

The

Salisbury Review

Absolutely the wrong opinion on everything



Elizabeth Line Farringdon Station. Courtesy of BAM Ferrovial Kier JV

Putin's Knout

Theodore Dalrymple

Ministry of Lies

Myles Harris

Magic Mushrooms

Lindsey Dearnley

White Man's Art

James Monteith

The Oldie Card

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War is a terrible thing. During General Curtis LeMay's firebombing of Tokyo on the 10th of March 1945, a city made up of mainly wooden houses, between 80,000 and 120,000 people were burnt alive in one night. Given enough fuel at the right temperature the human body will ignite. Imagine your child catching fire in front of you. American aircrews, of which only 96 were lost in the raid, reported smelling cooked flesh twenty miles from target. Even now it is ranked as the most destructive air attack in history. There are many more examples like this in the West's recent history. Blair's Iraq war is another.

Against this particular act of cold blooded, calculated brutality; LeMay must have known exactly what would happen to Tokyo – even Putin's crimes don't compare. He is never the less a fool for not doing his strategic homework. He thought he could get away with a handful of deaths in the Ukraine followed by a puppet government. Now he finds himself embroiled in a war he cannot stop, which demands more killing and flattening of cities and, even if he were to succeed in seizing the entire Ukraine, it would be ungovernable.

The West is equally trapped in this ludicrous but fatal farce. By painting Putin as the worst war criminal ever, it is forced to supply more and more weapons to the Ukraine because war criminals must be stopped mustn't they? But the more weapons it sends the more Putin, with his back to the wall, will have to resist. This will go on until Putin either uses a battlefield tactical nuclear weapon or invades a neighbouring NATO signatory, in which case NATO will formally declare war. Even if it never goes as far as that, our industries are likely to collapse if we stop buying his oil and gas. If we continue; a war, paid for by us, it will go on. Like all wars it has its own momentum.

Readers may be surprised by our articles explaining the Russian case, none of which so far has appeared in most of our mainstream press, maybe they do not realise they are in the same state of ignorance as

our counterparts in Russia. The latter think they are fighting a Fascist government to liberate a Ukraine people longing to be free, we think we are fighting a psychopath to free his people. We laughed at Russian censorship as we closed down the only Russian TV station in the West and banned all political, cultural and sporting activities with her. Russia has done the same.

TV now largely dictates when wars will start or finish. Think of the burning child in Vietnam running away from napalm, which ended the Vietnam War, of the dead toddler on the beach in Turkey causing Chancellor Merkel to admit tens of thousands of Arabs to Germany ensuring in a half century German will be partly Arab, or today, a picture of a dead child under a tarpaulin in Mariupol that may lead, if NATO is dragged into war over Ukraine, to the nuclear bombing of London. None of these images, although true, were the truth.

It is vital that both sides give up this war, but how? The West must acknowledge that Putin did not invade the Ukraine on a whim and Putin has to call a ceasefire. Truthful media accounts are due to both populations, which could prove very difficult for Putin if Russian TV showed the war damage he has caused in the Ukraine. We will also be surprised how much we have been lied to.

We are part of a world energy market and while we are not reliant on Putin for petrol, we have to buy gas at world prices, prices that may cripple the economy this winter. If we want to free up money to buy more gas, we should consider raising the cost of petrol for private motoring. There are 32.7 million private cars in the UK, one for every two of us, and with just as many cars on the road as there were before the war, petrol is still too cheap. Its price should be raised to put at least half the private cars off the road. We have buses, trains, bikes and taxis, we don't need private cars any more than we did in the Second World War. This is war.

Are we serious about war? No. Cossetted in our consumer society we don't think it will happen to us. It will if we don't wake up and smell the phosphorus.

Ukraine

Four articles



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“Humans, all the way back to our common ancestors with chimpanzees have always made war.”

Scientific American September 2018

The torn line wavers, breaks, and falls.
‘Get up, come on!’
the captain calls ‘Get up, the Welsh, and on we go!’
(Christ, that my lads should fail me so!)
A dying boy grinned up and said:
‘The whole damned company, sir; it’s dead.’
‘Come on! Cowards!’ bawled the captain,
then Fell killed, among his writhing men.

Machine Gunfire: Cambrin by Robert Graves (September 25 1915)

The Kiss of Putin's Knout

THEODORE DALRYMPLE

Islamist criticism of western society often resembles, at least in part, that of conservatives within western society itself: the lack of real belief in anything except ever greater consumption, for example, or freedom interpreted as mere licence, the vulgarity and triviality of popular culture, the leniency towards criminality, and so forth. The greater the cultural elite's desire for dissolving or pushing boundaries as being good in itself, the more valid the Islamist's criticism of contemporary western society seems to conservatives.

And yet conservatives do not swallow Islamism whole or even admire it, let alone see it as a solution to our present discontents. Islamism comes with certain theocratic beliefs and is highly intolerant. Most western conservatives are social liberals who desire public decorum and the preservation of whatever is good from the heritage of the past. They believe in freedom tempered by self-control. They do not want law to be the sole arbiter of the permissible. Conservatives have no difficulty in understanding that Islamism is worse, far worse, than the disease of which it claims to be the cure.

The same cannot be said, or once could not have been said, of the attitude of at least some conservatives to the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, whose criticism of western decadence, which is real enough, parallel that of the Islamists. They have swallowed whole his claim to be the defender of a Christian worldview and society, a claim *prima facie* absurd in one who was a career KGB officer and who has never renounced the whole apostolic tradition of that organization, responsible for human suffering on an almost unimaginable scale. Anyone who can be proud of that past is *ipso facto* a moral monster, for it is impossible that an operative was ignorant of that past or what it entailed.

Vladimir Putin's claim to have found God is ludicrous. We should not have believed Dr Shipman had he claimed suddenly to have had a religious revelation proving to him that killing 200 of his patients or more was wrong; and even if we did believe it, we wouldn't subsequently put him in charge of a hospital, however naïve we were with regard to his claim. Moreover, the particular church to which Mr Putin now claims allegiance is itself, and has long been,

little more than the KGB, or now the FSB, at prayer. As a Russian Deng Xiao-Ping might put it, what does it matter if the cat is atheist or believer, so long as it catches mice.

Conservative apologists for Putin, who are surprisingly numerous, disregard entirely the almost fantastic levels of kleptomania permitted to the so-called oligarchs, which makes the worst of our insiders seem like small-time larcenists who have more in common with shoplifters than with Putin's harem of billionaires.

Such freedom of expression as was allowed in Putin's Russia was tempered not so much by self-control as by assassination, and more journalists by far have lost their lives under his rule than did under the rule of Leonid Brezhnev, and I am not in the slightest trying to rehabilitate the memory of that unlamented man.

Apologists of Putin point to his popularity, and that he has brought a certain kind of stability to his tormented country. Popularity is not a gauge of moral or even political virtue, however; it is probable that Hitler enjoyed at least equal popularity in Germany even after it ought to have been clear to everyone that he had led the country to disaster. Kissing the rod that beats you is a human propensity, especially in circumstances in which you cannot easily get rid of the rod, or fear that it can be replaced only by another, possibly worse one. As a deeply depressing Romanian peasant saying has it, a change of rulers is the joy of fools.

Even if this were true in Russian's case, and the future being hidden from us, no one can say whether or not it is true, it would be no reason to applaud, admire or wish to imitate Vladimir Putin. We have to judge him by what we know of him, not by the hypothetical actions of some hypothetical successor. We should be thankful that we have a very different political and cultural tradition from the one in which he operates.

Apologists, or even outright supporters, of Putin point out the supposed errors of western foreign policy to account for the present war in Ukraine, present as I write this. This is like accounting for, and excusing, Hitler because of the treaty of Versailles. The degree to which that treaty was unwise, unjust, and punitive is still a matter of dispute, but even on the worst

interpretation, the connection between Versailles and Auschwitz is not like that of an axle to a wheel, to put it very mildly. Moreover, it is clear that Vladimir Putin has long disbelieved in the right of Ukraine even to exist as an independent nation, despite his country being one of the guarantors of the inviolability of its territory.

When it comes to truth, Vladimir Putin makes both Trump and Biden look like George Washington.

What accounts for the popularity of Putin in certain conservative circles? No doubt the spectacle of power, especially for those who have lost it or believe themselves qualified or entitled to exercise it, is attractive as a kind of wish-fulfilment. Some people, no doubt of a masochistic disposition, are susceptible to braggadocio of the bare-chested Mussolini or Putin type. More important is the appearance of conviction: unlike the cultural and political elites in western countries, Mr Putin has never wavered in his belief in either the goodness or high historical destiny of Russia. I leave it to psychologists, for whom everything is the opposite of what it seems except for those things that are exactly what they seem, to decide whether this unwavering belief is the real thing or a manifestation of a deep inner doubt, or indeed a smokescreen for his kleptocratic regime, now necessary for his very survival. Some conservatives long for the kind of self-belief that Mr Putin emanates, and they wish that we could import it.

They are tired and disgusted by the constant

denigration of their own country's history, traditions, culture, in short, its entire past, as if there were no glories or achievement in it, but only a litany of crimes horrors and disasters, punctuated, if at all, only by radical opposition.

Exasperated by this kind of inverted patriotism, that of belonging to a country that is not the best but the worst of all possible countries, they look to Vladimir Putin for a model of uncritical national self-regard to imitate. What a relief it would be to return to a prelapsarian belief in one's country! And when one combines this with the apprehension that one's country is indeed decadent, just as Mr Putin says it is, the circle is closed, so to speak. Putin is the man for us!

What is lacking here, apart from an acknowledgment of Putin's limitless viciousness, is a sense of proportion, possibly the most important of all senses. There *are* many things wrong with contemporary Britain, and with all other western countries, our contemporary culture is largely cheap, trashy and vulgar, true that our political class is largely contemptible, and so on and so forth; but we are still free to try to change things for the better, still our life is incomparably better than it would be under some pale-Putin figure. We must not let the bad be the friend of the worse, the far, far worse. Above all, having lived lives of security and comfort, we should recognise evil when it stares us in the face.

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



First World War France Public Domain

Russia, a black hearted Prokofiev opera

BRIAN RIDLEY

Russia is hopelessly schizophrenic, for good historical reasons. Nothing makes this clearer than its invasion of Ukraine: its claim of Kyiv as a Russian holy city, and at the same time exhibiting appalling barbarity. Kyiv, indeed, was the first city in Ukraine to become Christian. It had been established among the Slavs by the formidable trading and pillaging pagan Vikings, who needed a centre to organize its trade in slaves, furs, silks from the East, everything marketable. The Vikings, mostly Swedish – the Danes and Norwegians being busy robbing the treasures of British monasteries brought organization for the first time to the pacific Slavs, and Kyiv became a sort of capital city of the young and struggling state of Rus. Rus did not look West for its civilization, but rather to the capital of the old Roman empire – Constantinople – and its Byzantine form of Christianity.

The story goes that Vladimir, who was the founder of Christianity in Ukraine, looked at all the known religions with a refreshingly open mind. The local Slav one had no striking ceremonies and was too primitive, so that was dismissed. The Muslim religion was the most obvious given where he was, but that was emphatically dismissed when it became clear it frowned on the use of strong drink. That had to be an abomination to an erstwhile Viking, brought up with stories of valiant death in battle and being transported to Valhalla by a lovely Valkyrie to an endless drinking spree. The Latin papal religion of Europe, looking West, had some striking ceremonies, but Vikings were always looking to Byzantium, where the religion was Greek, and it was the Greek take of Christianity that won. The effect of this choice was to emphasize that Rus, and ultimately Russia, is not by any means European, given the gulf between the two forms of Christianity; in the Latin religion the ecclesiastic is quite separate from the State; in the Greek it is an organ of the State. This is why the Russian Orthodox Church supports Putin.

The progression of this Swedish/Slav state, Rus, towards a Christian civilisation was comprehensibly squashed by the invasion of hordes of Tartars under Genghis Khan, who had created an Empire that stretched from Manchuria to the Caucasus and beyond. When it eventually disintegrated the Tartars inhabiting the western area became Muslim and known as the Golden Horde. Christianity survived. A local state, founded by Alexander Nevsky, celebrated musically by Prokofiev, and, centred around Moscow, was born – Muscovy subservient to the Tartar. Muscovite Princes, because of their religion, saw themselves grandly as successors to the old Roman empire, with a capital in Moscow, the new Byzantium. However, when those local Princes became Tsars of Muscovy, they were uncomfortably aware that Kyiv was the true historical font of their claim; and needed Ukraine to be part of Russia to cement their authority. Muscovy won the war against Sweden and its ally Ukraine-Rus, and Peter the Great changed the name from the Tsardom of Muscovy to the Empire of Russia, an invented name. There were now two Russias: Little Russia and Great Russia, the former better described as Ukraine-Rus, the latter by Muscovy and the mental legacy of the Golden Horde. The current Tsar of Muscovy Putin, like all the Tsars before him, felt the lack of authority, being once subservient to the Golden Horde. Given the historical background, it suggests that the current invasion of Ukraine has, above all, a historical motivation. But if Kyiv is so holy and important why shell it? Perhaps someone in the near future will write a book on ‘The Madness of Putin’, or ‘How One Day Russia Woke Up To Find Its Tsar Insane’.

When Russia looks to the West it gives us music literature, poetry and science, which we treasure. Looking East, it gives us barbarity and autocracy. The West has, recently, thought of Russia as European. Given its schizophrenia, it will never be that.

Brian Ridley is a Fellow of the Royal Society.

The EU, NATO and Russia: a 21st-Century Thucydides Trap

JAMES MONKTON

Six years ago, in the pages of the *Salisbury Review* I warned that NATO and EU expansionism – which they euphemistically call ‘enlargement’ came with a very high risk of provoking the Russian bear into an angry response. And here we are. A horrible war rages in Ukraine that could escalate at any moment to something that is beyond catastrophic.

This is Putin’s war; he is ultimately responsible for it; and that makes him Europe’s first great monster of the twenty-first century. He is currently in competition with Xi Jinping for the top-slot in the international league. But the West, and in particular NATO and the EU, must accept their share of culpability for the current state of affairs through their self-serving interests. Many had warned that their actions would likely lead to what is happening. But they carried on regardless. It is a miserable tale of self-promotion over all other considerations.

Currently, the focus is very much on how NATO will respond to Russia’s invasion. This is in itself an odd perspective because NATO, as a defensive alliance, has no business being involved in Ukraine in the first place. Not that this has stopped it becoming involved in non-NATO conflicts before, as in Libya in 2011. But the ties between NATO and the EU have not previously come under sufficient scrutiny: these cosy bedfellows have been snuggling up together in Brussels, where both have their nerve centres.

It is a common misconception that there is no intrinsic connection between ‘Europe’ and NATO, commentators citing the EU membership of Austria, Ireland and Sweden – none of them NATO states, and all neutral. While these states are indeed neutral, they will not all necessarily remain so: for some, neutrality is a subject for increasing debate, especially since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and now Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. But there is indeed a fundamental connection between the EU and NATO. Since 1989, any country that has joined the EU has also joined NATO; since 1999, some fourteen European nations have joined NATO, many of which were previously under Soviet rule. Moscow howled loudly and menacingly. Article 42.7 of the EU’s 2009 Lisbon

Treaty reinforces relations between itself and NATO. This stipulates: ‘If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance *by all their means in their power*’ (my italicisation). This article is specifically referred to as the ‘mutual defence clause’, akin to NATO’s famous Article 5 of the Washington Treaty of 1949.

The possible implications of this are obvious in a war, especially with Russia: it is easy to see how a non-NATO EU country under attack calls on NATO EU countries for military aid under the article, thus embroiling those new belligerents in a wider conflict. And if Russia were then to attack those new combatants, it would easily be taken as an act of aggression on a NATO member, demanding a full NATO response under its collective defence Article 5. The wording of Article 47.2 is strategically ambiguous in classic EU style, but it nonetheless readily lends itself to the above frightening scenario.

As Prof Richard Sawka noted in *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* (2015), since the implementation of the Lisbon treaty in 2009, accession countries seeking to join the EU ‘are required to align their defence and security policies with those of NATO’. In that woeful year of 2009 and the activation of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU initiated its ominous-sounding Eastern Partnership Plan (EaP), which was designed to prepare more Eastern European countries for EU membership. This is what agitates Russia so much. These potential accessionary states include Georgia, on Russia’s border, and other post-Soviet countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and, of course, Ukraine. Putin repeatedly warned that pursuing this course of action would lead to conflict.

This was at the core of the 2013 revolution in Ukraine, in which a corrupt but democratically elected government was overthrown by pro-EU forces, an event accurately known as the ‘Euromaidan’. The Russian annexation of Crimea immediately followed the next year. At the time of writing, the EU is still pushing its aggressive, provocative expansionism, European Commission President Ursula van der Leyen

visiting President Zelensky of Ukraine in Kyiv in April handing over to him EU application papers and promising fast-track entry: ‘this is where your path towards the European Union begins’. Moldova and Georgia are also looking for quick entry into the EU. This reckless expansionism is nigh-on suicidal given Putin’s likely response. Van der Leyen might preside over an even larger EU, but it might amount to nothing more than an even bigger pile of radioactive dust. To paraphrase Tacitus: ‘They create a wasteland and call it European integration’.

Why is NATO so ready to follow the EU’s playbook? Like the EU, its survival as an institution depends on its remaining relevant. After performing sterling service in the Cold War, it has become a victim of ‘nothing fails like success’. What was its purpose then to be? Of course, it is a dangerous world out there; but that requires a flexible response, not a rigid ‘one binds all’ NATO structure. Temporary alliances, reflecting changing geo-political concerns, are more practical in the post-Cold War era. At the time of the ending of the Soviet Union, Eduard Shevardnadze, then Russia’s foreign secretary, offered to disband the Warsaw Pact if the West did the same for NATO. The offer should have been accepted. But, just like the EU, its fellow giant cash-guzzling machine in Brussels, too many sinecures are at stake within the NATO bureaucracy. Generous annual leave, exotic foreign placements, trips

back home paid for, duty-free fuel allowances and other tax perks, private health insurance, education grants for children, up to the age of 24, excellent salaries: all are strong incentives to keep the gravy train rolling. Offering the prospect of NATO membership to former countries of the Russky Mir, the Russian sphere of influence, has been one way of doing that. NATO has played this game even with countries such as Ukraine, despite the fact that any country with a disputed border is not allowed to join its ranks.

Like the EU and all major organisations, NATO has manifested aspects of an institutionalised form of Michels’ ‘Iron Law of Oligarchy’: despite honourable and even altruistic founding intentions, institutional entities always end up existing first and foremost to serve themselves. The self-serving interests of NATO and the EU are thus propelling us into a highly dangerous Thucydides trap. Russia, no longer the great power it once was, but which Putin would like it to be treated as, feels threatened by the growing dominance in Europe of the EU and its military back-up of NATO. Russia is responding all too predictably and just as it said it would. And yet the world was shocked when Putin sent in the tanks. In the current fog of war, more blind manoeuvres are being made – perhaps over the cliff’s edge.

James Monkton is a university lecturer.

Unquiet Flows the Dnieper

MARK MANTEL

I was buried in my study, ‘man-cave’ in American, all afternoon when I first heard the news. Of all things, I had been studying the Symbolists of the Silver Age of Russian literature. These were a loose group of mostly Christian poets who felt their task was to restore the cosmic significance of ordinary life. Their project was, of course, soon cut short by the Bolshevik terror. Still, my drab days were really needing some ‘restoration of cosmic significance’. The darn problem, though, is that to really understand the period, you must know some things about metaphysicians like Schelling and Schlegel. And my cranium can’t think through all that like it once could. I was thus already in a disheartened way when my wife unceremoniously stormed into my sovereign territory to announce that Russia had invaded Ukraine.

I wish I could say that my first reaction was immediate dread at the coming bloodshed. But, to my shame, the first devil to enter my mind was that my

hope of maybe scribbling a book about the Symbolists was now dashed. Who now would read about glories of the Russian Silver Age? Anyways, it was in this sorry state that I was duly conducted to the den to watch the news. I could already imagine the media frenzy the terrible simplificateurs had waiting for me. I wanted to retreat to the powdery leather of my study and wrap myself in a blanket of tobacco smoke. Maybe I would even be obliged, in my own house, to show the obligatory indignation at whatever upsets our global hegemony? Traditional authoritarianism leaves a man the right to remain silent. But our much-improved system condemns him to speak and extends its reach right into the private sanctuary of his conscience.

What can I say? Do you remember that documentary that came out a decade or two ago about an idiot who went to live on friendly terms with some bears and ended up getting mauled to death? I watched a documentary about the reaction of the idiot’s friends to

his grim end. And what struck me was their adolescent horror that a bear acted like a bear. They were disillusioned to the point of comedy. And that was just how the media and our politicians, I will not call them diplomatists or statesmen, reacted to the predictable Russian invasion. Biden especially looked like a hysterical schoolboy, and you could tell Ursula von der Leyden was milking the feelgood of sanctimony for every dribble of warmth it could proffer. I knew that I could not get to the bottom of anything by watching all this.

It is no easy matter for the average person to verify anything. I was not about to rely on activists, politicians and specialists who often have financial, armaments, and political interests in the subject. Should I read the news of some neutral country? *The Times of India* maybe? Madagascar? Anyways, I ended up doing what some Americans do when international matters get too befuddling.

One of our best Russian gurus is a man called Mearsheimer. He is of the Realist school of diplomacy. In other words, he is not determined to portray enemies as embodiments of absolute evil rather than as representatives of legitimate politics. He also suspects that affixing the obligatory Hitler box-moustache on images of foreign leaders might make it hard to restore international peace. Mearsheimer knows more about Russia and diplomacy than the entire staff of CNN combined.

So, I figured Kissinger and Mearsheimer could give me something more than the hysterical sensationalism of the networks. But first, I am obliged to ask a favor. I would not ask it if I was merely a polemicist. Indeed, I only have the audacity to ask because I have the naivete to suppose that a mutual search for the Truth is possible, even now. Please give me a charitable read by doing the following:

Imagine that Scotland became an independent country. Imagine too the Warsaw Pact was still a going concern and that NATO was no more. Now imagine Scotland, peeved over a litany of old grievances, thought it would be a fine thing to invite the Warsaw Pact over to do military exercises right along the English border – and was getting armed to the teeth. Imagine further that Ireland already had bands of them planted along the north. And, for good measure, imagine there was a big base in Calais.

Imagine further that you had protested this encirclement for years but were summarily told that France and Ireland and Scotland can let in who they please and that nobody meant you any harm. Imagine further still that you have had two full-scale 1066-syle invasion attempts in the last 200 years – and the last one within living memory. Finally, imagine you send your boys to Glasgow to stop the threat and the whole world turns against you, saying you want to restore your old empire. Everyone gets together

to starve you out of business. Schools in Australia and Canada stop teaching Shakespeare and Dickens. And nobody even wants to play soccer (football) with you anymore.

Mearsheimer believes that the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis. The ‘taproot of the trouble’ is NATO enlargement and a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia’s orbit. The first round of enlargement took place in 1999 and brought in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. The second occurred in 2004 and included Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania,

Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Moscow complained bitterly from the start but was too weak to do anything about it. Then NATO began looking further east. At the 2008 Bucharest summit, NATO considered admitting Georgia and Ukraine. The Bush administration was gung-ho to do it, but France and Germany opposed the move, knowing it would be a reckless antagonization of Russia. Putin said plainly it would be a ‘direct threat’ to Russia. Russia’s invasion of Georgia in August 2008 should have dispelled any remaining doubts about Putin’s determination to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO.

Putin’s actions should be easy to comprehend. A huge expanse of land that Napoleonic France, imperial Germany, and Nazi Germany all crossed to strike at Russia itself, Ukraine serves as a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia. No Russian leader would tolerate a military alliance that was Moscow’s mortal enemy until recently moving into Ukraine. Nor would any Russian leader stand idly by while the West helped install a government there that was determined to integrate Ukraine into the West. Washington may not like Moscow’s position, but it should understand the logic behind it. This is Geopolitics 101: great powers are always sensitive to



potential threats near their home territory. After all, the United States does not tolerate distant great powers deploying military forces anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, much less on its borders. Imagine the outrage in Washington if China built an impressive military alliance and tried to include Canada and Mexico in it.

Mearsheimer further points out what George Kennan had to say about NATO expansion. George Kennan was the man who wrote the *Long Telegram* and the *X Article*, which set forward the strategy of containment that would define US policy toward the Soviet Union for the next four decades! He was the most influential American diplomat of the Cold War era and an architect of the Marshall Plan. Shortly after the US Senate approved the first round of NATO expansion, Kennan said: 'I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anyone else.'

So, let me ask you: do you not think the opinion of a man like this has more weight than all the clowns on the news today? The man has been containing Russia since the 1940s for heaven's sake!

Of course, many intellectual midgits now challenge these learned men, with the usual predictable tactics. I need not describe here the efforts of activists, spin doctors, and outside interests, armaments makers, to destroy a person. The real difference, though, between the Western press and the Russian is that the Russian people know they are being lied to. And as a result, Russians usually have a rough sense of the truth, more or less. In the West, as John Stuart Mill noted long ago: 'the modern regime of public opinion is, in an unorganized form, what the Chinese educational and political systems are in an organized form; and unless individuality shall be able successfully to assert itself against this yoke, Europe, notwithstanding its noble antecedents and its professed Christianity, will tend to become another China.'

What about the civilian casualties, two wrongs don't make a right, but Biden's accusation of Putin as a 'war criminal' is hypocritical to the point of pathology. Does Biden call Roosevelt or Kennedy war criminals? Should we perhaps not look to ourselves first and then criticise others? The US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, knowingly and intentionally targeted, killed, and injured an untold number of Japanese civilians.

The logic here seems to be: 'Our civilian killings are fine and dandy but yours are altogether a bad thing. That's because you are bad, and we are good.'

But maybe Washington can wag its sanctimonious finger because we didn't do it 'lately?'

Scholars at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs figured 360,000

civilians lost their lives at the hands of US and coalition forces post 9/11. Most civilian deaths took place in Iraq, where as many as 208,000 people perished. Syria saw the second-highest death toll, with 95,000 casualties. Both countries were harder hit than Afghanistan – where about 46,000 civilians died.

Again, two wrongs don't make a right. And maybe the above figures are exaggerated. But I think the larger point stands, great powers facing an existential threat will mobilize and deploy all their resources to confront and remove a threat and there will be human costs. And, if anything, Russia has a lot more to fear from activity right along its borders than the US had with its wars halfway across the planet.

Kissinger explains well how Russian history began in Kievan-Rus. How Russian Orthodoxy spread from there. How Ukraine has been part of Russia for centuries. 'Crimea, which is 60 percent Russian, became part of Ukraine only in 1954.... The west is largely Catholic; the east largely Russian Orthodox. The west speaks Ukrainian; the east speaks mostly Russian. Any attempt by one wing of Ukraine to dominate the other, as has been the pattern, would lead eventually to civil war or break up.'

Was Khrushchev a Ukrainian? In what other instances could the head of state of one country be a totally foreign nationality? One of my favorite Russian writers is Gogol, a Ukrainian. His stories are usually seamlessly broken up into Ukrainian Tales and Petersburg Tales. He wrote mostly, if not exclusively, in Russian. To the extent Ukraine is to be pulled between Russia and the West, Russia plainly has the stronger claim.

Westerners will object, of course, that Ukrainians should 'decide for themselves'. That may be true. But it is not how the West has acted. The US government has bankrolled the National Endowment for Democracy in Ukraine. It has funded more than 60 projects aimed at promoting 'civil society' in Ukraine. The NED's president, Carl Gershman, has called Ukraine 'the biggest prize'. After Yanukovich won Ukraine's presidential election, the NED decided he was undermining its goals, and so started a massive campaign to support the opposition.

Does this really sound like letting Ukrainians 'decide for themselves'?

Mark Mantel was born in St Petersburg to a Russian mother and Ukrainian father. He left the old country with his parents, as a boy, but has travelled back a few dozen times since the communist crumble. The war between the nations has torn his own heart, but he has thus far avoided psychotherapy and antidepressants.

Age, the horror mask you cannot take off

JANE KELLY

I was recently dining alone in a pub. I've been doing it all my adult life but now it's different. Some middle-aged, Mediterranean men with their wives smiled benevolently at me, not the kind of interest I once attracted. I am now sixty-five and their eyes melted with sympathy.

'Are you OK?' one asked. I smiled back reassuringly. They all looked over at what they clearly saw as an old woman cruelly isolated. Where were her family? As I left a young waiter told me that I, 'looked very nice'. Why wouldn't I, but people now see me in a way that I do not see myself. I am looking out at the world through a horror mask which I never asked to put on and I cannot take off.

As a journalist, I often lived like a commercial traveller, protected by an expense account, company car, good hotels with discreet restaurants. I occasionally got the ire of jealous waitresses who saw me as what was then called a 'yuppie'. Once I reappeared for breakfast and a waitress who'd served me the night before ignored me. When I gained her attention she said, 'I thought I'd better wait until your husband came down.' She knew as well as I did that there wasn't one. In those days things were fundamentally about sex. Now they're about the proprieties of old age.

I recently took some disused digital equipment to a drop off point in a mobile phone shop. A bored youth looked surprised when I arrived, as if I was trying to get into a disco. They obviously don't get many lone grannies in there. He was not interested and knew nothing about recycling equipment but he kept calling me, 'Dear', and I could see he was straining to be polite because of what he saw as my great age. The way the young see older people is truly strange. I recently saw a poster for *Cabaret* showing the face of Joel Grey. I was astonished that when he played the part of the MC in the Berlin club, he was a child! When I saw the film in 1972 aged sixteen, I thought he was in raddled middle-age. Like every other youngster I was the victim of time somehow stretching out infinitely, preserving the illusion that old age and death would never happen to me or my friends. As some gloomy Jacobean said, 'Before the age of forty man never thinks about death, after it he thinks of nothing else.' The latter part of life, at best, is about trying get over that early mistake and accept the horrible truth that manifests more every day, in aching joints, thinning hair and ligaments and most painfully in other people's faces when they see you.

Older people will never be welcome apart from

as generous grandparents because they reek of the unthinkable shortness of life. In evolutionary and biological terms, they are no use. From 1940, Hitler's T4 Aktion picked them off along with mental patients and the disabled as not worthy of life. By 1941 that policy led to 93,521 hospital beds emptied, the problem of 'bed blocking' solved. On rather more compassionate grounds Germany has recently made a study into the 'gray digital divide,' the current structural rejection of old people going on largely unnoticed. It showed that elderly people play a minor role in research done on internet usage. New apps are not aimed at them or their interests. I recently noticed this when a neighbour aged 96 was told that she couldn't get her Co-op loyalty tokens except by mobile phone. She also had to specifically apply for a paper census form, or rather I did it for her as no one at National Statistics answered the phone. She also had doorstep milk delivery cancelled after thirty years having to go on line now and order weekly using a complicated website, rather than the milk-person picking up her note in an empty bottle.

In the US ninety-four percent of people under fifty have a mobile, but only just over half of the over sixty-fives. Without social media they are now excluded from much banking, business, shopping, health information, entertainments, and booking hotel and rail tickets. Many like me feel they are always scrambling to keep up, getting the hang of one thing and dreading the next development. For the first time I regret having no offspring as I need them to help me with new technology; I imagine strapping grandsons coming to my rescue as I struggle to download an app. But perhaps they wouldn't be so obliging. Age UK estimate that of two million over seventy-fives, less than half use a computer. Of those only a quarter are using the internet more since the pandemic, while nearly one in ten are using it less, perhaps due to lack of 'support' from relatives.

Some cultures are kinder to older women than the British and American. Women are considered sexually attractive far longer in Catholic Europe, Hollywood used to be puzzled by the appearance of French actresses such as Simone Signoret, and in old age continental woman have a special status. Islam may be the same, but the respect is conditional on the older lady doing nothing much outside the home or even the kitchen. It must be nice to be indulgently tolerated rather than despised, but suffocating to be seen as some kind of fragile ancient child.

The answer to that patronising view and the abhorrence, is to play the dotty old lady card. Older men can try ‘irascible’ as long as they don’t start hitting out with their sticks. Near my home in London one street was occupied by Miss Smith, who some said had once been a concert pianist but was now living in a car with plastic bags tied to her feet. She liked feeding pigeons and I offered her money to feed them. She struck me across the face nearly knocking me over. I was not pleased and rang the police. A young Bobby appeared and didn’t want to deal with either of us, a ‘Gran Guignol’ nightmare for him. He took me aside and whispered that she’d been punching cyclists and been warned that she was in danger of getting an ‘ASBO.’ I couldn’t see her in court somehow.

Others go a different way and become too helpful. Old men directing traffic, desperate for the status of being useful again. Women petting other people’s children and dogs, which may lead to snarling and bites, although the dogs are usually amenable. Perhaps Miss Smith was merely under deep cover, as many people would like to do the same but wouldn’t dare. Potty is an easy ruse as so many younger people believe that over a certain age a woman must be daft. At a Christmas party in Chelsea, a young toff did me the honour of conversing with me for a few minutes. He said his uncle had been doing well after the removal of his pancreas until he received a Covid vaccine which killed him. I said he could not have lived without a pancreas. Posh boy, flustered by my surprising incredulity, admitted that only his appendix had been excised.

Old lady syndrome is a good excuse for the bumbling absence of mind you may have had all your life. In young women it’s considered cute. A neighbour and I have both

recently walked out of supermarkets forgetting to pay. I was told before I got to the door, apologised profusely and was forgiven. We were both excused for being old and apparently muddled. In fact, we were distracted by rage. We had both been treated rudely by shop assistants and been wrestling with that rather than focussing on the automatic till. My neighbour had asked to be directed to ‘confectionary’ and been sent to the wrong aisle. When she went back the girl claimed she been asked a different question. She had poor English so no argument was possible in case she played her ‘race’ card. I had been trying to find something for washing woollens, perhaps an old-fashioned pursuit as the youth stacking the washing liquid shelves said he had never heard of such a product and gave me the usual, ‘We don’t stock it here.’ I knew they did and called a supervisor who handed it over saying, ‘You can’t expect him to know. He’s a teenage boy.’

He had been allowed to play the teenage-card, in particular the English working-class kids card – cannot reasonably be expected to know anything at all. I was furious and got distracted but was saved from prosecution by playing my OAP card. The stupid, lazy boy will also get one of those one day, but among the many, many things he knows nothing about, that is top of the list.

Jane Kelly was a professional journalist in London for 35 years. Since going freelance in 2008 she has written for The Spectator, Arts Review, The Jackdaw and published two books; a biography of Colin Farrell and Inside a memoir of her year teaching in Wormwood Scrubs, London.

Robin Cave 1932-2022

We are sad to record the recent death of Robin Cave who was a great support to the *Review* for more than thirty years. Robin was an outstanding representative of what Edmund Burke called the ‘little platoons’ – people who keep voluntary organisations going without any reward or much recognition. His contribution to the *Salisbury Review* was immense and over many years.

He was a friendly, helpful presence; a fund of knowledge and good advice and possessed of the quiet enthusiasm needed to work the long hours he did in preparing the magazine. Never flustered or panicked he got a lot of quiet amusement from the frenetic goings on as the magazine was being prepared. ‘Ask Robin’ was a watchword of the proofing room.

Although he was a scientist by profession, he had a wide knowledge of literature, history and above all the theatre; he supported a number of amateur dramatic and operatic societies as a stage manager and lighting specialist. In retirement he edited the magazine of the Society for Theatre Research. A skilful and meticulous proof reader of the *Salisbury Review* since 1990 until the time of his death, Robin also kept the books of the magazine for much of that time. He was a continuous source of wise advice and comment drawing on an encyclopaedic knowledge of a wide range of subjects. He was always ready to help, however unglamorous the task.

He is and will be greatly missed. We extend our condolences to Merrie, his family and many friends.

The Editor

‘Occasionally the NHS would ring and ask if I was Suicidal’

LINDSEY DEARNLEY

Lately, a spate of articles have been published revealing the promising results of research into the effects of psilocybin on depression. Could it be that the much maligned and misunderstood ‘magic mushroom’ has something therapeutic to offer after all? Can it really treat depression in one dose?

We live in a world where the slippery slope of assisted suicide clinics now extended their mission to include those with chronic depression and other psychiatric illnesses. In 2018 a twenty-nine-year-old woman, suffering from chronic depression and suicidal thoughts since childhood was euthanized in the Netherlands. More recently, a French woman desperate to move from the housing block she claimed caused her allergy was also euthanized rather than anybody attempting to sort out her problems. I read these stories with a chill, for whatever their reputation and legality, surely psychedelics should be put on the table before assisted suicide? I’m left to wonder, for I took them around a decade ago to deal with my own depression, and found them, as the John Hopkins research team did, to have a very positive outcome when taken in a correct dose.

They have a bad reputation, those poor mushrooms, from hippies and irresponsible ravers. But the reputation is largely a result of those taking ridiculously high doses, in settings and with little expectation of what they are letting themselves in for. Psychedelics are not toys, nor are they necessarily fun.

I was thirty when I took them. Anti depressants had left me with restless legs and the list for cognitive therapy was over two years long. Occasionally the NHS would ring me and ask if I felt suicidal. ‘No’ I’d reply ‘but if I say yes will I jump the queue?’ they assured me it didn’t work like that, but I was quite sure it did. I had sought help because I was living a life with neither peaks nor troughs. I just drifted along unhappily; unsure of what to call the grey flat existence that had plagued me for several years, other than to adopt the clinical language of the times we live in and call it depression.

I’m sure many people are in the same boat, plodding along, not enjoying life, unable to laugh or cry and quietly looking forward to the end. But such people

are functioning, they are going to work, pay their taxes, and don’t cause any three-mile tailbacks by threatening to jump off a motorway bridge. There is not much help available for those who live in the no man’s land of functioning misery. Is it an issue for the health service to begin with?

I decided to look elsewhere, namely, a nearby field where Liberty Caps grew in abundance. I had done my research, and found many positive stories about them, and their ability to ‘rewire the brain’. Nobody was quite sure how they worked, but they worked, at least for a decent amount of people who took them.

It’s illegal of course, but I felt the law was really only there for those who cause a problem to others. So long as I took a sensible dose, I did not see that I should bother the law, and the law would not come and bother me.

Assisted by a friend who taught mushroom foraging in her spare time, we gathered several hundred of the tiny, slimy Liberty Caps, and soon I found it easy to identify them, for they look like little hats on gangly toothpick stalks, somewhat stranger and more ungainly than their closer look-alikes. Once home, we laid them on newspaper to let the bugs crawl out of them, and discarded any we weren’t entirely sure of. Illegal mushroom picking is not for the faint hearted, and I certainly don’t recommend it without guidance, especially as they are now so easily, and legally, procured by post from the Netherlands. But I didn’t have that option then.

Once dried, I weighed them and took what the Internet considered a mild dose, washing them down with orange juice to disguise the muddy taste. My stomach lurched, but thankfully I was able to keep them down. Then I waited. I don’t really know what I was expecting. I had never so much as smoked a cigarette. I didn’t know what a psychedelic experience was. Would I hallucinate crazy imagery and do something stupid, or worse, would I have the much-feared bad trip?

I was assured all these things were associated with much higher doses and this turned out to be quite true for there was little in the way of visible change, save the lights getting brighter the colours more vivid, and a ‘jumping out’ of patterns, but there was nothing

that could be described as true hallucination. The room remained as it was, yet I felt intoxicated, for much of the change was taking place in my pattern of thought. The experience was that of disassociation and introspection. Combined together, it was as if I could regard myself in the third person, and therefore judge myself as I might judge others, with all the ease it is to spot the habits and foibles of another, without a defensive ego to obscure my faults.

Of course, it's boring to hear about other people's psychedelic trips, worse if they bring their introspective enlightenments into it, however, this experience and ones since, did give me an understanding of the mechanisms by which psilocybin gives results in these studies. Unlike most antidepressants, psilocybin does not work 'behind the scenes' on the brain's chemistry, rather it pulls the consciousness mind into an active participation in ones own deconstruction. There is nothing available in the pharmaceutical industry that does that. Nothing, and we need it, or at least, I certainly did, for once I saw, with some amusement, that much of my moroseness was down to my own habitual behaviours. I saw every habit in sharp clarity, from the way I obsessed over slights right down to the motions I went through making a cup of tea.

I laughed with surprise. It was such a simple thing to suddenly become aware of, but the understanding had liberating consequences, because everything in my

life and actions tended towards patterns. An old lyric sprung into my thoughts:

*There was a young man who said, 'Damn,
For it certainly seems that I am,
A creature that moves in determinate grooves,
I'm not even a bus — I'm a tram.'*

And after that, life was easier. The deep and profound revelation was awareness of my own unexamined clockwork – which I lived, entrenched within my own patterns of thought, behaviour, reaction and expectation, and I had never even noticed. Suddenly I felt free to change it.

Of course, if this were all mushrooms were capable of doing, they would never have been made illegal in the first place. A sliding scale of experience is on offer, from mild to complete derangement and while studies have shown it's effective on even severe depression, there are those who leave the experience for the worse. Not everybody is built to handle psychological rearrangement and many have a past littered with traumatic incidents that are perhaps best left unvisited. With such unpredictability, it can never be a panacea and will likely remain a last-ditch roll of the dice, but are the modern alternatives any worse?

Lindsey Dearnley is an artist, illustrator and journalist.

The biochemisty of an LSD trip

MYLES HARRIS

They are known as heart sink patients because your heart sinks as soon as they come through the door. Their story never changes, or if it does it moves from one hopeless, untreatable set of symptoms to another like moving rooms in a seedy hotel in which every room has the same broken-down furniture and stained carpet. Their symptoms don't match anything in the textbooks, they have been to every department of the local hospital and nothing has ever been ever found wrong. Antidepressants don't work and every drug you prescribe invariably has terrible side effects. After 15 minutes of moaning, they shuffle out the door clutching another useless prescription.

Rumination is a feature of severe depression involving going over and over the same painful

thoughts again and again until the listener is driven to the limits of her patience. So why is it that the next patient who really has got something to worry about, her breast cancer has just recurred, is outgoing, stoical, and despite her terror, can smile through her tears? Are heart sinks merely selfish and self-obsessed or are they suffering as much as the cancer patient, but worse off because their means of attracting sympathy is missing, like somebody gesticulating 'Fire!' behind a pane of thick glass but going unheard? It would seem so. Six thousand five hundred seriously depressed patients took their lives in 2019, three times as many as cancer patients.

What makes us happy? A chemical called serotonin is important. It increases the transmission of electrical signals between the 86 billion neurons in our brains.

It has chemical counterparts in the outside world, two of which, LSD and psilocybin, are remarkably similar in structure to serotonin, similar in the way that two practically identical keys to a master key can open the same lock. LSD and Psilocybin fit the 'happiness lock' in the brain very snugly, much more snugly than serotonin.

The active principle is also found in the roots of forest mushrooms (mycelia). Trees communicate with each other via mycelia, forming a dense neural network below ground, which, fuelled by energy from the sun, allows them to divert various nutrients to fellow trees who lack water, essential chemicals or nutrients, or to fight their predators or change the acidity of the soil.

Scientists were naturally interested in such chemicals, but when in the sixties LSD and its counterparts were banned on the unwarranted charge of being dangerous chemicals pandering to

hippy cultists in the useless 'War on drugs' – you can go to jail for possession – work on them, especially by the big pharmaceutical companies, stopped. Politicians, backed by the Department of Health were so obsessed and misinformed about LSD and its counterparts that they sacked their own drug czar, leading neurologist Dr David Nutt for saying they were safe. You can always tell when somebody has got something right when a government department sacks them for saying it.

However, research continuing elsewhere showed such positive results that three years ago after intense wrangling with the Department of Health, Imperial College got a license to start experimenting on them. What did they find? LSD and psilocybin, when given to severely depressed patients as a single dose, can produce startling long-term changes in mood of up to a year. Some patients who never had a day free from mental illness in their adult lives, described the effect as, 'a dissolving of the ego; of their fixed, rigid world disintegrating under its effect, enabling them to revisit both happy and terrible episodes in their lives and make sense of them.' Sixty-seven per cent remarked they were 'the top most meaningful experiences of their lives, equalling the birth of their first child or the death of a close relative'.

LSD, is especially active on an area of the brain in the higher cortex called the Default Mode Network, a 'metabolically hungry' part of the brain, that takes

40 per cent of its energy. Activating it caused an increase in self-reflection, an ability to mobilise complex mental imagery, undertake mental time travel – to go backwards and forward in the mind's past and future – and an ability to consider theories of mind. What is my mind? Who am? How do I think? A researcher described the process as an 'orchestrator of self'.

The drugs hugely speed traditional means of integrating self, such as psychotherapy, religion, music and other rituals. They are far more effective than the traditional anti-depressant drugs whose effects are unpredictable and can have serious side effects. Adverse reactions to psilocybin were clocked at 0.1 per cent, much less than antidepressants where the danger of fatal overdose is ever present. As for fatalities, according to the Drug Policy Alliance, 'There has

never been a recorded death exclusively due to LSD in humans.'

Researchers have compared the discovery of how these drugs work to the invention of the telescope. Just as astronomers were unaware of the nature of the universe until Galileo: thanks to the scanner, neurologists have discovered one of the chemical paths by which we control our moods and gain

insight into them; it is as if there were a chemical bridge in our brains which we can cross from the locked, rigid, one-track ruminative thinking of the severely depressed to a more open relaxed and receptive state of a mind able to cope with the world. Or if you wish for a more physiological explanation, how the brain can alternate between fight, locked down, or flight, backing away from its previous conceptions.

However, these studies don't bring us any closer to a language of the mind. Scans show us the paths by which some type of language is being passed from one part of brain to another, but not the language. Which leaves us still faced with Paley's argument, 1802, about finding a fully functioning watch in a forest, and the difference between it and a stone. Who made this watch, and what is this language it tells called time?

What is this thing called the brain, so similar to that of our primate ancestors but able to write Shakespearean sonnets and understand advanced theoretical maths? Evolutionists deny a designer, (they have to, it's part of the religion of Darwinism) saying it is only a matter of size, while the human brain is 20 per cent bigger than



a chimp's, the density of its neurons remains the same, we just have more of them. The reason our skulls, and our brains, are the size they are is because our skulls are just thick enough so when we fall over, they don't fracture easily. If gravity were less they would be larger, more they would be smaller. That means they have to be an optimum weight for our bodies to support them. So would a bigger brain be brainier? Provided the number of neurones per thousandths of a square

inch of brain remained the same.

Now here's the thing, we can already grow artificial neurones from bio-compatible materials in the lab, so are we on the brink of creating brains that have 50 per cent, 75 per cent, 300 per cent greater intelligence? From a cure for depression to the superbrain. Is this just the beginning?

Myles Harris is our Editor.

Keeping Plod's Snout out of the press

ANDREW TETTENBORN

These days the threat to the middle classes' ability to speak their mind comes not so much from the government, or even from employers, although the latter's tendency to use vague provisions in contracts of employment to police private speech needs watching carefully. Professional organisations are increasingly getting in on the act, and taking steps to discipline or expel members, on the basis of fairly vaguely-drafted provisions in professional regulations prohibiting such matters as bringing the relevant profession into disrepute or diminishing the trust that the public has in it.

A case a few weeks ago, however, which has not received the attention it should, shows a welcome retreat in the scope of professional regulators' rights to police what professionals say in public, rather than how they do their job in the office. It concerns the Bar Council, or rather its regulatory arm the Bar Standards Board: the body, in any case, that regulates barristers.

Jon Holbrook, a planning barrister at Cornerstone Chambers and in a parallel life a sharp conservative commentator, had never minced words when it came to expressing his personal views. Matters came to a head in January last year. When it was announced that, with the help of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, a black teenager anonymised as RW had won a settlement from her school after an argument over permissible hairstyles, he tweeted: 'The Equality Act undermines school discipline by empowering the stropky teenager of colour.'

You might see this as just an expression of trenchant views that the Bar, a profession supposedly a bastion of robust speech, at least over the port in the Inns of Court, could take in its stride. But this was not to be. RW complained, Holbrook was immediately ejected from his chambers, despite an offer to resign, and the

profession, with a few honourable exceptions, publicly closed ranks against him. There was, said one barrister, 'no place for anyone in the legal profession with such repugnant views'. A senior, and otherwise respected, human rights barrister agreed that he was embarrassed to share a profession with him, and numerous advocates called for him to be reported and disciplined.

And sure enough, he found himself before a disciplinary panel on a charge of saying things apt to 'diminish the trust and confidence' placed by the public in him and his profession, or which might be seen to 'undermine his honesty, integrity and independence'. The tweet in issue, it was said, did both because it had been 'designed to demean or insult' RW. Moreover, the Bar did not limit itself to that tweet. Digging back over 18 months in a painstaking exercise in offence archaeology, it brought similar charges in respect of seventeen earlier tweets. These latter were a mixed bag. One questioned the good faith of some soi-disant refugees; one suggested equal pay legislation disproportionately benefited wealthy career women; yet another criticised the Bar Standards Board itself for showing political partiality by supporting London Pride. Some, including one that merely quoted Sir Roger Scruton and called for counter-arguments, criticised UK authorities for deliberately ignoring difficulties caused by an unassimilated Muslim minority in the name of multiculturalism, or criticised the media for glossing over crimes committed by Muslims. One, which we will see more of, said: 'Free speech is dying and Islamists and other Muslims are playing a central role.' All these, it was said, 'were designed to demean or insult others including Muslims, homosexuals and women', and might be 'considered distasteful or offensive by others'.

Rather to everyone's surprise, the Bar dismissed all

the complaints save as to the last tweet. All of them, it said, including the reference to RW, had been ‘not seriously offensive or discreditable’, and while ill-advised had fallen on the right side of the line. But the final one, it said, was different. By suggesting that Muslims were responsible for curtailing free speech, it could promote hostility to Muslims and as a result diminish the public’s confidence in the Bar. Holbrook was warned and fined £500 for what he had said.

No doubt the Bar thought this Solomonic judgment, which gave something to both sides – an endorsement of free speech up to a point, combined with a small rap over the knuckles for Holbrook to satisfy the more bloodthirsty tricoteuses of the Bar, neatly tied matters up.

But Holbrook appealed; and his appeal succeeded. Political speech, said the appeal tribunal, was protected under the Human Rights Convention unless gratuitously offensive in its expression: the fact that it might give rise to offence, or be widely seen as unpleasant, was not enough. As if to rub salt into the wound, it also roundly rejected the rather complacent suggestion of counsel for the Bar that being a barrister was a privilege and that those exercising it should not complain too loudly if they found their right to express social or political views curtailed in exchange for the right to retain it.

Apart from being excellent news for Holbrook, this is clearly a strong endorsement of free speech, as well as of good sense. Indeed, most people would think it a little odd to say that the public’s trust and confidence in the legal profession depended on the extent to which

its members either did not hold unorthodox political views, or if they did were prepared to dissemble them.

But it goes much further than this. Regulators supervise many professions these days: and since their powers potentially extend not only to taking someone’s present job away but rendering him entirely unemployable by law in his chosen trade, they are far more significant to a person’s right to speak his mind than any individual employer. And at least in principle, the rules applied in this case by the Bar would apply equally to all sorts of other professions: think not only lawyers, but accountants, financial professionals, doctors, nurses, social workers and teachers, all of whom are subject to active professional oversight and various forms of professional discipline. If this means that members of all these professions now find themselves equipped with a much more extensive freedom to speak their mind in the public sphere whatever their regulators may think, this is a very significant development indeed.

There is one thing we have yet to see: any serious admission by the Bar that it might have been in error when it threw the book at Holbrook in order to establish who was boss. But one lives in hope. True, there may be no such explicit requirement in the Bar’s code of conduct, but even lawyers will sometimes realise the virtue of admitting that they have got something wrong.

Andrew Tettenborn is a professor of commercial law at a well-known UK university who regularly teaches in Britain, Europe and elsewhere.

White Man’s Art

JAMES MONTEITH

What better than a visit to the Courtauld Gallery over the Easter holiday to provide my youngest child with a taste of the glories of Western art. Spread over three floors of one wing of Somerset House, the collection is smaller and more intimate than that of the nearby National Gallery, yet it encompasses almost the whole of Western art, from the early Italian Renaissance to Viennese expressionism, by way of Rubens, and culminates in the dazzling collection of impressionists on the top floor.

But it seems that the Courtauld considers its collection something of an embarrassment. Drawn to an arresting self-portrait by the Bloomsbury artist Roger Fry, I read underneath that although Fry drew inspiration from

African wood sculpture, his view that it was the product of a ‘primitive’ culture, that is, primitive in comparison to the high civilisation of the West, was indicative of ‘the racist attitudes of the time’.

Keen to discover whether I, too, was racist for holding Western art in higher regard than African, for preferring Michelangelo’s David or Raphael’s School of Athens to tribal masks, I consulted the Courtauld’s ‘Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-racism’ strategy. The Courtauld, which has a longstanding reputation as the world’s foremost art institute and has educated more gallery and museum directors than any other art institute, has, it seems, embraced ‘critical race art history’. Consequently, it is now committed to

‘celebrating diversity and all its benefits’, to developing ‘inclusive and anti-racist teaching programmes and pedagogies’, to establishing ‘decolonisation reading groups’, and to addressing ‘structural bias and inequality’. All staff are undergoing ‘equality and diversity’ training in which they learn to recognise (I quote from the training literature) ‘the performance of whiteness in the workplace’, ‘what is white privilege’, ‘micro-aggressive behaviours and defensiveness’, ‘access to power and privilege’, ‘unconscious bias’, how ‘pre-conditioned mindsets’ can be challenged, and ‘how notions of Whiteness play out in the dominant culture’.

In other words, Western art has no special aesthetic or civilisational merit; it is merely the manifestation of a hegemonic culture which privileges whiteness; and, since it is irredeemably tainted, it must be deconstructed, decolonised, and destroyed. Indeed, it cannot be long, one imagines, before ‘white’ art is declared degenerate and committed to special galleries for public ridicule, as Hitler did with the expressionists in the 1930s; or before the contents of art libraries tainted by their ‘whiteness’ are removed altogether from public view.

All the same, Roger Fry’s characterisation of tribal art as primitive, and Western art as a high watermark of civilisation, a view echoed by Kenneth Clark of *Civilisation* fame (now infamy) is eminently cogent and defensible, even though few scholars would now dare voice it. Fellow Bloomsbury Clive Bell summarised the traditional view beautifully in 1928 in his extended essay *Civilisation*. For culture to progress to civilisation, and for civilisation to develop into high civilisation, argues Bell, the dead-hand of tribal custom, superstition, and taboo, must be banished, and our instinct corrected by reason and self-criticism. For high civilisations are marked by the disinterested pursuit of the truth; intellectual, moral, and aesthetic. High civilisations are literate cultures. The collective unconscious gives way to the individual will, but it is a will tempered by urbanity of manners and sociability, and by a sense of humour. High civilisations are characterised by ‘a willingness to talk and laugh about everything’, of which Plato’s *Symposium*, ‘that feast of reason’, stands as the exemplar. And, yes, a stratified society is an essential pre-condition, because it furnishes ‘a leisured class’, which can appreciate the fruits of civilisation, and is engaged in civilized pursuits. No wonder the equality-mongers of the Courtauld have trouble with the idea.

Roger Fry held sub-Saharan African tribal art in high regard precisely for its ‘ultra-primitive directness of vision’, unmediated by any ‘intervening mental process’, by any ‘conscious critical sense’. And this

freshness of vision is also what the impressionists had been seeking to recreate – though mediated by the Western tradition, which is why the impressionists do not themselves count as primitive. However, by Bloomsbury standards, our own ancestors, ranging from Neolithic to Celt, and Viking to pagan Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, were no less primitive than their tribal equivalents in Africa. The civilisation of the Roman invaders was far superior to that of the illiterate Celts, even though the Celts made exquisite gold torques, were excellent herbalists, and possessed elaborate religious rituals. Nor were the barbarian hordes that menaced Western Europe after the Fall of Rome notable for their civilisational accomplishments, as Kenneth Clark memorably illustrated in the first episode of *Civilisation* when he contrasted the prow of a Viking longboat with a classical statue. Both, he argued, were works of art; but whereas one imagination ‘took shape in an image of fear and darkness’, the other took shape in an image of ‘harmonised proportion and reason’, and therefore embodied a higher state of civilisation.

As for Western civilisation, probably the most remarkable high civilisation the world has ever seen, its emergence over the next thousand years was made possible by a host of contributory factors – geographic (proximity to the sea and trade routes), cultural, (the legacy of classical Greece and Rome), religious (Christianity), economic, (capitalism), and political, (the separation between church and state) – none of which notably involved ‘whiteness’.

If Conservative politicians possessed a single genuine conservative instinct, they would argue that newcomers to our country should be assimilated into the Western tradition. For unlike the pretence of equality achieved by ethnic quotas, real ‘inclusion’ is only possible if group identities based on ethnicity are abolished. And rather than seeking to impose equality, they would defend class, hierarchy, and privilege, the indispensable conditions for that tradition being transmitted to future generations.

Instead, wedded to the fashionable post-Marxist dogma of multi-culture, they foster a diversity of minority cultures and subcultures, thereby denying those minorities the superior resources of the dominant culture. An elaborate pantomime ensues in which we must all pretend there is parity between all cultures and subcultures, between tribal masks and Renaissance portraits, for example, while actively deconstructing the dominant culture in the name of diversity and inclusion. The result is that our precious inheritance of Western civilisation is no longer transmitted to our children. It is nothing less than civilisational suicide. Never mind the clash of civilisations between the West

and Islam; the Islamic world was also once host to a high civilisation, if we go back far enough. We in the West are now so lacking in self-belief, in vital spirit, that we cannot – we dare not – even judge our highest works of art superior to a tribal mask or a totem pole.

When I see a tribal mask, I cannot help but hear the incessant roll of Conrad's distant drums in *The Heart of Darkness*. No doubt this reveals that I am in

urgent need of 'equality and diversity' training. My instincts and my 'whiteness' must be reconditioned – or cancelled. Nevertheless, the drums grow ever louder, and the cracks in the veneer of our civilisation grow ever wider. How long before we plunge into the abyss?

James Monteith is a journalist.

Xi-Ping's co-prosperity sphere

After Taiwan will the Chinese invade Australia?

DARYL McCANN

It was in the second half of April. Europe's attention had been focused on Russia's opening moves in the Battle for Dombas. In order that Vladimir Putin might be able to claim some type of success, how many Ukrainian civilians were going to die, and Ukrainian towns and villages obliterated? On the other side of the world, however, Xi Jinping had his own imperial ambitions. On April 19, 2022, came the signing of the China-Solomon Island Security Treaty, the latest chapter in Xi Jinping's 'transcendent global security' initiative.

Greg Sheridan, foreign editor of *The Australian* newspaper since 1992, described the new Beijing-Honiara pact as 'one of the worst days for our national security since the end of the Vietnam War'. He rightly upped the ante two days later, noting that Xi Jinping's intervention in the Solomon Islands echoed Imperial Japan's ambitions in 1942 during the Pacific War: 'The Japanese in World War II established their base there in part to cut Australia off from the US. The Chinese want a base there today to affect a modern version of the same strategy.' Back in 1942-3, some might recall, it took the bloody Battle of Guadalcanal in the Solomons, along with naval successes in the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway, in addition to victories at Milne Bay and on the Kokoda Track, to safeguard the lifeline between the USA and Australia.

Alarm at China turning this part of the world into an updated version of Japan's wartime empire is long overdue. Most Australians, for forty years and more, took a very upbeat view about the modernisation of the People's Republic of China (PRC). We were lucky, our political class, cultural commissars, mining magnates, famers, importers, university chancellors, real-estate

developers *et al* informed us, to be interconnected with the fastest and greatest economic transformation in the history of the world.

It was as recently as 2014 that President Xi addressed the Australian Parliament on the eve of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) being signed. Politicians on all sides of the political aisles, not least then-PM Tony Abbott, more conservative than most Australian leaders in recent decades, chortled with joy at the prospect of ChAFTA guaranteeing our future economic prosperity. Xi Jinping titled his stirring speech 'Pursuing Chinese and Australian Development Dreams Hand in Hand and Achieving Regional Prosperity and Stability Shoulder to Shoulder'. His benign purpose was to uplift relations between our two Pacific nations into a 'comprehensive strategic partnership' in which we were 'sincere partners of mutual trust'.

The mutual trust began to recede in late 2018 when the federal government announced new legislation to protect Australia's national security against Chinese espionage and meddling in our domestic politics. The dark side of Sino-Australian relations had been there all along but it was getting harder to ignore them with the public disclosure of one scandal after another, culminating in Clive Hamilton's 2018 bestseller *Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia*. PM Scott Morrison's call, back in April 2020, for an international inquiry into the origins of Covid-19, was the final straw from Xi Jinping's point of view. He subsequently launched a full-scale trade war on Australia, revoking every last pledge contained in ChAFTA, which continues to this day.

The advent of AUKUS, the trilateral security alliance

between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, announced on September 15 last year, made it official – the PRC was not so much Australia’s strategic partner as our strategic competitor. It is this context of a veritable second Cold War in the Asia-Pacific region that Australia’s shock at the China-Solomon Islands pact is understood. Unconfirmed reports that the new agreement provides for the deployment of Chinese security forces in the Solomons, as soon as possible, has only intensified Australian fears about Beijing’s military ambitions in the South Pacific. Manasseh Sogavare, prime minister of the 700,000 people in the Solomon Islands, is not especially popular in his country. Having two thousand or so members of China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) on hand might prove useful in the lead up to and/or aftermath of the next election. There is also talk of the PLA Navy having a permanent presence in the islands that are only 2,000 kilometres from Australia.

The China-Solomon Islands pact was announced as Australia ended the second week of the campaign for the May 21 election. Both the Coalition government, an alliance of Liberals and Nationals, and the main opposition group, the Australian Labor Party (ALP), sought political advantage from the bombshell. The Labor Opposition had been careful over the past three years, as Sino-Australian relations soured, not to condemn the substance of the government’s criticisms of Beijing, while suggesting at every turn Labor could have handled things far more effectively and tactfully.

In 2020, during the height of the trade war against Australia, Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese had blamed Morrison for having ‘presided over a complete breakdown of relationships’. Australia’s government had to stick up for democratic principles, of course but PM Morrison, in Albanese’s opinion, had offended China for ‘offence sake’. So, it came as no surprise that Albanese, in the April 20 televised leadership debate, castigated Morrison for being caught off guard by the China-Solomon Islands deal and subsequently promising to ‘step-up’ Australia’s commitment to the South Pacific: ‘This isn’t so much a Pacific step-up as a Pacific stuff-up.’ Morrison, not unreasonably, wondered why Albanese always took ‘China’s side’ in the deterioration of relations between the two countries and when China starts ‘interfering in our region, somehow it’s Australia’s fault.’

Politicking aside, the reality is that both the Coalition parties and the ALP, the two dominant political forces in Australia, have totally misjudged the character and ambition of the Chinese Communists going back almost a half a century. The misplaced euphoria surrounding Xi Jinping’s address to the Parliament in 2014 and ChAFTA being a case in point. By that

stage Beijing was militarising the South China Sea and speaking more belligerently about ‘re-uniting’ Taiwan with the Socialist Motherland. Moreover, North Korea, Cambodia and Nepal were already modern-day tributary states of the Middle Kingdom. More recently, Myanmar has fallen under the shadow of Beijing’s ‘protection’, while we can expect Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Samoa to be bribed/pressured like the Solomons into signing security treaties with Beijing. Many of these territories, and let’s not forget Hong Kong, were marked for inclusion in Imperial Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere.

Despite the distance between Canberra and Kyiv, the Coalition government has not ignored Putin’s ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine. Though nowhere near the level of British assistance, Australian aid has consisted of lethal weaponry and armoured personnel carriers. For PM Morrison, and he is not alone in this view, there is a high degree of co-ordination between the respective imperial ambitions of Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. On February 5, less than three weeks before the invasion of Ukraine, Tsar Vlad and Emperor Xi publicly pledged ‘no limits’ to the friendship between Russia and China. The likelihood is that Putin delayed his ‘special military operation’ until February 24 out of deference to Xi’s request it take place after the Beijing Winter Olympics were completed on February 20. In other words, Xi knew about Putin’s bloody enterprise in advance but failed to warn the world. The official theme of the Beijing Olympics, if you have forgotten, was ‘Together for a Shared Future’.

Scott Morrison, during the campaign, began referring to the convergence of interests between Moscow and Beijing as an ‘arc of autocracy’. Meanwhile, our Minister of Defence, Peter Dutton, announced on Anzac Day, April 25, most sacred day in the national calendar, that Australia had to ‘prepare for war’ if we hoped to maintain peace. Some will argue, the Labor Opposition obviously, that the Morrison government, well behind in the polls, turned up the rhetoric in the last stages of the campaign in the hope of winning a ‘khaki election’.

There is obviously some truth in this. On the other hand, there is Churchill’s poignant line, in the preface to *The Gathering Storm*, about unpreparedness for war making war all the more likely. Here he perfectly encapsulates the theme of pre-war appeasement: ‘How the English-speaking peoples through their unwisdom, carelessness and good nature allowed the wicked to re-arm.’

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

Communist and Catholic: the remarkable story of Hamish Fraser

ROGER WATSON

Few will have heard of Hamish Fraser and only a few people alive will recall him. I met him only once for about three hours, but he probably had a more profound effect on my life than any other person. Hamish was well enough known for his death to be noted in an obituary in *The Times* of 29 October 1986 and he has a Wikipedia entry, but these rather gloss over the details of his remarkable life and ideological journey which is only fully told in his autobiography *Fatal Star*.

Hamish was born and brought up in Scotland in a Presbyterian family. He went up to Edinburgh University to study science in 1931 and also became a committed Marxist

and member of the Communist Youth League, the youth wing of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). In 1936 he went to serve as a political officer in the secret service of the Spanish Republican Armed Forces during the Spanish Civil War. It is clear, from his autobiography, that he witnessed executions by firing squad of people he was probably responsible for reporting to the Republicans. He recalled how men at the point of execution, despite being tried and condemned by their own side, would still shout 'Viva la Republica' as the order to fire was issued.

When he returned to Britain, he resumed his political activities, joining the CPGB, becoming a group leader. He worked among the men at the famous shipbuilders John Brown & Co on Clydebank. At the outbreak of the second world war, Russia and Germany were allies due to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939. However, Germany overstepped the bounds agreed

in the pact and it became clear that Russia might change allegiance and fight with the allies, which they did leading to Hitler's invasion of Russia in 1941. Leading up to this the CPGB, which had supported Communist Russia remaining out of the war required to be convinced that Russia should join. The task fell to Fraser who wrote a pamphlet explaining why it was necessary.

In due course he convinced the CPGB to support Russia's involvement. This was viewed as a very important step in Russia and for his efforts Fraser was awarded the Order of Lenin by Josef Stalin.

After the war the CPGB, predicting a baby boom immediately following the war,

directed some of its brightest stars into education and that included Fraser who trained as a primary school teacher. In Scotland, teacher training took place at Jordanhill College of Education, now incorporated into Strathclyde University, in Glasgow. In Scotland, unlike in England, it is compulsory for trainee teachers to study Religious Education as part of the curriculum. Fraser, as a committed atheist, was unhappy at the prospect. Rather than protest or take a cursory approach to it he decided he could play the educational authorities at their own game and study so hard that he would come top of the class. He duly achieved this but, in the process, something began to stir inside him. He was becoming disillusioned with the CPGB, but his atheism also began to crumble. Rather than return to his native Church of Scotland, having cut his ties with Communism, he took instruction from a Jesuit priest and became a



Thermopylae: Another betrayal

Catholic convert in 1948. This was noted with much opprobrium on the front page of the Communist daily newspaper *The Morning Star*.

Thereafter, armed with his intense ideological training from his days as a Communist and with a very fine intelligence he began to expose the ways and working of Communism. Of course, he knew how the Communist Party tried to infiltrate, undermine and compromise the Catholic Church and he began to speak and write about this profusely. Remarkably, some of his harshest criticism came, and continued to come, from within the Roman Catholic Church. Clearly, aberrations such as Liberation Theology were a target of his criticism as were any attempts by the Church and including a series of Popes to liberalise Catholic doctrines on marriage, the sanctity of life and aspects of theological doctrine. He became an expert on these matters but never depended on his own knowledge and judgement entirely. Instead, he had to hand a team of experts on Catholic theology, Canon Law and Church History with whom to check his ideas. He was strongly opposed to the changes to Catholic liturgy introduced in the wake of the Second Vatican Council and remained a devotee and leading exponent of the Tridentine Latin Mass. In the 1960s he began producing a 'samizdat' style magazine called *Approaches* where he gathered much of his own regular writing and the writing of many like-minded people both inside and outside of the Church. It is for this endeavour that he probably became best known and in 1965 he retired from teaching to devote the rest of his life to it.

I met Hamish Fraser in 1986. My wife and I had moved to Scotland from London with our two young children and, in the process of getting established, we lived with my parents on the west coast of Scotland in the port town of Ardrrossan which is coterminous with the town of Saltcoats. On leaving London a conservative and Catholic trade unionist who I had got to know very well, on hearing where we were going, suggested I look up Hamish Fraser and gave me his address and phone number in Saltcoats. We had left London for several months before I recalled the suggestion one morning and felt nothing short of compelled to contact Hamish immediately. I phoned him on a Monday, and he invited me down the next day which, I know, was the 14 September. I had a wonderful three hours with him. He seemed to have all the time in the world for me and I had to tear myself away. Having just had a call from one of his contacts within the Vatican he told me about the struggles that went on behind the walls of the Vatican

City and about a great deal more. He also wanted to know all about my own activities and my journalistic aspirations. I left laden with pamphlets and copies of *Approaches*. I returned home and read these almost without stopping.

As a result of my meeting with Hamish, two things happened. The first was that unknown to me until several weeks later, he had contacted an investigative journalist who was working on the left-wing infiltration of and influence on the World Council of Churches and all its national offshoots. He suggested I may be the person to write this up for publication. We completed this task within a few months and published the booklet *The Subversive Secularisation of Religion* which came to the attention of the late Sir Roger Scruton, then editor of *The Salisbury Review*. Almost verbatim but with some very useful editing, it was published by Roger. This gave me a foothold in political writing, and I continue writing for *The Salisbury Review*. The second thing that happened was that Hamish invited me to come to dinner with my wife. His wife was leaving for a few days, so they suggested the Saturday night of that week to which I agreed. On Friday night I received a phone call from one of his daughters to ask if I was the person coming to dinner the next evening. When I confirmed that I was she told me that, sadly, her father had died suddenly that morning, the 17 September. I now felt that I knew why I had been so compelled to visit him that week and the timing and the loss of this great man had a profound effect of me.

At the time I had already made the journey from my own atheism back to my native Church of Scotland, but I was not entirely comfortable with some of their social policies and positions on several important issues, principally abortion. However, I had essentially been 'immunised' against Catholicism from an early age and had resisted the temptation to convert. My meeting with Hamish, the literature he gave me and the circumstances surrounding that extraordinary week in my life initiated a strong desire to become a Catholic. Maintaining contact with Hamish's family I began to explore Catholicism further, to take instruction from a Divine Word Missionary and the following year my wife and I were received into the Roman Catholic Church. People often refer to the 'hand of history' in the affairs of men. Nothing would convince me that I have not felt the hand of God in mine.

Roger Watson is a writer and retired academic.

The Conservative Ministry of Truth (Min-Tru)

MYLES HARRIS

If liberty means anything at all,' wrote George Orwell, 'it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear'. On the 19th of April the House of Commons passed the Online Safety Bill which will, according to Nadine Dorries the Digital Secretary, 'make Britain's internet the safest in the world'. Only in the sense that a corpse is silent. In a couple of years the media will be no more than a political *Hello* magazine.

The intention of the bill is to protect children from online sexual predators by imposing huge penalties on social media companies who allow harmful messages on their platforms. Ten per cent of annual turnover, for Twitter, that would mean half a billion dollars, and, if the offence continues, prison. (Elon Musk in Wandsworth?)

The worry is what is meant by safe, a definition that has changed since the counselling industry intervened with the idea of safe spaces, trigger warnings, and other bogus therapeutic ideas that treat everybody as a psychiatric basket case quivering with left-wing sensitivity. It is from this nonsense that the idea of 'legal but harmful' has come.

While nobody can doubt a 12-year-old will be seriously harmed by a paedophile encouraging him to send sexual pictures of himself to her, yes women can be paeophiles too, 'legal but harmful' now includes controversial opinions on slavery, race, history and sex. Under this doctrine, a seventeen-year-old wanting to transition to the opposite sex who comes across the name of J K Rowling online may claim to be just as damaged as the 12-year-old who sends nude pictures of herself to a predator.

The government tells us not to worry; this is about sexual grooming, blackmail and harassment, not opinion. However, what will happen if the seventeen-year-old transgender proves harm in one of our left-wing, money-grubbing courts?

No internet company is going to risk penalties of ten per cent of turnover or prison for its directors and will set its artificial intelligence censors – humans no longer censor our speech – at a very high bar. There is a provision in the bill for 'due regard for freedom of speech', but as any lawyer will tell you that is a very

weak legal sanction. The censorship algorithms will ignore it.

Especially as 'OFFCOM will be able to enter companies' premises to access data and equipment, request interviews with company employees and require companies to undergo an external assessment of how they're keeping users safe.'

The transgender debate will cease, only its advocates will remain in the public eye. We will hear no more from opponents of open door immigration, critics of the Black Lives Matter movement, or from those who doubt the motives of the Extinction Rebellion movement.

Censorship is like scabies, scratch it and it spreads. Taking their lead from the social media companies, editors, journalists, teachers, advertisers, even those engaged in ordinary conversation, will begin to watch what they say.

The idea of a conservative government bringing in a bill limiting free speech is astonishing but it has even greater plans. Not so long ago it was proposed that racist remarks made in the privacy of the home should be criminalised, presumably by other members of the family, visitors or even between the sheets. The only reason it wasn't done was that it would affect the vote, but could wait for a year or two until the public was ready.

It would be easy enough. Enter Alexa, the box on your living room table that tells you the weather in the Canary Islands or the time of the next train to Glasgow. Alexa can also tell the authorities about you. So, for that matter can your interactive TV or mobile phone, an equivalent of an electronic ankle tag tracking your movements, thoughts, your friends, what you write or text, what you buy, who you sleep with.

True you can turn your phone off, or leave it at home when you go out, but nobody can really function without one these days. The gate is wide open to the next step after this bill, the control of private speech and writing, all in the name of online safety you understand?

Myles Harris is our Editor

The Shuddering Kiss of Judas

MARY SYDNEY

Most of us have been through it; the job interview that suddenly goes wrong in the middle, or the dismissal so polite that you aren't sure it happened. Then there is the defensive argument, which gets you nowhere. Watching a film made last February, showing Calvin Robinson being dismissed by Jonathan Baker, the Bishop of Fulham, is excruciating in several ways. After studying theology for two years in Oxford, Calvin had been offered a curacy at the end of 2021 but without explanation it had been rescinded. The CofE had confirmed his spiritual 'calling' from God and Fulham had sponsored his training. Now he had obviously changed his mind. He is affable, promises not to 'flannel', but quickly resorts to, 'Perhaps have another go later, try a part time post. Do keep in touch.'

Both men have holy icons behind them but are locked in a bitter conflict; Calvin tried to explain his calling to be a priest while the good bishop explains patiently; 'For a whole variety of reasons it's not going to work. There's a lot of concern about this curacy, it's just going to be a constant battle field which won't be fruitful for the church. There has continued to be a lot of turbulence, you are riding two bicycles.' He starts throwing in names; the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, DBE, who recently told Radio 4 that, 'The Church of England is on a change journey', and the Bishop of Edmonton were against his acceptance. Fulham uses the marvellous phrase 'The crucible of the twitter-sphere' to express his doubts about Calvin and his activities on social media, although all the people involved, have twitter accounts. The Bishop of London has over 16,000 followers, Edmonton has 3,000. They are left wing, while Calvin, squarely on the right, has 100,000 followers, boosted by his regular appearances on TalkRADIO and GB News. 'You are attracting the wrong kind of complaints', says the bishop sadly, pointing out that Calvin had been asked to 'pause his other work', to 'focus on the priesthood', but hadn't done so. He reminded Calvin that rather than attacking the Archbishop of Canterbury on TV a priest should, 'Seek unity, reconciliation and the peace of the world.'

Perhaps he had a point but Calvin had acquired just

five complaints for his social media statements. He read them after making a 'Subject access request', after being refused permission to see them, he says, by the Bishop of Fulham. He read that on February 5th 2021, the Rev Marjorie Brown, 127 followers, wrote to Edmonton that she was 'gravely concerned about Calvin and his politically provocative posts', particularly an 'appalling tweet' he'd sent about another curate, Jarel Robinson-Brown. 'I hope this kind of vitriol will be challenged', she wrote. She objected because he'd called Jarel a racist.

Calvin is mixed race, Jarel is black. On January 16, 2021 Jarel, (10.1k followers) former Vice-Chair of the Lesbian and Gay Christian movement, 'which challenges homophobia and transphobia', who calls himself 'a scholar priest', tweeted about Captain Tom Moore who was attracting public praise after raising £32 million for the NHS leading up to his 100th birthday. Jarel tweeted: 'The cult of Captain Tom is a cult of White British Nationalism. I will not be joining the 'National Clap'. Thirty thousand people then signed a petition against his keeping the curacy of St Botolph, Aldgate. The Bishop of London called their response, 'appalling racist and homophobic abuse', other clergy condemning the petition. The C of E's 'anti-racism taskforce' set up in 2020, called the response, 'A lynching.'

Jarel had also tweeted; 'A blessed Sunday to everyone except Boris, Priti and all the oppressors!' And, 'I've read enough unnecessary articles written by ignorant white Christian men to last a lifetime.' Not exactly an example of 'unity and reconciliation' but he kept his curacy. His brand of 'turbulence' was acceptable. He was also forgiven having a 'second bike' as the high-profile author of, *Black, Gay, British, Christian, Queer* launched in October 2021, in Marjorie Brown's church, St Mary's Primrose Hill, home of the English Hymnal. *He Who Would Valiant Be* was written there, when such things were still 'binary'. Jarel has also contributed a chapter to a, *Book of Queer Prophets*.

There are many reasons to employ one man and cancel another, but the different response to the two ordinands seems significant. Calvin who was brought

up in a one parent family in the east Midlands with a mother who had to take two jobs, and educated at a comprehensive, might seem the ideal candidate for the current CofE's 'inclusivity' plan. He's worked in industry and in teaching. He was head of computer science at a secondary school in Hendon. In 2017, his smiling face and recherché Afro hairstyle appeared on posters promoting the Department for Education's, 'I Chose to Teach' recruitment drive. But his ideas just don't fit with current church thinking on 'inclusivity'.

'There's more politics in the CofE now than in parliament', he says. He believes the kind of indoctrination he saw becoming 'systematic', in schools has also marched through the state church. He disagrees with their apparent obsession with race. 'The Bishop of London said to me, "But the church is racist, Calvin." She was telling me, a black man,' he says laughing, 'that I am wrong about racism in the UK; therefore destroying her own logic'. This is mainly about politics; 'Black Theology' is now taught in all theological colleges and they all support 'critical race theory', CRT, from the US, advances the idea that 'race' is a deliberate social construct established by whites to maintain their educational and social advantage at the expense of black people. He was dismayed by the creation of the bishops' 'Anti-racism taskforce,' when Justin Welby announced, 'There's no doubt that the CofE is deeply institutionally racist.' The General Synod also voted to 'Apologise over racism.' 'They are not in a position to be giving everyone else advice on this', says Calvin. 'Their attitude is counter-productive. All I see from them is left-wing 'virtue signalling' and white guilt. Of course, we should be inclusive but in Christ, in our faith. According to the Bible there is, 'Neither Jew nor Greek', just one nation under God, but they are not interested in teaching theology anymore'. He calls Welby's views on immigration, 'ridiculous and party political'.

He has also made enemies because of his views on women. An increasing number are entering the church and he's depressed by the CofE being 'flooded by liberal women wearing rainbow dog-collars, putting LGBT flags on their altars'. He is also bravely dismissive of the militant 'Trans' movement. In one of his most retweeted appearances on GB News, he says boldly, 'A woman is an adult human female.' In these woke times stating a biological fact is newsworthy. The leader of the Labour Party and many others in public life are terrified to say it. 'There are immutable characteristics', he says. 'Trans is against the laws of God. People teaching about identity politics are misguided. A Christian must find their true identity in Christ. Everyone is welcome but that cannot be about watering down our values so as not to offend anyone.'

He's not in favour of women's ordination, and even defends the idea that Christianity does not approve of any sex, gay or straight without marriage. It is strangely surprising to hear him voice the common orthodoxy of priests from fifty years ago. Nothing he says was unusual then but now the church has embraced a new theology.

He sees a possible solution to the current political stance of the church through 'entryism', people with his views getting into theological colleges and fighting their way through. He chose St Stephen's House in Oxford, the only remaining conservative Anglo-Catholic college, but says there were attempts to stop him going there. There was pressure for him to go to Mirfield, a liberal institution instead. In the interview, the Bishop of Fulham said that he was 'trying to save Calvin from himself'.

English Christian conservatives must now look abroad to groups such as the Anglican Church of North America, (ACNA) but Calvin says he is disillusioned and not sure it's worth anyone joining the CofE now anyway. He sees it slipping into managed decline. It's perhaps significant that one of his opponents, the Bishop of Edmonton is devoting his energies to, 'the creative use of church buildings', a euphemistic term for what to do with churches that no longer have any bums on pews. 'They are getting rid of vicars and parishes', says Calvin wistfully. 'There's no real vision there, just embarrassment about what they stand for. They could invest money in employing more clergy and get on with the job of offering Christian ministry to the people, but there is such a divide now between their views and those of ordinary people.'

When two men from the ethnic minorities applied for jobs in the church, one was acceptable, the other wasn't; thus exposing the direction of the CofE today and its position at the heart of the culture war where 30,000 complaints from 'ordinary people', can be summarily dismissed on the grounds of, 'racism'. Once proud to be a low key, self-effacing 'broad church', it now seems to have political secular opinions and no room for someone like Calvin with his traditional orthodox views. He sees that narrowness as a loss for the whole church; 'Between us Jarel and I cover a broad spectrum of ideas', he says, 'but the church only wants to hear his views not mine. Like all metropolitan elites they don't really like diversity of thought or opinion.'

Mary Sydney is a social commentator.

Are homeowners really Tory?

HENRY OLIVER

Three major pillars of the post-war socialist government remain: welfare, the NHS, and the major and petty bureaucracy of the planning system. The NHS is a political reality Tories have to live with. Welfare is a necessary part of a liberal democracy, even though we might disagree about what sort of welfare we ought to have. But the planning system is a strange, un-Tory relic that has grown out of all proportion. And yet its supporters are mainly conservatives.

In the last two generations we have built so few houses relative to population growth that we are short of perhaps a million homes. As a result, house prices have risen out of all proportion to wages. All sorts of reasons are dreamed up to explain this away. Russian money in Mayfair is blamed. High rates of immigration are blamed, even low interest rates are wheeled out. In all of these arguments, the traditional Tory reliance on pragmatism and common sense is abandoned.

How can the party of Salisbury and Thatcher, of historic opposition to market restrictions, the part of free trade, be so easily persuaded by this nonsense? The Tories used to be the party of property rights; the situation with the housing market is speeding it back to being a part of vested interests and land owners. House prices are usually three or four times higher than wages, on average. This historical norm has been left behind in the last few decades and the average house price is now more than eight times the average wage. Just how much Russian money do we think is in this market?

House prices have gone up so much in the last two generations that many people have seen their property rise in value by more than they paid for it. These people have been paid to live in their homes. What an investment! Take out a loan to purchase an asset that will see no increase in real value or productivity and by the time you have paid the loan off you will receive the full value of the asset again. To what set of Tory principles does this absurd situation adhere? Why is it that the voters who are pro-wealth and pro-business cannot see that this market is crooked? How comfortable are conservatives with being the party of this sort of unearned wealth? They are walking right into the stereotype the left always makes of them...

Almost all constituencies with a 50 per cent homeownership rate or higher vote Conservative;

the rest vote left. At the same time, buying a house is no longer a question of hard work, smart saving, and aspiration. It is a market full of government schemes and interference, parental loans, and shrinking product size and quality. What sort of Conservatism is this supposed to represent? Perhaps the reason there is such a paucity of good ideas in the Conservative Party today is that they have bought a huge constituency of voters they do not know how to confront.

Plenty of people already inside the system find ways of answering the point. Affordable homes are available to buy in obscure places! Mortgages were never easy to obtain! Young people feel entitled to live in London! What a rare and fascinating example of Tories thinking like lefties. Maybe there is a culture of entitlement among young people. It's an odd word to describe the young families on good incomes who want to raise their children in a house rather than a flat, or, entitlement of entitlements, with a garden. Nor does entitlement seem a very comfortable fit with those Tory shibboleths enterprise and aspiration. If they really believe in those things, they would build homes in the most productive part of the economy, the South East.

This line of thinking has become so anti-common-sense that you can find people in the landlord industry who will tell you – they hear this at conferences – that deregulating the planning system isn't a good idea because brick manufacturers won't be able to meet demand. Are we giving up on the basic principles of economics now as well? Lord Salisbury told the Tory party you may as well ignore the weather as ignore supply and demand. House prices are through the roof, demand has been building for thirty years. I think someone, somewhere, will find a way of making money by making bricks when the opportunity arises.

If it wasn't for the fact that these people prefer blue rosettes, you might not know they were Tory at all. Imagine the same sort of thinking from the other side. Real entrepreneurs aren't put off by high marginal tax rates. People feel entitled to have their own business. And in London!

This issue is the last risk facing the broad Thatcherite settlement. While Tories bicker about income tax and pensioners there is a constituency amassing that will be forever locked out of the housing market. Political anger, or indifference, will only grow as people raise

their families in apartments so that a group of already prosperous people can keep the housing market rigged to their advantage.

There is an opportunity to change this, without anyone losing out. The Street Votes policy is being considered by the government. This is a scheme where residents on low density streets will be able to vote to sell their houses to a developer who will put in higher density terraces or mansion blocks, thus enabling more use of the same space. This not only brings more housing to existing areas without eating into the green belt, it allows existing homeowners to take a profit. Everyone can be better off.

This is a chance for the Conservatives to do something to ameliorate a crooked market largely of their own making. Without solutions like this, the Conservatives will be in an increasingly casuistic tangle about what and who they represent. From Imperial Preference to Baldwin's Protection Election to the Corn Laws, the Conservatives have been here before. They are no strangers to the political wilderness. Let's hope Boris keeps the wheels on for long enough to allow Michael Gove to get the job done.

Henry Oliver is a writer for Unherd, The Critic and CapX.

Hungary Elects Orban – Again

MARK GRIFFITH

On Sunday April 3rd Hungary's voters decided to return Viktor Orban and his Fidesz party to not just a win, but a triumphant win, taking two-thirds of parliamentary seats. This two-thirds majority allows him again to change Hungary's constitution, further embedding his party's grip on power – or allowing him to continue undoing the previous communist regime's persisting grip on national institutions, depending on your stance.

This is the fourth four-year term of government in a row. Fidesz won in 2010, 2014, 2018, and just now 2022. There was an earlier fifth term, from 1998 to 2002, a term Orban is said to have later regretted as being too moderate. Then the remnants of Hungary's communist-era government, the reformed communist/socialist party – the MSZP – took back power for two terms. After which Orban returned to power to form a Fidesz/Christian-Democrat coalition government for the 2010-to-2014 term. This was the previous two-thirds majority or 'supermajority' enabling Fidesz to change Hungary's constitution.

Orban's political ideology is routinely called 'populist', 'xenophobic', 'anti-democratic' and other things seen as 'obviously' bad. Part of the reason that centre-left journalists hate Orban so much is betrayal.

He was once one of them.

A curious feature of the Fidesz story rarely mentioned these days is that they started out as urban liberals. Fidesz, formed in 1988, was once a very different party.

Orban and his college friends had a major following, but mainly in Budapest. The party's name spells out an acronym in Hungarian: FI (Young = 'Fiatal'), DE (Democrats = 'Demokraták'), SZ (Alliance = 'Szovetseg'). This Hungarian acronym was also intended to echo the Latin term for faith, trust, confidence – 'fides'.

The 'young' part was built into the party's constitution. No official could remain in the original Fidesz after the age of

35. My friends in Budapest found this reassuring. Youthful idealism, lack of cynicism, a fresh departure from old quarrels and old obsessions.

This changed in 1993.

By 1993, Orban realised Fidesz's charming young liberals would never win power. The fragile 1990-1994 coalition government of centre-conservatives (MDF, the Hungarian Democratic Forum) – excluded the leftist Fidesz. The MDF government was weak, quarrelsome, led by former dissidents against communism, people still trapped in the past. Orban grasped two things: the centre-right was the future



of power, and no strong party of his generation yet occupied that niche.

There was a satirical film made in 1969 Hungary that was banned from screening for a decade. *A Tanu* (The Witness) was, readers might be surprised to learn, financed and made within the communist state-funded film industry, back then relatively open-minded compared to other Warsaw-Pact COMECON countries. Nevertheless, Hungary's ruling socialist party decided to ban its screening in cinemas. One of the comic plotlines of the 1950s story involves a doomed attempt to grow oranges in Hungary. Because no-one under communism could openly criticise communist officials, this plan goes ahead despite its complete impracticality.

In the end, hothouse lemons get passed off as oranges so a party official can proclaim that communism has achieved a scientific victory, and the official must bite into a lemon in front of an audience while pretending he is eating an orange. He famously proclaims that yes, it's on the small side, yes it's a little bit sour, but it's *ours*.

In memory of this film moment known to all Magyars, the early 1990s Fidesz journal was named *Hungarian Orange*. When in 1993, Orban carried out his internal coup, he moved the party 180 degrees from its urban liberal origins. He dropped the age limit, started to court older voters in the countryside (where real political power still is), and broke with almost all his friends.

In the process, *Magyar Narancs* (Hungarian Orange) went from being the party's official magazine run by university chums of Orban to being a bitter opponent of the new Fidesz. It still is. Yet the official Fidesz colour today remains orange – a curious trace of that acidic scene in the long-censored 1969 film. The original orange/lemon joke was about totalitarian authority forcing people, as in Anderson's the *Emperor's New Clothes* story, to deny the evidence of their own senses. As a result, the official orangeness of Fidesz still has resonance for many Hungarian critics of Viktor Orban.

Nonetheless, the opposition to Fidesz is a mess. They performed particularly badly on April 3rd to give Orban his second constitution-altering supermajority. Further, Orban shrewdly distanced himself from both Putin and the western pro-Ukrainian position, correctly divining that most Hungarians firmly wish to stay out of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Orban's opponents meanwhile went to the lengths of holding their own primary last autumn to choose a single leader who could defeat Viktor. The short list of three were: Klara Dobrev, wife of one-time socialist leader Ferenc (Francis) Gyurcsany; Peter Marki-Zay, a former Fidesz small-town mayor who gained a reputation as an honourable centre-right politician untouched by corruption; and Gergely (Gregory)

Karacsony (his name means Christmas), mayor of Budapest. Mr Christmas currently leads a small national party called Dialogue. Peter Marki-Zay won that primary to be the anti-Orban candidate.

Marki-Zay failed on election day, partly due to massive Fidesz spending on political advertising, many say from state funds. At the same time, the anti-Orban alliance was bizarre. It contained both former communists and ethnic nationalists Jobbik. Around 2015, Jobbik's leader decided to drop its anti-Jewish and anti-Gypsy rhetoric, wishing Hungary's Jews a Happy Hannukah. Everyone rolled their eyes. A centre-left alliance to dislodge Orban containing former neo-Nazis looks pretty desperate.

In 2018, Jobbik's true believers formed Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland), which got enough votes to clear the threshold, entering parliament on April 3rd. They now have 7 of 199 MPs. Interestingly, they're the only party that saw through the covid-19 power grab. They clearly oppose mandatory vaccination, lockdowns, masks, and persecution of vaccine-refusers. The only Hungarian I personally know voting for Mi Hazánk is a politically active Jewess who is vocally against antisemitism, and proudly wears a star of David, but believes the covid-19 surveillance-state project is the main danger. She told me over a pot of tea in February that '*I don't like antisemites, Mi Hazánk are definitely antisemites, but they have no chance of power, and they're the only party that gets covid right, so in April I'm voting for them.*'

No-one denies that both MSZP and Fidesz governments were corrupt. In fact Orban seems to think he *must* build up a client class of business owners to make centrist-conservatism permanent. There isn't space here for detailed claims the communist elite still persists, so just one small example. Two decades after the idealistic start of the party that promised to stay young (Fidesz), a new party appeared in 2009, coloured fresh green and white. In similar vein to the early Fidesz, it was called 'Lehet Más Politika' or LMP ('Politics Can Be Different'), a sweet student grouping of greens and liberals. Conservatives point out, though, that LMP's founders' parents were senior communists.

Given they had the best educations, this might not be so odd. But it explains the cynicism of older provincial voters who want not 'fresh beginnings' but revenge for forty years of communism. Those rural voters sincerely love the post-1993 Fidesz – and Viktor Orban.

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

Proportional Misrepresentation

I^AIN SALISBURY

In 1969, Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson hatched a ‘cunning plan’ to secure the imminent general election. With the Family Law Reform Act, he reduced the age of majority, which includes the voting age, from 21 to 18. Doubtless he was influenced by the old adage that a young person who isn’t a socialist has no heart while an elder who remains one has no head. Surely the teenagers of the ‘swinging sixties’ could be counted on to defend his white-hot technological revolution?

It was to no avail. Although Labour went into the 1970 campaign with a double-digit lead in the opinion polls, the Conservatives were returned with an overall majority of thirty. The psephologists claimed that there had been a ‘late swing’ but the rest of us suspected confirmation bias among left-leaning pollsters and wondered what they were actually doing for their money. The election was noteworthy for a second innovation. The 1969 Representation of the People Act allowed candidates to put ‘political descriptions’ on the ballot paper for the first time. I suggest that both these changes represent a continuing challenge to our democratic institutions.

The temptation to reduce the voting age even further in search of political naivete persists in some quarters. While most people today accept 18 as the age at which a young person assumes all adult responsibilities, in the 2013 Scottish Referendum Act, the SNP reduced the voting age for the plebiscite to 16. Whatever the stated reasons, it seems likely that the government expected schoolchildren to rally to the Saltire. If so, its scheme ganged thoroughly aghast. A survey of five thousand Scots taken immediately after the poll found that 54.3 percent of 16 to 19 year-olds had voted against independence, as had 54.1 percent of the 20 to 24 cohort. Nevertheless, in 2015 the Scottish Parliament lowered the voting age to 16 in all local elections.

A voting age below the age of majority is clearly an absurdity. At 16, a Scottish child is considered too immature to take out a bank loan or incur an overdraft but is assumed to be well qualified to oversee the wealth of nations. Similarly, children of that age cannot be sent to adult prisons but may

vote to influence policing and penal policy. They are not permitted to drive or to buy alcohol in a bar, off licence or supermarket. Even acquiring a tattoo is prohibited below the age of 18. It is entirely reasonable for citizens to expect their fellow voters to be legally responsible for their own lives before adjudicating on the law for others. This is clearly not the case north of the border. Thus far, there does not seem to be much of a clamour for England to follow the Scottish example but we should be prepared.

At first sight, allowing political descriptions on ballot papers appears harmless enough and might even be helpful. Indeed, two Edward Heaths stood for the Bexley constituency in the 1970 general election, one having changed his name by deed poll. It was fortunate, therefore, that the other was allowed to describe himself as ‘Leader of the Conservative Party’. While this and several other entertaining loopholes have since been closed, a significant change to the principles of British democracy had occurred. The 1970 election was the first in our history in which a voter didn’t need to be able to name his or her chosen candidate. It opened the door to that most insidious of oxymorons: proportional representation.

Britain’s famously ‘unwritten constitution’ was written, for the most part, by an assistant House of Commons librarian called Thomas Erskine May. First published in 1844 and now in its 25th edition, ‘A treatise on the law, privileges, proceedings and usage of Parliament’, usually just called ‘Erskine May’, makes clear that an MP is a representative of the people and not a delegate of a political party. While few voters look beyond party affiliations when casting their ballots these days, being elected in his or her own right gives a British MP an authority and an autonomy that other parliamentarians lack. No government can count on the slavish subservience of its backbenchers. The latter can, and frequently do, ignore instructions from the whip’s office. British MPs are entirely free to transfer their allegiance to a different party, become independent, or even to set up a new group, as in 1981 when the ‘gang of four’ disaffected Labour members founded the Social Democratic Party. The question of whether a particular MP continues to be a suitable

representative is not decided by any political party but is left, ultimately, to the discretion of the voters at a subsequent election.

The crux of the Westminster Parliament is truly local representation for every citizen. Party affiliation is but one of many factors a voter might wish to consider. Those who would prefer a different MP are completely free to present an alternative candidate for the approval of their neighbours.

Spain, by contrast, tries to use a fully ‘proportional’ system. People vote just for a political party and their lawmakers are chosen entirely by its apparatchiks. The more votes the latter receive, the further down a list of increasingly inadequate hacks and time-servers they are able to go when filling out their delegation. The expression ‘proportional representation’ is a contradiction in terms. Those elected under such a system are delegates of the party. They are emphatically not representatives of the people. The Spanish experience also illustrates other PR pitfalls. For example, a voting district has to be quite enormous for the results to come close to ‘proportional’.

Spain bases its system on fifty historic provinces, the boundaries of which have remained unchanged since 1833. Many now have a population that is too small to sustain even a semblance of proportionality and the Cortes Generales has become highly malapportioned. Single-issue, local, and extremist parties have also proliferated so there is little prospect of a stable majority government. It took two years, two elections, national embarrassment, and not a little *ennui* to cobble together the present administration, which still lacks an overall majority. It comprises the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE) in coalition with Unidos Podemos, itself an amalgam of the Chávez-inspired Podemos and a group of five parties espousing competing varieties of communism and calling itself Izquierda Unida (United Left). As if that weren’t enough, being a minority government, it also requires at least the acquiescence of several left-wing regional parties to pass any legislation. With youth unemployment at 30 percent, vital economic reforms are completely stalled. Spain really needs to leave the euro and cut interest rates, of course, but ‘frogs will grow hair’ first, a traditional Castillian saying. Our Iberian friends have saddled themselves with something close to the worst of all political worlds. And that’s before King Juan Carlos was forced to abdicate in disgrace.

The rot has already started at a local level in Britain. There is no room here to discuss the bizarre Single

Transferable Vote (STV), in which papers are fed into a kind of electoral Magimix where both winning and losing ballots may be shuffled between candidates. It is used locally in Scotland and Northern Ireland and, once again, it eliminates the possibility of a truly local representative. In Ulster, 5 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) are returned from each of 18 mega-constituencies. This leaves every MLA with a lot of ground to cover.

The London Assembly and the parliaments of Scotland and Wales are elected using the Additional Member System (AMS), also known as the Mixed Member Proportional System outside the UK. It is a kind of half-way house in the project to wean us off constituencies. Each elector gets two votes, one for a local representative and the other for a party list. Although the obligations and responsibilities of the two kinds of legislator would appear to be quite distinct, they enjoy a similar status in the various chambers. This means that constituency representatives have to contend with interference in their local affairs from ‘list’ members who may be delegated by competing political parties and may come from a demographically very different voting district.

In Wales, 40 Members of the Senedd (MS) are elected from constituencies, with a further 20 coming from party lists in five electoral districts. These numbers are obviously arbitrary. The Electoral Reform Society is already pressing demands for the number of ‘list’ seats to be increased. To become truly ‘proportional’, they will eventually need to dispense with the pesky constituency altogether.

Beware the weasel phraseology of those, like the supporters of the Electoral Reform Society, who seek to undermine or even take away our representation. Their propaganda is full of expressions like ‘fair votes’ and ‘wasted votes’. Although it’s semantic nonsense, ‘proportional representation’ can sound scholarly when contrasted with ‘first past the post’, which seems more appropriate to a vicarage fete egg and spoon race. Those, like myself, who live in a constituency where their preferred candidate is unlikely to prevail must acknowledge that there is nothing ‘unfair’ about being bested in a fair contest. And the only ‘wasted’ ballot is one that isn’t cast.

Thomas Erskine May has passed us a legacy that has brought liberty and stability through some of the most threatening and turbulent periods of our history. We must take care not to fumble it.

Iain Salisbury is a retired physicist

Artless working-class morons and Immigration

DON BEECH

Since 1948 when The Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury and disgorged its 1029 immigrants onto British soil, unprecedented levels of mass inward migration have driven-up the official UK population to roughly 68.5 million; an increase over the period of about 40 per cent or 20 million souls. (worldmeters.info.uk). Yet if immigrants' interlocutors are right, then the quality of their lives here have, at best, been mixed. This applies especially to people identifying as black or brown, many of whom, it's reported, still regard the UK and its institutions not as The Promised Land they were seeking, but rather as a kind of plantation ruled over by a clique of post-colonial masters and their overseers. Somewhat inauspiciously, in 2022 many black and brown people still believe police officers acting in the public interest and at great personal risk, by conducting dangerous 'stop and search' operations against knife-crime for instance, to be racist monsters devoted to humiliating them whenever possible and just for the fun of it.

But few people of good sense would now deny the many social difficulties black and brown people continue to experience; difficulties which have attracted compassionate commentary equal in measure to the seriousness of their effects. Regrettably however, the same can't be said of the level and quality of commentary in relation to the way in which those identifying themselves as white and working-class have experienced mass immigration, as it were, downstream. Discounting idiotic representations of working-class life drawn, say, in dramas such as the BBC's *Eastenders* or in right-on Channel 4 documentaries cataloguing the sins of nasty landlords and their fat blameless victims; intelligent accounts of white working-class life remain thin on the ground. Perhaps it's something to do with a patronising impulse on the liberal-left to take the working-class's allegiance for granted whilst at the same time treating its members as artless fools. But notwithstanding the role Brexit and the fall of the Red Wall played in encouraging the liberal-left to think again about this, I'll wager there was nothing further from Gordon Brown's mind when he hopped out of bed on the morning of the 28th April 2010, anticipating the coming day's election campaigning in Rochdale. After

all, what could such a great man have to fear when in all seriousness he thought he was about to be anointed King of the Working-class?

But that was before a 'bigoted (ie, white working-class) woman', Gillian Duffy, crossed his path and all but ruined his public life. Played out under the gaze of an astonished nation, Brown's contempt for the kind of artless working-class moron she obviously represented to him shone through their toe-curling eleven-minute encounter; at a stroke stripping him of any credibility as the man of the people he claimed to be, just read any of his many turgid books. Afterwards, cowering in defeat, this self-righteous son of the manse confessed pathetically to his handlers 'that was a disaster'; and it was. But what really mattered, was that the encounter broadcast to the nation how wide the breach had grown between the 'democratic' left's globalising vision for the UK's population, and the real-life preferences of erstwhile Labour 'supporters' like Gillian Duffy born 1945, and those of the previous war generation – my own father (1918-2000) included.

Until Mrs Thatcher came along and charmed his socks off, my father *always* voted Labour; it was ontological. A little in-love with her intelligence, glamour and spunk, it was her promise to save him from the existential blight of trade unionism, on the production line at the Ford Motor Co, and at home with his feisty wife, that was decisive in his reluctant conversion to political Conservatism. Little formal education made him non-ideological, just as serious social deprivation made him mentally resilient, physically hard and morally self-critical, qualities typical of his working-class social conservative identity long before he took Mrs Thatcher's political shilling. But by this time thirty-five or so years had already passed since he had returned to East London after six gruelling, but also life affirming, years in 'the services' as a Marines Commando. For the rest of his life, he complained quietly about the soul-destroying work he nonetheless accepted as his lot, paid his bills and looked after his family whilst expecting little in the way of material justice from state or employer in return. I wished I had respected his worldly intelligence earlier than I did.

In his later years he often spoke of feeling increasingly unsure of himself and what was going on around him. Although a committed family man and great father, it was as a worker and more specifically a Royal Marine that he identified himself as a worthwhile human being. And yet, by the time Mrs Thatcher had demolished the trade unions the game was already up for the patriotic values – loyalty, self-sacrifice and dependability – of this modest saviour of humanity, and many like him. By the late 1990's the message was clear; if the global village was to be made safe for everybody it would need protection from folk like him: globalisation, feminism, casino-capitalism, Euro-Marxist pedagogy and the ideological hegemony of worldwide egalitarian-progressive politics saw to that. And so it turned out that his later life tracked the creeping devaluation of patriotism which would do such irreparable damage to his identity and that of the many millions like him and their descendants – those who would eventually form the majority of Brexit '52 percenters' and northern 'Red Wallers'.

My father's example typified the British working-class's refusal to unite in serious class struggle against its supposed real enemies – international Jewry, bankers and 'the rich' – a phenomenon which has always bamboozled the left; social democratic and Corbynite alike. George Orwell argued convincingly how uncomfortable the (English) working-class always were with socialism's difficult abstractions. Moreover, in the concrete sense it's hardly a secret why the white working-class has been so reluctant to pick up the Red and/or European flag on behalf of the Pakistani peasants, Arabian imams, African pastors, Eastern European thugs and all the other linguistic, social and cultural 'communities' which have now permanently pitched camp here on what was once working-class soil. And anyway, why wouldn't they come here to take 'our' jobs if they could? I can't imagine any working-class person criticising them for that. The problem was that the liberal left so positively and self-righteously fostered it. On top of that, it was no secret that such large numbers of immigrants were bound to undercut wages, claim benefits they hadn't earned, trigger housing crises, create ever-lengthening queues at doctors' surgeries, increase the severity and nature of violence on the streets, clog-up the courts, and pragmatically cry 'racism' when things didn't go their way. As newcomers whose own histories often ruled out any possible understanding of ours, why should things go their way? After all, we and our ancestors were here first.

So, there are clearly more than enough good reasons, abstract and concrete, for the white working-class to feel terminally aggrieved about the effects on

their lives of mass immigration, especially when it's empirically undeniable that since Windrush the institutional infrastructure of social insurances, which *de jure* constitutes the welfare state, has by leaps and bounds become an unbearable burden on taxpayers and is now creaking at the seams. Unsurprisingly, adding the existential demands of twenty million human bodies to an existing population of fifty million or so, and ramming them into a finite territorial space on an already crowded island, will antagonise a person to distraction, especially if they're ridiculed, insulted and denied an opportunity to think, say or do anything meaningful about it. In the interests of clarity on this important point, there's been no equivalent mass movement of people to be found anywhere in our documented history: the thirty thousand Huguenots who found religious asylum here in the 17th century, and Jews expelled from Germany in the 1930's probably come closest.

As everybody now knows, even internationally-led attempts by the liberal-left – Mr Obama's threats and the EU's endless obstructions – to reverse democracy and ignore the popular will 'to get our country back' failed to stop Brexit and the Conservative electoral landslide which followed; demonstrating a clear white working-class preference to stick with traditional British exceptionalism in the face of its attempted annihilation by an egalitarian blitzkrieg from the international liberal-left.

But the ability of British exceptionalism to survive this blitzkrieg is a very specific phenomenon. Our patriotism is neither ideological/utilitarian nor contractual in its nature; British history provides no social or political *tabula rasa* to write on for those who might interfere with it in a revolutionary fashion, and neither will it ever satisfy the assumption that new social contracts can be written on the hoof creating an instantaneous sense of belonging for those who decide to turn up at Tilbury or get washed up on the Kent foreshore in rubber dinghies. *De facto* if not *de jure*, asylum here is a one-off privilege or concession: not a right. Rather, it leans on institutional realities and human perceptions emerging from below and over time which specify attachment to 'this' people 'this' law, 'this' territory, 'this' kind of citizenship and 'these' ancient liberties, which, warts and all, have long attracted deeply felt and rooted commitment from all levels of British society. Furthermore, if Brexit and the 2019 General Election are anything to go by, they still do. Pragmatically accepting these traditions to be materially 'unfair' but at the same time generally reasonable and only faintly corrupted, constitutes the fault line on which the flaky balance of British working-class life was always built. In return,

Britain's rulers have consistently allowed those like my father who in Dr Johnson's formulation 'toil at the lower employments of life' to periodically sacrifice themselves in defence of our shared national liberties (real or imagined) in return for the freedom to fully identify themselves with Britain's history – one of the very few worth identifying with!

As Max Weber put it, in societies favouring tradition, members identify in such-and-such a way 'because it was always like that'. In other words, if Lord Salisbury was right that life is little more than 'delay', then Brexit quintessentially represents the conservative habit for

order which is the only proven way to sensibly resist the entropy which is the ultimate lot of man. Looking out on the entropic forces which mass immigration has unleashed on the parts of our towns and cities which were once home to the white working-class, it seems that patriotism might be a habit worth hanging onto and positively fostering in the interests of all social classes – and especially so if Putin decides to shift his attention much further to the west.

Don Beech is a retired teacher.

Father Forgive them for they know not what they do... or do they?

GREG ROBERTS

I recently watched a documentary about the Falklands war. In it, the participants seemed to agree that a great many bad decisions were made which did not appear to make sense. These included leaving ships exposed to enemy attack unnecessarily and opening up a Southern front to the war that caused the tragic loss of the Sir Galahad and so many who were aboard at the time. It seemed that those in charge of making the important decisions did not make the right choices because they did not have the capability, expertise or knowledge to carry out their job to best effect.

Then there is the story of the recent Shrewsbury Hospital maternity 'scandal' where many women and their children might have died because people made the wrong decisions. I am sure in both cases that the people concerned did not set out deliberately to make the wrong choices

and put the lives of others at risk; they acted to the best of their ability making what they felt were the correct choices at the time. It was their ability and experience which was at fault leading them to make what turned out to be the wrong choices.

Children generally grow up believing that 'grown ups' know what they are doing. A child follows the instructions of its parents trusting them to make the right decisions for its welfare and that they are wise and know best. A child at school trusts its teachers to look after it and to impart knowledge and

the truth to it. When we step into a building, we trust that the engineers

have taken everything into account when designing it. Only as one gets older does one realise that whilst most things 'work' most of the time, it does not follow that everyone truly knows what they are doing in their jobs or lives. Only as one gets older does



Another Vladimir - the Impaler

one realise that people are fallible and that incorrect decisions are made more often than one used to think. Sometimes people who are not capable of doing their jobs are 'carried' by those who are and who cover up and correct their mistakes. The old adage that people are often promoted to the level just above what they are competent in becomes all the more obvious.

Speaking of bad decisions, of course, the many aspects of managing the COVID pandemic have been plagued with more than a fair share of them. Printing limitless money, the timing and use of lockdowns, releases from lockdowns and so much more besides. How many of these decisions were wrong because of ignorance or inability and how many were bad because of deliberate policy to, for example, prioritise one group of people above another? Airports are now in chaos because, they say, they do not have enough staff to deal with the increase in business after the end of lockdown. Was this a 'mistake' caused by bad decisions taken months earlier or a logical outcome of prioritising, say, shareholders profits against the interest of employees who had been 'let go'?

I have not been abroad since the start of COVID but am aiming to go away somewhere soon. At last, there will be a chance to go abroad and to feel 'at home' again. I am not from foreign parts, my family history in England has been traced back to at least the 1800's, but as is felt by many, I no longer feel I am amongst my own kind in my own country. Canada and the USA are perhaps the best examples of places one can go to where one feels one 'belongs' and is amongst one's own kind, but even when going to, say, Spain, one can feel more at home and amongst one's own kind than in many parts of Britain. I will no doubt feel once more on arriving back at Heathrow or Gatwick that I have flown into the UK from a country where I felt at home, to one where most people around me are from countries I would never want to go to or feel at home in. Arriving into London to an airport that could be in India or Africa and where I have to be interviewed by a surly faced foreigner at a 'Border force' immigration desk to be permitted to enter my own country.

Politics perhaps are different. Did those in power in the 1980's, and before and since, know that the decisions they made, regarding immigration, would irrevocably change the country, or did they make a genuine mistake not realising what would happen? When it was predicted that only a few Eastern Europeans would come to the UK when they were allowed to come freely, was this a genuine prediction

made by incompetent leaders or did they know all along that they were lying and making choices that would affect the country for ever? Did the politicians foresee the stabbings, gang rapes and housing shortages when they opened the country to everyone or was it a genuine surprise?

I would like to think that these decisions were mistakes made out of ignorance, but I fear they were more than likely deliberate acts. Are teachers made to teach our children from left-wing anti-British agendas with distortions of history because those who decide the policies genuinely believe these are truths, or because they know they are untruths but teach them anyway.

Boris supports a 'green agenda' yet is the father of seven children. Having those 7 children will have created 330 times as much CO₂ as would have been saved if he had switched himself completely to 100 per cent green energy. The left, and the BBC, complain that people cannot afford a house to live in whilst at the same time encouraging unlimited immigration. They welcome and spend millions on economic migrants who Border Force bring in to Dover whilst complaining about the tax rises needed to pay for looking after them. Do they do these things genuinely not realising the connections and believing they are making the correct decisions, or do they do this knowing but hiding the truths?

What of the other great left-wing/BBC inconsistency? Supporting Muslims and all they do on the one hand, yet supporting women's rights on the other? The trans movement wants to allow people with penises into women's changing rooms yet at the same time supports 'me too' and cries out that women must be provided with 'safe spaces'. Do they know and see that these contradictions are there and that the public need to be lied to to cover them up, or do they genuinely not have the cognitive ability to see the contra-indications?

So, do they 'know not what they do?' or do they know what they are doing yet do it anyway? How much of what is around us is because of ignorance and error, how much is because of deliberate decisions made knowing they are wrong for the silent majority? What I do know, is that I don't like any of it.

Greg Roberts is a retired GP.

Democracy collapses in the face of the wheat price

BRIAN BOLGER

There was a glowing feeling amongst the liberal left in the 90s that the era of globalisation had ushered in a period of ‘settlement’. That is, that the great questions of the day were not to be settled by Bismark’s ‘blood and iron’, but by its opposite, international trade, global agencies, the World Bank and the IMF. The model of ‘liberal democracy’ was the partner of this globalised regime; it was believed that autocratic states would see the benefits of the liberal world and that they would gradually liberalise, democratise and open markets to international trade. Political theorists such as Francis Fukuyama put forward the idea of the ‘End of History’; that the Hegelian process of history would not result in a Marxist utopia but in fact a liberal democratic one. The movement of history would end with the stasis of liberal democracy. However, this analysis was based on some fundamental misconceptions about economic history and culture.

Since 2011 there has been a reversal of globalisation. This was based on increases in domestic GDP worldwide and also China’s reorientation towards domestic markets. There has also been a huge leap in Protectionism worldwide. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has been hit by the impacts of Covid and now, security threats. Although there are ups and downs in the overall trends; the volatility highlights the unstable nature of global capitalism. Therefore, whilst trade becomes more aligned to domestic markets; the trade in services has moved its axis eastwards, where China has taken a greater share of the business. The geopolitical realities of protectionism and nationalism are a result of the negative consequences for poorer domestic populations who are not party to the liberal global leverage of the multicultural elites. Putin’s position has pivoted around these factors, and has noticed, with Bismarckian relish, that it is not globalisation or liberal democracy which is the driver of history, but resource scarcity. Economic power is shifting towards developing economies such as India, which has overtaken the UK in economic size.

Russia has leverage ability with resources, especially fossil fuels, and has used this to its advantage. Developing nations, as in Africa, will be co-opted in

the need to secure oil and gas. Putin is aware that the nineteenth century ascendancy of the liberal states of Europe were geographic and resource based. Hence the predominance of a kind of intellectual, cultural western superiority has been debunked in favour of a nascent geographical anthropology. One of the seminal factors that Jared Diamond outlines as a reason for the collapse of past societies is the demise of essential trading partners. He describes how the Polynesians on Pitcairn Island suffered from the demise of their trading circle in shells. Once the Henderson and Mangareva islands suffered internal destruction over resources and land, Pitcairn was essentially isolated. That is why resource protection is the driving force behind modern geopolitical developments rather than ‘democracy’ or ‘human rights’. Putin is aware that Russia has a major resource which can be used to isolate or leverage power through substantial cash flows. This is evidenced in the half-hearted effect of sanctions. The unwillingness of some, particularly the Germans, to reduce this trade dependency is well noted in the Kremlin.

Modernity is characterised by a convergence of catastrophes. We have at once a geopolitical resource war, an environmental nadir, a global pandemic. These are not coincidental or contiguous with the age of the Hindu cyclical age of the ‘Kali Yuga’, for example. They are synonymous with a collapse of the materialistic age, whether Capitalism or Communism, and its corollary, liberal democracy. As modernity squeezes resources and environment, politics becomes merely like Pareto’s competition of elites. Previous collapses tended to be regional or isolated, whereas now the nature of a global system, pushes the whole of humanity to the edge of the precipice. Guillaume Faye, in *Archeo Futurism-European Visions of the Post Catastrophic Age*, predicted ‘A dramatic chain reaction of events is converging towards a fatal point which I believe may occur in the early Twenty-first century, between 2010 and 2020. This will plunge the world into chaos and cause a genuine cultural earthquake. These catastrophe lines concern the environment, demography, economy, religion, epidemics, and geo-politics.’ We are now at this point of a seismic shift in the ‘telos’ of the modern world. This has

occurred because of a neglect and abandonment, post-Enlightenment, of archaic and communal values, of family and tradition. The brave new world of progress and scientific rationalism has been proven to be a chimera. The west has lost its 'telos' or meaning and replaced it with the empty values of the liberal market.

What Putin has seen is this collapse of courage in the West; an inability to protect themselves from external, existential threats and a peculiar weak slavishness to liberal culture and the way it erodes the values of traditional societies. Western states have been prepared to sacrifice internal cohesion and security for vacuous liberal sentiments, mass immigration and a continuous assault on family, biological sex and community. This is not to suggest that Putin's barbaric regime embodies anything better; it is merely a form of gangster capitalism which has brutalised its own population. However, they do possess a clarity of 'realpolitik' which is absent to the bureaucratic careerist classes of western government and institutions. The future will be periodic crises and wars pertaining to resource accumulation. The Chinese will be eyeing Taiwan where the TSMC foundry has a near monopoly on semiconductor production. The Donbass region of the Ukraine has massive coal supplies and a huge supply of Lithium fields. The simulacrum is a type of 'Sudetan' persecution of ethnic Russians in the region; but the real mover is the substantial mineral and resource wealth of this part of Ukraine. The Ukraine war is the first of the world's 'Resource Wars', it is the return of Bismarck stamping around in Europe, it is the failure

of rationalism and liberalism to address existential crises. It is important that the conflict is not seen as a fight between liberal democracy and the autocratic 'far right' of Putinism. This would be another miasma of deceit for it would absolve the west for their culpability in resource accentuation, of liberal free markets, and the global elites pursuit of trans-national capital flows. It also embodies that dreadful catchphrase of liberals: 'the far right' – the misnomer which spreads its net to include anything traditional, catholic, or ideas based which questions the fundamental tenets of liberal democracy. There is a general movement towards authoritarianism in both the Occident and the Orient; this can be seen in the limited scope of 'representative democracy', in the 'executive dictatorship' of the UK system. This is a result of the gradual movement to Asiatic norms which have bypassed liberalism on the way to functional authoritarianism; it was visible in the way 'democratic' states were able to suspend freedom during the Covid pandemic. Liberalism is only as viable as the next crisis. The *End of History* is premature; as Spengler noted in *The Decline of the West*; 'History is direction – but nature is extension – ergo everyone gets eaten by a bear...'

Brian Patrick Bolger has taught Political Philosophy and Applied Linguistics in Universities across Europe. His new book, Coronavirus and the Strange Death of Truth is available now in the UK and US.

The Madness of Crowds

PATRICIA MORGAN

As history testifies, mob movements are easily ignited given an apposite signal and can quickly occupy a power vacuum where authority is absent or complicit. The spread and speed of modern communications are their Godsend.

The killing of a serial criminal in the US had party leaders to footballers to police reflexively kneeling in submission to those on the rampage to 'dismantle' society. With a craze unleashed, there is little let-up in statues coming down, museums removing exhibits, and the names of leading Enlightenment philosophers like David Hume taken from public sight. Teachers give lessons from quasi-Marxist 'Toolkits' on 'white privilege' and the British Library digs out authors with any ancestral connection to slavery or colonialism. Joining Lord Byron and George Orwell is the late Poet Laureate Ted

Hughes; an indirect descendant of someone 300 years before he was born. The Royal Botanic Gardens strives to acknowledge its 'exploitative and racist legacies', by having plants confess to links with past maleficence, since leafy beings were 'central to the running of the British Empire' and commercial interests.

Universities are leaders in 'decolonising' and 'diversifying'. Durham works to 'decolonise' mathematics, since correct answers indicate 'white supremacy'. Maths joins the denial of the existence of male and female; another victim of the assault on objectively or factual knowledge. People can make-up their own sex, devoid of reference to reality and everyone must believe it.

Even narrowly focused crazes do, of course, leave customs in their wake. The legacy of the 'flowers for Diana' hysteria is maintained by cameras compulsively

panning in on heaps of cellophane wrapped bouquets and giant balloons after any unfortunate death. In a leftover from the water drinking mania, messages at mainline stations tell people to always carry a bottle of water. Would concourses otherwise be strewn with collapsed bodies?

The Black Lives Matter and the following transgender surge aspire to total social and even human reconstruction. Prior to recruiting virtually every institution and dimension of social life to do their bidding, these movements were well stocked and ready for action after decades spent accumulating resources. It just needed George Floyd's messy end, or Bruce Jenner's media re-launch as glamorous Caitlin, to light a fuse for super-charged additions to the onslaught on Western culture.

The origins here lie in Post-Modern or neo-Marxist Critical Theory, which has infiltrated all levels of academia to inspire sexual and racial identity movements. To further social disintegration, destroying capitalism is superseded by crushing 'heteronormativity'. The prospective wasteland promises to be inhabited by a kaleidoscope of ever-diversifying relations, experiences and bodies, or the liberated world of omnisexuality (LGBTQQIP2SAA+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, pansexual, two spirits, androgynous, asexual). Capitalism is on-side with such great marketing opportunities. Apple's phone update has a pregnant man 'emoji' and Netflix its '*he's Expecting*' drama series.

Our ongoing cultural nihilism is offering a largely blank space for any ambitious chancer to fill: without obstruction or serious opponents. As sociologist and theologian Peter Berger once observed, there is the modern 'homelessness of the mind'. This is minus a shared system of beliefs, positive references and values that give a sense of belonging and purpose that is worth defending. Along with 'mediating structures' like religion, family and neighbourhood, much has been remorselessly denigrated and dismembered.

That human impulse for attachment to a meaningful purpose or source of reference manifests itself, not least, in organisations embracing aspiring directives to elevate their mundane toil. There can be downsides, even disastrous consequences, when any override quality standards, service and evidence. The Ockenden preview reports deaths of at least 9 mothers and 201 babies (with 94 brain damaged), related to major problems with care at two NHS Trusts. While these had been put down as 'scaremongering', disaster centred on the pursuit of 'natural' birth, for which one was praised by the Commons health selection committee in 2002 for its lowest UK caesarean rate.

Women pushed to be 'natural' may not be informed of risks, as antenatal courses led by hypnobirthing practitioners, eschew painkillers and interventions – like the anathematised caesarean – disapproved of by the

NHS regulator, the Care Quality Commission. With the National Childbirth Trust dominating midwifery services by the NHS, Royal College of Midwives and Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, failure can always be attributed to being insufficiently 'natural'.

According to 'women against the patriarchy', medical technology is male intervention to prevent important female expressions of the natural order. The story goes that traditionally childbirth was serviced by the wisdom and experience of 'wise women'. In reality, midwifery training and hospital births were advanced in the late 19th century to reduce the rates of maternal and infant mortality that fell behind general health improvements. Women often gave birth in appalling squalor, where frequently inebriated 'wise women' spread deadly germs from patient to patient on filthy hands. A 'natural' exponent tells me that any transverse lying baby (underlying placenta) can be smoothly 'turned' to avoid 'unnatural' medical delivery. In the days of the 'wise women', endeavours to save the mother's life here meant inserting pincers and knives to crush and cut up the baby and get it out in bits.

If dogmas usurp accredited professional training and standards, knowledge and ethical principles, how much easier is it to capture new, poorly researched specialities. Variants of Freudian psycho-analytic theory long passed for psychiatry in the 20th century. John Bowlby's 'maternal deprivation' version claimed that any early separation from the mother or insufficient 'mothering', disposed to criminality and, crippling the capacity for relationships, created affectionless psychopaths. With quasi-mystical 'bonding' a one off, this blocked adoption in exchange for life in care. It obstructed removing children from destructive homes, they would be doomed anyway, and encouraged their return.

I am haunted by a boy who was left at an infant school where I was sent to help out in my late-teens. He was starving, filthy, stinking, in rags, without speech and with his grey-green flesh covered in bites and bruises. His arms went over his face if anyone approached. The head-teacher said nothing must be done because 'Bowlby said...'. By the early 1970s, horrific child deaths were challenging the 'once and only relationship' dogma. Prominently, Maria Colwell was returned to her mother with ten children by different men and beaten to death. Subsequent legal changes helped to further adoption, along with evidence that even late ones were successful.

With public services now running with the transgender bandwagon, youngsters are being sterilised, castrated and given mastectomies. By 2018/19, referrals of children to NHS clinics seeking sex change more than tripled those in 2014-15. With referrals from three years of age, a half in 2020 were under 14. An unquestioning 'affirmation' route in place of 'watchful waiting' means puberty blockers from around 10 years and cross-sex hormones from age 16 in preparation for bodily reconstruction. Pausing or reflecting on the implications is transphobic 'conversion

therapy’.

The effects of the ideology fuelling sex-change extend beyond surgery and social work into all social dimensions and institutions from language to prisons to early education to media to universities to policing to government. Other fads that have affected public services and seeped into wider society hardly compete with transgenderism, and racial ideology, in terms of range, ambition and power. It is extraordinary that, after the long and complex journey to full female equality, even the word ‘woman’ is anathematised, with its erstwhile subjects relegated to ‘uterus havers’ or ‘birthing people’. A carrier of the fluid future, transgenderism is prominent for the rejection of science.

Reversing these developments must deal not just with the services mutilating healthy bodies, but the wider influence and control wielded by identity lobbies. Even

then, were a fight possible and successful against these current dictators, there remains the void created by ongoing cultural disintegration. This is not just a place of nothing, but an available space open for occupation by aspiring ideologues and social engineers with their own world-views, agendas and resources. What’s the next craze going to be?

Perhaps it is time to stop disparaging and smashing up the multi-faceted, extraordinary achievements of Western civilisation with, not least, it’s Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman legacies, philosophical, scientific and ethical developments. There is still a lot of potential here to mine and inspire.

Patricia Morgan’s latest book is Banning Conversion Therapy: What is the Evidence? 2022. Wilberforce Publications.

From the Backwoods

TIM BOOTH

Most days, even during the Great Lockdown and thus in defiance of the Law, I hear the clip-clop of hooves descending the hill into our small Welsh town, and know that it is a rather shaggy horse with plaited tail drawing a very simple jaunting-car. On the box of said car are two teenage girls who generally follow a routine of driving to the seafront, where the horse is unharnessed. One or other of them then steps astride the animal from a low wall and bareback rides the horse across the beach and belly-deep into the sea, gently spurring with her heels. The horse herself seems docile, and following her plunge in the water, returns placidly to be re-harnessed to the jaunting-car, after which the teenagers trot away homewards.

They usually bring with them a small white dog, accommodated neatly in an open metal box slung below the axle from where he peeps out upon the passing scene, with interest. The girls, being teenagers, take precisely zero notice of anything or anybody beyond their horse and equipage; but both of these they manage with absolute, gentle confidence.

However, despite being teenagers, I have never yet seen them using a mobile phone in any way: surely, this is extraordinary. On occasion I have noticed them pausing in the town square, when the small white dog sits, for some reason, upon the horse’s back. At other times I have noticed the two of them (sisters, I assume) riding their horse together, bareback, one behind the other. The only tack they use is bridle and reins. Neither girl wears a riding helmet or any other form of Personal Protection. They have no High Visibility Jackets, no Retro-Reflective

Stripes. Indeed, their jaunting-car is devoid of (a) brakes (b) identification and (c) red reflectors at the rear. There seems nothing to prevent the small white dog, should he be so minded, from jumping out from his small cabin, at grave risk to himself in passing traffic.

Given that these observations are in the *Salisbury Review*, I have complete confidence that no reader will react with outrage. No reader, I trust, will demand that I reveal the name of our town, in order that the Police may impound the jaunting-car and the RSPCA be enabled to inspect the horse that so frequently wades in the salt waters and the small white dog that may, or may not, be at risk; most of all, I assume no reader will expect Social Services to examine the details of the home lives of these girls, including the reasons for their parents’ negligence in not providing helmets, knee pads, boots, harness, saddles, Advice On Safe Riding, High-Vis tabards and Highway Code Requirements. Nor even lifejackets (including a fifteen-minute lecture on How To Wear and Safely Activate a Lifejacket) for the minutes spent riding in the sea.

Long, long may they continue to ride their horse where they wish, dressed as they wish. For it will be clear to all readers of the *Salisbury Review* that these girls are a throwback to earlier and happier days when freedom was not a concept considered or debated; when freedom simply meant that personal responsibility was the default position of the country; and when the State had almost no role in the lives of its citizens.

Tim Booth is a sailor and occasional journalist.

ARTS AND BOOKS



Our corrupt Civil Service

Anthony
Daniels

The Great Post Office Scandal, Nick Wallis, Bath Publishing, 2021, £25.00.

This book recounts the story of what is probably the greatest miscarriage of justice in recent British history, certainly the one with the largest number of victims, at least 700. It is the story of the synergy between incompetence and gross dishonesty in what one is tempted to call the British nomenklatura class, of its preference for sending scores of innocent people to gaol and ruining hundreds of lives rather than own up to an obvious and known error.

In 1999, the Post Office, in need of modernisation, installed a computer system called Horizon, developed by Fujitsu, into which all transactions in all sub-post offices would be entered. This, supposedly, would automate stock-taking and accounting.

Insufficiently tested, problems with the system, said to be the largest non-military computer system in Europe, soon surfaced. Suddenly, large deficits began to appear in the accounts of many sub-post offices. Since sub-postmasters were not employees of the Post Office but independent contractors, they were expected to make good the deficits from their own resources. If either they did not, or could not, do so, they were prosecuted, the Post Office having its own prosecutorial powers. Many of the postmasters were intimidated into admitting things of which they were innocent, usually on the promise of a more lenient sentence; many were sent to prison nonetheless, were bankrupted, deprived of all livelihood, made homeless and driven into deep depression or even to suicide. It is plausible that the Post Office hastened the deaths by fatal disease of some postmasters. In effect, though perhaps not in law, the Post Office indulged in large scale theft of its sub-postmasters' assets.

It is important to stress that the postmasters were decent people, the very salt of the earth. They were proud to work for the Post Office, which they believed had a social as well as a commercial function. They had been preselected

for their honesty and trustworthiness. The stories told in this book of their vicious persecution by the Post Office beggar belief and leave the reader furiously angry on their behalf. It was as though they were punished for their decency and respectability.

The Post Office never considered that the holes in the accounts of so many sub-post offices could have been caused by their Horizon system, though it knew from early on that the system was not only fallible, as all computer systems are, but faulty. For nearly twenty years, the Post Office, in the persons of its highest level of management, lied, obfuscated and obstructed all attempts to find the truth. When finally, a heroic group of sub-postmasters brought an action against the Post Office, the latter resorted to all kinds of tricks in order to delay and prolong proceedings, in the hope that the resources of the sub-postmasters would be exhausted. By the time the sub-postmasters won a settlement of £57.5 million on behalf of 555 sub-postmasters, four fifths of it was eaten up by legal fees, and what was left over was but a small proportion of the losses suffered by the sub-postmasters at the hands of the Post Office. Further action is continuing; however, all that the sub-postmasters will win by way of compensation, which no one could begrudge them, given what they have been made to suffer will, of course, come from the pockets of the tax-payers and not from the resources of the extremely well-paid chief executive and other such functionaries, the Post Office at the time being a government-owned corporation. Just compensation will be beyond the means of the Post Office to pay: it is you and I, dear reader, who will have to pay for the chronic improprieties of the untouchable nomenklatura class.

Certain heroes emerge from this book. One is Alan Bates, the founder and leader of the campaign for justice by the sub-postmasters themselves. Another two are Ron Warmington and Ian Henderson, forensic accountants who were obstructed at every turn by the Post Office but stuck to their last. There was James Arbuthnot MP, now Lord Arbuthnot, who supported the sub-postmasters from early on and made their cause his own; and there is Mr Justice Fraser, who restored faith in the justice system by his meticulous but devastating dissection of the Post Office's case. Finally, there is the author of the book itself, a freelance radio and television journalist who doggedly pursued the case for eleven years, without any guarantee of its relatively happy conclusion, which must in part be attributed to him. His work restores faith that journalism can be a noble calling.

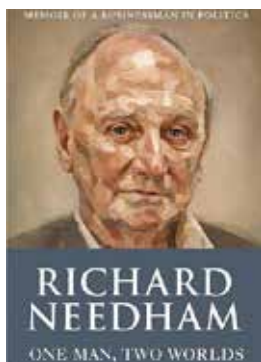
Alas, I have to say that his book is not an elegant literary artifact; it is far too long and it should be half its length. Understandably, a man who has devoted so much of his

time and energy to a cause like this is reluctant to leave out any fact he has uncovered, any detail that might be included. However less in a book like this really is more.

On the other hand, he conveys very simply and eloquently the stories of those who suffered at the hand of the Post Office. I challenge anyone to read them without experiencing sympathy for the victims or anger towards their arrogant and often rather stupid persecutors. Overall, Mr Wallis's work is above praise.

His book clearly illustrates the corruption of the British criminal justice system by plea bargaining. This turns justice into a game of poker. It encourages the bullying of the accused and the innocent to plead guilty; it encourages the prosecution to accept guilty pleas to charges of a lesser offence than the one actually committed. No doubt this speeds procedure, as does reward for early pleas of guilt, which are irrelevant to desert, and speed is an element of justice; but convenience of procedure should not take precedence over all else. Without the system of plea-bargaining, these monstrous miscarriages of justice could hardly have occurred.

One would like to say that this book is about an isolated case, and that, in the words used in all internal inquiries into hospital scandals, 'lessons have been learned'. But the nomenclatura class never learns any lessons because it is never held to account, acts with impunity and is often rewarded by promotion for the disasters it has wrought. Our corporatist state is just the ticket for persons of modest ability, unbounded ambition and absence of character.



Ulster Grit John Jolliffe

One Man, Two Worlds, Richard Needham, The Blackstaff Press, Newtonards, 2021, £15.

The two worlds in question are politics and business, in each of which Needham has played a striking part. Nominally he is Earl of Kilmorey, but being an Irish peerage, carries no seat in the House of Lords. Discarding the peerage except when making a restaurant booking, Needham had to make his own way in the political field, on which he had set his heart, partly thanks to an early hero worship of Nigel

Nicolson, who had been deselected at Bournemouth through his opposition to the Suez venture. A refreshing independence was to be Needham's own way, mixed with a shrewd idea of how to get on.

First, he had to make some money, the family coffers having been drained by his forebears. His comments on the Eton of the late 1950s, where he failed to shine except in house plays, are spot on. Eton did not 'do' careers advice. Those without a safe financial background he says, found it hard to 'gain a place in the real world' except on the then unreformed and unexacting Stock Exchange and the then cosy Lloyds insurance market. But after one or two disappointments he persevered to sufficient success, partly by rejecting the 'us and them' mentality often prevalent at the time.

Not surprisingly, in view of his origins, he shows all the valiant Ulster characteristics of courage, determination, resilience, and a sense of humour, sometimes a grim one. The chapters here on Northern Ireland, where he was later to serve as an Under-Secretary and Minister, are of special interest, being based on first-hand experience. It is interesting that when he finally got there, the friendly comments quoted on the cover of this book come from the more flexible and persuasive of his colleagues, namely John Major, Chris Patten, and Matthew Parris. He was also a strong and convincing supporter of Jim Prior. In the blame game over Ireland, he names four guilty men: in the blue corner, Carson and Ian Paisley; in the red corner, De Valera, with his neglect of economic growth and social reform all through the 1940s and 1950s, and his 'virulent and public anglophobia'; and Gerry Adams, with his 'warped mind' and his appetite for sheer hypocrisy.

By 1981, monetarism had killed off not only inflation but also whole swathes of British manufacturing industry such as machine tools, shipbuilding, chemicals, the automotive industry, much of steel, and many manufacturers of components. Much of this is hardly a new story, but it gains special interest from being written from the inside. Later, as Minister for Trade, his wife's background in Germany and the Far East, and her knowledge of several highly relevant languages there, were of enormous value to him. His energy in relentless globe-trotting in the search for trade expansion, often with her at his side, was also impressive. One of his achievements, though not single-handed, was the first Anglo-Japanese Trade Conference, born at a time when memories of the horrendous experiences of British prisoners were still often fresh.

His breezy, self-assured style, and his ability to take in new and complex business, made him a thoroughly efficient Minister of Trade. But there are

sometimes two sides to his success stories: only one is ever mentioned here. Of course, politicians, and others too, always try to show themselves in the best possible light: who wants to miss an available trick? But the solid achievements remain, and even though many others may have had a hand in them, effective leadership, which was what Needham provided, is very important, and it is fair to say that he often gives full credit to others when he thinks it is deserved. Among other appointments he later served for sixteen years on the boards of the ever-successful companies of James Dyson, who he already knew from his Chippenham constituency.

After two years of toing and froing to Northern Ireland, he had had enough and retired, thus confounding the famous dictum of Enoch Powell that ‘all political careers end in failure.’ But needless to say, there was no sign of retirement leading to idleness. Altogether this is a refreshing and always readable book, a cut above its genre. My only complaint is about the index, which consists only of names. The reader would have benefited from entries under activities and subjects.



Glass sponges and gigantic bears

Celia Haddon

Otherlands. A World in the Making, Thomas Halliday, hdbk, Allen Lane, 2022, £20.00.

The growing extinction of species during our own epoch, the so-called Anthropocene, isn't anything new – that is, if you take the long view. *Otherlands* takes the very long view, tracing the beginnings of life on this planet backwards from the Pleistocene some 20,000 years ago when mammoths and gigantic bears weighing a ton roamed the steppes, to the Ediacaran 350 million years ago, when microbial mats covered the bottom of the ocean from which emerged distinct boulder-like clumps called stromatolites. Stromatolites, amazingly, can still be seen off the coast of Australia, but the other early living creatures – tiny swimming jellies with eight arms and flat wormlike creature about three centimeters long – can only be found in fossils.

This journey back into the past is complicated by the random nature of what has been preserved. If past creatures have not been turned to stone, we know nothing

of them. *Otherlands*, therefore, is a journey backwards which can only describe one specific environment at a time, a place, and an epoch that has by sheer chance been recorded in stone. As the writer travels backwards, therefore, he cannot make a detailed comparison for each epoch because he is not comparing like with like.

In the most recent epoch backwards, the Pleistocene 2.58 million years to 12,000 years ago, Halliday takes us to the mammoth steppes of Alaska where many of the animals are recognisable, though differently sized. Horses are smaller, the bears gigantic and there are woolly mammoths roaming around. *Homo sapiens* have arrived and will soon be hunting mammoths and as the climate warms after the Ice Age they will become extinct.

The next move backwards, geographically from cold to hot, is to Kenya in the Pliocene epoch, four million years ago. Some of today's birds, for example swifts, are flourishing there and many of the mammals are identifiable as the ancestors of today's species. There are four species of elephants then, including the *Deinotherium giganteum* whose tusks bend backwards and the *Anacus* which had thirteen-foot long tusks like a forklift truck. Modern man is absent but his furry ancestor, a hominid known as *Australopithecus anamensis*, sleeps in trees and is about the same size as a chimpanzee.

Halliday describes each world in time, describing the landscape as we might see it with our own eyes. Back a further one and a half million years to the Miocene (5.33 million years ago) we are on an island off what will become Italy. Island ecology creates odd animals. When species get cut off from the mainland for millions of years they adapt to the limitations of an island. The smaller animals get bigger and the bigger animals get smaller. Thus, the Terrible Moon-rat or *Deinogalerix* takes the place of the *Smilodon* sabre toothed tigers that flourish on the mainland and a rat, not a cat, becomes the apex predator. This extinct Moon-rat is related to, though three times as large as the hedgehog and like the modern hedgehog has a strong unpleasant body smell. The goats and deer, on the other hand, have shrunk into what is known as island dwarfism. A minute antelope-goat is so small that it has been named the 'mouse goat', while to the West on the island of Menorca there is now a giant rabbit, *Nuralagus*.

Further back on Seymour island in the Antarctica, during the Eocene epoch, 41 million years ago, the temperature has heated up and summer brings a temperature of 25 degrees centigrade there. Penguins are huge with the largest, the *Anthropornis nardenskoeldi*, standing as high as a man. Gigantic seabirds, with a wingspan of five metres, and long heavy beaks with teeth, cruise the seas. On land the grazing animals are still recognisably somewhat like our current ones

– resembling camels or land hippos with tusks. As warm-blooded mammals, they have developed from ancestors in the previous epoch, the Paleocene, 66 million years ago. After a huge meteor crashed into the Gulf of Mexico, burning down the forests, shutting out the sun with clouds of smoke, the mass extinction killed off the dinosaurs while the smaller mammals survived. A layer of meteor iridium is left in the fossil record to tell us what happened.

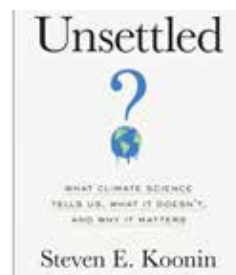
Jump backwards to the Cretaceous epoch, 125 million years ago, and the largest of land-living dinosaurs are flourishing, while in the air flying reptiles take the place of birds. This is one of the fun epochs with lumbering titanosaurs like the Donbeititan, weighing up to 20 tons with a long thick neck reaching over 17 metres in height, a sort of giant reptile version of a giraffe. We have their footsteps preserved in stone as well as their fossilised bones. These are prey for the carnivores like velociraptor and tyrannosaurus, the monsters we know from movies. There are also one of the first bird ancestors like the Confucius bird, so called because hundreds of its fossils with feathers and beaks have been found in volcanic rock in China. Disappointingly, the single illustration for each chapter and epoch shows a butterfly-like lacewing, rather than a titanosaurus or a Confucius bird.

Backwards to the Jurassic and Halliday takes the reader into the oceans, where the fossil layer in Germany is scattered with the ammonites, we can still find on the muddy cliffs of the Dorset coast. This is the epoch first discovered by Mary Anning with her fossil shop in Lyme Regis. The sea level is high because the temperature of the world is high. Below the water level there are reefs, not of coral, but of glass sponges, beautiful frail constructions in silica. These reefs were thought to be extinct until Canadian scientists found some on the British Columbia coast.

But as the reader travels backward in time, creatures become weirder though less spectacular. In the Triassic, 225 million years ago, dinosaurs are taking to the air as gliders and there are cynodonts, early forebears of today's mammals, semi aquatic 'time-crocodiles' and even coelacanths. Further back, however, the sea becomes more important and the living creatures in it, even the ones that begin to emerge on to land, tend to be smaller. At the end of the time travel, in the Ediacaran, 550 million years ago, with fossilised remains not far from what will be the city of Adelaide in South Australia, nothing lives on the land because there are no decayed plants and animals to provide a soil for life. There is life in deep sea vents, where volcanic eruptions bring warmth and light to cyanobacteria and tiny multicellular creatures scuttling on the sea bottom

I recommend reading this book with an iPhone or tablet nearby for Google images, Wikipedia and definitions of

some of the scientific terms. Thomas Halliday describes most of the creatures he mentions in words, but there is only one drawing per chapter. The book is an imaginative tour de force but not an easy read for the non-scientist. It is, however, well worth the effort it may take.



Climate Half Truths

Richard Packer

Unsettled? What Climate Science tells us, what it doesn't and why it matters, Steven E Koonin, Benbella Books, £15.00.

I have been suspicious about the world of 'Climate Change' for many years. There is so much certainty and zealotry on display in an area which seems highly complex scientifically thus calling not for over-confidence and rush, but rather for painstaking investigation by those thoroughly imbued both with relevant technical expertise and a careful approach. Major decisions, potentially of monumental economic and social consequence, have been taken with much grandstanding, but without any proper analysis and debate. The UK parliament gaily signed up in next to no time, at the present government's suggestion, to the UK's achieving 'net zero' by 2050 and many other similar targets, and made this a legal requirement without a proper cost/benefit analysis, and without dissent. In the current state of technology attempting to reach this objective would cost trillions (hundreds of billions) of pounds for the UK alone. Moreover, the UK commitment is unilateral and without any assurance that any other country would cripple itself to the same extent and hence no assurance anything much would be achieved by the sacrifice. Were parliamentarians serious when they signed up to all this? Did they even think about it?

Further, one is put off by the activists. Extinction Rebellion and the like are obviously obnoxious and self-centred, but I refer mainly to the fashionable. When a cause is supported disproportionately by the likes of them one is well-advised to examine matters carefully. Take Mark Carney. There are differing views about his competence as an economist, but he has no obvious qualifications to lecture us all on climate. But as is the way of such people he does not let that stop him. Koonin's book quotes predictions he has publicised, which turned out to be wrong. That is not a crime in itself, but from whence do such people get the confidence

to lecture the rest of us on climate, trans policy, race and all the rest of the fashionable issues of the moment without any relevant expertise?

If you were already wary about the trend of policy on Climate Change you will be much more worried about matters when you have read this book. Koonin has serious reservations about several aspects of the way matters are going which he sets out carefully and judiciously. Indeed in his proportionate responses he could usefully be taken as a model by others commenting in the field.

Before we describe the nature of Koonin's reservations it is right to pause, what are his qualifications? For decades he has been a professor of theoretical physics at the California Institute of Technology, Caltech, which on most comparative university lists is of like stature to Oxford/Cambridge or Harvard/MIT. He is a former Under Secretary for Science in the Obama administration (a cross between junior minister and permanent secretary) and has been chief scientist for BP. He is not a climate scientist, but is a distinguished chap in the world of theoretical physics. He understands the concepts; he does not just quote other people.

In essence Koonin thinks the political and media worlds have not, and probably cannot, cope with the nuances and uncertainties of the science. The process he describes, of which he gives several instances, goes like this. In responding to political and media pressures especially for brevity descriptions of the facts are summarised. Inevitably nuance is lost, and texts become more definite than is justified; soon a public narrative gains hold which is in some respects misleading. At the same time, perhaps because both the media and politics gain attention by making dramatic and/or extreme pronouncements, summaries become more pessimistic than the detail warrants. The narrative thus derived and publicised becomes the accepted 'truth' which all but real experts regard as the ultimate standard. Pointing out any defects in such narratives is unpopular, not only among enthusiasts, but also among those who have supported or used them, such as government ministers. So specialists come to bite their tongues as ever wilder claims are made. Yet in the absence of informed criticism the general public naturally assumes the published narrative is accepted by all, including expert opinion; whereas, as we have seen, in significant respects, this is untrue. This is the unsatisfactory state we are in now.

Koonin demonstrates all this in several different ways. One is to point to a number of facts, which he claims uncontentious among the real experts, but which are commonly contradicted in the Climate Debate. These include that human activity has had no detectable effect on hurricanes over the last century; that Greenland's ice sheet is not shrinking any more rapidly than it was 80 years ago; and that the net economic impact of human-

induced climate change will be minimal until at least the end of this century. All three of these assertions are regularly contradicted in the climate debate. Koonin examines several more such discrepancies between the facts and popular belief with authoritative examination of the data. It is all very sobering. We might be committed to providing vast resources to make changes which are partly unnecessary.

What are we to do about this unhappy state of affairs? Nuance, doubt and shades of grey are not what appeals to politicians or the media. There is nothing we can do about that. We can make the case that enthusiasm is not an attribute that is likely to prove useful in this policy area; and regard with suspicion those whose advocacy relies unduly on that quality or start preaching, as many do. Preachers generally have beliefs of a kind that is incompatible with a rational examination of scientific fact. But otherwise, there is nothing for it but to explain carefully why a given position is mistaken and what might be a better way forward. There is no 'silver bullet'.

Climate Change is of major importance. Much life has been extinguished on earth previously by natural forces (asteroids and volcanoes), which changed the climate dramatically and quickly. The earth is warming probably at least partly as a result of mankind's activities. This needs watching and it is probably wise to seek to slow the pace of warming by reducing the use of hydrocarbons; but, like every other suggestion, not at any price. In each case we need a proper cost/benefit analysis of the action proposed – and preferably no preaching. And, like Koonin, I suggest we probably need much more attention paid to planning how mankind might adapt to any climate change that comes our way.

Meanwhile Koonin's book provides a good, measured introduction for those concerned about where our present policies are taking us



A Catechism of Wickedness

Martin Dewhirst

The Shortest History of the Soviet Union, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Old Street Publishing Ltd, Exeter, 2022, £12.99.

I think that some expert analysts of a huge subject (like the author of this book) would find it easier to write a long monograph on their speciality rather than a short

one. But if they did so, how many people would read it? I was asked recently to recommend the best available work on the Cold War for an intelligent and busy reader, and I immediately rejected 'The Cambridge History' of the subject, because only a very few people would have the time and the stamina to read a volume that is 1,976 pages long.

Sheila Fitzpatrick has devoted decades of her life to studying and writing about the USSR, and her latest volume sums up her verdict on what turned out to be a failed experiment. She was always less critical, or less actively critical of this experiment than her critics, but I have to admit that there is little here in her summing up with which I, for one, would now strongly disagree, with the benefit of knowing what has happened in Russia during the three decades after the USSR's collapse. Indeed, I found everything, apart from some lines in the Introduction and the Conclusion, perfectly acceptable. All the main chapters contain numerous details that I had either forgotten or never known.

For instance, the Bolsheviks, like the leaders of the neo-Soviet regime since 1991, I would add often collaborated with professional criminals to get their way, and the Soviet Communist Party's membership was always largely made up of ethnic Russians, 72 per cent in 1922, when Ukrainians and Jews comprised only 6 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. Fitzpatrick maintains that Lenin led the political revolution, whereas Stalin led the economic revolution. I would suggest that Gorbachev always put politics first, whereas for Yeltsin (and his advisers, especially American advisers) economics was the top priority, but also with devastating results.

The author maintains that by the end of 1942 no less than 40 per cent of the USSR's territory and 45 per cent of its population were under German occupation, far more than I had realised. As a result mainly of the 'Great Fatherland War', in 1959 there were nearly 20 million more women than men in the RSFSR, Ukraine and Belorussia. The Brezhnev years (1964-1982), far from being merely the 'period of stagnation', were probably the best ever for 'ordinary' Soviet citizens, who then enjoyed plenty of 'welfare state' protection and services. By 1985 there were almost six million men in the Soviet armed forces, twice as many as there had been in 1960, and thus qualifying at that later time as the largest army in the world.

Who could then have seriously expected that the entire experiment would collapse a mere six years later? But was it succeeded by something better or worse? For me, and perhaps for Fitzpatrick as well, this is still an open question. She writes that in the early 1980s Brezhnev and most of the men around him were well past the usual retirement age, which

made me write in the margin '(as now)'. Are Russia and the West currently ready for a sudden change in Moscow? Have Putin and Russia already 'lost' Ukraine for ever? Do most Russians really want a Western sort of freedom? The author mentions that in 'a 1999 poll asking Russians which of thirteen variables were most important to them, 'democracy' came in second last, less popular than any of the options except 'freedom of entrepreneurship'. Top choices were 'stability' and 'social welfare'.'

And how much better are most, not all, of the former Soviet Union's Republics doing as 'new nation states', 'abruptly thrust into the business of statehood before they had achieved nationhood'? Fitzpatrick writes that 'Yeltsin and Gorbachev got short shrift from the public in a 2017 poll that found that 'anger and contempt' were the predominant feelings of 30 per cent of respondents towards them both, while an additional 15-13 per cent picked 'disgust, hate'. This poll also 'showed that in terms of public esteem, Stalin with 32 per cent of respondents choosing 'respect' as the best description of their attitude to him, scored higher on this particular point than any leader but Putin (49 per cent), with Lenin in third place at 26 per cent.'

To my surprise, there are a few questionable statements, especially in the Introduction and the Conclusion to this monograph, the most glaring of which is the choice of the term 'post-Soviet', rather than 'neo-Soviet' about ten times, despite some of the quotes used in this review which seem to indicate, at a deep level, continuity rather than change. However, this hardly reduces the value of a useful and timely book.



Has NATO been lying all along?

Sean McGlyn

Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Stalemate, M E Sarotte, Yale University Press, 2022, £25.

Mary Sarotte, a prize-winning historian on the ending of the Cold war, might have expected her new book, *Not One Inch*, to have created a favourable impression among university international affairs departments, intellectual circles and geopolitical think tanks. Instead, this heavyweight academic tome – some 550 pages long, of which 200 pages comprises footnotes and other

supporting scholarly apparatus, albeit with a patchy index, has become a minor publishing sensation. Because its release coincided exactly with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Putin's main excuse for such destructive action is the threat his country feels from endless NATO expansion. The focus of this most timely book is exactly on that subject: how and why NATO has expanded so rapidly in the decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This NATO expansionism, or 'enlargement' as the West decorously terms it, into Soviet Russia's previous sphere of influence was relentless for a decade: Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary in 1999; Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic States in 2004; Croatia and Albania in 2009. Overtures were also made to Moldova, Georgia and, of course, Ukraine, the last being the reddest of red lines for Putin. *Not One Inch* sets out how the ground for this was prepared during the 1990s. At the start of this century, Putin repeatedly attempted to come to an accommodation with the West on strategic, economic and political matters but failed, being continually and humiliatingly rebuffed. It was a similar story in the 1990s.

There has been much heated debate over whether, at the ending of the Cold War, the 'West' (ie, NATO, Europe, and above all by some distance, America, for whom NATO is a proxy) promised Russia that it would not expand its frontiers closer to Russia. The Russians say that NATO did make such a promise: "Not an inch to the east", we were told in the 1990s', Putin remarked just two months before invading Ukraine; 'They cheated us – vehemently, blatantly'. The West insists that no such guarantee was ever made. Sarotte finally gets to the very heart of the matter.

Did the West make such a promise? In Sarotte's account on 9 February 1990, a liminal moment between the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, James Baker, the American Secretary of State, met the Russian premier Mikhail Gorbachev who wanted assurances that the imminent unification of West and East Germany would not mean the new state being a member of NATO. His preference was for a neutral Germany. Baker's response was that a neutral Germany might create its own nuclear arsenal, and asked Gorbachev: 'Would you prefer to see a united Germany outside NATO, independent and with no US forces, or would you prefer a united Germany be tied to NATO, with assurances that NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one-inch eastwards from its present position?' Gorbachev opted for the latter, declaring NATO expansion unacceptable. 'We agree with that', responded Baker. This became Russia's understanding of the believed agreement. Since then, as Sarotte rightly observes, 'various leaders in Moscow would point to

this exchange as an agreement barring NATO from expanding beyond its eastern Cold War border'.

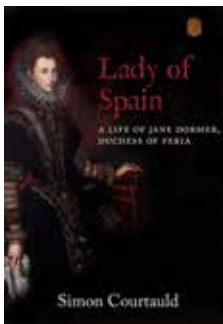
Commentators have since argued over whether this was a verbal commitment, a statement of intent or merely just a question; Sarotte opts for 'a hypothetical bargain'. In purely technical terms, it was the last; but that is not the spirit of the suggestion. When Baker returned to his boss with the idea, President Bush ungraciously dismissed it out of hand: 'To hell with that! We prevailed and they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.' And that was that, it might seem; but this is to isolate the Baker-Gorbachev discussions as a definitive one-off. As Sarotte shows, other key players made a similar pledge to Russia. West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl told Gorbachev a few weeks later that if Russia did not oppose German unification, 'naturally NATO could not expand its territory to the current territory of the GDR [East Germany]'. His foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, reiterated that to his Russian counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze: 'For us, it is clear: NATO will not extend itself to the East'. Not that any of them had the power to decide NATO policy. But then on 17 May, NATO's chief Manfred Wörner declared that because NATO was prepared 'not to deploy NATO troops beyond the territory of the Federal Republic [West Germany] it gave the Soviet Union firm security guarantees'. (Wörner performed a complete *volte-face* three years later.) All this makes it understandable why the Russians felt that they had been lied to.

Boris Yeltsin fared no better as president of the new Russian Federation in the 1990s, President Bill Clinton telling him that the Baltic States would join NATO. The priapic Clinton had a number of his own problems to deal with, such as Monica Lewinsky's wardrobe and getting re-elected. Sarotte does not overlook domestic considerations. Polling showed that rapid NATO expansion was supported; the president 'was too good a politician to forget that 20 million Americans of Eastern European descent lived in fourteen states that accounted for close to 40 percent of the Electoral College'. Russia suffered more humiliation, probably intensified by being paid off with much needed cash infusions into its crumbling economy. NATO kept on moving eastwards in the 1990s. At the time, numerous leading figures in the US warned against this as a tragic lost opportunity for possible reconciliation: General Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; two secretaries of defence; numerous diplomats; and doyen of Cold War strategy George Kennan, who called NATO expansion 'the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era'.

President George W Bush kept the pressure on in 2008 at a NATO conference in Bucharest. Against

opposing voices, not least Angela Merkel's of Germany, he steamrolled, or payrollled, given the EU's lack of funding for NATO, through his wish for even further enlargement. At the end of the conference, the official communiqué declared: 'NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO'. Putin's response came four months later with military intervention in Georgia. Crimea in 2014 followed a similar pattern.

The book offers much more in explaining the world's current juncture. Sarotte unravels the truths, half-truths and egregious lies of the complex and fast-moving geopolitics of the European and America environment in the 1990s in a wonderfully readable way, and to offer a superb analysis of why we are in this mess today. This is a hugely important book of urgent relevance to the current military crisis in Europe as well as a riveting read.



A 16th-century Mrs Thatcher

Virginia
Bainbridge

Lady of Spain: A Life of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria, Simon Courtauld, Anthony Eyre, 2021, £22.50.

In his new book Simon Courtauld, well-known author and columnist, returns to familiar territory – the English in Spain. He shifts his focus from men of power to a woman at the centre of politics in England, and later in Spain. Jane Dormer's life spanned the reigns of six English monarchs from Henry VIII to James VI, also Charles V, Philip II and Philip III of Spain.

Courtauld deftly explains the complex historical background, the time of great political turmoil during Europe's religious Reformation. Already the subject of earlier biographies, Jane Dormer's life also illuminates the cultural history of her time. She was born into a courtier family in 1538 and by this time the royal household was composed of influential gentry families as well as aristocrats. Her uncle St Sebastian Newdigate was martyred by the friend of his youth Henry VIII, for opposing the English Reformation. Her cousin was Sir Philip Sidney the poet and favourite of Elizabeth I. Jane was a childhood companion of the boy-King Edward VI, then a gentlewoman in Queen Mary's household, and her loyal confidant. Here she met her future husband, the Spanish ambassador Gomez Suarez de Figueroa, Duke

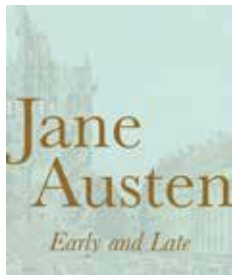
of Feria. After their marriage in 1558, she travelled with him to Spain where she was to spend the rest of her life, on his family estates at Zafra, and at the Spanish royal court at Madrid and Valladolid.

It used to be supposed that only royal princes received a Renaissance education, in England Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth. Thomas More was viewed as eccentric for educating his daughters. New studies have revealed that the political elite of this time educated their daughters to be players, not just spectators of public life. Jane had many learned contemporaries including her cousin Frances Sidney, co-founder of Sidney-Sussex College, Cambridge, and the Cooke sisters who were married to Elizabeth I's senior advisors William Cecil and Nicholas Bacon. Jane Dormer's family belonged to the faction within the Tudor elite which promoted church reform before the Protestant Reformation. This faction regrouped around Queen Mary and after her death remained loyal to Rome. Jane was strongly influenced by her maternal grandmother Jane, Lady Dormer (née Newdigate, d. 1571), a university patron in England and at Louvain in Belgium, where she lived in exile for her faith. Jane Dormer's upbringing at court prepared her to befriend Mary, Queen of Scots, then Queen of France, when the Feria entourage passed through on the journey to Spain. Jane corresponded with both Mary and Elizabeth to the end of their lives.

Jane was a widow for half her life, so her political activities are better documented than if she had remained in the shadow of her husband. Always close to power, she was a valuable advisor to Philip II in the age of the Armada. She was on good terms with England's ambassadors to Spain, who came from the same circles as her own family. They imported English food together, including cheese, and passed on her correspondence with her extensive network of contacts in England. She worked effectively with the Spanish authorities for the release of English prisoners and exchange of hostages. She also played a senior role in the Catholic exile community, petitioning the Spanish Crown for support for indigent English exiles.

Jane's first biographer was her chaplain Henry Clifford. He was writing when the genre of biography was in its infancy. His 'Life' is more of a hagiography, a litany of pious good deeds. His work was in the mould of Erasmus, whose lives of Thomas More and other friends were less 'warts and all' and more edifying examples for others to follow. Clifford's intended audience was English Catholics back home. Her political skills enabled her to steer a difficult course between loyalty to those she loved in England and in Spain. Hers was an era of intrigue, spies, terrorist plots and plans for armed rebellions. She may have been taken in by some unsavoury English plotters and double agents, but so were her male contemporaries. Simon Courtauld locates

Jane Dormer, Duchess of Fera, in the landscape of Spain, the heat, the dusty travel, the homesickness for comfort food, and her hard work as an informal ambassador. He reveals the portfolio of skills required of a great lady, estate accounts, household management, as seen in her cookery book, astute networking and cultural patronage. Her surviving portraits also show the kindness and warmth of this grand lady of politics which made her loved by queens and courtiers in England and in Spain.



An Archive of Austen Alexander Adams

Jane Austen, Early and Late, Freya Johnston, Princeton University Press, 2021, £25.

Freya Johnston (lecturer at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford) argues that Jane Austen (1775-1817), far from discarding her earliest writings as juvenilia, went back to them and considered those stories to have some value. 'Austen preserved, returned to, and revised her earliest unpublished works long after she became a published author. The book-length fictions with which she made her name cannot be securely demarcated from the shorter juvenilia in terms of when they were composed, or according to their subject matter, or on the basis of their author's concern and affection for them.' Her book *Jane Austen, Early and Late* is an examination of evidence for the idea that there exists an integrity of Austen's writings, juvenile and mature.

There are three manuscript booklets of fair copies made by the author of her early writings, now in the British and Bodleian Libraries. The texts were originally written between 1787 (when Austen was 11 or 12) and 1793 (when she was 17). These seem to have revised by Austen as she copied the original manuscripts, which are no longer extant. The presence of other hands suggests that the Austen-Leigh family saw fit to alter the booklets in the decades after the author's death. The 27 writings are diverse: playlets, stories, a mock history, two unfinished novels, fictional letters. The stories were often parodies or satires of gothic melodramas. They prefigure the subtler social commentaries of her mature years. Her writing could be seen as 'a perpetual attempt to adjust the rival

claims of satire and sentiment, Gothic and realism, a combination of young and old in which the early quixotic strain is not necessarily rejected or chastened but rather encouraged to live on, alongside other ways of seeing the world.'

None of the early texts was published until 1871. The first was a one-act playlet, dedicated to the author's father. *Lady Susan*, an epistolary novella, was a transitional work that the author never submitted for publication. It is considered effectively unfinished, with a brief conclusion wrapping up the story in summary fashion. That work too was first published in 1871. Even so, at the time, the Austen-Leighs were still protective of Austen's stellar reputation, dismissing most of her early texts as private affairs and mere practice. It is easy to understand such a view and also easy to sympathise with readers and critics who wanted complete publication of the juvenilia. What Johnston points out is how many critics and academics who admired Austen's mature novels disapproved of, even resented, publication of the juvenilia when it finally did appear. Some of them had even advised the destruction of the manuscripts. The family did destroy many of the author's letters, and censored others, rendering the published correspondence a painted shell of her life.

Johnston unpicks the editorial positions that shaped the reception of Austen's writing after her death. She notes that distinctions between the main six novels and the other material is not as obvious as it seems. Both *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were not fully revised by the author for publication and could be considered unfinished. Austen's death at the age of 41, the unfinished quality of some substantial manuscripts showed that she was capable of writing more high-quality work and has led to speculation about Austen's literary future. This requires an understanding of where she started as an adolescent author, and how her talent might have led her had she not died prematurely. The absence of a diary and the denuded state of the letters led literary critics, somewhat unwillingly, to Austen's juvenilia.

The order in which Austen's novels were written is not known. Cassandra Austen, Jane's sister and to whom most of her surviving letters are addressed, followed the development of her sister's writings, reading chapters as they were written. She wrote a rough chronology of the novels' writing, but it is somewhat unclear. Austen rewrote stories, so Cassandra's suggested dates may refer to the final draft, aside from the issue of overlapping composition of the novels. The novel *Sanditon* was left unfinished at Austen's death and is considered by critics to be coarse, when compared to the other six novels. *Northanger Abbey* and *Lady Susan* were both early manuscripts but published posthumously. The former

was sold to a publisher in 1803, unpublished, then bought back, so Austen could revise it in preparation for publication following the success of published novels of 1811-5.

An obvious point about Austen's juvenilia is that the mill of academia grinds ever finer. New generations of historians and academics need new things to write about, hence the focus on ever more obscure works of authors whose major works have been critically exhausted. The literary industry demands new products; lecturers seek new territory where they can claim tenure book deals. Johnston discusses how Austen's juvenilia echoes her six published novels and the parallels between her writing and the life of her family. Austen admired the novels of Henry Fielding and links between Austen and writings by Johnson, Swift and Pope have been noticed

Austen's last writing was a satirical poem about horse races in Winchester, dictated from her deathbed. The poem is about St Swithin, whose body was buried in the Cathedral, and Johnston reflects that Austen realising that death was close and perhaps realising that she would also be buried in the cathedral and thus become a neighbour of the saint. The poem's last lines were 'When once we are buried you think we are gone / But behold me Immortal!' – perhaps a reference to her future immortality through her books.

Sanditon was written by Austen during her final illness, under the shadow of pain and imminent death. She had completed 11 chapters. The early break in the writing and the absence of any note or outline has left critics unsure of where the novel was going, making it fertile territory for others to finish. The novel is marked by a laboured and prominent humorous dimension, reminiscent of Austen's youthful writing. 'If it were not known for certain that Austen composed *Sanditon* between January and March 1817, aspects of its style, pace, characterization, and language, as well as its physical appearance in the form of three notebooks, might lead it to be classed as one of the teenage works. This raises the intriguing possibility that Austen might have abandoned the novel before her death, realising it was too open and too difficult to finish.

The History of England was written when Austen was 15 years old. It covers the period from the reign of Henry IV to Charles I, taking inspiration from Oliver Goldsmith's 1771 history of England. This book includes photographs and transcriptions of marginalia in Austen's copy of Goldsmith's history. Johnston attempts to distinguish between the varying but similar handwriting styles of Austen and her relatives. Regrettably, the Goldsmith sentences that prompted the comments are not transcribed and only some of these are legible or complete in the photographs. Overall, *Jane Austen, Early and Late* is a thoughtful and engaging study of Austen as author.



Unfree Speech

Brian Eastty

Free Speech, Jacob Mchangama, Basic Books, £25,

When I was a student in the 1970s the no platforming of the National Front was my first glimpse that free speech could be a controversial issue. 'A ban will not establish a precedent', I was assured. 'And look what happened in Germany in the 1930s with its casual attitude to hate speech.' Forty years later, the platform has shrunk so much as to exclude those who are sceptical about man-made climate change or protective of women's sex-based rights. The NF is no more, its successor organisation the BNP never having overcome the humiliation which followed its leader having been given an hour to expound his views on *BBC Question Time*.

Jacob Mchangama explains that the Nazis did not get to carry out their evil work as a result of the Weimar government looking the other way. Adolf Hitler was platformed throughout the country for two years and Nazi newspapers were regularly banned. However, this allowed the Nazis to portray themselves as martyrs and, when they eventually gained power, to use *tu quoque* arguments against their opponents who had silenced them, when they put their own oppressive policies in place.

Many more preconceptions about free speech are overturned by Mchangama which at times seems like an edition of the BBC programme *QI*. As one's easy assumptions on the subject are dismissed, one can almost hear the klaxon. Karl Marx was opposed to a free press? Despite his name being attached to some of the most oppressive regimes in history, Mchangama quotes him: 'The free press is the ubiquitous vigorous eye of a people's soul, the embodiment of a people's faith in itself...'. The Islamic world has never been tolerant of opposing views? Mchangama introduces us to Ibn al-Rawandi a ninth-century scholar living in the Abbasid Caliphate who attacked the Quran as full of inconsistencies and advanced the view that men could rely on their own intellect without the dubious revelations of prophets. Though frequently attacked by clerics, he survived to write dozens of books.

Across the centuries Mchangama finds a theme across the many centuries an inconsistency in approach free speech. Even those thought of as heroes are found to have feet which, if not made of clay, at least point in

opposite directions. Even John Stuart Mill had a very unexpected attitude to freedom of the press when it compromised his colonial interests. 'Both the dangers and the advantages of the free press in India have been very much overrated', he told a parliamentary hearing some years prior to his more robust defence of British press freedom.

John Milton is the most damaged paragon of free speech advocacy, after whom Mchangama coins a phrase Milton's Curse to denote 'the selective and unprincipled defence of free speech'. The author who demanded 'the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties' in *Areopagitica*, soon after became a censor himself.

Milton is one of two emblematic figures frequently mentioned by Mchangama in trying to find unifying themes. The other, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, is Barbra Streisand. Mchangama frequently refers to the Streisand effect, a reference to the lawsuit the singer brought against a website for publishing photographs of her home, a move which had the undesired consequence of drawing attention to the website and increasing the number of people viewing the photos. He first refers to this when discussing Tacitus and the speech in which he declared that 'through persecution, the reputation of the persecuted talents grows stronger'. It is a clear indication that the potential of the powerful to behave counter-productively in relation to free speech is as strong now as it was in 25AD. Mchangama also mentions it in relation to the boost in sales of the *Enlightenment Encyclopedie* and the huge increase of traffic on Donald Trump's Facebook account when it was locked in January 2021.

A rare champion of free speech whose reputation survives intact is Eleanor Roosevelt. The widow of the American president was a key figure in the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with its landmark protections for freedom of speech and freedom of opinion. A huge obstacle was the insistence of the Soviet Union that an obligation to prohibit hate speech be included. It argued that the resurgence of fascism and Nazism needed to be prevented and yet its choice of allies. Saudi Arabia and apartheid South Africa, hinted at a more sinister preoccupation. Though they had little else in common, Mchangama points out that 'all claimed to be in possession of the Truth and all favoured punishing religious, ideological or political heretics under the guise of restricting various forms of hate speech'. Roosevelt's determination to exclude hate speech from the UDHR was to be vindicated more than fifty years later when, following the publication of cartoons of the prophet Mohammed in Denmark, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation attempted to get a resolution on blasphemy passed by the back door

by trying to conflate criticism of a religion with hatred of its adherents. Fortunately, they were unsuccessful and the new resolution makes clear that the protection given is for people not religions or ideologies.

Later, Mchangama suggests a better test might be 'dangerous' rather than hate speech. The former term has been coined recently to define speech that increases 'the risk that its audience will condone or commit violence against members of another group'. This is intended to prevent such abuses as the campaign of incitement against the Rohigya on Facebook which preceded their ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, while preserving the right to criticise a religion.

One hopes that our governments know all this but, reading Mchangama's scepticism that provocative ideas alone cause 'harm' one is reminded that we have a government currently pushing through an Online Harms (sic) Bill which many campaigners including the Free Speech Union, fear will have a chilling effect on free speech. This comes a few weeks after the banning of the Russia Today TV channel as a reaction to the atrocities in Ukraine by a government which might perhaps need to be reminded that *Mein Kampf* was for sale in Britain all through the Second World War.

Whatever the situation, Mchangama is on hand with a piquant precedent. In passing he mentions the Scottish government's hate crime provisions. In criminalising speech deemed to offend people with a wide range of protected characteristics, even in the home, I doubt that they expected to be compared to the Spanish Inquisition. Similarly, students importuning spineless campus administrators to fire lecturers who have broken some taboo would, one hopes, be appalled to know that they are following those who expelled Pierre Bayle from the University of Rotterdam for pro-atheist views in the late seventeenth century and abolitionist academics from American universities in the eighteenth.

The Internet's arrival changed everything but not as originally envisaged. Mchangama reminds us of the golden age when it was thought to be a free for all for users, when Tim Berners-Lee could talk about individuals filtering content as they pleased because 'when someone imposes involuntary filters on someone else, that is censorship'. Instead, it seems to be a free for all for the censors. Bill Clinton's comment from 2000 that an authoritarian state would find attempting to control it like 'trying to nail Jell-O to the wall' is now met with the same kind of hollow laughter as greets the roughly contemporary assertion about the end of history. It is by no means certain that anyone is in control of the Internet but it is certainly not the individual users, who are being subject in Mchangama's

phrase to ‘moderation without representation’. It is clear that the platforms are too big for anyone to moderate without recourse to an algorithm which invariably gets things wrong. Facebook tends to shut down anyone who mentions Tommy Robinson even if it is to strongly disagree with his views.

To write on this subject on such a vast scale geographically and historically is a huge achievement, but Mchangama focuses on censorship by the state

and disregards the growing tendency of private sector companies to censor often to appease their young employees who will often have only recently left universities with highly regulated speech codes.

Yet this is an important book. As the mention of the persecution by the Chinese government of Dr Li and his colleagues for ‘spreading false rumours’ about the virus the world would soon know as COVID-19 shows, it concerns a right we cannot afford to surrender.

ART

Whistler’s Woman in White, Joanna Hiffernan, Royal Academy of Arts, London, February to May, 2022.

Sean McGlynn

James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), notorious for his litigious barratry, was both a frivolous dandy and a serious painter, dedicated to his art in a quest for perfection; his often breath-taking craftsmanship is clearly on display at this exhibition of ‘Whistler’s Woman in White: Joanna Hiffernan’ at the Royal Academy. Born in America, he made his way via Paris, as a student, to London in 1859, where he became an independent artist in his own right. Here he created *Wapping* (1860-4), an acknowledged masterpiece on display at the exhibition, which reveals in detail a very modern scene with the intense activity of the dockyard contrasted behind a trio at leisure enjoying a drink. One of the trio is Whistler’s muse, model and mistress, the red-haired Joanna Hiffernan. Whistler had to paint an extra button or two on her blouse to cover her up accepted by the Royal Academy. Alongside it is another of his famous river scenes set, the looser *Battersea Reach* (1863-4).

The centre-pieces of the show are obviously his three famous studies of Hiffernan in a white dress, all gathered together in one room. Of these, *Symphony No. 1 in White: The White Girl* (1861-3, 1872) and *Symphony No. 2 in White: The Little White Girl* (1864) are the clear stand-outs and deservedly so. While their images are familiar, it is altogether another thing to experience them personally. The almost life-size *No. 1* is genuinely stunning. Only close-up scrutiny can reveal the mastery of Whistler’s craftsmanship, not least seen in his extremely delicate treatment of the drapery. He clearly enjoyed, and met, the challenge of having a white figure against a white background, with the only contrast at the top with

Hiffernan’s red hair and at the bottom with the bear rug upon which she is standing. It caused much controversy in its day: such large-scale portraiture was reserved for the great and the good; and the lack of formality in hair and dress further added to its disquiet of it being a painting without narrative or purpose. Her oblique gaze is enigmatic and impossible to fathom. It was painted initially in Paris where the official Salon rejected it, instead being displayed in the new Salon des Refusés, keeping good company with Manet.

No. 2 is more indicative of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The figure is painted in front of a (white) fireplace and mirror, in which her melancholic face is reflected. Here Whistler offers a little more contrast on one side of the painting, the pink and purple flowers in the bottom right-hand corner having a tremendous effect. A colourful fan also breaks up the white, exemplifying some of the then-fashionable Japonisme also represented at the exhibition. The third painting, *Symphony in White, No. 3* (1865-7), depicts two figures: the professional model Emelie Eyre Jones sits on the floor in yellow, while Hiffernan languishes in white on the sofa. As with *No. 2*, the colour is on the right hand-side of the painting as one views it. Whistler deemed ‘the figure the purest I have done’, but the painting is markedly inferior to the first two, with an air of Lawrence Alma-Tadema about it, without the classicism. The quick study of *A White Note* (1861) is also on display, prefiguring the symphonies.

Some exhibitions are rather slim in their main content and need to be padded out. This is the case here, as the exhibition struggles to fill its Sackler rooms at the Royal Academy. The padding, generously spaced out, comes from three main sources. One is the provision of works by other artists which allow for compare and contrast exercises, and not least influences on and by Whistler. Thus, we have a series of seascapes with low horizons by Courbet, followed by Whistler’s

Venice, Hub of Globo Homo Alexander Adams

later interpretations of similar scenes with two of his own, including *Sea and Rain* (1865), in which a fading figure on the beach facing the sea unintentionally captures something primordial about our transience and primordial origins. Another route is to offer repeated studies of the same subject in a row, sometimes as many as four of them. Three such are all of Joanna Hiffernan by Whistler's friend Courbet. Whether these duplicates are by Whistler or others, these will chiefly be of interest to the dedicated art historian and artists, looking for insights into Whistler's great technical skills and development. Indeed, his series of drawings and etchings appear effortlessly notable, often possessing a quiet beauty.

Finally, there are paintings and other exhibits towards the end of the show that highlight something of the Victorian craze for 'women in white', most sensationally captured by Wilkie Collins's novel, *The Woman in White* (1860). Whistler insisted that his painting had nothing to do with the book: it 'simply represents a girl dressed in white standing in front of a white curtain.' Some of these are rather uninteresting, but serve to show off Whistler's ability and influence by comparison. Two of these additions are very worthy of note: Gustave Klimt's *Portrait of Hermine Gallia* (1904) and John Everett Millais's *The Somnambulist* (1871). The latter is especially interesting, as it has a clear reference to Whistler whose work Millais openly admired but also because with the young lady sleep-walking along a cliff-edge with a spent lantern it offers the sort of moralistic warning so beloved of the Victorians, many of whom severely criticised Whistler for his lack of such improving didacticism in his work, the artist attractively going his own way in the school of Aestheticism, or 'art for art's sake'. Of these other women in white, Whistler outshines them all.

There are some seventy exhibits in total. It is a great achievement of the exhibition that so many are from American collections. While the exhibits are all centred around just three of Whistler's key works, the element of extension has to be expected. But many of these additional pieces are also illuminating and enhancing. And while there is inevitably a dilutionary effect, it did not impact on the enjoyment of Whistler's work and what a truly impressive artist he was. Indeed, I came away thrilled at the experience.

Of course, the exhibition's title prompts a somewhat contrived focus on the model rather than on the painter; by having Joanna Hiffernan's name in the title there is the element of a woke attempt to make her the passive star of show. Thankfully, however, nothing can detract from Whistler's masterful art.

The exhibition moves on to the National Art Gallery in Washington, DC until October.

Although founded in 1895, the Venice Biennale only became a significant event in the art world after 1945. The international art circuit developed in the post-war period as a means of increasing trade in new art and developing cross-border cultural exchange. The Biennale is a bellwether of art politics and, as in all areas of public life, the upper tier of fine art is in the hands of the left. The advent of the 2022 Venice Biennale (postponed from 2021, due to COVID restrictions) has brought a blizzard of promotion. As a critic-journalist, I am on the mailing list of dozens of public-relations firms. Consequently, every day I receive about two dozen promotional packages for art events. Over the Spring 2022, most were related to the Biennale.

There seems a common political thread in the events at the Biennale. Looking through my e-mails, I find the following items:

'For Estonia's exhibition for the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, Kristina Norman and Bitia Razavi will present, in close collaboration with curator Corina L Apostol, *Orchidelirium. An Appetite for Abundance* – connecting the past with the present, all through the lens of colonial botany and its socio-political ramifications.'

'Małgorzata Mirga-Tas's large-format work *Re-enchanting the World*, which will premiere in the Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2022, is an attempt to find the place of the Roma community in European art history.'

'*Selling Water by the River* [by an artist duo, in the Latvian pavilion] will endeavour to address the shifting borders between private and public space within a wider social context. [...] Where disagreements and conflicts often arise is where private and public spaces meet; a place where different values intersect. For example, the presence of the LGBTQIA+ community is still a sensitive topic in the Baltic and the broader region of Eastern Europe. Although times are changing, even within these regions, that which is different from heteronormativity has often clashed with conservative worldviews linked to a nationalist discourse within the framework of a tradition of a patriarchal society.'

'Uganda will present works by two contemporary artists Acaye Kerunen whose work investigates the 'agency of women's work in Africa and [...] the role that this artistic labor plays in the climate ecosystem,'

and Collin Sekajugo, whose work examines the racist biases of the global mainstream through the lens of popular culture.’

‘*Migration Blanket: Climate Solidarity* – which will be shown at the Venice Biennale on 23 April – tells the story of how climate change is destroying women’s lives, causing early marriage, preventing access to education, causing hunger and leading to violence against women.’ A summary headline would be ‘Impending Humanitarian Crisis: Women Most Affected’.

These are instances of activism – a fusion of political activism and artistic practice, mainly through protest, participation and working through non-traditional means. Activism is the new wave in the arts, promoted by museums, taught in art schools and funded by taxpayers and shadowy charities. Although arbiters of taste will tell you that every person is a political being, it seems curious we get mainly progressive politics at pavilions. There are some national committees which selected artists who use traditional techniques and whom have strong grounding in nationhood, but none of those committees are for Western countries. There is a palpable sense of shame emanating from Western European and Anglophone countries. Their state arts are the territory of *globo homo*: the internationalist trans-humanist cosmopolitan, who is dedicated to mass migration, secular society, technological advancement and eco-alarmism. She, for women over-index in arts administration, is keen to display her empathy with migrants and minorities; she is wracked with guilt over colonialism and is committed to putting her feminist beliefs into action.

The British pavilion at the Venice Biennale will feature Sonia Boyce, whose most famous artistic intervention was to remove a Pre-Raphaelite painting of nudes from Manchester City Gallery, to ‘start a conversation’. Her career has been founded on criticising British people for their ignorance and indifference towards non-white minorities. The overwhelming hostility and racism that she has faced has led to her being awarded the OBE, elected to the Royal Academy, her art being acquired by multiple state bodies, featuring in dozens of exhibitions, documentaries and books and receiving numerous awards and fellowships. Now she has been selected by the British Council to represent Great Britain at the world’s premier art event. As an artist, I wish I could have experienced such rejection and prejudice.

Here is an excerpt from a recent article for *The Jackdaw*, in which I became the first art critic to point out something everyone knows but nobody can say:

‘Sonia Boyce will exhibit in the British pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2022. This is because she is a black woman and a feminist. [...] Boyce is a token being used to prove the multi-cultural credentials of the (mainly white) liberal elite which runs State Art. Her work is feeble; it has few notable qualities and none sufficient to make it worth exhibiting at the national level, let alone international. She is just a stepping stone to future pavilion selections: an immigrant artist, a Muslim, a transgender artist and so on. Boyce is in the unenviable situation of being a diversity hire, someone whose skin is being paraded like that of a safari trophy. Her whole career rests on State Art patronage. Rather than her manipulating or browbeating curators, I believe Boyce is more puppet than puppet master. Her art has nothing to offer except a badge of virtue for the people who praise and promote such forgettable inconsequential art. We should not despise Boyce but pity her; our contempt should be turned on the functionaries of State Art, who use minorities as dupes and exclude talented artists from due consideration.’

Now, of course, I am picking and choosing. There are plenty of national pavilions featuring art that is promoted for its beauty, ingenuity, extension of tradition and emotional appeal. These are the very facets of art that philosopher of aesthetics Roger Scruton held so dear. Such artists (and critics and collectors who support them) do exist, but none of them are representatives of Western countries. State administrators in the West despise artists dedicated to beauty and craft, unless they have a marketable minority status. In the West, artists who love art-as-art are the marginalised ones, not minority artists who claim to be marginalised but who are the darlings of progressives who run museums and charities.

We should be concerned that cynical politicisation threatens to extinguish opportunities for real artists. Bodies we appointed to protect and promote our nations’ cultures have been corrupted and captured by individuals who hate their nations’ histories and native peoples. They put their ideological allegiances above any consideration of service, spending our money to advance their values. If you go to Venice, visit the churches, not the Biennale.

Alexander Adams is an art critic and artist. His book Artivism: The Battle for Museums in the Era of Postmodernism is published by Imprint Academic in August.

IN SHORT

The Last Queen, The Remarkable Story of Elizabeth 11's Seventy-Year Reign and the Future of the Monarchy, Clive Irving, Biteback Publishing,

Of the many books that have been or will shortly be published during the seventieth year of Elizabeth 11's reign, this is probably one of the least deferential. In this gossipy book Irving is particularly interesting on what the royal family do not wish us to know or to remember. For example, he details the fascist sympathies in the 1930s not just of the Duke of Windsor and Wallis Simpson, but also of the then Duke of Kent and the future George VI. The latter, luckily for Britain, changed his views and the Duke of Kent, also addicted to drugs, perhaps luckily for the royal family's reputation, died in wartime in an air crash while serving in the RAF. The bad behaviour (and there was plenty) and stupidities of that generation of King's sons was hidden from the country by compliant newspaper proprietors and their editors and also by most Royal biographers.

Indeed, according to Irving, one of the great successes of our Royal family till recently had been in concealing the family secrets. It was Sir Anthony Blunt, himself a Soviet spy, who was sent off at the end of the war to destroy any revealing letters that had been sent to the family's fascist German relatives. However, the advent of Rupert Murdoch put an end to compliant press coverage. The royal reaction to Princess Diana's death showed how out of touch with the public mood the family could become, surrounded by upper class courtiers who like them are more interested in horses than history and with few if any intellectual interests. No wonder the family is slow to adapt to modern conditions.

If the monarchy is 'the firm', as apparently the royals call it, it looks like a disparate group of failing businesses being held together by its long-lasting CEO, Elizabeth 11. Thanks to her steady and untiring performance in what Irving calls an 'unnatural' role, the crown has survived the latest blow, the behaviour of Prince Andrew. He concludes that the monarchy has entered a 'phase which that it seems ill-equipped to understand and manage.'

Celia Haddon

Art That Made US. Brilliant Isles, James Hawes. Old Street Publishing, £8.99.

This small book about art and literature accompanies the BBC 2 Series, *Art That Made Us*. Both begin with 'Spong Man,' a little sculpture from the early 5th century, now in Norwich Castle Museum. Hawes, a lecturer in creative writing at Oxford Brookes University, in his light style, sees it amusingly as 'some ancestor of Rodin's *Thinker*'. Others think it might be Odin. Whoever, it's the first 3D figurative art created by the Saxons. But neither the TV series nor the book wants us to see them as our ancestors, an indigenous early version of us. The Channel, according to Hawes was never a barrier but always, 'A great sea-road.' Sculptor Antony Gormley commenting on TV was also careful to say, 'The people who made it,' following the woke emphasis on the collective over the individual.

Current group think is ever present, even Shakespeare is about race. Hawes seems to have got a balanced historical view; 'Shakespeare's London was not the London of the Empire and the Slave Trade'. (His capitals.) But then he lurches into anachronism, "Blackamoors", his quote marks, were identified as rivals for jobs and state handouts.' One wonders what 'handouts' were like in Tudor England? 'Othello's skin colour is constantly noted and seems an invitation to insults. Those insults show that one of the staples of modern racism – Black males as a sexual threat to white society was already familiar.' Some of us can remember when, 'An old black ram is tugging your white ewe,' was spoken as a rather affectionate jibe between bantering men, the joke being on Desdemona's father.

The book is divided into short, well-connected chapters, full of interesting facts. There is an excellent chapter on the amazing Tulip Staircase in the Queen's House, Greenwich, designed by Inigo Jones, a poor draper's son who brought Palladian architecture to London. But as we move on, Hawes doesn't approve of satire in painting or writing, it's not good to laugh at bad things, and he says, the 'lived testimony' of freed slave Olaudah Equiano is, 'much more potent than satire.' The theme of race and of course slavery pervades. Even Burns is compared to a black jazz musician.

Hawes despises Bloomsbury, 'A sexed-up, trust-funded re-jig of rural English life,' but then they were all white. He reluctantly rejects Philip Larkin whilst reminding us that, 'hair-raising ideas about race were common until the 1970s,' and doesn't like

J K Rowling, not for her defence of women's rights against trans men, but because he sees Harry Potter as an expression of conservatism, 'Old stuff is basically good,' a defence of ancient white institutions. This book about the nation's most vital 'art' appropriately ends with Stormzy at Glastonbury. The black 'Grime' artist wore a police style stab-vest showing a torn and faded Union Jack. 'An image of genius,' says Hawes.

Jane Kelly

Purr. The Science of Making Your Cat Happy, Zazie Todd, Greystone Books, £18.99.

Research into the lives of our domestic cats, as opposed to research into the domestic dog, has at last become more common in universities. This book takes what researchers have discovered and applies their findings to your cat's life. It's a neat idea, done well. Each chapter starts with some anecdotes about the author's own cats, then reviews most of the latest research with a final short section into how to apply the science into your own home. It's a *How-To* book from a different angle.

At a practical level, some of the advice isn't that different from what can be found in the average *How-To* book. This is partly because much of the way we keep cats hasn't yet been put under the behaviour

microscope. Cats are difficult research subjects - they don't like being tested in a strange laboratory and if tested in their home they get bored and walk away from the researcher. Thus, many of the ways we are keeping our cats still haven't been studied and even vets or breeders may not know as much as they should. Where the research gaps are obvious Zazie Todd has filled in with interviews with various feline experts.

One of the themes most often mentioned in the book is that cats are amazingly individual. Some are loners: others are more sociable with other cats. Some like a belly rub: others will rake your hand with their claws if you do this. Todd advises making sure you know as much as possible about a new cat or kitten's previous history and individual behaviour before you decide to take it on. A loner cat will be miserable in a home where there are already two or three cats. She has some good advice on settling a cat into a new home and introducing it to other cats and dogs.

Perhaps the most important message in this book is simply this – that cat owners, and vets, and cat rescuers should keep up to date if they want a happy cat. Alas, most don't. So, if you know a cat owner who is having difficulties with their cat, give them this book. It will help them and their cat

Celia Haddon

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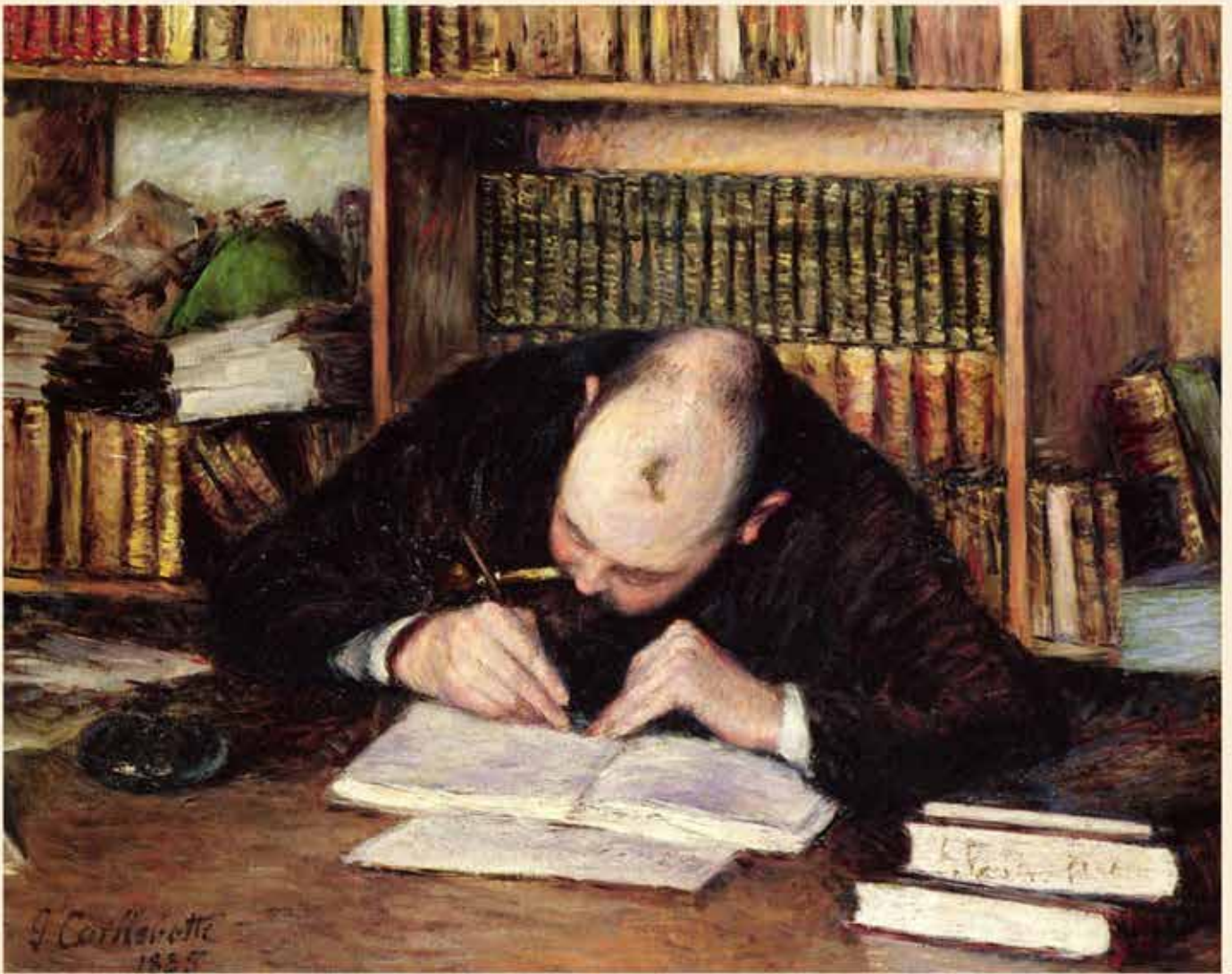
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