the reception that he received in 1971 in Mao's China and Kim Il Sung's North Korea; I strongly recommend the film on YouTube of Ceausescu's state visit to Korea. Henceforward he wanted similar totalitarian conformity and discipline in Romania, but the Balkans are a long way from the Korean peninsula. It could not, thank goodness, be done.

Ceausescu's destruction of Bucharest and myriad towns and villages in the name of modernization and social justice is highly reminiscent of the slightly more democratic and less drastic efforts in the same direction of our own town councils. Most of the councils had, or still have, their little Ceausescus, and the Royal Institute of British Architects might with justice be renamed the Ceausescu Institute of British Architects.

The revolution against Ceausescu's rule turned out really to have been a *coup d'état*: but the *coup d'état* turned out really to have been, unintentionally, a revolution, for there was no going back to the pre-coup dispensation. You can't make eggs of an omelette.



## Weimar Art

### Jane Kelly

**The Gallery of Miracles and Madness**, Charlie English, William Collins, 2021, £20.

Most of us have a romantic idea of the Weimar Republic, those few short years of androgynous dancing girls, Bauhaus textiles, and brilliant art; the painters, Kirchner, Klee, Beckman, Marc and Nolde are still loved for their unique expressionism directly inspired by children and the new science of psychotherapy. Mental affliction was studied for the first time for its creative potential as artists turned away from pleasing the public or the state in favour of exploring themselves. Hitler's arrival turned that miracle of modernity into the darkest primitive madness. A quarter of a million disabled patients were

murdered including many artists.

This fascinating but sometimes grisly book, details the cultural shift to Hitler's T4 programme, an aspect of Nazi genocide often overshadowed by the wider ferocity of the Holocaust. The Nazis started a true, 'culture war'. As the author says, 'A cultural undertaking as much as a political one'. As Hitler the failed artist tried to, 'Forge a community of ethnically pure Aryans', famous galleries were closed, curators intimidated, statues pulled down or hidden, while leading artists, writers, film directors and academics fled or stayed behind to face pariah status, or death.

The first half of the book describes the work of Freudian psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn, an unstable but enlightened man who published, *The Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, in 1922. He was not trying to diagnose illness, with a PhD in art history his interest lay in the work for its aesthetic value. In Heidelberg psychiatric clinic he was fascinated by Franz Bühler, a mentally ill metalworker who produced, *The Choking Angel*, showing a divine messenger standing on a man's neck. Prinzhorn compared his work to Albrecht Dürer. Dresden seamstress Agnes Richter, committed in 1893, remade her grey hospital jacket, restitching the arms on backwards and like an installation artist of today, embroidering it all over with expressions of her anguish: 'I miss today', 'I am'. Prinzhorn collected images by builder Karl Genzel who made wooden effigies including one of Paul von Hindenburg that fused primitive images and political cartoons. He collected 5,000 works by 450 'cases'. Asylum inmates were suddenly enviable as they seemed to possess a shortcut to their unconscious and a 'transcendental world'. Paul Klee, then teaching at the Bauhaus, greeted the images in Prinzhorn's book with rapture. Many artists saw these works as authentic responses to the destruction of the Great War. Surrealist Max Ernst drew inspiration from the book's images by August Natterer, an electrical engineer who claimed to be a direct descendant of Napoleon. Dali borrowed from Carl Lange, a former salesman who saw religious symbols in the insoles of his shoes and made detailed drawing of a hundred such 'miracles'. 'The only difference between myself and a madman', Dali declared proudly, is that 'I'm not mad'.

Releasing the voice of the marginalised radically changed art for good. Prinzhorn planned to build a 'Gallery of Pathological Art', 'The deadliest atmosphere for artistic blossoming', he wrote, 'was one in which the grassroots were paralysed for fear that their self-expression was illegitimate'. Unfortunately, he died in 1933, aged forty-seven, just as Hitler came to power. Most of the professional artists who featured in Hitler's hugely publicised 'Degenerate Art

Exhibition', in Munich in 1937, had to flee Germany. It cruelly displayed modernist art and work by the mental patients next to each other to hammer home the link between biological and artistic degeneracy. Karl Wilmanns, who ran the Heidelberg Clinic, was sacked. By 1939, there was no one left to speak up for the asylum artists.

The second half of the book deals with Hitler's demand for 'Healthy art', based on 'Rassenkunde' racial science. Mental illness and epilepsy were inherited, so sufferers were, 'Life unworthy of life'. Another motive for this first mass-murder was finance; institutional psychiatric care is costly and Reichsmarks were better spent on tanks. At least thirty of Prinzhorn's artists were killed by gas. The detailed descriptions of their deaths make a nasty read.

I am grateful to the author for this quote from Thomas Mann: 'An art which turns to the people, serves the needs of the crowd, of the small men... is the worst philistinism, and the death of the spirit'. Something worth tweeting to members of the current 'All inclusive' art establishment in our current 'culture war'. There is a good section of notes at the end, and though the narrative is well researched, the writing style is thin. English writes in American, which seems to be the accepted way now, as if Americans can't be expected to deal with any unfamiliar references. Perhaps he really talks like that, but more likely it is about cupidity in the publishing industry.



## Russian Exodus Martin Dewhirst

**The Compatriots: The Brutal and Chaotic History of Russia's Exiles, Émigrés, and Agent Abroad,** Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, Public Affairs, New York, 2019, \$30.

'The more Russia changes, the more it remains the same.' Do I agree with this judgement? Getting near the end of a lifetime devoted largely to studying Russia and Russians, I have to admit that I'm still not sure. What I didn't know until I started reading this book is that, according to the United Nations, Russia now has the third largest number of any country's people who are living abroad: 11 million (though in 2006 Putin

put the number at more than 30 million, of whom 10 million were said to be living in Europe). India has 17 million living abroad, Mexico 13 million, China only 10 million, Bangladesh and Syria 7 million, Pakistan and Ukraine 6 million. Of course, most of these 11 or 30+ million Russians are not politically very active, but of those who are, some support Putin and Putinism, while others oppose him and it. Which of these two subgroups is the larger and/or more influential? It's hard to say. What I find far more worrying is the impressive number of *non*-Russians who are only too happy to work with the Putin regime, as is shown by the Panama (2016), Paradise (2017) and Pandora (2021) Papers. This collaboration certainly 'pays off' financially, if not reputationally, for the participants, but it helps to create a much more dangerous situation for traditional Western/European values than appeasement did in the 1930s.

*The Compatriots* is divided into four unequal parts, of which the first, 'Spies and Dissidents', is the weakest. Providing the historical background to the recent and current situation, the authors do not even mention in passing the cynical and rather successful *Trest* (Trust) operation run by the Soviet secret and special services in the West, mainly in France, in the 1920s, encouraging intelligent but naïve Russians living abroad to believe that the regime in the USSR was quite weak and could be overthrown if more émigrés cooperated with the anti-Soviet underground, represented by its alleged emissaries who managed to get to the West, but who were pro-Soviet agents. This operation, creatively developed and adapted since at least the 1970s, in order to keep first the Soviet, and later the neo-Soviet, regimes in power in Moscow, has been and still is astonishingly successful. Unfortunately, the leading players (both Russians and non-Russians) aren't, and can't safely be named and shamed by the authors because, if they had done so, they and their publishers would have been taken to court, as is currently happening to Catherine Belton after the publication of her honest, but still rather cautious, *Putin's People*.

Nonetheless, Part 1 still makes some good points. In 1943, the USSR's 'ideology was rapidly moving from a vision of a universal Communist future to a dream of the Russian empire's glorious past'. This, of course, didn't prevent Stalin's successors from crushing the Hungarian Uprising in 1956, or *their* successors from crushing the Czechoslovak attempted shift to social democracy in 1968, or *their* successor, Putin, from illegally grabbing two parts of the Ukraine in 2014. Were all these criminals paranoid? And are the authors correct when they suggest that, by 1951, 'Soviet intelligence was becoming a truly nationalist,

purely Russian agency’?

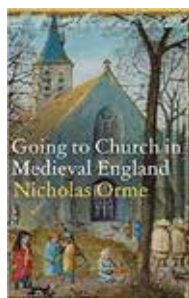
Part 2, ‘Market Forces’, sheds more light on Russia’s move, beginning in the late 1970s, according to the authors, from state socialism towards state capitalism, with the secret and security services in the forefront of this great experiment. ‘Extremely sophisticated schemes were developed to channel hard currency and all kinds of untraceable commodities, from gold to diamonds, to the West. And these schemes were operational right until the collapse of the Soviet Union, and a bit after.’ Alas, it ‘took a decade for US policy makers to realize just how corrupt and cynical the [neo-Soviet] political system really was that replaced Communist rule in Russia’. The former KGB had thoroughly infiltrated the Russian financial system. Perhaps only the terminology had changed?

Part 3, ‘Putin’s Project’ introduces readers to Boris Jordan and Peter Holodny, two of the most questionable supporters of Putin. The authors rightly ask why Putin’s successful attempt to ‘absorb’ most of the main émigré Orthodox Church into the extremely corrupt Moscow Patriarchate was ‘so readily accepted by the descendants of the first wave of the émigré community’. This question is left open for the reader to try to answer.

Part 4, ‘Means of Outreach’, mentions that 2000, when Putin took over from Yel’tsin, marks the end of the period when there was no *political* emigration from Russia. ‘It lasted nine years, just a split second by historical standards. Now it was over.’ I would change ‘nine’ to ‘13’, but in essence the authors are right. Why did it take so long for so many illusions about the ‘new’ Russia to be crushed (Chapter 27)? ‘Why did so many smart, westernized, financially successful people feel so comfortable under Vladimir Putin in the first decade of the twenty-first century? The KGB had a horrifying reputation, and Putin never condemned the organization that defined him.’ ‘Every year Putin tightened his grip on the political system, but few in the country or abroad, seemed to care.’ ‘The Kremlin blamed them the liberals for all kinds of troubles the country had gone through after the collapse of the Soviet Union, from the upsurge of violent crime to economic downturns, and ordinary Russians seemed to accept that narrative.’

What conclusion do the authors offer? They can do no better than to quote the nineteenth-century Russian poet and diplomat Tyutchev, who felt that it’s impossible to comprehend Russia(ns) if you apply only your mental abilities. To avoid total despair, you need to have *faith* in Russia [and God?] and hope that it will all work out all right in the end when we are all dead. Like everything that Soldatov and Borogan publish, this book is very well worth reading. It’s a pity it hasn’t

been better edited and checked, and seems to have been rushed out. Readers of this journal shouldn’t be put off by the statement on the inside front paper flap that Mr Skripal was poisoned in Salisbury in 2017, and not a year later. Nearly everything else in the book is correct.



## Congregations behaving badly

Brian Eassty

Going to Church in Medieval England, Nicholas Orme, Yale, 2021, £20.

Religious observance in the centuries following Augustine’s reintroduction of Christianity into England, did not necessarily involve going to church. Many people had to rely on travelling clergy (ministers), but between the tenth and twelfth centuries the country was divided into manageable units (parishes). Nicholas Orme’s book describes what went on in them until the Reformation and shows how effective the parish system was, when now it is seriously threatened for the first time in a thousand years.

This arrangement installed Christianity at the heart of every community. On hearing the Sanctus bell rung, parishioners were expected to bend their knee even if at home or working in the fields. It provided spiritual support for people at times of need in return for devotional obligations and donations. These demands were made especially at Lent and Easter when people were expected to make confession and, on Easter Sunday, to attend church and join in Holy Communion and to pay a tithe. At other times, parishioners were not expected to take part in Holy Communion, only to witness it. Before the Reformation, the congregation was only expected to observe the rituals of the service passively rather than gaining any spiritual guidance from it.

The most important part of the service was the consecration and elevation of the host, at which point the bread and wine were believed to transform itself into the physical body and blood of Christ according to the doctrine of the Real Presence. This created a tension in church design. A secluded place was needed for such a transformation and yet the laity were encouraged to ‘see God’ and were indeed very keen to do so. This was resolved by having an area, the chancel where the

consecration took place separated by a screen from the nave where the laity were sitting and from where they were expected to glimpse the elevation through holes in the screen, if they were not allowed into the chancel at that point in the service.

Wealthy residents of the parish, especially those who gave money for the upkeep of the church and its clergy, would be allowed to have seats in the chancel, the better to observe what went on. It was one way in which the social status of various members of the congregation outside the church was replicated in the service. Chaucer was a keen observer of these social distinctions. His *Wife of Bath* is angry at having her first place to make her offering usurped. One could imagine such a wealthy confident woman terrifying a parish priest if, like Chaucer's Parson, he was poor and of peasant stock. With so little demanded of the laity, it's no surprise they found ways of making their own entertainment and one distraction, particularly for the women, was competitive ostentation which Chaucer found amusing. Orme quotes from a poem of the sixteenth century called *The Proud Wives' Paternoster*, in which lines from the prayer are interspersed with women's thoughts about their clothes. Ordinary people in the nave unseen by the clergy often indulged in worldly behaviour – flirtations and even lovemaking was not uncommon.

Distraction with earthly matters was not the worst instance of bad behaviour which Orme finds in church records. Men could be just as jealous of their social status as women and a service gave them several opportunities to feel slighted if they were not given the precedence they felt they deserved.

Forced attendance encouraged bad behaviour. While some determined souls persisted in staying away, others attended, but took great pains to show that they were there in body only. Compulsory religious observance was like compulsory education and some medieval clergymen would have had to face congregations which resembled today's nightmarish sink schools, for an institution insisting that one attends is less able to dictate how one attends. In some of the wilder rural parishes, men brought an array of weaponry with them and, if others brought dogs and even birds of prey to church, it was clearly to intimidate. Orme cites one case of a knight at Eltham in 1514 who, when challenged for bringing his hawk to church, struck the priest in the mouth. It has taken many centuries for the modish pet blessing of today to see animals once more accepted in church.

The Church was not without sanctions in more serious criminal cases such as sedition, murder or poaching the bishop's deer. Orme describes a service of excommunication which involved the malefactor being 'cursed in the name of the Trinity, the nine orders of

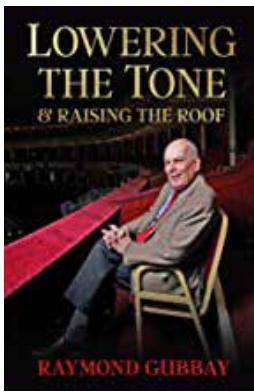
angels and all the saints'. Then the priest would dash two lighted candles to the ground and spit on them to symbolise how the good works of the offender would be extinguished before God if he did not repent. In an age when the existence of Hell was real, this dramatic ritual must have been terrifying.

If individuals caused problems in churches with their desire for precedence, sometimes whole parishes behaved in the same way. At Pentecost parishioners would attend church and give a small sum known as a smoke farthing. This collection was then taken to the local cathedral in a procession. The arrival of such processions from many parishes at the cathedral caused problems with some parishes demanding to be let in ahead... The Bishop of Chichester worried that the processions 'led to opprobrious words, quarrels and even homicides'. Orme explains that the processions were largely composed of 'younger fitter men buoyed up by comradeship and the holiday spirit'; their behaviour was like the parochial partisanship and local pride that, many centuries later, was channelled into football.

Eventually church services moved from a strict reliance on ritual to teaching the principles of the faith. As most of what was said was in Latin, the gradual introduction of sermons in the thirteenth century gave congregations glimpses of the Bible and what their religion expected of them, a challenge for the clergy; many had gaps in their own education. A book of ready-made sermons sold heavily but many priests were diffident about using them. One was envious of his bishop's preaching ability: 'But let a simple priest a I am say the word of God to you and you set no price thereby.' Orme finds that the stock comic figure of the maladroit clergyman whose sermons drive his listeners to heckle or to doze off are in the joke book *A Hundred Merry Tales* as early as 1500.

Huge changes came with the Reformation. Printing and the use of English made the Church more easily dominated by the state and Cranmer took full advantage of that. The *Book of Common Prayer* which he introduced in 1549 made clear that it was designed for people to use praying together rather than independently.

Now that the Church of England is trying to make another radical change, one of the pleasures throughout this book is the quiet tribute paid to the parish, as a workable unit which has served us well for so long. At a time when we might be returning to a more centralised minister system again, with plenty of well-paid Diversity Coordinators, we are lucky to have Orme's book to remind us of the strength of an arrangement where a vicar lives among or close to his flock and knows them well.



# Making Music Pay

## Merrie Cave

**Lowering the Tone and Raising the Roof**, Raymond Gubbay, Quiller, 2021, £18.99.

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When he was eighteen in 1964 and looking for a job in the entertainment business, Raymond Gubbay had an interview with the impresario, Victor Hochhauser, which changed his life. There were three questions:

Where did you go to school?

Are you a Jewish boy?

Can you start on Monday?

This autobiography about adventures in the classical music business is a lively read, spiced with many amusing stories about musical celebrities like Nigel Kennedy, Jack Brymer, Lloyd Webber and Yehudi Menuhin, his favourite artist. His reminiscence about Edward Heath, the conductor is a gem. Gubbay came from a musical family in North London all of whose members played an instrument. His mother was a professional pianist and had lived in the Weimar Republic taking lessons from Arthur Schnabel.

Hochhauser specialised in concerts at the Albert Hall and arranged venues for the Bolshoi ballet and other Russian musical companies. Gubbay was entrusted with organising coaches to take the artists round the country which was often a complicated task because of the apparatchiks reporting on the performers and making sure that none of them defected. Occasionally some did or were arrested for shoplifting.

After two years Gubbay had not tired of the excitement but of Hochhauser's volatile personality and decided to strike out on his own. He already had some experience from his father's amateur opera productions in St Pancras Town Hall; he borrowed fifty pounds from him and opened an office in Oxford Street. In the seventies the government encouraged local authorities to take over failing commercial theatres, an Gubbay soon exploited these opportunities with small scale concerts round the country. Within twelve months he was arranging 120 concerts a year especially in seaside towns. Later

he was putting together concerts in the newly opened Queen Elizabeth Hall and orchestras for Hochhauser's Bolshoi Ballet.

The opening of the long-awaited Barbican Concert Halls in 1982 brought him new opportunities and soon accounted for three quarters of his business, about fifty symphony concerts a year. Now Hochhauser exclaimed 'Raymond Gubbay, he's doing so many concerts a year you could almost call him an impresario.' He also had imaginative ideas about getting new audiences: the Christmas Festival, the Teddy Bear concerts for children and Valentines Day. Such events were deplored by the musical snobocracy: a stuffy matron chided him 'you are lowering the tone young man'. Some Arts Council-sponsored outfits like the London Symphony Orchestra were close to bankruptcy, led by arrogant people who didn't understand box office or programming: three performances of Berlioz's Harold in Italy in a week hardly cuts it. Making money from sold out concerts was thought to be sinful and an executive of the LSO ordered him over lunch at the Garrick to restrict his concerts at the Barbican to no more than ten.

Gubbay always wanted to find new audiences for opera other than in Covent Garden, or English National Opera so he organised a ten-performance run in Wembley and later in the Albert Hall, both successful. His winning idea of spectaculars like hiring a historical enactment society to fire off muskets in the 1912 still continues. *The Times* ran a headline *Gubbay strikes gold with Arena Butterfly*.

He *did* realize that opera has to be subsidized, but like many of us wonders why so much tax payers' money was needed and often wasted. By the mid-nineties the Royal Opera House was in a financial mess and when a new executive director was advertised Gubbay applied for it with a twelve-point plan of reform. The ROH refused to accept the application and wouldn't give him an interview. A year afterwards he was surprised to be awarded the CBE and wondered whether someone in the Establishment liked his chutzpah.

In a period when the arts were financed and dominated by public subsidy it was an outstanding achievement for Gubbay to have had star billing in the weekend newspapers early in his career. In the last chapter of the book he describes how his shows reflected changing tastes and how the advance of technology has brought new challenges for performers and audiences, but he is adamant that in spite of an uncertain future, digital will never replace the excitement of live performances.

# Art

## Alexander Adams

Maria Anne Bass *et al*, *Conchophilia: Shells, Art, and Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, Princeton University Press, 2021, £40.

Julius von Schlosser, Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann (ed), Jonathan Blower (trans) *Art and Curiosity Cabinets of the Late Renaissance*, Getty Research Institute, 2021, £55.

The authors of *Conchophilia* aim to study the many aspects of the love of shells primarily during the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Low Countries. This consideration ranges from the collection, trading and collection of shells, to assessing the art of shells (the elaborate silver and gold mounts) and art about shells (numerous still-life paintings of them). It is a very wide field. A book several times as long could have been written just about the still-life art of shells.

The development of the Rococo style was greatly influenced by the emulation of natural forms. Shell-encrusted grottoes became the rage for those with country estates. The sweeping parabolas and curlicues of painting by Boucher and Louis XV decoration come from natural forms, especially shells. The dainty pastel colours and metallic surfaces reflect the fashion for mother-of-pearl. In Holland, collection of shells, like that of tulips was considered a mark of wealth and sophistication. The zeal of naturalists to categorise the animal kingdom matched the speculative, aesthetic and social impetuses to collect shells.

European collecting of exotic shells was the outcome of trans-global trade, particularly by the Dutch in the East Indies and the British and French in the West Indies. The resultant prosperity also sparked a boom in picture painting for the walls of the new mercantile middle-class. Naturally, in a trade that emphasised secular subjects, the still-life was ideally suited to incorporate beautiful and strange shells.

Shells became a valuable import to Europe and a form of payment within the colonies. ‘Cowrie shells were beginning to be used Brinck writes, to decorate horses’ bridles. He also notes that so many were imported that they were then transported to Angola, ‘where they are distributed as currency and of great value. Thus, these shells are now valid in commerce.’ Shell collection became a profitable activity for locals in newly monetised colonial economies.

Shells often required extensive processes to clean,

strip off encrustations, polish, mount and engrave and often had to be collected by native divers because shells on beaches were often damaged or worn. Treatises were written on how best to prepare shells for trade or display:

*... goldsmiths regularly transformed natural item with non-European provenance, such as coconuts and ostrich eggs, into ‘utensils used for drinking’. Vessels made out of Asian shells were displayed in the Kunstkammern of German princes, the studioli of Italian scholars, and the konstkamers of elite Netherlandish collectors and appeared in church treasuries and among the possessions of prosperous merchants.*

Illustrated are nautilus shells in ornate Baroque gilded-and-enamelled settings, which transformed into drinking cups. These combined the ingenuity of Man and the intricacy of Nature.

The sexual undertone of shells were not lost upon admirers. Included is an illustration of Jacques de Gheyn II’s painting of an ardent Neptune, complete with jutting pointed shell, approaching Amphitrite, whose body is partly obscured by a conch. It is almost as comically lewd as a McGill cartoon. At high-society drinking parties, supping from shell cups would honour Venus, goddess of love, in a pagan-style celebration that was as bawdy as it was refined. In some depictions of native divers, the lithe young men and maidens gathering the treasures of nature were themselves shown as exotic wonders, to be lusted after and catalogued.

*Renaissance illustrations in travelogues visualised eyewitness accounts describing inhabitant of ‘the Indies’ – where nautilus conchs and porcelain came from – as scarcely covered or entirely naked. The nakedness of the ‘Indians’ made them comparable to mermaids and mermen, believed by European collectors to populate the oceans that connected local seas to the rest of the world.*

There were more Christian uses of shells.

*Take a description of a German Kustkammer. ... On the table at the centre of the room, a small sculpture of the Crucifixion is placed directly beside a cluster of coral, its branches extending in parallel to Christ’s arms. This pairing of human-made object and natural specimen links the blood of the crucified and his distorted body to the color and shape of red coral fragments.*

Balthasar van Ast became a specialist painter of shells.

One chapter investigates the extravagant dollhouse made for Petronella Oortman in 1686-1810. The ornate construction, built as a glazed cabinet (over eight feet tall), is owned by the Rijksmuseum. It was made to represent Oortman's house in Amsterdam, including a miniature cabinet for tiny shells. Oortman had an extensive shell collection. The most expensive of dollhouses formed versions of the *Wunderkammer*, chest of wonders, incorporating rare materials, but Oortman's is exceptional. It cost the value of Oortman's four-storey townhouse. It was so famed that it was the subject of a detailed painting, which recorded dolls, now lost. 'Apparently, the dollhouse's nature was somewhere between that of a curiosity cabinet and what we would now call a participatory artwork.'

Another chapter discusses the proliferation of shell rooms and shell grottoes in German palaces, made to follow Italian fashion. Some of these rooms, partly or wholly adorned by shell, still exist. Photographs of these are complemented by engravings of lost rooms. Some faces made of shells in the Versailles grottoes, in the composite style of Arcimboldo. Grottoes were intended to be strange, dark, irregular and punctuated by disorienting diversions and curiosities. Another essay covers shells in art, noting that Rembrandt, in a fit of spendthrift curiosity collecting, paid a record

price for a shell.

Overall, *Conchophilia* is an engaging and richly illustrated book which people of all levels of expertise will find rewarding. Here is a brief note for the first translation of a classic 1908 German-language study of *Wunderkammern* (cabinet of wonder) show how rare coral and shells were staples of cabinets of curiosity. Most *Wunderkammern* were of natural history specimens, minerals, shells, fossils, archaeological artefacts, specialist tools, ornamental tools and weapons, automata, magical and non-Western cultural material; they were usually accompanied by owners' libraries and art collections. *Art and Curiosity Cabinets of the Late Renaissance* was written by Julius von Schlosser (1866-1938), a Viennese art historian. Von Schlosser point out that the religious, scientific and artistic all derived from the pursuit of knowledge and expertise and so it was natural that these fields would overlap most in the collections of rich, learned and cultured gentlemen. These collections would later become properties of modern nation states as inheritors of power from royalty and thence divided into museums of science, history, technology and art and libraries. The text is informative and not dry. Although the monotone illustrations make the book unappealing to a modern eye, it is a fine survey of the development of the *Wunderkammer*; and by extension the origins of our museums.

## Film

### The Collini Case

German and Italian with subtitles, Director Marco Kreuzpanter

Jane Kelly

Without him you'd be working in a kebab shop', a young German woman spits out at her adopted brother who is half Turkish. Later he picks up a beautiful blonde who laughs when he tells her he's a lawyer. She cannot imagine a Turk in such a prestigious job. Caspar Leinen, child of a German father and Turkish mother, is a Caspar Hauser figure, a disturbing presence brought in from outside. In childhood he had been taken in by his feckless father's wealthy friend, entrepreneur Hans Mayer, who treated him like a son, providing an excellent education. The film begins in Berlin as he takes his first case as a defence lawyer, three months after qualifying, defending Fabrizio Collini, played by a

barely recognisable Franco Nero, who has murdered Meyer, the man who saved him from the kebab shop.

There seems no doubt that Collini is guilty; he shot Meyer in the forehead three times and stamped on his face with such force that brain matter was found on his shoe. There is a rather grisly and hackneyed scene where Caspar glides, US attorney style, into the pathology lab to have a look at the body on its slab. Collini keeps schtum, his motive a mystery, gradually revealed to originate in dark deeds during the Second World War. Nothing original in that, a classic courtroom drama, plenty of family tension, and Nazis, but this all has extra frisson because the film is taken from

the best-selling novel by Ferdinand von Schirach, grandson of the leader of the Hitler Youth, who got twenty years at Nuremberg after perverting a whole generation of boys with cruel ideology.

An interview between David Frost and Baldur von Schirach, now on YouTube, shows the war criminal looking like a benevolent grandfather or uncle, as he says he regretted nothing, because he ‘Loved the boys so much’. The von Schirach family have obliterated his grave, but his image dominates this film which is about innocent young lads and the damage meted out to them by adult racism and brutality.

It has a slow start, with time switches between 2001, when Collini kills Meyer, the 1980s, showing Caspar’s golden childhood in a family of Aryan looking children; and Second World War Italy, the setting for Collini’s motive. Most of it is in a German courtroom, full of tacky furniture, microphones and glass screens. Participants do not seem to address the court but only each other, which rather lessens any tension, and witnesses have their backs to the jury. Visually it is dull, but the issues it explores are gripping; German law versus justice as Collini is revealed as a victim as well as a killer. There is a rather predictable gasp of horror when Meyer’s membership of the SS is announced.

Crucially, Caspar discovers that Collini had already tried to bring Meyer to justice using German law, but failed. This is the real subject of the novel and the film: a law passed in 1968, by Dr Eduard Dreher, which asserted that only the Nazi leaders were murderers, all others, ‘just following orders’, accessories to manslaughter rather than accomplices to murder. Their deeds also came under the statute of limitation so they would never be indicted after a certain date. ‘Nothing less than an amnesty’, says Caspar, and we see Meyer, slaughtering innocent Italian peasants and torturing Collini, who returns in old age, forced to take extra-judicial revenge.

The film may be inadvertently topical as history is now being reassessed in Europe. In 1968 Germany was once more a brash, economic power-house, and the whole developed world was embracing a culture of hedonism, consumerism and living for the moment. The Germans at that time can perhaps be understood for not wanting to go on weighed down by guilt forever, although Nazis crimes because of their extraordinary scale and intensity are particular, and it is extraordinary that Dreher had resumed life as a lawyer after the war despite joining the Nazi party in 1937, and as prosecutor in Innsbruck in 1940, ordering executions for stealing a loaf, using a bike

without permission, and taking a suitcase discarded after a bombing raid.

It seems Germany made a decision in the ‘Swinging 60s’ to draw a line under the horrors of the past and to get on in the new world. Since the novel was written in 2011, a more puritanical culture has taken over which insists on judging History by its own contemporary ideas, whatever the context or historic distance. Perhaps we now live in a world more akin to Dreher’s attitudes than the film makers realise, where the law can be used to threaten justice.

The film is stimulating in its ideas, but not altogether successful, giving an unrealistic view of Italian peasant life during the war, when many people were starving, and a sentimental ending when Caspar visits Italy and sees the dead father and son as ghosts happily embracing. He ends up with a new ravishing German girlfriend, apparently forgiven for being surprised that he could be a lawyer, and he has won his first case, a happy Hollywood ending. The publication of the book led to a national debate, it’s unlikely that this soft-centred film will have the same impact.

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# IN SHORT

## **Agent Sonya, The true Story of World War II's Most extraordinary Spy**, Penguin 2021, £8.99.

'The truth is always fantastic'; Ben McIntyre has succeeded yet again in making true stories more exciting than thrillers. He was lucky that 'Sonya', her codename, wrote extensively about her amazing life which included fiction, some of it autobiographical. His exhaustive research brings much fascinating detail but never gets in the way of the thrust of the story.

Around 1945 the inhabitants of Great Rollright a quiet village in Oxfordshire would never have guessed that one of their neighbours, Mrs Beurton, an ordinary housewife and devoted mother who took part in village events, was one of the most successful Soviet spies, transmitting important information to Moscow in the attic and visiting a dead letter box in one of the surrounding fields She got away with it owing to the gross incompetence of MI5. It was said that one of her interrogators was unable to spot a traitor even under his nose. She was also fortunate that throughout her long career nobody ever betrayed her in spite of many opportunities – except for her childhood Nanny, who wasn't taken seriously. Unlike most spies she had a pleasant and approachable personality, never striking one as dogmatic.

Ursula Kuczynski came from a left-wing Jewish family in Berlin several of whose members landed up in Oxford and Hampstead; her brother Jurgen was also a Soviet spy. She embraced the communist cause early having witnessed the failure of the German Revolutions in the aftermath of the Great War and the relentless rise of the Nazis.

The map preceding the text shows how between 1928-50 Ursula spied for the Soviet Union in several continents. Trundling round the world she acquired two husbands and three children and often helped by her Nanny-Ursula believed that her domestic life was excellent cover. In Shanghai, a hotbed of espionage in the twenties and thirties, she worked with and loved Richard Sorge, 'the impeccable spy'

who tested her mettle by taking her on a hair-raising ride on his motorbike. Her son said much later that Sorge was the love of her life. In Manchuria she was digging up Japanese secrets to send to Moscow and in Switzerland she was involved in the planning of an assassination attempt on Hitler, met and conveniently married her second husband Len Beurton, a British subject. Now she could get to England via Lisbon and join her family there.

Undoubtedly her most successful coup was helping Klaus Fuchs, a leading Harwell scientist, transfer secrets to Russia between 1941 and 1943. Like other serious Communists she thought she was assisting world peace by helping Russia to build the bomb. At this time, she and her family lived in a rented cottage in Oxford belonging to Judge Neville Laski, a solid patriot. Ursula was transmitting reports two or three times a week and her children wondered why she was always sleeping in the afternoons.

I will not reveal the denouement. Read the book; it's a marvellous Christmas present.

*Merrie Cave*

## **The Struggle for a Human Future**, Jeremy Naydler, Temple Lodge, 2020 \$19.

*The Struggle for a Human Future*, is a collection of five articles, loosely centred around the growth of the Internet and the computerisation of modern life. One article is about the roll-out of 5G, aimed at making the Internet available almost everywhere on earth, while another article is about the scientific description of light as opposed to religious descriptions of light.

Jeremy Naydler is rather unusual compared to most current-day academic philosophers. Despite starting at Oxford with PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics like several government ministers – David Cameron most recently) Naydler became interested in religion. His latest book, *The Struggle for a Human Future*, reunites his spiritual concerns and the Anglo-American philosophical tradition he left behind at college. This book examines how computers are

changing the human experience of thinking.

Until recently, Naydler has had two major academic interests: the origin of modern post-Socratic philosophy in the religions of the ancient world – how a subject called ‘philosophy’ even arose in the first place, Rudolf Steiner’s attempt early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to reunify analytic thought and spiritual practice, and Goethe’s earlier attempt to conceive of science as a human-centred activity rather than a subject centred on logic and materialism. One of Naydler’s earlier books reinterpreted the Ancient Egyptian religious texts as shamanic and experiential in character. *In the Shadow of the Machine* about the rise of calculating machines since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, (2018) shows the evolution of computers. Naydler has embraced a third interest: how computers are changing us, and pushing us away from our spiritual side.

He is careful not to condemn computers nor to propose a Luddite isolation from the Internet, but he counsels self-discipline, suggesting the temptation to self-distraction of the 24-hour Internet is a spiritual test. We must learn to move away from the computerised network of images and messages when we decide to, and to recognise it as a false

environment, however fascinating and useful as it sometimes is. He talks about the importance of listening to Goethe, Steiner and nature itself – learning to just ‘listen’.

He describes himself as a gardener as well as a philosopher and makes much of his day-to-day living tending other people’s gardens in the Oxford area. Very modestly he occasionally refers to the practice, during a gardening session, of ‘being with’ a particular plant and experiencing it in a non-analytical way. The growing net of computer-mediated virtual life seems to be cutting us off from the direct experience of nature as well as experience of other aspects of life.

Some of the book is more practical, warning that electronic frequencies and radio transmissions seem to be having damaging effects on plants, insects and animals, perhaps even people, worse effects than the industry promoters behind the fast-growing ‘Internet of Things’ would like to admit. Naydler’s tone of voice is calm and relaxed; there is no sense of panic, nor predictions of doom.

*Mark Griffiths*

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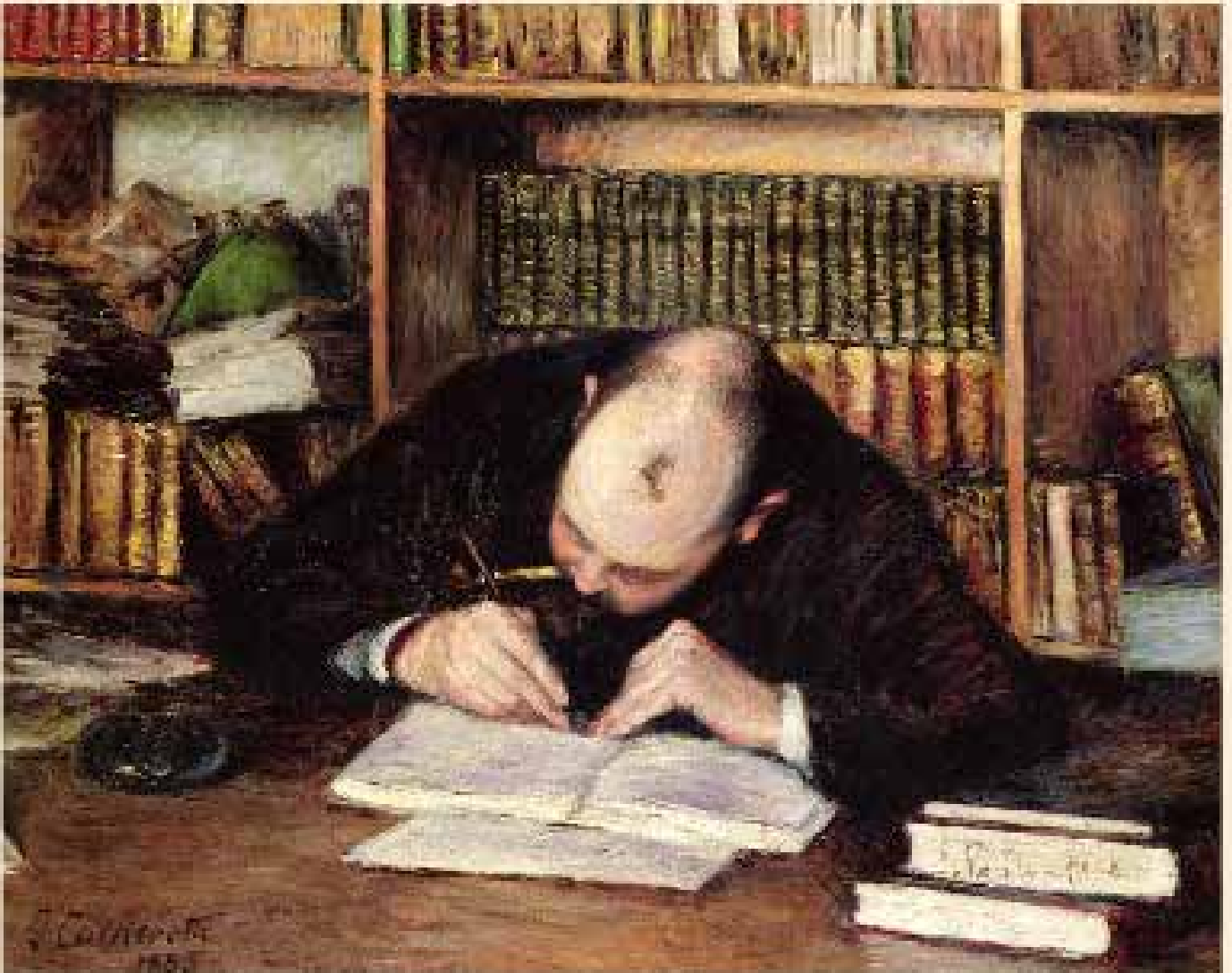
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