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The Third Marquess of Salisbury
1830-1903

Euthanasia is not the answer / Henry George
Warning from France / Alistair Miller
The Beatfication of David Oluwale / Bill Hartley
Letter from France / Theodore Dalrymple
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The
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Editorial

The message of the recent general election was unmistakable. Although there was no great desire for a Labour government – Labour gained only 34 per cent of the vote on a turnout of 60 per cent – voters felt an overwhelming need to punish the Conservatives for their dismal record in office. And nowhere was this need felt more urgently than among conservatives, who felt betrayed, above all, on the issue of immigration.

Not only had successive Conservative governments broken their promise to get net immigration down to the 'tens of thousands'; they had systematically lied. Mass immigration, as it has turned out, has constituted the Conservative's main instrument of economic policy – an easy means of plugging labour shortages, dampening cost pressures, and 'growing the economy'. Indeed, according to a report published earlier this year by the Resolution Foundation, most of the growth in the British economy over the past decade can be attributed to population growth fuelled by mass immigration.

That the short-term fix of mass immigration is massively damaging to our longer-term interests is now widely recognised. The economic damage arises because our firms import cheap labour to fill their vacancies instead of investing in the skills of British workers and raising productivity through capital investment. Wages are depressed among the low-skilled, leading to millions of workers being supported through benefits. And housing and services are stretched to breaking point. But the social and cultural effects of mass immigration are no less serious. No attention whatever has been given to how immigrants from non-Western cultures can be integrated into our society. Rather, our multicultural society has been regarded as a cause for unequivocal celebration. In the aftermath of the recent riots in Leeds, apparently provoked by Roma children being taken into care by social services, the local council praised the contribution of the Roma community 'to the diversity and richness of the Harehills'. Yet the perception that our national identity, our indigenous national culture, and our social cohesion, is under threat by rapid demographic change is overwhelmingly what drove the Brexit referendum result.

The beneficiary of all this – apart from Labour – has been Nigel Farage's Reform UK, whose splitting of the Conservative vote reduced the official Conservative Party to 121 seats, its lowest number since the party was formed in the 1830s. Whether Reform will replace the Conservative Party to become the alternative to Labour, or the Conservatives manage to reform themselves under a new leader, remains to be seen.

The battle for the Conservative party seems to be shaping up on predictable lines. On the left are the liberal or 'One Nation' conservatives, who promise essentially more of the same. On the right are the Thatcherite free marketeers, who promise a minimal state, low taxes, and the unleashing of free enterprise. Absent, however, is any debate about the existential social and cultural issues that have arisen because of mass immigration and the emergence of a self-serving globalist

liberal establishment. Nor is there any recognition that central to the English tradition of conservatism, from Burke, through Disraeli, to Scruton, is not unfettered global markets, but the sense of belonging that arises from our local attachments to family, community, and nation.

Kemi Badenoch, the odds-on favourite in the leadership race, is in many ways the most impressive of the candidates, and she has fought a brave and principled campaign against woke. But, like Priti Patel and Robert Jenrick, the other representatives of the right, she is a neo-liberal Thatcherite free marketeer who shows scant appreciation of the social and cultural fabric that conservatives ought to be interested in conserving – and which Thatcherism, sadly, did much to destroy. That leaves Reform, who, for all their shortcomings of policy and personnel, and their Thatcherite tendencies, have at least grasped the existential threat to our national identity posed by mass immigration.

Will a *genuinely* conservative movement emerge in British politics, a movement that represents the aspirations of our people, and that draws inspiration from the great English tradition of conservate thought? It is the task of this magazine to ensure to its utmost that it does.

A Warning from France

Alistair Miller

The riots sparked by the Southport stabbings seem to have fizzled out as quickly as they erupted. Some of us questioned the prevailing narrative, which attributed the riots to far-right agitators, but it is obvious now that much of the violence was perpetrated by hooligans out for a punch up. More thoughtful commentators on both left and right have highlighted a deeper anger among working-class communities and called for a serious debate on immigration. But, contra Elon Musk, we need not worry about civil war breaking out – at least, not for now.

Yet in France, there is open talk of the country descending into civil war, an already tense situation exacerbated by political paralysis in the National Assembly. The July elections eviscerated the moderate centre, Macron's party included, and produced a stand-off between the nationalist right and the cosmopolitan left. Even Macron privately admits that his main task is to stave off civil war. But how can this be? As former imperial powers who have seen mass immigration from their former colonies, Britain and France have much in common – and yet their experiences of integrating those populations are radically different.

The British have enthusiastically promoted the principle of multiculturalism, with Roy Jenkins, then home secretary, blazing the trail in his 1966 speech to the National Committee for the Commonwealth Immigrants, in which he argued against 'a flattening process of assimilation' in favour of 'cultural diversity'. Nowadays, anyone who questions the orthodoxies of diversity, inclusion and multiculturalism is regarded as a potentially dangerous proponent of 'cultural nationalism'. The French, on the other hand, have made no formal attempt

to institute a multicultural France; instead, they have assumed that immigrants would assimilate and adopt French culture and values. That they have largely failed is evident from the large expanses of urban France that are now police no-go areas and that it takes only a spark to set alight – as as we saw last year when French police were blamed for the death of Nahel Merzouk, a young joyrider of North African descent who failed to stop at a police check point, and riots broke out across France.

This has led to some self-congratulation on the part of the British, who regard their multicultural society as a source of pride. Last year, for example, Rishi Sunak declared that Britain was 'a fantastic multi-ethnic democracy'. But there has also been favourable comment from abroad, particularly from France, concerning Britian's election of a Hindu as prime minister and all the major offices of state being occupied by citizens who were either black or Asian. The coronation, which emphasised the diversity of modern Britain, seemed only to confirm Britain's achievement.

But what is rarely discussed is the cost of Britain's transformation into a tolerant diverse multicultural society. We have lost our common culture, the indigenous English have been denied a legitimate culture or identity of their own, and widespread censorship, or 'cancel culture', has been instituted under cover of hate crime legislation to prevent anyone from questioning or ridiculing the new orthodoxies. Indeed, even reference to 'the indigenous English', a deeply exclusionary term, is fraught with danger.

The French, by contrast, have never given up on their national culture and identity, despite the efforts of a progressive liberal establishment to deconstruct and denigrate France, as exemplified by the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, which was a hymn to 'woke'. Even Macron, who once declared that French culture did not exist, pre-empted the statue smashers in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests by declaring that 'the republic will erase no trace or names of its history' and 'overturn no statue'. The contrast with Britain could not be more marked.

An important reason for this difference is that a central part of French national identity is constituted by the republican ideals of rationalism, meritocracy, and secularism. Rational debate is enshrined in French culture and education; the meritocratic principle is foundational to the principle of equality; and secularism, or *laïcité*, the separation between private faith and the secular public realm, is a bulwark against religious dogma. French conservatives have long criticised the over-extension of this ideal as threatening a more important one – that of France itself. In a celebrated article in the *Figaro* in 2004, entitled 'The Fatherland betrayed by the Republic', Jean Raspail argued that whereas France was a cultural, historical and religious entity, a living creation of flesh and blood, the Republic consisted of little but abstract rights that could be endlessly multiplied. But the republican ideal, which has widespread support on left and right, has proved a bulwark against multiculturalism above all by its proscribing of religious symbols in the public arena and its support of unconditional freedom of speech, including the right of scurrilous cartoonists – like those of Charlie Hebdo – to blaspheme and cause offence. Which explains the passion of the debate

in France over hijabs in schools and sports, burkinis on the beach, and Halal meat in schools which are widely seen in France as constituting a creeping Islamisation of the public space.

The republican principle has taken a battering in recent years, notably in French schools where hardly a week goes by without a principal of a school or college receiving death threats for trying to enforce a ban on the *abaya*, or by insisting on free discussion of Islam in civics classes. In *Les profs ont peur*, Jean-Pierre Obin paints an alarming picture of the renouncement of the teaching of republican values by teachers in French schools for fear of reprisals in the aftermath of the beheading of Samuel Paty in 2020 for doing just that. The Holocaust causes special difficulties, and some teachers now refuse even to teach it. But though it is proving hard to enforce, the principle at least holds, and prime minister Gabriel Attal has defended it vigorously.

There is also freedom of speech. The liberal establishment in France is as anxious as the British to enforce prevailing orthodoxies. But books are displayed in shops and supermarkets that would never be published here, and articles appear in the *Figaro*, the French conservative daily, that would never be allowed in the *Telegraph* or *Spectator*. And thanks to the billionaire Vincent Bolloré, a conservative Catholic from Brittany, the French can tune in every evening on CNews, the French alternative news channel, to forthright discussion of topics like immigrant crime, multiculturalism, Islam, the loss of French culture, and anti-white racism that would never surface here – not even on GB News. Moreover, there are major political parties who openly warn about the dangers of mass immigration, radical Islam, and the loss of French culture. There are no such equivalents in Britain. Éric Zemmour and Marion Maréchal would both be banned for inciting hatred against Muslims, as would Zemmour's party, whose name *Reconquête!* is inspired by the reconquest of Moorish Spain by Christian Europe.

Is France headed for civil war? Is France to blame for not instituting a multicultural society like Britain? And what lessons can Britain draw? Many of the answers to these questions, or at least clues to them, can be found in an extraordinary incendiary pair of books recently published in France by Driss Ghali. The first, *Français, ouvrez les yeux !* is Ghali's lament for the loss of the France he loves, sacrificed on the altar of mass immigration; and the second is *De la diversité au séparatisme*, which outlines Ghali's radical plan for saving France.

Ghali is not the first to address this issue. The French, unlike the English, have been spoiled for choice in recent years by a multitude of titles dealing in the existential issues of mass immigration, the threat of radical Islam, the loss of a national culture and identity, the new religion of multiculturalism, and the coming civil war. Ghali's analysis echoes those of Pascal Bruckner, Mathieu Bock-Côté, Ivan Rioufol, Michel Onfray, and Alain Finkeilkraut, to name some of the most prominent – as well as Renaud Camus and Jean Raspail, who are officially unmentionable. What makes his book exceptional is that Driss Ghali is of Moroccan origin, a practising Muslim with an intimate knowledge of the culture of the Maghreb from which so many French immigrants have originated.

Ghali's parents raised him within Moroccan Islam, a moderate and tolerant form of Islam

with roots in Sufism; but also within French culture, from which comes his admiration for the principles of reason and the rights of man, as well as an abiding affection for the French way of life. Whereas his spiritual father is Islam, his mother is France. He has no scruples in declaring that France 'is no longer the country of the French', speaking of the replacement of the French population by immigrants or foreigners, most of them Muslim, arguing that 'Islam and French civilization are incompatible', referring to *les français de souche* (the indigenous French), and in accusing the political class of 'organising their disappearance'. Even Renaud Camus, who coined the term 'the Great Replacement', and was consequently banished, did not go so far.

For Ghali, the root of the problem lies in the collective renouncement by the French people of their national autonomy, their national culture, their self-belief, and their destiny. The blame lies both with a liberal elite, who denigrate France at every opportunity and have facilitated the replacement of its population through mass immigration, and a compliant people, who repeatedly return this elite to office – as they have just done again. Of course, he is not alone in arguing this. What sets him apart is his unusually vigorous defence of French colonialism, notably France's record in Algeria.

Ghali argues that the Algerian War, a stain on the honour of France requiring constant apology and penitence, if the prevailing narrative is to be believed, was much more complex. In fact, many Muslims supported France's presence in Algeria and even fought with the French army. Many others wanted reform, but not separation. Ghali even defends the infamous OAS (*Organisation armée secrete*), the paramilitary group that fought to prevent Algerian independence and plotted to assassinate De Gaulle – the subject of Frederick Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal*. Though there were 'unpardonable excesses', its members were essentially patriots. For Ghali, the real dishonour of the Algerian war attaches to France's shabby treatment of the *pieds-noirs*, the French who were expelled and sought refuge in France, and France's betrayal of the loyal Algerians, the *harkis*, who were left behind to be massacred. Yes, there was brutality and domination, but so there had been before the French arrived, including the barbarism of Arab slavery. France bestowed 'inestimable gifts': order where there had been anarchy, the apparatus of the state where there had been warring tribes, and French civilization.

However, the central theme of Ghali's books is the disaster of mass immigration. Ghali is not 'anti-immigrant'. An immigrant himself, he has the greatest respect for the individual who comes to France, works hard, and wants to assimilate. The problem lies with the mass immigration of peoples whose culture and religion makes assimilation to French norms and ways impossible.

For Ghali, the culture clash is twofold. First, that peoples originating essentially from essentially tribal societies have a very different attitude to authority, which is basically there to be bribed or exploited, to work, and to Western notions of individual responsibility. The loss of respect for the role of the state is especially deadly for France because the state is a vital buttress of the French way of life and of republican values. Second, that Muslims, whose religion demands total submission, and whose values are deeply conservative, face the shock of having to adjust to an aggressively

secular 'hyper-liberal' society. Add racism and economic deprivation into the brew, and the inevitable result is festering resentment, along with over 700 inner-city no-go areas euphemistically termed *zone sensibles*, which the native French have largely evacuated. The French state has little or no authority in these 'lost territories', argues Ghali, its sole role being to dispense benefits, grants and services. Apparently random acts of violence and terror mount by the day. But for Ghali, there is method in the madness. Each brutal murder or beating of a police officer, a prison guard or security officer, a teacher or priest, each rape of a woman, is a victory for thugs who would defile and conquer France. It announces the struggle, the war to come between the indigenous French and a new people, largely drawn from North Africa and inspired by Islam, who reject France and all it stands for.

The other side of the coin of mass immigration is the replacement of a common culture by the 'multicultural' society. The orthodoxy we are insistently fed is that diverse inclusive multicultural societies are rich, vibrant, stimulating, and liberating – an unequivocal gain. But Ghali's refutation is devastating, the more so in that it is so rarely voiced. For it is not only our formal or nominal identity that is threatened by the presence of 'the other'. It is the rich and complex tapestry of shared sensibility, intimacy, confidences, manners, humour, perceptions and preferences that enable us to feel at home, to be ourselves, to speak and act spontaneously, and to breathe freely without fear of causing offence. When we share our world with the other, nothing 'flows' anymore. All communications must be 'subtitled' to ensure there is no misunderstanding. Once conversation about football, money, the weather and other banalities has been exhausted, we are reduced to silence. And if the French can no longer be themselves in a homeland that was two thousand years in the making, then they 'have lost their country'.

What can be done? For Ghali, the indispensable pre-condition for any plan of action is that all those, regardless of the colour of their skin or their religion, who 'love France unconditionally' unite and choose resistance over appeasement, as De Gaulle did in 1939. He advocates the following steps:

First, stop mass immigration.

Second, end the equality of civilizations assumed by multiculturalism, and insists on the primacy *and the superiority* of French civilization in France. Those who want to save France must recognise the extraordinary power and vitality of Islam, a religion that attracts converts precisely because it punishes its enemies and inspires its followers to die for it. Islam, in other words, has the potential 'to dynamite France'. There should therefore be instituted two classes of citizenship. For those who are prepared to assimilate and embrace French civilization, to declare loyalty to '*une certaine idée de la France*', full French nationality and citizenship. For those who are not, an associate status which gives them the right to work and to live in France, but no more. For those who would argue that this discriminates against Islam, Ghali replies that the discrimination is justified because France 'is in competition against Allah', and only one or the other can win. Moreover, Muslims in France enjoy freedoms and rights they could not dream of in the Islamic world, along with generous healthcare and public services. France is 'a paradise' for

Muslims, but only if it is understood that Islam is 'a guest', and no more.

Third, the right to blaspheme must be reconsidered. Whether it be Islam or the Catholic Church, criticism is essential, but profanity is not. A strong France that puts strict limits on Islam can also afford certain principles of moderation. Many of us will recoil at this proposition, but Ghali makes a fair point when he argues that if we had wanted to preserve unconditional freedom of expression, we should never have allowed mass immigration. In other words, the horse has already bolted.

Fourth, France should do everything in its power to neutralise 'the death impulse' that paralyses mainstream Islam, and to this end, it should encourage and promote those forms of Islam – notably the Sufi inspired movements originating from North Africa – that are tolerant, peaceable, and welcoming of the West. Whether it involves financing rival TV channels to Aljazeera or highlighting the legacy of slavery and racism on precolonial Algeria, all means, fair and foul, should be deployed. Why should rappers calling for 'the rape of white women', for France to be 'fucked', or for armed revolt call the tune?

Will France find a saviour, a new De Gaulle, who can give voice to the collective aspirations of the French people, and embody the spirit of the nation? Or will a bewildered people, against all their instincts, carry on returning the same cosmopolitan liberal elite who spout platitudes about *le vivre ensemble* for fear of rocking the boat and 'making waves', even though the boat is headed straight for the rocks? Either way, there lies trouble ahead. Ghali is unsure whether the conflagration can be averted. Indeed, he notes that more and more people, of all faiths and political affiliations, sense that 'the confrontation is coming'.

Not everything that Ghali says has direct application to Britain. But his penetrating analysis of the difficulties of cultural assimilation, particularly severe when Islam is involved, and of the nature of what is lost when a common culture is replaced, is supremely relevant. Multi-ethnic Britain is successful in many respects. Colour prejudice, for example, is largely a thing of the past. We have moved on. But as the English continue to flee the vibrantly diverse urban areas of Britain to be with people who share their own culture and values, multicultural Britain is becoming ever more segregated. The pressure from asylum seekers, real and bogus, is set to grow, and their planned dispersal into social housing around the country will inevitably stoke tensions, especially in more deprived areas. Plans to build millions of new homes in more affluent areas will not go down well either. And with growing numbers of the English turning to Reform, who have shown they can win seats in Parliament, and seem to voice people's concerns about 'cultural change', our multicultural society will come under pressure as never before.

Euthanasia is not the Answer

Henry George

A vote to legalise assisted suicide will likely be on the cards with a Labour victory in the general election. As someone opposed to a change in the law, this feels like a creeping shadow, engulfing opponents and supporters alike.

The question of assisted suicide is hardest where compassion for the terminally sick is concerned. I understand the impulse here, and do not diminish the pain and suffering in which too many still end their lives. I have a severe, genetic fragile skin condition called Recessive Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa, which leads to blisters and wounds equivalent to third degree burns. My subtype is also prone to extremely aggressive skin cancers, of which I've had five. The pain is often extreme. Life expectancy is short. The end will not be easy.

Roger Scruton wrote that "the value of life does not consist in its length but in its depth". I fear arguments from compassion about assisted suicide for terminal illness imply that a life like mine is also not worth living, that it does not have any depth, nor any value. That it would be better off shorter than it already is. Law is a teacher, and would give license to this view of life, shaping our collective moral sense. We see the result in Oregon, where 53% who seek assisted suicide do so for fear of "being a burden".

Further, once assisted suicide becomes a right that is tied to compassion, what is the means to prevent its expansion beyond the terminally ill? One cannot define unbearable suffering in a self-limiting way. Now, in Canada, Holland, and Belgium, euthanasia of the mentally ill and "mature minors" aged 12 is either proposed or pursued. The answer is surely expanding investment in and access to improved psychiatric care, pain management and palliative care. Kill the pain, not the patient.

This is where the arguments from autonomy come in, on a par with compassion. Many assisted suicide advocates argue for the bodily autonomy of individuals who do not wish to lose control and succumb to the universal frailty of the human condition. Dame Esther Rantzen's discussion of assisted suicide has been framed in this manner. Meanwhile, one of the main proponents in the Lords, Lord Falconer, also emphasises the aspect of control as paramount.

These arguments ignore that our individual choices ripple beyond our individual lives. We are shaped by and shape others through a web of relationships. My disability is a heightened form of our dependent human condition. I wouldn't be here without the love of my family. Arguments from compassion and autonomy pass over the vital virtue of this solidarity in suffering, of our bonds of mutual loyalty. We face the perverse situation of lamenting the scars left by suicide while affirming assisted suicide. As R H Tawney put it, freedom for the pike

is death for the minnow, and we see this in Canada where the poor and disabled are increasingly slipping through the safeguards and pushed into euthanasia.

This points to the last two arguments: utilitarianism and progress. *Times* columnist Matthew Parris welcomed what others fear: social pressure on the old and terminally ill to seek assisted suicide in utilitarian terms, increasing happiness for the greatest number. This would be a good thing, as it would improve the social fitness of the group and ease pressure on the public purse. Parris would applaud the situation in Oregon. The Canadian Medical Association and others would agree, saying that the Medical Assistance in Dying programme would save up to $100 million a year. How *unlikely* is it that the NHS wouldn't adopt such an approach? Particularly given the use of blanket *Do Not Resuscitate Orders* for the learning disabled during Covid. This view ends by reducing individuals to biomass awaiting disposal for the greater good. It is the politics of "no man, no problem".

Matt Hancock MP has meanwhile compared the campaign for assisted suicide to the legalisation of homosexuality in the 1960s and of gay marriage in the 2010s. In this view, moral progress marches one way, to ever greater liberation from social and bodily limits. It is ironic however that Hancock's call to push moral progress forwards stands to send us revolving right round the clock of history, returning to a pre-Christian world where the weak, disabled, and elderly were killed at birth or cast aside in old age. Those like myself stand to be kicked into the ditch at the roadside of progress, with those responsible convinced of their place on the right side of history.

In the end, legalising assisted suicide and euthanasia means giving legal and moral license to cruelty that wears a mask of kindness. We must not do so.

The Honkey and the *-i--e-*

Duke Maskell

The Left is stupid about many things (or is it everything?) but at the bottom of all its other stupidities — fertilising and bringing them on — is its stupidity about language.

Words are disobedient. As T S Eliot says in "Burnt Norton", they won't stay still. You put them down, somewhere safe, turn your back … and they're gone. In "What is Called Thinking" Heidegger makes the point more fully than Eliot (and without being troubled by it):

> multiplicity of meanings is the element in which all thought must move in order to be strict thought. To use an image: to a fish, the depths and expanses of its waters, the currents and quiet pools, warm and cold layers are the element of its multiple mobility. If the fish is deprived of the fullness of its element, if it is dragged on the dry sand, then it can only wriggle, twitch, and die. Therefore, we must always seek out thinking, and its burden of thought, in the element of its multiple meanings, else everything will remain closed to us . . . words are not terms, and thus are not like buckets and kegs from which we scoop up a content that is there. Words are wellsprings that are found and dug up in the telling, wellsprings that must be found and dug up again and again, that easily cave in, but that at times also well up when least expected.

Which means praise can unpredictably turn into blame, blame praise, insults honours, silencings clamour. I don't know that Jeremy Bentham can be thought "on the Left" but his unintelligence about language is just the unintelligence of modern Leftism, which thinks it can make people think rightly by banning wrong words. Bentham thought (it's an intellectual's illiteracy) that a word that "reprobates", like "lust", can't "approbate", except in self-contradiction. But (as he would have recognised if he had been more literate — and married) when the word was alive as a serious condemnation it was also, and *therefore*, equally alive as serious praise. When it was available to say "Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame/Is lust in action", it was also available to say, "And your quaint honour turn to dust,/And into ashes all my lust." Words don't have, as Bentham supposes, fixed meanings. Marvell has no difficulty using the word *lust* to mean something we daren't reprobate, not this side of the grave. And we have no difficulty understanding him. He has, like Falstaff, just as little difficulty using the word *honour* to mean something he does reprobate.

Words, like dogs (and people), can turn. Famously, Kaiser Bill meant to insult the 1914 BEF by calling it "Sir John French's contemptible little army" but, if the insult is remembered today, a century and more after Kaiserdom got dropped into the dustbin, it is only because it was adopted as a badge of honour by the insulted, and then enshrined in Westminster Abbey, as

"The Old Contemptibles" who, at the First Battle of Ypres, held back, for months, "a force ten times their number". Something similar is true of Hilary Clinton's 2016 description of Trump supporters as "a basket of deplorables". Trump supporters quickly adopted it to describe themselves, and the Trump campaign repeatedly used it against Clinton during and after the election. In her 2017 book *What Happened*, Hilary Clinton herself said that it was a factor in her electoral loss. *Boom! Bang!* Backfire! And the list of such examples must be (as Wittgenstein probably said of grammatically well-formed sentences) endless.

Not on the list — but it might have been — is "nigger". But world-wide, Anglophone Leftism (which would always rather domineer than think and prefers to cut off its own nose rather than no nose at all) prefers to ban the word from polite conversation, which – if it really wanted to disarm the word's power to insult *and* if it had any verbal intelligence — was the last thing it would do. The way to put Southern Whitey's racism in its place would have been to adopt "nigger", as some homosexuals have adopted "queer" and "dyke". As recently (ie as long ago?) as 2004 and 2006 Reginald D Hunter did have "Nigga" in the titles of a couple of his shows, of which one was nominated for The Edinburgh Comedy Awards main prize and one won the Writers' Guild Award for Comedy. (But, of course, his spelling of the word showed he had a licence to use it; and we have all moved on since then — perhaps he has too.)

Instead of adopting the word, what world-wide, Anglophone Leftism has done is, by making it *taboo,* fixing it as having only one possible use and that the ugliest possible, a use it never *quite* had until it was banned and which, while the ban lasts, cannot be escaped. It's a stain which it looks as if nothing can remove.

Until it was *tabooed*, the word had a range of possible meanings and uses, as you can see in the Uncle Remus stories; as, almost certainly — for all Whitey knows — it still has amongst black Americans (even one from the Deep South, like Hunter); and as it demonstrably had in 1897 in Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus*:

> The nigger was calm, cool, towering, superb. The men had approached and stood behind him in a body. He overtopped the tallest by half a head. He said: 'I belong to the ship.' He enunciated distinctly, with soft precision. The deep rolling, tones of his voice filled the deck without effort. He was naturally scornful, unaffectedly condescending, as if from his height of six foot three he had surveyed all the vastness of human folly and had made up his mind not to be too hard on it.

But, it turns out, he is a sick man, dying (perhaps from tuberculosis) but won't admit it. And the crew, almost to a man, encourages him:

> Falsehood triumphed. It triumphed through doubt, through stupidity, through pity, through sentimentalism. We set ourselves to bolster it up from compassion, from recklessness, from a sense of fun. Jimmy's steadfastness to his untruthful attitude in the face of the inevitable truth had the proportions of a colossal enigma—of a manifestation grand and incomprehensible that at times inspired a wondering awe; and there was also, to many, something exquisitely droll in fooling him to the

top of his bent. The latent egoism of tenderness to suffering appeared in the developing anxiety not to see him die.

Of which, whatever else might be said, what can't be said is that it has any touch of racial ill will in it. Jimmy — called "nigger" by both his author and his shipmates — inspires not just tenderness but devotion:

> It was at this time that Belfast's devotion—and also his pugnacity—secured universal respect. He spent every moment of his spare time in Jimmy's cabin. He tended him, talked to him; was as gentle as a woman, as tenderly gay as an old philanthropist, as sentimentally careful of his nigger as a model slave-owner. But outside he was irritable, explosive as gunpowder, sombre, suspicious, and never more brutal than when sorrowful. With him it was a tear and a blow; a tear for Jimmy, a blow for anyone who did not seem to take a scrupulously orthodox view of Jimmy's case. We talked about nothing else.

And how *ought* Jimmy to have been spoken of in 1897? Well, 127 years later, we know: as, for example, *a-person-of-colour*. But … who could *devote himself* to *that*? It's a moral impossibility. It reduces Jimmy to a circumlocution capable of receiving neither devotion nor insult — to the abstraction *the-correctly-spoken-of*. It puts the speaker's concern for his own skin uppermost and dehumanises the man he pretends to speak of more completely than the ugliest use of (what we must now call, in a circumlocution more insulting than the word itself) "the N-word" ever could.

For the foreseeable future, any such possibility of meaning as that Conrad gives 'nigger' has gone. The word can now be used, according to Leftist prescription, *only* as a deliberate insult; and whatever was originally insulting in it, Leftism has augmented by giving it this extra sense of *what-mustn't-be-uttered*. The triumph of world-wide, Anglophone Leftism is, by proscribing the word, to make it newly vicious and nothing but vicious, and to be able to cite its viciousness as justifying its proscription. Leftism's triumph is so complete that it has not only given the title of Conrad's novel a retrospective power to insult it never previously had but has made the novel itself, for anyone of a Leftist bent, incomprehensible. (Except, of course, when the power of the novel proves the greater.)

And, of course, if "nigger" is to be banned, then along with it, a host of other things must be banned too, including blacking-up for any purpose whatsoever (including morris dancing), pictures of golliwogs on jam-jars and books as innocent as Helen Bannerman's tales of Little Black Sambo. And then, if we English, in deference to black southern American sensibilities, must ban "nigger", surely, to be fair and anti-racist, we must, in deference to white southern American sensibilities, ban "red-neck" and "gringo"? And, even if most English have never heard of "the H-word", they had better shun that one too (unless they want some American honkey complaining about black privilege).

And where does it end? It doesn't. It can't. It is a never-ending, ever-spreading cultural revolution, and another of those cures that are worse than the disease. What hasn't been found to need our sheltering proscriptions today will be found to need them tomorrow. And, today being a day to which tomorrow has already come, "slave" is already under suspicion in university History departments

("enslaved" being the safer term used by those seeking publication and preferment) and such terms as "asylum seeker", "immigrant", "gay", "homosexual" and "lame" are now "non-advised" in English courts. And when whatever of opprobrium that is presently attached to those terms attaches itself to their replacements, we shall need another and different set of non-non-advised terms, and so on to the end of days.

It isn't just that particular words — lots and lots of particular words — become forbidden and that thought is canalised in certain predetermined directions but that, to the extent that we succeed in treating words as if they could and ought to be assigned specific values in advance, we succeed only — to return to Heidegger's image — in dragging the fish onto the sand to die. And then everything, as he says, remains closed to us. The Left, I think we have to say, is not only stupid about language but shows malice towards it. It *wants* it on the sand and does its best to drag it there.

Although the Leftists have succeeded in cancelling "the N-word" (now there *is* an insult) from current polite conversation, they can't cancel it from the language or men's minds. Never mind the *e-e--a--* in the room, what we have there now — thanks to Leftism — is the *-i--e-*.

Letter from France

Theodore Dalrymple

The Olympic Games are almost over as I write this in deepest France: and, barring a last-minute terrorist attack, they have been a great success – from that somewhat reduced point of view.

The 50,000 volunteers who have guided the perplexed strangers to their seats and elsewhere, the 50,000 security personnel who, together with drones constantly overhead, have prevented any terrorist outrage, have done their work extremely well. Whether this colossal effort was worthwhile depends on your point of view and scale of values. Personally, placing sports somewhat lower on the scale of human achievement than many people would place it, I would say no: but I accept that I am not the final arbiter of such things. In fact, no one is.

My brother-in-law, who has attended some of the events, has said to me that the games were extremely well organised. Paris was cleared of its traffic and also of its homeless and other undesirables. The spectators, mostly well-heeled, behaved very well. Even where large crowds gathered for an event, they left not a single piece of paper as litter behind. There was no rowdyism and a festive atmosphere prevailed everywhere.

It sounded just like Switzerland with fun added. This is what life should be like all the time! But of course, there was a darker side, and not everybody was quite as enthusiastic: for example the people who needed passes to return to their homes which happened to be near the Olympic village or event. If I were a Marxist, I would say that the games

were an exercise in the haute bourgeoisie's authoritarianism, though the Mayor of Paris pretends to be of the Left for electoral reasons.

Quite a number of people to whom I spoke were furious at the expense of it all, which will fall on the taxpayer: though of course they were unable to specify how much that would be, except that it would be a lot. They were arguing from general principles, namely that organisers of such events are always corrupt and everything costs much more than it need. It all sounds like the British Ministry of Defence.

Nor did I detect any medal fever, notwithstanding the enthusiasm that seems almost to have been centrally directed or whipped up officially. Of course, birds of a feather flock together, and so I meet people only of the strictest indifference; I know no one with whom I could discuss the discus competition even if I wanted to – I assume that the discus is still thrown.

I couldn't help following the disputes over the sex of some women boxers, though I must say that the very idea of women's boxing is repellent to me: it just isn't ladylike for women to box.

Whatever the sex of the boxers, though, some of them looked distinctly masculine to me, but there is a natural variation in appearance and what *I* think isn't evidence. I have noticed, by the way, a cultural tendency to the masculinisation of women: in posters of films with women prominently displayed, they are more likely to carry an automatic weapon than a handbag. One feels that one is being subjected to ideological indoctrination.

There has been a political truce during the games. Fortunately for the political class, the games do not last very long, or people might begin to wonder what the point of the political class is. After all, everything seemed to work perfectly well without it. For two weeks we lived in the paradise envisaged by Engels, in which the administration of things replaced the government of people. Belgium, after all, once went 500 days without a government, and nothing much seemed to have changed at the end of that period.

Alas, this is delusory It is true that Belgium had no central government for about eighteen months, but Belgium is a country of many governments with, I believe, thirteen political authorities entitled to pass laws. It was therefore no model for anarchists during its 500 days of central indirection.

Secretly, I rather hope that the Olympic Games explode, or perhaps implode, under the weight of their own grandiosity. The addition of ever larger numbers of 'disciplines' dilutes rather than concentrates the supposed ideals of the games. A pleasant party game would be to imagine new 'sports' susceptible to Olympic competition,

The list could be endless and some suggestions could make for very exciting watching: bomb-disposal, for example, though naturally from a safe distance. There could be cat-burgling, bag-snatching, machete wielding. At the other end of the spectrum, there could be tiddlywinks, a favourite pastime of my childhood, or blackberry-picking, another activity I enjoy.

When the political truce finishes, presumably after the Paralympics are over, surely one of the more bizarre spectacles of late modernity, from which some Parisians of my acquaintance are going to claim asylum in our house, politics will have to start up again. No one is really looking forward to it because there is a circle that will have to be

squared in the National Assembly: which, as mathematicians have found, is not an easy thing to do. Since, under the constitution, new elections cannot be held until June next year, a period of governmental instability is likely, which will most likely be a victory for M Macron. He will successfully have demonstrated that his kind of politics is the only kind that can prevent France from sliding into chaos. The only fly in the ointment for him is that he cannot stand for a third term.

Within quite wide limits, however, countries are not to be characterised by their politics alone. When I think of France, I think more of the two men who help us in the garden – it is too large for us at our age to manage on our own, than of any politician. One is a man of sixty, actually half-Algerian but fully integrated, who is not 100 per cent reliable in his attendance but who works extremely well, and refuses to be paid more than he asks, though it seems not enough to us. The other man collects our bees, though this year there aren't any because of the weather in May.

They are the greatest of friends, and every afternoon, when it is too hot to work, they are to be seen in the lovely village where they live, drinking pastis at the café and chatting endlessly. They are without ambition, content with their lot, and admirably useful to others in their mode of life. I confess that I envy them.

The Salisbury Review is struggling like a lot of journals and newspapers in the current economic climate.

We are sorry to announce that unless we receive sponsorship this issue of the magazine (Autumn 2024) will be the last print issue and after that we will be limiting our output to a digital-only magazine.

Current print subscribers will of course have access to the digital magazine from now on.

The People's Betrayal by the Elite

James Monteith

It seems clear now from the charges being brought against those involved in the "far right" riots that engulfed Britain this summer following the knife attack on children in Southport that nearly all those involved in the violence were local, that many had previous convictions for violent and disorderly behaviour, and that very few in fact had any connection to "the far right". It goes without saying that the violence, which included attacks on migrant hostels, mosques, passing blacks and Asians, and the police, was abhorrent. Shops were looted, windows smashed, and cars torched. Racists and fascists may well have been involved as agitators. But there were also peaceful demonstrations, like the one on the steps of Jubilee Square in Portsmouth on August 3. Judging from photos of the event, the small gathering consisted of a cross-section of the public drawn from the local shopping mall. All ages were present, as many women as men, and there were no shaven-headed yobs in sight.

More significant was Tommy Robinson's "We want our country back rally" in Trafalgar Square on July 27, which attracted thousands of demonstrators. Inevitably the Trafalgar Square rally was branded "far right" by the mainstream media – as are all protests that oppose immigration, migrant-related crime, Islamism, or double standards in policing – and Tommy Robinson's past connections with the English Defence League were highlighted. Previous demonstrations involving Robinson have descended into violence, most notoriously on Armistice Day last year, when Robinson organised a counter demonstration to a pro-Palestinian demonstration in central London. Calls for "football lads" to stand "shoulder to shoulder'"with veterans, when those veterans were preparing for the traditional two-minute silence in Whitehall, a sombre and dignified occasion, were never going to end well. But this time the rally was peaceful and good-humoured, with the crowd singing along to Neil Diamond's *Sweet Caroline*. Footage of the event shows a sea of mostly English and Union flags dotted with some Israeli Stars of David and Scottish Saltires; a striking contrast to the rival "Stand up to racism" rally a couple of miles away, which was a sea of anti-racism and pro-Palestine banners, dotted with Palestinian flags and Irish tricolours – with not a single English or Union flag to be seen.

Whether Robinson's involvement helps the white working class in its struggle to voice legitimate concerns is questionable. Inevitably, his contributions are inflammatory, and commentators highlight his association with the English Defence League, along with his criminal record, which includes a 12-month prison sentence for assaulting an off-duty police officer. Yet he remains enormously popular – just do a *You Tube* search on his name and read the comments – and is regarded by many as the authentic voice of the people.

One cannot help but suspect that the root problem with Tommy Robinson is his class. If he had been brought up "to the manor born", gone up to Oxford, and worked out his

youthful high spirits at the Bullingdon Club, things would have turned out very differently. Instead, he was brought up in Luton, his career as an aircraft engineer was ended when he got involved in a drunken brawl, and he witnessed firsthand the rise of Islamism in Luton's parallel Muslim community – it was the heckling of a homecoming parade of British soldiers by Islamists that led to his founding the English Defence League in 2009. Whereas Boris Johnson's concerns about Islam found expression in humorous remarks about women in burkas looking like "letter boxes", and earned him a mild ticking off, Robinson's found expression in anger at the activities of the Huddersfield grooming gang and got him jailed for breaching reporting restrictions at their trial.

The English Defence League is the great bogeyman here. Synonymous with racism, fascism and neo-Nazism, its very mention strikes fear into the hearts of decent law-biding citizens. On Wikipedia, it is described as a "far-right Islamophobic organisation" whose ideology is grounded in "nationalism, nativism, and populism", and which blames "a perceived decline in English culture on high immigration rates and an uncaring political elite". Yet this might accurately describe the views of at least half the population – and not just of those on the right.

Anxious to avoid being accused of being an EDL supporter, I clicked on some of the key words for further clarification. Nationalism is defined by Wikipedia as "an identity-based belief system, an idea or social movement that holds that the nation should be congruent with the state" – in other words, that we are a nation; nativism is "the political policy of promoting or protecting the interests of native-born or indigenous inhabitants over those of immigrants, including the support of anti-immigration and immigration-restriction measures" – something that has widespread support; and populism is "a range of political stances that emphasize the idea of 'the people' and often juxtapose this group with 'the elite'". These views were precisely the ones held, and held strongly, by the four million people who voted Reform at the last election. Reform's platform was nothing if not "nationalist, nativist, and populist". But they are also the views held, to a greater or lesser degree, by a wide section of the population, including many of immigrant descent who are in competition with migrants for housing, jobs and services.

The other thing the EDL is associated with, of course, is "Islamophobia". According to Wikipedia, Islam is perceived by the EDL as "a threat to Western culture" evoking "Samuel P Huntingdon's notion of the Clash of Civilizations", and whereas Western culture is depicted as "tolerant and progressive", Islamic culture is depicted as "intolerant and backward". Yet there is a serious intellectual debate to be had about Islam and the West. Roger Scruton's *The West and the Rest*, for example, was a perceptive analysis of the profound historic and cultural differences between the two civilisations. The idea that notions of a culture clash are harboured only by a small group of extremists is absurd. What is more, a survey commissioned by the Henry Jackson Society earlier this year, which revealed that a third of British Muslims would like Sharia Law to be instituted in this country and only a quarter believed that Hamas committed atrocities on 7 October, cannot have alleviated the wider concerns of many people concerning Islam's compatibility with Western secular values.

The other question, which the mainstream media never addresses, is why the legitimate

concerns of millions of people concerning immigration and demographic change should have found sole expression in the voice of Tommy Robinson, and why their anger, sometimes inchoate, should have found its sole outlet in riots and brawls on the street. Where is the rest of the population in all of this?

The lower middle class, if I may use that pejorative term, views with distaste the yobbish behaviour that too often characterises the working class, the sort that shout "Here we go!" at football matches, get drunk, and drape themselves in the English flag – although I would caution that most football fans do not fall into this category, and the behaviour of the fans this Sunday at Stamford Bridge, where I accompanied my son to watch Chelsea's pre-season friendly against Inter Milan, was impeccable. Meanwhile, the upper middle class, the new professional cosmopolitan elite, the sort that inhabit tree-lined avenues in largely homogenous "boutique" suburban enclaves, endlessly extend their mansions, flit to the continent to enjoy their holiday villa, and employ a small army of cheap migrant labour to do their chores, feel little connection whatever with the country at large – indeed, they regard "Little Englanders" with barely disguised contempt.

But above all, where is the political elite? Much has been written, both here and in America, about the rise of the meritocratic new elite, and of a political class that ministers exclusively to this elite's interests and self-serving cosmopolitan liberal values, while ignoring the needs and concerns of the wider population. Of special note are Daniel Markovits' *The Meritocracy Trap*, Michael Sandel's *The Tyranny of Merit*, Joel Kotkin's *The Coming Feudalism*, Eric Kaufmann's *White Shift*, David Goodhart's *Head and Heart* (a worthy follow up to *The Road to Somewhere*, his brilliant diagnosis of Brexit), and Matthew Goodwin's *Values, Voice and Virtue*. Goodwin's brilliantly articulate and impassioned speech on this theme to last year's National Conservatism Conference is readily available on the net and essential listening. But the classic analysis is Christoper Lasch's in his 1995 *The Revolt of the Elites – and the Betrayal of Democracy*. Lasch makes the seminal point that meritocracy, far from enabling democracy, is "a parody" of it. Unlike the aristocratic hereditary elites of old, the new elite or technocracy recognises few obligations "to their predecessors or to the communities they profess to lead". They obsess about "attacking hereditary privilege" and "fostering social mobility" but show scant regard for those left behind – most of the population – who have only themselves to blame. Any sense of a wider community, of "the common good", or of "a common culture" is lost.

For decades in this country, people's concerns about immigration and the loss of their culture – our culture – have been ignored by the mainstream political class, our liberal establishment elite. Judging from its reaction to the recent riots and demonstrations, these concerns will continue to be ignored. Reform is a genuinely anti-establishment party, which interestingly seems to have Tommy Robinson's support. But with a clampdown on social media misinformation in store, allied with existing hate crime legislation, which proscribes any speech that incites hatred or causes offence, Nigel Farage will have to tread carefully. Decent people will hold their tongues for fear of being branded "far right". And the dirty work of protesting on the street will continue to be left to the "football lads" of the white working class.

The Beatification of David Oluwale

Bill Hartley

In April 2023 BBC news reported that a plaque on Leeds Bridge had been stolen, hours after it had been installed in an unveiling ceremony organised by Leeds Civic Trust.

The plaque had been placed there to commemorate the life and sad death of David Oluwale, a Nigerian who in 1949 had stowed away on a ship bound for Britain. Eventually he arrived in Leeds where he found work. Subsequently Oluwale's life took a downward spiral which included mental illness, a long spell in a psychiatric facility and time spent living rough on the streets of the city. In 1969 he was seen being pursued by two police officers. Two weeks later his body was found in the River Aire. The officers were subsequently jailed for assault, though it could not be established whether their actions had led to his tragic death.

Referring to the removal of the plaque a police superintendent declared himself 'appalled' by this iconoclasm and announced that it had been decided to treat the incident as a hate crime. It doesn't seem to have occurred to anyone that placing the plaque in such an accessible spot was asking for trouble. Also, other property damage in the environs of Leeds Bridge doesn't appear to have received anything like this level of attention. After the routine Saturday night excesses damage isn't unusual. A recent example being the breaking of a fine acid engraved window, one of a series at the nearby Adelphi pub. These are, or rather were an example of Victorian glasswork. The Adelphi also has a plaque, this one commemorating its architectural significance. Staff remain mystified about who did this and so apparently do the police.

The unveiling ceremony hadn't been restricted to those who were sufficiently interested to gather on the pavement nearby. Around the city the council arranged for images of Oluwale and his plaque to be beamed to various LED message boards. Following its disappearance and acting on their own initiative, volunteers undertook a spot of magnet fishing further upstream in the River Aire, presumably in case the missing plaque had ended up there amongst the urban detritus. All they dredged up was a hand grenade, which led to the evacuation of the nearby Asda Supermarkets' head office. Subsequently a temporary plaque was put in its place but it was torn in half. This time CCTV was able to spot the culprit and for once an act of vandalism in Leeds city centre saw someone prosecuted and taken to court. The defendant denied the charge, claiming he had been so outraged by some racist graffiti written on the plaque, that he had showed his disgust by tearing it off and throwing it in the river. The court chose not to accept his explanation.

The Oluwale cult continues to thrive, promoted by a memorial trust set up in his name. Although there is no firm evidence regarding his fate, hearsay seems to be sufficient and this has been transformed into fact. All we do know is that he was racially harassed and assaulted by two police officers. Their behaviour was reported by another

officer and the men were arrested, charged and convicted. According to the David Oluwale Memorial Association he came to England determined to assist in its post war recovery. To those who follow the cult this has been transformed into a messianic desire to get to the mother country. A country which, if the disciples of the cult are to be believed, was determined to reject him.

Recently Leeds City Council was among several in West Yorkshire to announce how cash strapped they are. This doesn't seem to have prevented them from finding the funds to erect a footbridge across the river; a couple of hundred yards away from Leeds Bridge near where Oluwale is believed to have entered the water. Arguably a somewhat superfluous crossing point: Victoria Bridge is only a couple of minutes' walk in the opposite direction. This Bridge of Sighs also commemorates Oluwale's martyrdom. So, he now has a presence on two bridges in Leeds.

Leeds Bridge is closest to where he allegedly disappeared into the waters of the Aire back in 1969 (the two-week hiatus before his body was discovered is rendered irrelevant by devotees). In November 2023 there was a further commemoration service on the bridge. Shoppers from nearby Briggate squeezed past those who had gathered around the third version of the plaque. Votive graffiti was left on the wall in which acolytes expressed their 'love' for the deceased.

Whilst Jerusalem has its Via Doloroso, Leeds has a guided walk around the city where pilgrims can visit places where David lived and worked and drank. The last time this happened Oluwale themed films were screened such as *Hounded* and *We are all Migrants*. The Arts Council provided some of the funding. Pilgrims were also able to take away souvenirs in the shape of books and pens. These eulogiai provided a physical link to show that they have walked in the footsteps of David.

The gathering on Leeds Bridge was held to announce the appearance of yet another memorial.

Hibiscus Rising is a 31 feet high sculpture by the artist Yinka Shonibari, part funded by Leeds City council and erected in Aire Gardens, a nearby urban regeneration project. This was part of the Leeds 2023 Year of Culture. A press release described it as 'a symbol of unity and hope and shows how far Leeds as a unified inclusive city has moved from a less tolerant past'. The press release goes on to elevate Oluwale to the status of a British-Nigerian Leeds resident, who was hounded to his death as a result of systematic police harassment and violence. Again, there is no proof as to how he ended up in the river. When the legend becomes fact print the legend, seems to be the official approach.

Hopefully the CCTV which for once was so effective in detecting vandalism on nearby Leeds Bridge, may also be positioned in Aire Gardens. Other areas of public parkland in Leeds city centre have been so thoroughly vandalised that one might think the perpetrators brought tools with them, given the damage to heavy duty wooden seating and stonework

Long term residents of the city may be baffled as to how the Oluwale cult sprang fully formed into their midst. The Memorial Trust is to be congratulated for a superb promotional job, reviving as they have a decades old tragedy, dealt with by the courts at the time. Now in the words of the David Oluwale Memorial Trust they can, 'help Leeds come to terms' with what happened. Whether Leeds likes it or not.

Tories as Cassandra of Politics

Darian Murray-Griffiths

The remaining few days of this convoluted and bizarre general election campaign have revealed the latest iteration of the Tory message, a phase one might term the 'Cassandra phase' after the classical figure who always spoke the truth but was destined to never be believed. In this phase, resigned to defeat as the self-proclaimed 'underdogs' of British politics, the Conservatives have sought to wring the air full of emergency warnings, prophetic telling, and a certain dose of doom-mongering. They have raised the alarm about the true, unknowable costs of Starmer and Labour's deliberate stealth and imprecision. The message is simple and chilling – you've been warned. As supermajority predictions swirl, this may be seen as 'desperation' (as Starmer has termed it). But I think that, for all of the woe, incompetence, and shoddy dealings of late, the Conservative message is one that we should listen to more carefully, for it resonates.

At least the Conservatives did not end up as the third party in the Commons. A new era has dawned for an entire next generation, while the constitutional and cultural landscape of this country will be altered, perhaps forever. This is not typical journalistic hyperbole but potential truth. Pay not your attention to the surface-level digressions and bomb-proof focus-group-tested blandness that pour forth with enervating regularity from the mouths of the Labour frontbench. Instead, look to their policy platforms and to the reports of their intellectual supporters. Be it gender, race, patriotism, or history, they smother actual culture wars, actual conflicts of belief or imagination, under the stifling oppressive weight of 'forget about it', 'it does not matter', 'these are whipped-up Tory fears'. They do so now but look to what a radically changed political landscape might be able to inflict upon the cultural landscape. The arguments on the economy have been well-rehearsed but look also to our precious constitution. In need of reform and more 'good chaps', for sure. But the Fabian reforms of Labour and those on the political Left constitute a long-enough war of attrition in which, bit by bit, piece by piece, the hallmarks of the constitution are dealt body blows from which they might never recover. It is truly worrying to all who value balance and equipoise in our fragile politics that a Labour Party not satisfied with a Commons super-majority now seeks to reduce the second chamber to an impotent, lickspittle shadow. Domineering arrogance of power never tastes so good, be it from Right or from Left. Without a strong opposition, this new temporary political consensus that leans Left will possess the power and the initiative to use temporary supremacy to permanently entrench its vision. A dangerous position that, when no side has a monopoly of wisdom or truth, the powers that be then decide to act as if they alone do.

Is this an argument based upon fear?

Perhaps. Fear is linked to the possibilities of the unknown. But it is worth pointing out that a Labour frontbench so incandescent with apoplectic rage whenever they are questioned on former beliefs or even present policies, who are so morally outraged the moment when an intelligent public asks for detail on their spin and soundbites, cannot yet be trusted. Forgive those who are unwilling to be the trusting fools who should have known better had they dared to be more questioning, more sceptical, more distrusting of the low-level spin we are fed.

This has been a really unappetising and dissatisfactory election – we have been fed a relentless and remorseless diet of negativism and finger-pointing from either side, both reluctant to engage our higher forms of intelligence, too prepared to stretch, to breaking point, our credulity. Come July 5th, the funny money of all parties will be shown up for the caddish reality it really is. The neglecting of the vast swathes of left-behind and marginalised peoples in this country of ours will become evident sooner than we know – as the revolutionary realignment of Brexit and the recent political convulsions of France have already proven. But, most of all, the Conservatives may be able to snatch one garland from the impending misery of election night – that, in time, they may be the Cassandras of 2024 rather than the boys who cried wolf. It's another question, perhaps another article's worth, to ask why these Johnny-come-lately Cassandras didn't do more in office to argue better against or prevent the worries they now so fulsomely predict.

The Sweet Sound of Vinyl

Noel Yaxley

Few cultural pursuits are as enjoyable as browsing through independent record stores. While mainstream chains offer a small selection of albums, the vast array of unknown titles that greet you as you walk through the door of an independent is one of life's great thrills. Inside, time becomes a meaningless concept; a few minutes spent perusing the shelves stretches into an hour as the stack of LPs I am holding increases. I can still picture my heart pounding when I found a copy of *Greed* by Swans wedged behind a Steely Dan record. I would purchase a half-dozen interesting new records and leave the store. Under a lightly scuffed cover and inner sleeve, a world of possibilities awaits.

The demand for music available in physical form has sky-rocketed in Britain. In 2023, vinyl record sales in the United Kingdom reached 6.5 million, marking 16 consecutive years of growth. In the meantime, the unassuming cassette tape is making a comeback. Sales reached a record high of 195,000 in 2022, the highest in 20 years. And supply exists wherever there is demand. In the UK, there are now 461 independent record stores, up 36 percent from ten years ago. And I'm lucky to live in a city that boasts one of the best in the country.

In February 1991, Paul Mills opened SoundClash, a small record store in Norwich, in eastern England. This little, independently owned store has persevered through the economic storm of creation destruction for more than thirty years.

SoundClash has always stood tall, even as vape shops and trendy coffee bars have replaced pawn shops and indoor markets. Situated in the bustling bohemian centre of the city, its distinctive exterior painted in blue has consistently drawn me through the doors.

Decor-wise, it feels more like a student's bedroom than a business. About the size of a one-bedroom apartment, its heavily graffitied walls are lined with rows of black shelves. A couple of well-used Technics decks and a chewed-up pair of headphones at the counter allow any potential customer to listen before they buy. I cannot even begin to estimate the number of hours or days I have wasted at the counter with my scuffed Converse glued to an equally scuffed carpet. This is where my love affair began.

Paul and I caught up a few days ago during one of my frequent visits. I wanted to talk to him about the growing interest in physical music and the resurgence of independent stores. I was curious to know what was causing this boom.

"A lot of it is Gen Z," Paul tells me, as he rubber stamps a pile of invoices. "These days, kids are fascinated with vintage. They want to be different, stand out, y'know, rebel, in the same way we did."

He claims that the primary cause of a lot of this is pop culture nostalgia. In his words, "Nostalgia sells". The once-ubiquitous Sony Walkman's appearance in several well-known films and television programmes has influenced demand. Whether it's Max on *Stranger Things* listening to Kate Bush tapes or its appearance in *The Last of Us*, retro chic has returned to the humble cassette.

To my surprise, I realised that I was inadvertently caught in this wave of nostalgia recently. A few weeks ago, one of my friends told me that he was going on a trip across Europe. For the next twelve months, he would be living in a Volkswagen campervan with only an old-fashioned front-loading tape player for company. So, I decided to make him a mix-tape. One for the road, as it were.

As soon as I touched a dusty old TDK-D-90, I felt like I was transported back to my youth. I used to listen to John Peel on the radio when I was a teenager, my fingers twitching over the stereo's record and play buttons, waiting anxiously for the newest session track from Tad or Shellac. Peel knew his listeners were recording the music, so would occasionally pause to ensure we didn't miss anything.

There's an art to making a mix-tape. I can create an excellent mix-tape with just a pencil and a few inches of gaffer tape. Never, ever use a BASF-120. They might add an additional thirty minutes of music to your compilation, but it's a trade-off. The thin tape in the deck always ends up twisted. We refer to this as "tape salad". This can be solved with a pencil.

Of course, you cannot just put any old song on it. The person you are making it for must be known to you. A mix-tape is, therefore, personal. Making something for someone has more emotional weight than just clicking "buy" on Amazon. When we parted ways for the summer break in high school, I recall recording a cassette for a girl I liked. Completely filled with soppy songs, it had stickers all over it, and I had created the cover art. If this experience has taught me anything, it's that nostalgia can wield a lot of power. And it affects everyone.

The mainstream is aware of nostalgia's ability to sell. Music on cassette has been released by artists like Harry Styles, Billie Eilish, and Taylor Swift. The latter released a limited blue-edition of her album *Midnights*. Meanwhile, all 20 of the biggest-selling albums in the UK were released on tape in 2022.

In recent years, it has brought about a remarkable revival. "It's a comeback story for the ages, a modern-day Rocky," asserts Paul. However, there is some truth behind all the light-hearted humour. With an opponent as big as Spotify, this particular tale of the tape has left the streaming behemoth with a bloody nose. From relative obscurity ten years ago, cassettes are now

selling in large quantities. According to Luminate data, there was a 443 percent increase in cassette tape sales in the US between 2015 and 2022.

The culture industry puts what has happened in context, but it doesn't really address the more important question. Why? Is this just a case of a few lucky musicians and shrewd record labels capitalising on the nostalgia trend? Paul has a theory.

"People need control over their lives," he asserts, rather philosophically. "Unfortunately, every cultural medium we consume these days is digital. You don't own anything. When you purchase vinyl or cassette, you regain a sense of control." Paul is a very intelligent man, despite his modesty as a businessman. Decades of research have shown that when someone acquires ownership of an item, its value rises. Put simply, we value what we own. In psychology, this is known as the endowment effect. It appears the dusty record decks on top of the counter had a greater impact on us than we realised.

I know my paean to plastic is more sentimental than factual. It's a drop in the ocean when it comes to the world of music consumption. Merely bringing up statistics brings me crashing back to reality. Only 8 percent of all music sales worldwide are in physical form. Furthermore, the £311 million in sales in the UK pales in comparison to the £2.2 billion in streaming sales.

I'll always support music in analogue form. I am guaranteed to get goosebumps whenever I see a young person pick up a 12-inch piece of wax, whether it be at Banquet Records in London, Jumbo Records in Leeds, Resident in Brighton, or my very own SoundClash. The voice in my head will say, "Go get it, what are you waiting for?"

From the Archive - Autumn 2006

A Gender-Neutral Society?

Patricia Lança

Professor Mansfield thinks we are now living in what he calls a gender-neutral society, brought about by the campaigns of the radical feminists, especially academia. They managed this, he says, by peaceful means; by 'consciousness-raising', by words rather than violent action. And they were astonishingly successful. Their adversaries caved in all around them and they managed to change practices by changing the language, making any kind of verbal 'sexism' – a word they themselves popularized – unacceptable among decent people. And the new dispensation was achieved with extraordinary rapidity, which Mansfield confesses causes him surprise and some puzzlement. He says he is still unable to explain feminist' easy victory. So easy indeed, that manliness is now deprecated and men feminized. Not that the author calls the process of sensitization by that name. But many others have and there may be some truth in it.

In measured and often witty argument he examines the concept of manliness in his book (*Manliness*, Harvey C Mansfield, Yale University Press) in all its manifestations, practical and literary, historical and philosophical. No reader will be surprised at his citing Achilles or John Wayne; most will find the mention of Nietzche less consensual, unless *über-menschism* can be construed as manliness. But Mansfield readily admits that not all manliness is commendable.

However, its core characteristics certainly are and the feminists are mistaken to decry it. If only they were to accept society's (and women's) need of manliness in men they would lose nothing and strengthen their case. Mansfield's ideas in this regard are generally unexceptionable. The trouble lies with the feminist framework he appears to accept. There are a number of points he might have questioned. First, while academia may be a gender-neutral space, it is doubtful that this is true of society as a whole. Or even desirable. Secondly, the accession of women to full citizenship (something feminists call 'women's liberation') cannot really be ascribed to the last three or four decades of radical feminist activism. The realization of sexual equality, still uncompleted in many areas and especially of the domestic front, owed itself to other causes and would have come about regardless of the activities or argument of people like Greer, Friedan, Butler and their ilk. It can even be argued that most women – and society as a whole – might today be better off without the ranting of the radical feminists. The appearance of these figures was because new spaces had for a long time been opening up to women and those self-appointed spokeswomen for the female sex simply took advantage of their opportunities. Like the Bolsheviks in 1917 Russia the feminists assaulted a crumbling citadel and captured it with remarkable ease.

Mansfield, however, leaves the premises of radical feminism untouched. Refuting feminism is not his objective. He does not even talk about the ravages it has caused in terms of sexual harassment legislation, quarrels over quotas and affirmative action, the bitterness of the so-called culture wars, fatherless homes, mounting domestic violence, intellectual and moral obscurantism, the breaking down of civility and the coarsening of manners. What he wants is to put in a plea for men. He does so eloquently and with some elegance. But it is doubtful that he will get a hearing from either side. Instead of looking to biology, anthropology, history and economics for the sources of women's subordination, without which it is impossible to find the right solutions, radical feminism has been largely based on the Marxist theory of class war, discredited notions about primitive communism and what Engels called 'the overthrow of mother-right' in those halcyon days when savages were noble and there was no class exploitation.

One of the curious things about this book is that its author, who is a Professor of Government at Harvard, in over 280 pages scarcely mentions economics. What he is concerned with are philosophical ideas. It is as though he had been dazzled by radical feminism's forays into the dismal labyrinths of post-modernism and had decided that philosophy would be the area in which he was most likely to impress his word-drunk feminist readers. Of course, ideas are immensely important, but Mansfield's mistake is to forget that ideas, only gain influence in an appropriate environment. Ideas which don't catch on because they are ahead of their time or out of context are quickly forgotten. Plato, in the IVth century BC, had a great deal to say about the role of women in the communist society described in *The Republic* – Mansfield gives Plato frequent mention. Before the scientific revolution of the XVIIth century and the Enlightenment of the XVIIIth century, Plato's social projects could not but remain a dead letter. And although what came to be known as 'the woman question' began to come into the foreground in the nineteenth century it was not until the twentieth that matters really came to a head. It was the industrial revolution and accelerating technological advance that set the scene for women's emancipation which could not have taken place without them.

The radical feminists are quite mistaken in their theories about the patriarchy being the source of women's subordinate status. The unwelcome truth of the matter is that until

modern technology could produce efficient means of contraception on the one hand and on the other multiple labour-saving devices, women and children – the human race, in fact – could not survive at all without the protection of the male sex. Radical feminists forget that young humans need their mothers because they have a very long childhood, required for learning language and other exclusively human skills. Men, as the necessary protectors of women, had manliness thrust upon them by Nature and this was reinforced by culture; their reward was honour and the status of leadership in the home and outside it. Some exercised their power magnanimously, others were tyrants. But women could not avoid dependence until technology freed females from annual childbirth and both sexes from back-breaking labour.

It is an extraordinary commentary on the obtuseness (not to say scientific illiteracy) of some female academics that they continue to mythologize patriarchy as an evil imposed from outside of nature, and insist that 'gender' is a social construction. Schools may no longer provide adequate teaching of biology or zoology but our television screens and newspaper columns are filled daily with studies of animal behaviour, the courting rituals of alpha males, programmes about genetics and the role of mitochondrial DNA in heredity, X and Y chromosomes, testosterone and the rest. Everything indicates that the males of mammalian species are hard-wired for masculinity (manliness). During 99.99 per cent of the human and pre-human past men had to go hunting and kill animals for food, and some of the attributes of manliness are associated with this activity – boldness, aggressiveness, stoicism, etc, while associated cultural traditions account for most of the rest. But feminists have preferred to learn from a crackpot male philosopher, Michel Foucault, who thought heterosexuality had been imposed on society by the bourgeoisie. They have made him one of their most significant intellectual icons. But this is not really surprising if they are misguided enough to dismiss science as a male enterprise: part of phallogocentrism condemned by Foucault.

However, rather than persist in beating that dead horse, it is more constructive to mention some of the many factors that brought about women's emancipation and in which the radical feminists had no hand at all. The developments which helped to liberate women tended to make many masculine attributes redundant. The advent of the motor car at the end of the nineteenth century had far-reaching social repercussions. When the first members of the upper classes bought motor cars and reserved their horses for the hunt, it really was the beginning of the end of chivalry in every sense. It ushered in the possibility of freedom of movement for women as well as men, and with no muscular exertion. Not only could people travel, safely and dry: chaperones could be dispensed with. In southern Europe where the chaperone was ubiquitous and middle and upper-class women were not allowed to go out alone, a driving licence became a woman's access to freedom of movement and escape from the home. The Saudi Islamic fundamentalists know what they are doing when they ban women from driving cars. Simultaneous with the advent of the motor car was the condom. Whether or not the latter was first thought of as a prophylactic its use as a contraceptive soon became widespread and from that time onwards the size of families among the educated classes dropped dramatically. The path was opened for separating sex from reproduction and women were set for biological freedom.

Long before the First World War sent droves of women into the factories to replace men who had departed for the armed forces, growing mechanization during the previous century had lured working women into industry. The sewing machine needed female operatives at home and in the workplace. As capitalism developed so did its concomitant service industries. In offices

everywhere the typewriter became ubiquitous and with it the female typist. Employers had been quick to see the advantages of lower-paid female labour and there were not enough men to fulfil the growing need for clerical workers. Women had never been absent from economic life; peasant women had always worked in the fields and villages, even though some of their tasks might have been lighter than those of men. With the advent of machinery, agriculture needed less manpower and the exodus of whole families to the towns provided expanding industry and commerce with the human beings needed as producers and consumers.

The long, slow movement towards female emancipation ran parallel with the growth of capitalism as did education to fill the need for a more educated workforce. None of these needs or their satisfaction grew at an even pace. As usual it was the political sphere that lagged behind and this was the arena where conflicting interests met and policies were hammered out. Hence there were women physicians before there were women members of parliament, women writers before there were women cabinet ministers. Family law was one of the last bastions to give way but now, for good or ill, an entire generation of women has grown up into a world of easy divorce, contraception and abortion. The United Kingdom even got itself a woman prime minister and she was certainly no product of radical feminism. And now all over the developed world there are more women university graduates than men.

Why then the remarkable rancorousness of feminist discourse? Why does even a man as urbane as Mansfield make so much rueful mention of the domestic battle to get husbands to share the housework so that their wives might have careers? Why did Betty Freidan's unremarkable book *The Feminine Mystique* have such success that it is now regarded among feminists much as *The Communist Manifesto* among socialists? The answer is simple: the educated woman's boredom with housework. A glance at the pace of female emancipation in places like southern Europe, Latin America and India tells it all. It is much easier for an educated woman to combine marriage, motherhood and a career in poorer countries than in rich ones. Where there is still a large peasant population but the cities are approaching Western standards, there is no shortage of domestic servants to staff the more spacious southern or non-western homes of professional women and at much lower wages than those of the European or American nanny. Husbands have little to lose from their wives' pursuit of careers. No doubt this stage of affairs will not last for ever, but while it does, the middle-class women it benefits will be freer to enter politics than their Anglo sisters. And with notably less friction in the home with their men-folk. All this, of course, is to leave out the special case of Islam, but that is a different story.

There can be little doubt that modern life does indeed threaten traditional ideas of manliness. The multiple social and economic factors which were crucial to the emancipation of women have also been significant in creating a deficit of manliness in men. This is observably so where muscular aspects of manliness are concerned. Who needs muscle when you've got machines? Even the horny-handed sons of toil have mostly disappeared to be replaced by clean, neatly overalled technicians. There are, or course, still enclaves where brawn and endurance are needed, and the fork-lift truck and bull-dozer are not always the complete answer. But even extractive industries, abattoirs, or fishing vessels are easier places to work in than they once were. As for the legions of office-workers, where is there scope here for old-style manliness? What scope does exist is on the streets and playing fields where much male aggression stubbornly persists to everybody's inconvenience.

Much as all normal women appreciate manly men, and normal men prefer womanly women, it really does seem time to get rid of their use as

nouns. What we want today is *character* in both sexes and this is something that western education systems have been remiss in developing. If educators, professors, school-teachers and those who run their institutions, can set about this task a good many of our troubles would be over.

Patricia Lança was a deputy in the Portuguese Parliament and a writer of books and articles on social and political topics.

Archive – Autumn 2002

A Voice crying in the wilderness

Alfred Sherman

The Salisbury Review was founded in 1982. It was established as the *porte parole* of a conservative organisation, the Salisbury Group, which did not survive. The term conservative – I use the lower case to distinguish it from the Conservative Party, which is not conservative in our sense of the word – is a matter for interpretation, not at all cut and dried. By 1982, the aim of the *Review*, or any like-minded organisation, could no longer be to conserve or preserve conservatism and what it stood for, but must of necessity have been either to restore or to mourn it. To restore entails enquiry into the causes of its desuetude and conditions for reversal. Moreover, conservatism restored would be conservatism reshaped, involving ideas of what should be rather than what is. Conservatism restored is a construct unlike natural conservatism, which in its day entailed hallowing the status quo because it was the status quo, "all that is right". By 1982, very little of that was left. The Labour victory of 1945 had changed not only the face of Britain but also the Conservative Party. It had become Butler's party in all but name, a variant of socialism. These changes have continued till this day. What could conceivably have been rescued was a subject for conjecture which continues to this day with decreasing hopefulness. In that case, to be conservative today is to be radical or revolutionary, to reject the status quo, but in favour of what?

The universities were once a home of conservatism. But having been turned into nationalised industries and a form of welfare in which discrimination between quality and mediocrity is outlawed, and quality sacrificed to accessibility, the universities were lost to conservatism. Conservatism entails hierarchy and deference. Conservatism's hierarchies were independent but inter-locking: royalty, the Lords, the bench, the bar, the law society, the world of medicine, banking and business, the armed services, the established church, *inter alia*. Deference has become unfashionable, except for momentary adoration of current idols: entertainers and sportsmen. Otherwise, there is a dearth of models and standards. Many current cultural norms are antinomian or counter-culture, eg the Booker and Turner prizes: defiant demoticism has replaced classicism; we have it on Plato's authority that art determines social behaviour. Our guardians go along with it.

1982, when the *Review* was founded, was a time of hope, Margaret Thatcher reigned with bold Conservative rhetoric. But decades of

disappointment continued to follow. During the following twenty years our awareness of the rigours, of deception grew *parti passu* with the oppositional stance of the *Review*, which has of necessity become a voice crying in the wilderness. Margaret Thatcher remains a key figure in British politics of the last quarter of the century, subject to continuous reinterpretation. That she towered above our narrow world like a colossus is beyond argument, but what became of it all is as fraught with argument as ever. Perhaps the appearance of Thatcher and the underlying reality are inseparable. Moreover, the Salisbury Group and its *Review* were not Thatcherite *ab initio*.

Many Conservatives thought in terms of authority and the State, and expressed misgivings regarding the commercialisation of society and marketisation of social thought, prioritisation of free enterprise and the market, while others directed our main fire against étatisation, socialism and controls. Some liberals were indeed guilty of overstressing the importance of the economic at the expense of socio-political factors. This dichotomy remains with us today.

Though Iain Duncan Smith was elected as a Thatcherite favourite, his rebranding of the Conservatives as the party of the public services (including massive subsidies to rail passengers a small minority of passengers) and dedicating PM's questions to the treatment of a patient in A&E, as well as Oliver Letwin's extravaganzas, raise doubts. Margaret Thatcher was right when she pointed out that the Conservative Party could not be called "the party of free enterprise", though it favoured free enterprise, its roots go much wider, deeper and further back. State ownership and control have undoubtedly spread too far, but this leaves the question of the proper role, function and scope of the State to be worked out by modern conservatives for the 21st century. In the 'seventies and 'eighties, Thatcherism and Conservative generally stressed the creative role of free enterprise and the wasteful role of sate intervention. These are both strictly true, but more generally a caricature. The implied slogan "private good, public bad" is as misleading as the socialists' implied slogan "public good, private bad". For one thing, private and public are not simple antitheses. Public services, including defence, law enforcement, education and administration have always been subject matter of conservatism. Public utilities may be privately, municipally or State owned without affecting their special character. Schools, hospitals and the like can be owned and run by charities. The profit-motive is an engine or change, not a good *per se*. Most Conservatives welcomed the transfer of control over the bank rate from the Treasury to the Bank of England. But should the rage of interest be fixed by a State institution rather than by borrowers and lenders? Margaret Thatcher once argued that we, the public, do not own the nationalised industries, on the contrary, they own us. Conversely, awareness of the complexity of society and the unknowability of motives and outcomes are part of the conservative ethos, whereas by contrast Thatcherism dealt in certainties, in beliefs rather than ideas.

Classical conservatism was quintessentially and exclusively British. It had nothing in common with European society, institutions and thought, its links were with the Empire and the once British United States, with its common-law heritage. The idea of the European community, European courts, law and bill of rights was anathema toit. But they now reign. Multi-culturalism has never been debated or legislated, but it holds sway as the unquestioned basis of national policy. Since multi-culturalism precludes Britishness, the whole basis of Conservatism has been nullified without argument, mainly during the last thirty years. Patriotism has been dismissed

as xenophobia or racism, conservatism with it. Accusations of racism, that catch-all denunciation, make brave men blanche and throw up their hands.

Measurement and definition of State and non-state is not simple, nor are the criteria stable over time. Institutions controlled by party politics have a character of their own. GP's and barristers are both self-employed but the one lean towards hospital doctors and the other towards judges. Regardless of the railways' exact status, it matters more if they are run as enterprises or part of the welfare economy than who their nominal owners are. The same holds good for the arms industry, and indeed many other branches of manufacturing industry which seek custom or hep from authority. Much of the nominally private sector is dependent on the sate in one way or another.

As things are going the English will become a minority in their own motherland, and the country de-Christianised. Only history will tell us whether multi-culturalism and the minoritisation of the British nation will continue, or the process will be reversed by exercise of popular will, however painfully. The history of the *Review* has coincided not only with continued alien settlement but also with multiculturalism's continued conquest of the thought ways and its institutionalisation. The Honeyford case is an example. Conservatism has always been inextricably linked with both Englishness and Anglicanism. Multiculturalism, which treats all languages, cultures and nationdoms as equals and Anglocentrism as xenophobia, violates the essence of conservatism. Anglicanism is but a shadow of what it once was. Britain is less wholeheartedly Christian than it was in conservatism's heyday. The Church of England apologises for being Christian and accepts Islam as a legitimate British religion. Would conservatism's rebirth entail re-Christianisation? It all comes as a reminder that we are more keenly aware of what we are against than what we are for

Ideas are shaped by circumstances: in conservatism's heyday the State sector was a few percent of GDP, mainly the armed forces, now it is roughly half. Can the State's dependents seek to curtail it? In the mid-seventies an American politician warned that we might be approaching the point of no return in this regard. If we pass it, where could the conservative counter-revolution emerge from?

As I pen these words, misgivings at some aspects of rethink have emerged from an unlikely source, the Labour Home Secretary. Hostile reactions were immediate and predictable; a sympathetic groundswell would take longer to emerge, it at all. I have just been invited by a nominally prestigious Conservative organisation to address a seminar on the question of national identity and relations with Islam. Are these harbingers, or flashes in the pan? But this brings us back to the question: what makes things happen? Why should some voices crying in the wilderness make things happen, and other fall on stony ground? We do not know. But cry we must.

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Conservative Classic

The Red Decade Eugene Lyons

James Monkton

Over the past few decades, we have seen some familiar names of ex-communists who have seen the light like the union leader Frank Chapple and journalist Peter Hitchens. Back in the Cold War and before, it was risky for former communists to reveal the true dangers of the Marxist system, because Soviet Russia had infiltrated Western institutions to the highest levels. In the US, the McCarthy anti-communist witch-hunts of the 1950s have been much maligned but while broomstick-flying witches have never existed, there were plenty of real communists in America, the UK and elsewhere penetrating government and the establishments and selling their nations' secrets to the Russian enemy. In *The Red Decade*, Eugene Lyons exposes the full threat of the "Red Menace" from the vantage point of a fully-fledged communist who was later angered by the malign ideology of his comrades to become a committed supporter of democratic freedom.

Lyons was one of the earliest American reporters in communist Russia, arriving there in 1928, and the first to interview Stalin after his rise to power. Born in Russia, his family moved to America in 1907 when he was nine and became a devoted supporter of the Bolshevik revolution, a true believer and activist. But the six years he spent reporting from his motherland for United Press disabused him of his youthful politics, transforming him into a crusading anti-communist. Show trials, pathological governmental lying, political executions and the calculated horror of the Ukrainian famine, the Holodomor, could no longer be defended.

On his return to the States, he articulated his critical new perspectives with increasing vociferousness and regularity. In 1935 in *Harper's Magazine*, he wrote of how previously he would feel guilty if he wrote anything negative about communist Russia, but now he "begun to feel guilty *toward the Russian people*" if he kept silent about its malevolent nature. A book followed, *Assignment in Utopia* (1937), but *The Red Decade: The Stalinist Penetration of America* from 1941, exposes the very real threat to western society from communism. He now vigorously opposed the alliance that America and Britain forged with Russia that year.

The Red Decade is a detailed exposure of the insidious and dangerous role of the Communist Party of America and its acolytes in the 1930's by a former fellow-traveller. It is easy to forget how, in the Depression and post-Depression eras, socialism was a very real force in the United States, the government fearing that a revolution might break out there and with good reason. Benjamin Gitlow, a leader of the Party, said of those years: "We were volunteer members of a militarized civil service, pledged to carry out the decisions

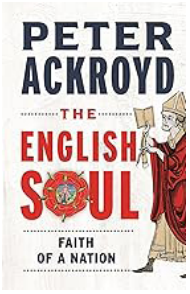
of our supreme ruler's resident at Moscow anywhere in the world but particularly in the land we were colonizing for communism, the United States." Lyons writes of the decade: "Never before had the country's thinking, official policies, education, arts and moral attitudes been so profoundly affected by the agents, sympathizers, and unwitting puppets of a distant dictatorship". Covert leftist entryism was also a common strategy in Britain. Front organisations like the American Youth Congress (on the Jesuitical principle of get them while they are young) and the gloriously unabashed Innocents' Club. were useful idiots who "professed themselves to be 'liberals' as they meekly followed totalitarian leadership into the most illiberal movements". Readers will recognise similar movements in our own times. Today's progressives – through virtue signalling, posturing and rank hypocrisy – were all present nearly a century ago in the States and echoed in Britain.

Lyons identifies the various "Trojan-horse" organisations and circles run by outright or crypto-communists. The worst, or certainly the most "befuddled", were the writers, academics, and actors. Lyons points out that Krushchev's famous Stalin-denouncing speech of 1956 exposed "the full measure of their fatuity" and "idiocy". Then, as with today's progressive clerisy, believers indulged in character assassination of their opponents; any detractors faced personal insults through "the arts of character assassination as practiced against infidels."

Character assassination of many of the leftists was often an easy task: the odious Walter Duranty, Pulitzer Prize winner whom Lyons knew it well. is infamous as a Holodomor-mitigating apologist for Stalin's brutality. Lyons observes that Duranty had that typical champagne socialist "peculiarly disdainful attitude towards the masses that one finds among some middle-class British – a "colonial distaste for 'natives'". Duranty, could justify the Ukrainian famine with his "oft-repeated assertion that 'you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs'" and referred to the famine as "under nourishment". He was not the worst, for Lyons provides a rogue's gallery of morons and dissemblers pedalling the Moscow line.

Lyons dissects the communist infiltration in his country over 33 chapters, many with amusing titles such as "The Liberals invent Utopia", "Hooray for murder!" and "The last loony scene". The book remains highly relevant today. Instead of fanatical communists, we now have fanatical "liberal progressives" severely curtailing our freedoms of free speech and association, and attempting to censor our thoughts and engineer society into a realm that is perverse to human nature. Today we are still at the stage where the progressives' grip is so hard that too few are brave enough to break ranks and become heretics. In the preface to the second edition, Lyons writes: "Now, as always, Party pressures radiate outward from the hard core of zealots to affect the minds of some millions, especially among the young and in the so-called Liberal Establishment". Those young are today's Liberal Establishment; they show no sign of recognising the error of their ways.

Arts and Books



All our yesterdays

Alan Sked

The English Soul: Faith of a Nation, Peter Ackroyd, Reaktion

William Blake wrote: "...there is no use in education. I hold it wrong. It is the great Sin. It is eating of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." Fortunately, Peter Ackroyd, although devoting a chapter to this artist, ignores his advice and gives his readers a brilliant account of the history of the Christian religion in England. It is a wonderful education on the subject for anyone who does not know about it already or has forgotten it. It is not a narrative history or even a comprehensive one. There is nothing about the construction of the great English cathedrals or the various orders of monks, nothing substantial on struggles between kings and popes yet the story covers most of the key figures and movements one would like to know about and Ackroyd, who is an accomplished historian, novelist and reviewer, writes clearly and compellingly so that the book is hard to put down. It would make a wonderful television series, since all its chapters would easily lend themselves to individual instalments.

Most of the chapters centre on an individual or individuals. But there are three which constitute sort of catch-ups with the general history of evangelicalism, orthodox Anglicanism and contemporary developments. These are well done and very useful to anyone following the story. One reviewer has suggested that religion is not really the soul of England and lamented the lack of attention paid to literature. There may be something in this, although, to be fair, the subject would require a separate volume.

English literature, in any case is steeped in Scripture. Shakespeare may not have been a religious poet like Milton but his characters are essentially Christian and Biblical in their expressions, although Shakespeare's Bible was the Genevan one. Antonio in the Merchant of Venice, for example, remarks: "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose", recalling the story of the Temptation, while the most moving allusion to the Bible is surely to be found in the speech of the forsaken Richard II:

> Did they not sometime cry "All hail" to me ?
> As Judas did to Christ: but he in twelve
> Found truth in all but one; I in twelve thousand none…
> … yet you Pilates,
> Have here delivered me to my sour cross,
> And water cannot wash away your sin.

Milton, who arguably deserved a chapter in Ackroyd's book, based *Paradise Regained* on the Book of Job. And in the final reply of the Saviour to Satan's eulogy of Athens, found in the Scriptures the fountainhead of the truths unknown to Greek philosophers:

Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,

And how the world began, and how man fell

Degraded by himself, on grace depending.

The poet was adamant that only the Scriptures held the truth: "Let them chant while they will of prerogatives, we shall tell them of Scripture; of custom, we of Scripture; of Acts and Statutes, still of Scripture…" One could go through nearly all the great names of English literature in support of Scripture till possibly Swinburne's line of 1866: "Thou has conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath." Even Byron had been brought up on scripture in Aberdeen and then England. From Greece he sent his publisher a letter requesting a good, common Bible and had it placed on his table with his tea every morning.

Ackroyd, of course, does not have time to explore Christianity and English literature, although he does have a chapter on Bunyan. What he does is to highlight the progress of Christianity in England from Bede through the most important figures in the establishment of the Church of England, the translation of the English Bible and the development of various movements and sects. If you want to know how Quakers came to be called Quakers and Methodists, you will find out here. If you want to discover the differences between all the strange sects that appeared after the fall of Charles I, Baptists, Diggers, Levellers, Ranters, and Muggletonians, you will find out here – the last Muggletonian died in 1979, would you believe. Yet everything is expounded in beautifully clear English prose. This is a true work of English scholarship, not some religious hand book and every chapter provides a beautifully drawn portrait of at least one major figure in English religious history. Indeed, all are so well portrayed that it is difficult to decide which chapter is best. I loved all of them.

The American Episcopalian theologian, Morgan Dix, in 1887 published a book of his Lent lectures entitled *The Gospel and Philosophy.* They are still worth reading. In these he forcefully argued that God had deliberately chosen not to reveal his message to philosophers, who would only have twisted and changed it over generations of their own small number, but had instead made the word flesh in the Incarnation, Atonement and Resurrection as recorded in the Gospels. This enabled the whole world and all classes to know God's purpose. So Christians had no need to pay attention to those who would alter the truth of Scripture. The men and women in Ackroyd's book are mainly those who historically shared the same viewpoint. Dix, of course, believed in upholding the traditions of the early Church, established by its councils, hierarchies and sacraments, although most of those included in Ackroyd's book did not. Those who did — Hooker, Laud and Newman — however, get equal treatment.

There is also room of course for the decline of Christianity in the nineteenth century. This was partly because of the advancement of science, particularly geology. Later on came the dispute over Darwinism. Nor should the development of Biblical Criticism, particularly in Germany be overlooked, although George Eliot said she had learned everything the Germans had to say from her friend Charles Hennell's *An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of Christianity* published in 1838. Eliot did not

publish an English translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* until 1846. Nietzsche, in the *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), then mocked her, saying that like all English people, she still had to act as if she believed in Christian morality, even if God were dead.

Ackroyd in a chapter on Evangelicalism points out that in the middle of the nineteenth century societies like those for the Suppression of Vice and the Lord's Day Observance, made life rather dreary. The whole Evangelical movement contributed as much to the decline of Christianity as any other factor. Here is the great Victorian sage, Herbert Spencer, writing in his *Autobiography:*

> I had not at that time (c 840) repudiated the notion of a deity who is pleased with the singing of his praises, and angry with the beings he has made when they fail to tell him perpetually of his greatness. It had not become manifest to me how absolutely and immeasurably unjust it would be that for Adam's disobedience, which might have caused a harsh man to discharge his servant, all Adam's descendants should be damned, with the exception of a relatively few who accepted the "plan of salvation" which the immense majority never heard of. Nor had I in those days perceived the astounding nature of the creed which offers for profoundest worship, a being who calmly looks on while myriads of his creatures are suffering eternal torments.

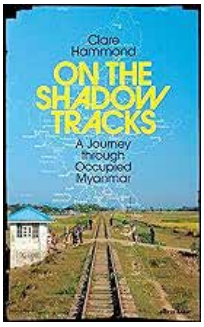
Why did Charles Darwin lose his faith? Selection? Not at all.

> The rate was so slow that I felt no distress, and have never since doubted even for a single second that my conclusion was correct… I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for, if so, the pain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished.

And this is a damnable doctrine.

Ackroyd does not avoid atheists and devotes a chapter to Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Bessant and Richard Dawkins. The story of Bradlaugh and Besant including their campaign for contraception is of course well known and great fun, although Dawkins's philosophy turns out to be incoherent. The book ends with a description of the last four Archbishops of Canterbury, revealing the little-known fact that Welby, the present one, is a charismatic, who was baptised in the spirit and prays in tongues. There is also a chapter on leading contemporary theologians. John Robinson, famous for defending *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and writing the much misunderstood *Honest to God,* turns out to have been a fairly orthodox Christian and a New Testament scholar whereas John Hick ended up denying the divinity of Christ and the whole doctrine of Atonement. Don Cupitt, I always remember for saying in a Channel Four television lecture I saw as a teenager, that the earliest existing physical description of Christ, found on a fragment of papyrus dating form 66 AD, was a "negroid, hunchbacked dwarf". I never read his books but Ackroyd shows him moving away from revealed religion altogether.

All readers of any Christian sensitivity should buy this book for both pleasure and intellectual profit.



Britain is to blame of course

Anthony Daniels

On The Shadow Tracks: A Journey though Occupied Myanmar, Clare Hammond, Allen Lane. £25.00.

My only experience of Burma was a brief visit during the period of the Burmese Path to Socialism under the dictatorship of New Win, military head of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party. I should have hated it, of course, but instead was deeply charmed by it. As a country, Burma was as a fly in amber; its terrible isolationist regime had preserved it from the homogenising influences that were turning so much of the world into a high-rise suburb; the Burmese were graceful and charming; and, of course, I had no access to or knowledge of its vicious repressive apparatus.

The problem with the overthrow of so many atrocious regimes is that they are often replaced by something even more abominable, though usually with some kind of variation in the abominations that they commit. Ne Win gave way to another military regime, if anything more ruthless than his. After many years of near autarky, the country was to an extent opened up. External, but not internal, liberalisation was the order of the day; but the military still controlled everything. Just as in the Soviet Union the KGB took private control of state assets, so the military followed suit in Burma – now Myanmar.

Clare Hammond is an enterprising and brave English economic journalist who lived for six years in Burma, working for its newly freed English-language press. During this time, she journeyed for several months round the country, as far as possible on the railway network. In so doing, she must have experienced considerable physical discomfort, and she bravely hazarded the xenophobic paranoia of the authorities.

In Burma, building new railways was the government's preferred technocratic method of welding Burma into a single nation. Civil war between the central government and several ethnic minority armed movements trying to secure independence or autonomy has been more or less continuous since Burma's independence from Britain. Given the geographical inaccessibility of much of the territory, railways would allow the army to move troops round the country quickly and efficiently suppress the long-running revolts. It was also supposed to favour economic development.

Most of the railways that were built failed to function. The grossly incompetent army had neither the technical means nor the organisational ability to build railways anyway, besides which it was so riven, from top to bottom, with corruption that funds set aside for the work were mostly stolen.

Worse still, most of the work was done with forced, virtually slave, labour. The army would arrive an in area through which it designed to construct a railway and demand a labour force, often of tens or scores of thousands, to carry out the work without payment. Villages on the route of the railways were simply destroyed and

land appropriated without compensation. Hundreds of thousands of people were moved from where they were living, and at the end of it all there wasn't even a usable railway – not usable even by the army, so that the civil war, or wars, merely intensified.

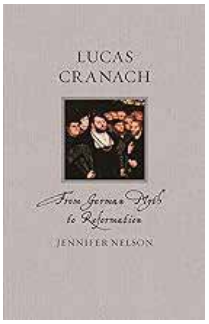
The author's journey ends in Naypyidaw, the new capital of Burma, built *ex nihilo* by the army under the then dictator, Than Shwe. The author would like to have interviewed him, but he is very secretive. Though not known to be dead, he is not known to be alive either-if he is alive, he would be 91. She interviews instead an octogenarian general, a former member of Than Shwe's government, who claims, in essence, only to have been obeying orders.

Naypyidaw seems to have been built on the North Korean model, but it out-Pyongyangs Pyongyang. Where Pyongyang has thirteen lane highways with no traffic, Naypyidaw has one of twenty lanes without traffic. It was the Marquis de Custine who remarked, in *Russia in 1839*, that in St Petersburg a crowd would be a revolution; in Naypyidaw the generals who had it built ensured that no crowd could even gather. It is the architectural manifestation of their military mentality, according to which everything that they desire can simply be ordered into existence.

The author seems determined to drag British colonial practice into the story as much as possible, as an exercise in gratifyingly vicarious guilt, as if the current regime were simply the colonial regime with a change of personnel. She also blames the world economic order for a great part of Burma's difficulties, without noticing that countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and increasingly Vietnam have thrived in it. It is true that the Union of Burma, as it was then called, gained independence as an unitary state imposed on an area of many different ethnicities, the Burmese being the largest, and some of which enjoyed a degree of autonomy under the British regime: and that this gave rise to intractable problems. But I am not sure that a patchwork of fully independent states, or a truly federal solution, would have worked better.

I found some of the reporting in this book a little repetitive; descriptions of railways dilapidated even before they were completed can be monotonous. On the other hand, repetition has its uses, as revealing an ingrained pattern of incompetence, corruption and brutality. There is not much cause for optimism about Burma. The interlude in which Aung San Suu Kyi assumed office, if not power, after so many years of total military rule, which was at first a breath of fresh air, soon disappointed those who had hoped for real changes. The expression of opinion became freer, and soon mobile telephone networks and smartphones were all but ubiquitous in Burma, making the previous regime of total control of public expression impossible; but dictatorships grow out of the barrel of guns, which the Burmese army still had and was prepared to use them. The army remained the path to social ascension and vast wealth in a very poor country, an explanation of its durability.

This is a valiant book. As I read it, I thought of HS2, the scheme to regenerate the British north through railway construction. It will cost twice as much to build 300 kilometres in Britain as it did to build 4000 in Spain. We have taken a leaf out of the Burmese army's book.



The man who liked blondes

Jane Kelly

Lucas Cranach from German Myth to Reformation, Jennifer Nelson, Reaktion Books. 71 illustrations 56 in colour. £16.51.

It's easy to see Lucas Cranach the elder as a remote painter of rather strangely stylised, attenuated medieval nudes but a welcome advance on the grisly crucifixions of Grunwald. A painter of pleasant gardens of Eden set in north European landscapes, famous for a rich colour palette ideal for beautiful images on up-market Christmas cards. It's a surprise to find he was a dynamic entrepreneur, helping to power the northern Renaissance, working to shape the way we see our modern world, and giving a new reality to the people he painted and to us, looking back at them centuries later. In this small but ferociously factual biography Jennifer Nelson presents an artist who transcended his own talent to give the early-modern German states a, 'A sense of community,' helping to turn them into what Nelson describes as a growing, robust Lutheran community endowed with the new message of Protestant salvation. She also explores his repertoire of female nudes, showing how they acted as a link between the new Germany and its notional connections with Ancient Greece and Rome.

Her first chapter introduces the artist as, 'The Godfather of the Reformation'. His closest friend was Martin Luther. In 1526, in the Wittenberg City Church, he became godfather to, 'Little Hans,' Luther's first son. Nelson says that day, 'Solidified a project of many years: it marked hope for the future of the massive cultural shift in the history of Europe now knowns as the Reformation.' That movement needed, 'New kinds of adornment' and, 'The inventor of this new kind of Christian art would be Cranach himself'. She believes that he determined, 'A religious community's visual culture and how its abstract beliefs look.' He could do this because he was, 'Already a community leader.' Through his early employment in the University of Vienna he had high- ranking friends and patrons all keen on the new Protestant learning. By the age of sixty he was court painter to the Elector of Saxony, had 'Repeatedly served on Wittenberg's city council,' and run many businesses; selling wine and then pigments, becoming a successful apothecary, and he co-owned one of the city's main printing houses. Founded to print Luther's first New Testament translation in 1522, it poured out sermons and treaties on the new faith. Nelson calls that output, 'The Cranach Brand.'

Despite his influence, she found hardly evidence of his life, except for his 1,000 paintings and prints. There are fewer than sixty written references to him, apart from business contracts. She could only examine his life through his work. Perhaps the best example of this is her extraordinarily detailed description of the Wittenberg Altarpiece, constructed by Cranach and his son in the City Church, in 1547.

> As a background of brush-stroke striated marble with lines placed atop, so that marble veins continue across

multiple notionally separate blocks. These implausible veins extend the power of the victorious whorl of Christ's garment.

It's famous for its inner wings, visible when the altar is open. They represent the Christian sacraments as ordinary, everyday things, a confession on the right, a baptism on the left, set in a plain and simple setting which she calls, 'Frumpy.' 'The painting artfully mimics unpainted wood panels, almost ostentatiously dull'. Gone are any van der Weyden style stone intricacies. Cranach paints portraits of living worshippers and church leaders who look plain ordinary too, no one is likely to worship them. In doing so he was following Luther's injunction to avoid graven images. For centuries altar pieces had depicted, 'Divine scenes of the Holy Family and saints,' so such, 'An intrusion of the everyday was remarkable.' He showed ordinary people carrying out humble devotions. In the panel with the Eucharist, Martin Luther is shown receiving wine from a jug bearing servant. By this new style of religious painting, 'Cranach created the most radically immanent altarpiece in European art history.' In it each believer was a 'Christian protagonist,' carrying forward the new faith. It is still celebrated as a monument to Reformation art, even known in German as the 'Reformationsaltar.'

Somewhat strangely his radicalism also involved beautiful, naked blonde girls. Nelson believes, 'Cranach's contribution to German humanism and the development of German identity hinged on his repeated treatment of alluring nude women of an eternal pagan past.' At court in Wittenberg, 'The thriving university encouraged an ever-broadening taste for the humanist reawakening of Greco-Roman antiquity.' He responded with, 'Proliferating images of alluring naked women, altering the field of German painting itself.' She calls him a, 'Mythographer of Women.' He became known for paintings set in classical antiquity that emphasised nude female bodies. These bolstered a Renaissance desire to connect with the ancient past, 'Participating in a long-lost set of cultural touchstones,' which through Protestantism became an, 'Educated European identity'. She sees this as a new, almost modern search for 'Authentic selves,' as individuals.

He emulated Italian humanist painters with rounded Venuses isolated against a black background, but unlike them didn't cover any of the body, leaving it completely exposed to the viewer, sensuous and available. For the first time, looking at a nude became a participatory act, to be enjoyed by ordinary men such as Cranach's humanist friends, who increasingly believed in individual responsibility and private conscience.

He also began to place naked figures in woodland scenes. Works called, 'The Silver Age,' referring to a German mythical past. According to Hesiod, whose works had been rediscovered in the Renaissance, this was one of five major 'ages' of mankind. It was a time of conflict and he shows dark skinned, brutish hairy men grappling for pale, refined women, posed like the antique statues which were well known to humanist scholars. By using women as positive models he brought together German local lore of 'Wild men,' inhabiting the forests with ancient Greek theory; he connected German culture to the past but moved it away from the forest towards an enlightened future. 'Cranach here is reinforcing a stereotype of German beauty,' writes Nelson, 'that would endure.'

From the study of contemporary documents and letters she applies almost forensic knowledge of political and art history. Perhaps the book is meant for people fascinated by political power struggles in central Europe in the 1500s. It has a detailed chronology, pages of references and forms part of Reaktion Books, 'Renaissance Lives' series delving into the literature, art, science, natural history, statecraft and technology of the Renaissance, from Durer to Titian. Such erudition seems almost out of place these days and as we are now almost entirely secular, she has to explain Christian terms. Like TV news reporters after the opening of the Paris Olympics when drag queens acted out the Last Supper, she has to clarify what exactly that sacred event was, and congratulations to her for eschewing any of the current anachronistic traps, even when dealing with that most 'contested' subject, the creation and viewing of female nudes. Cranach gets away with it and we are all the better for it.

In Search of Little England

Alistair Miller

England: Seven Myths That Changed a Country and How to Set Them Straight, Tom Baldwin & Marc Stears, Bloomsbury, 2024, £22.

The title of this book indicates what is in store: the latest attempt to debunk our history and expose it as a catalogue of heinous crimes against humanity – a task that Baldwin and Stears undertake with verve. Their declared mission is to deflate a host of 'over-inflated myths' and replace them with 'a real-life and humbler version of England'; and to aid them in this task, they have catalogued an impressive array of shameful episodes, grisly details and human vices. They admit that their view is a partial one and that their politics is 'left of centre'. Baldwin worked for the *Times*, Stears is a UCL academic, and both have advised the Labour Party. In other words, they are self-righteous bourgeois cosmopolitan liberals who regard Brexit as the work of reactionary Little Englanders and Nigel Farage as its diabolical mastermind. The book's underlying purpose, thinly disguised, is to explode the arguments of Leavers.

However, there is also much to like. The book is beautifully written, cogently argued, if from a progressive liberal standpoint, and a wealth of fascinating detail is skilfully organised. The light shone on the dark side of our history is a corrective to the over-romanticised vision to which conservatives, including myself, are prone. The book is cleverly structured around seven English locations, which each reveal a facet of our national story – or myth; explores the claims to fame of each, which are contrasted with vignettes of life there today; and plots 'a sequential path through England's history' along the way. The locations are Runnymede, Plymouth, Hull, Wolverhampton, Greenwich, Blackpool and Oxford.

The theme of the opening chapter on Runnymede is the 'overblown myth' that Magna Carta is the foundation of

our freedoms, indeed, that England *invented* freedom – a mainstay of English 'exceptionalism'. The authors make the well-worn observations that Magna Carta contained little that relates to our modern conceptions of freedom or democracy, did not establish the legal processes of trial by jury or *habeas corpus*, and was rarely referred to until the seventeenth century, when Edward Coke invoked it in Parliament's 1628 Petition of Right against the absolutist Charles I. But in documenting its mythical power and 'endless invocations' since then, including by the Levellers, the Chartists, it is there in the very name, and the authors of the American Declaration of Independence, the authors undermine their own argument. For if Magna Carta was transformed from essentially a baronial charter into a symbolic 'declaration of the rights of all free Englishmen', if it buttressed the rule of law and parliamentary government, then therein lies its immeasurable value and significance. However, the authors' real bugbear is the hijacking of Magna Carta by proponents of Brexit, who see the bureaucratic institutions of the EU as a threat to our liberties. Daniel Hannan comes in for special ire for his *How We invented Freedom and Why it Matters*, which proposes a new Anglosphere founded on the 'Anglo-Saxon' concept of limited government. There is a legitimate political debate to be had here. But when the authors write of the semi-suburban golf-course-infested countryside around Runnymede that 'there can be few places on the planet where people are more certain of their individual freedom', they have in large measure justified the myth.

Plymouth is the setting for a debunking of our maritime past. The villains are the Elizabethan seadogs Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins, because they pioneered the barbarism of transatlantic slavery; the Pilgrim Fathers who set sail in the Mayflower, because their colonisation of the New World heralded the erosion of native populations; and the entirety of our maritime and naval tradition, because it is inextricably connected with imperial conquest and slavery. Horrors and grisly details abound, including in Victorian Plymouth, whose wretched slums harboured thousands of women and child prostitutes, and where the water was so dirty that children drank beer. But most of all, the authors object to the image of adventurous swashbuckling buccaneers setting forth across the oceans that has been deployed by Brexiteers anxious to depict a free trading freewheeling vision of Global Britain.

Hull, paradoxically, is the setting for a debunking of the sense of moral superiority that has arisen from the slave trade's abolition. 'Abolitionism' was utilised to justify British supremacy because it showed that British imperial power was founded on high-minded moral principles, not plunder and exploitation – a 'sponge to clean a nation's conscience'. William Wilberforce, who was born in Hull, and whose campaign in Parliament culminated in the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, came to embody Britain's 'civilising moral mission in the world'. But his fame has eclipsed the role of more humble dissenters and of women whose campaigning and 'vast petitions' laid the groundwork for 'rich evangelical converts' like Wilberforce. Moreover, England continued to profit indirectly from slavery through its cotton industry, which relied on cotton picked by slaves in the American South, and later cotton grown in India, thereby contributing to successive famines. Wilberforce himself

supported repressive measures against strikers, and an account of his opium habit leads on seamlessly to the notorious opium wars with China: 'As Christian campaigners proselytised the virtues of tea to the poor of Hull … Britain's empire was pushing drugs.' The spirit of modern-day Hull, however, lies not in 'myths of moral superiority' but in an appreciation of what makes people different, unassuming forms of love and support, and the 'sense of the beauty found in the mundane' exemplified by another of its sons, the poet Philip Larkin.

Wolverhampton, of course, is best known for Enoch Powell, who was an MP there for 24 years. Yet such is the controversy surrounding his name, and the notorious 'Rivers of Blood' speech, that he has no monument – not even a blue plaque. Powell's mystical and insular vision of England was inspired in large part by Housman's wistful 'A Shropshire Lad' and was open only to those who shared in 'his slow alchemy of ethnic ancestry'. Closely bound up with this 'England alone' myth is the invocation of a pastoral idyll. Soldiers at the Western Front were told they were fighting for their village home, even though many were from the urban working class. Stanley Baldwin declared that 'England is the country, and the country is England'. And H V Morton's bestselling interwar *In Search of England* books depicted an England consisting of 'warm beer, country lanes and village greens' – though Morton concealed 'his frequent trips to brothels' and 'his private sympathies for Adolf Hitler'. George Orwell and J B Priestley's visions of England were more democratic in spirit, but they still seemed to have little place for outsiders – indeed, Priestley looked forward to clearing the Irish from the western ports. The authors spare the wartime Blitz spirit from their myth busting because it was centred on 'the everyday struggles of ordinary people'. But we have never wholly been able to move on from, or measure up to, our 'finest hour'. Modern Wolverhampton, by contrast, is multicultural, 'a cacophony of history, people and culture', with 'different tastes, smells, sights, sounds at every corner'.

The North Greenwich peninsular, home of the Millenium Dome, is the setting for a perceptive analysis of the Thatcher-Blair era's vision of a global liberal 'New Britain', a tale of high hopes dashed, and emptiness aptly symbolised by the dome. The problem was that the authors of this futuristic dream 'never fully understood the need to replace the sense of belonging, meaning and identity that had been ebbing away'. There is a s sympathetic vignette of Margaret Thatcher, who Matthew Parris reveals to be both surprisingly modern and engagingly human. The authors do their best to paint an optimistic picture of the cosmopolitan mecca that is North Greenwich. But there is precious little sense of belonging in this 'strange futuristic expanse', which could be 'a district of any modern city, anywhere in the world'.

The authors' journey of discovery to Blackpool is riveting but depressing. The once glittering holiday destination for the working class is now a monument to social deprivation, packed with housing benefit claimants, past sex offenders, vulnerable young people and asylum seekers attracted by the ready availability of cheap shoddy rental accommodation. Families still stroll on the promenade and enjoy the seaside fun of the South Pier. But the glory days are long gone, and in 2014 even the iconic municipal deck chairs were sold off. The tone is set

by self-styled 'fat bastard' comedians who make lewd suggestions about their dwindling audiences' sex lives. However, the political theme of the chapter is muddled. It is meant to debunk the 'myth' of the white English working class who have 'apparently' been betrayed. The authors argue there was no legitimate reason for voting Brexit and the working class have wrongly been demonised for doing so even though many did not. That mass immigration might conceivably cause social, cultural and economic problems for the deprived working class is beyond their comprehension.

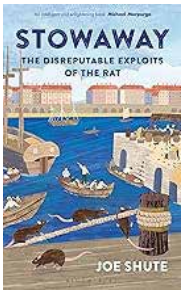
Finally, Oxford is the setting for an improbable debunking of the myth that the country is ruled by 'a privileged elite, out of touch and far removed from the experience of most people'. However, the real target is the 'raw, anti-establishment populism' developed by the Leave campaign, which played an important part in the Brexit vote. The authors do their best to counter the charge that there is a new liberal elite in thrall to a 'so-called 'woke ideology'', but not very convincingly. They argue that reports of a 'cancel culture' have been exaggerated because 'less than 0.1 per cent of external speakers in English Universities' have been 'disinvited'. But they make no mention of those speakers who were never invited in the first place, or those who have had their books pulled by publishers because they dared question established orthodoxies.

Throughout, the authors fall into the trap of condemning figures of the past for not abiding by the values and standards of today. They reject the idea that our freedoms can be traced Anglo-Saxon England, reminding us indignantly of slavery and savage punishment, and that Athelstan, England's first king, was 'no liberal'. But why would he be? The complacent assumption that our civilisation and values represent a state of supreme enlightenment is precisely the standpoint the authors criticise Victorian imperialists and Whig historians like Macaulay for adopting in their day.

The authors also seem unaware that, like any historical narrative, a national story is the result of a process of selection from a mass of facts and details. We choose the stories, events, and figures we judge the most significant. Inevitably some aspects will be emphasised above others and myths will develop. But it is precisely these myths that evoke a sense of shared belonging or identity, exemplify cherished national characteristics, and inspire us.

The great question the authors evade concerns what is left when a national culture, myths and all, is deconstructed and replaced by multiculturalism. In the absence of a common culture, what will hold a society together? Baldwin and Stears argue that 'England has never been homogeneous in either its culture or ethnicity', rather a 'muddled complexity'. But that would leave the English as the only people with no distinct culture or identity to celebrate, and nothing for others in which to assimilate. However, David Lammy, Labour's 'most senior black politician', whom the authors interview, would seem to differ. He locates his identity not in ethnicity but in a 'civic nationalism' that combines 'formal aspects of British citizenship' with 'English values and culture'. He insists that he is not British but English: 'My humour is English, my sensibility is English, my education has been overwhelmingly English, my friends and my wife are all English, my kids are English. So, even though I hold my links to the Caribbean dear, I'm not really a West Indian, I'm an

Englishman.' The idea of assimilation, for that is what Lammy is describing, would doubtless horrify Baldwin and Stears. But if Lammy knows what it is and how it feels to be English, why don't Baldwin and Stears?



Reasons to love rats

Celia Haddon

Stowaway, The Disreputable Exploits of the Rat, Joe Shute, Bloomsbury, £18.99, hdback, pp 272, illus.

Rats have strong social ties, feel distressed in sympathy if one of their group is suffering, and will help ailing members of their society with grooming and gifts of food. They have similar emotions to humans and live close to us all over the world. Yet we humans feel fear, disgust and even hatred towards them. Animal lovers who cherish their cats and dogs will unhesitatingly kill wild rats with lethal traps or put down poisons which will condemn them to a lingering death. Meanwhile scientists subject their laboratory rats to induced diseases, unpleasant medical experiments and forced swimming tests which can nearly drown them.

Stowaway explores the relationship between the two species – usually one of continual genocide (or should it be speciecide?) by humans. Though humans have killed many more rats than rats have killed humans, our constant attempts at elimination have not been successful. Alberta province in Canada is the exception. There are apparently no rats in Alberta, thanks to a Rat Control Zone set up at the province's borders in 1952 by Napolean Louise Poulon, known as "the man who killed a million rats."

In the control area he laid down so much poison that it lasted for the next five years and killed not only rats but also poultry, pets and other livestock. A photo of Mr Poulin and his workers shows them standing beside a huge heap of dead rats about four feet high and wide. Now his work is continued by a woman rat eradicator whose job it is to respond to any rat sightings with lethal force. However, only around 35 rats a year need eradicating, according to the author.

This absence of rats would not have pleased the Victorian publicans who ran ratting contests as entertainment for their clients. Bull baiting, dog fighting and cock fights had been banned by animal lovers but rats were not given the same protection from cruelty. A circular rat pit would be built in the basement or even the parlour of the pub and living rats would be put inside to be killed by terriers.

The purpose of the contest, and no doubt the betting was to see what number of rats could be dispatched in the shortest time by each individual dog. Jerry the champion rat killing terrier killed 14 rats in one minute seven seconds in 1891. Theoretically, ratting contests helped keep down the number of neighbourhood rats but in fact, rats had to be bred specially for the competitions. One pub landlord would get through 700 rats a week. It wasn't until 1912 that such contests were banned.

More conventional pest control was exerted by specialist rat catchers and their dogs, like Jack Black, a rat catcher

interviewed by Henry Mayhew, author of *London Labour and the London Poor* in the 1840s. Black would clear out rat nests and occasionally cook and eat his prey claiming they were "as moist as rabbits, and quite as nice." Surprisingly he also bred fancy rats in white, piebald and other colours.

For years pest controllers simply have relied on poisons like arsenic, warfarin, strychnine, or cholecalciferol which produces fatal kidney disease. Spring traps, which break the neck or back of the animal immediately, a kinder way of killing rats, are also used. Humane traps which merely imprison the animal might be even kinder, except that it is illegal to release a rat back into the wild after you have caught it. Whatever these pest control methods, they don't work very well.

Any wholesale slaughter of rats is ineffective as new rats simply move into the empty territory. Only in islands, where the sea creates a border impenetrable by rats, is it possible to eradicate a rat population. In towns making buildings rat proof and keeping food waste off the street is a better way of controlling numbers. Nor are there as many rats as we may think. Far from there being a rat for every person in the UK, there is more likely one rat for every ten thousand people, according to one expert.

Our modern brown rats are *Rattus norvegicus*, so called because it was thought they had arrived as stowaways among timber imported from Norway to Britain in the eighteenth century. They had indeed been stowaways on ships, but their origins were Asian not Norwegian. The original British rat, the one that is always blamed for spreading the plague, was a black rat.

Ironically, the black rat, or *Rattus rattus*, is now one of the most endangered mammals in the British Isles. Small colonies cling on in the Channel Isles and on Inchcolm, an island in the Firth of Forth. And from that latter small island they may well soon be eradicated, in an attempt to reduce the damage they do to seabird nesting colonies. Despite being an endangered species in the UK, they are outclassed by birds in the eyes of conservationists.

But some rats have a much cushier life. In the course of researching this book, the author Joe Shute adopted two pet rats Ermintrude and Molly and found that they made charming pets. He also attended a rat show put on by the National Fancy Rat Society, one of my favourite pet organisations. There he met various rat varieties –like rex rats with curly whiskers and curly coats, silver fawn rats, British blue rats and lilac agouti rats. However, he missed out on the keenest rat devotees who keep body rats, that spend time running about under their owner's clothing!

But perhaps the rats that do most for the rat image are the hero rats who detect landmines. They are not actually the kind of rats we have in the UK. They are a larger species, African giant pouched rats, half the size of a chihuahua dog and thus light enough to step on a landmine without setting it off. Trained with food rewards they sniff out the landmines, working in little harnesses, and have their own Instagram account, *@herorats*, with thousands of followers. They are now being trained in medical detection (detecting TB) and wildlife trafficking detection.

This charming book lays out the paradox of our relationship with rats. We humans fear the rats that live in our cities or the ones that live on our farms. Yet we love the rats that we adopt as pets. Human detritus allows

rats to live in sewers and houses and human throw-away food helps rat populations thrive on the streets. Yet instead of modifying our own wasteful habits, we kill the animals that feed on our wastefulness. There must be a better way.

The Erudite Scammer

Philip Patmore

The Book Forger: The true story of a literary crime that fooled the world, Joseph Hone, Chatto and Windus, £22.00

Everyone loves a good fraud if it is safely in the past and he was not himself a victim of it, especially if the fraud was practised on eminent and well-heeled persons who were made to look foolish.

Of all the frauds perpetrated that I know, my favourites are those of Thomas J Wise, who forged and sold at great profit bogus first editions of poems by nineteenth century poets, most famously *Sonnets from the Portuguese* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The poems existed, of course, but were not published until 1850. Wise printed and exquisitely bound a small, privately published edition dated 1847, previously unknown, supposedly at the poet's instigation. Copies of this forgery became the cynosure of bibliophile collectors' eyes. The irony is that they are now very valuable, as are all his forgeries.

This book recounts the fascinating story both of the man who perpetrated the fraud and of the two young booksellers who exposed it, John Carter and Graham Pollard. In 1936, the latter published a book with the unpromising title of *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets* which is possibly the most gripping work of detection that I have ever read.

Joseph Hone tells this dual story well and he has done original research, such that even old Thomas J Wise hands will learn something new. I cannot conceive of anyone with literary, bibliographical or criminological tastes not enjoying it. I have seldom spent two long train journeys more pleasantly than I did while reading it.

If I have a criticism, it is that the author does not convey quite strongly enough the extraordinary nature of Wise's career, which invites a somewhat shamefaced admiration, given that he was undoubtedly a criminal. He was born in quite humble circumstances but there was nothing in his background that would have provoked, predicted, or explained his bibliomania, which developed at a very early age. He cared more for the bibliographical rarity and the provenance of books than their contents and began to hunt for rarities. With determination, luck, erudition and a phenomenal memory, he soon accumulated a marvellous library, eventually one of the great private libraries of England. He became a deeply respected bibliographer, was given an honorary degree by Oxford and was made a Fellow of Worcester College. So great was his authority in the book world, that his word was law.

He probably started on his career as a forger to fund his acquisitions, but I suspect that there was also an element of devilry in his activities, as there is in the

great forgers of paintings. Forgers delight to dupe. Moreover, there are some persons who prefer to make money dishonestly than honestly: the former gives them a thrill that the latter never can. Wise was an excellent businessman who rose to the head of the company in which he started as a humble clerk, and by honest means accumulated a fortune that would now be the equivalent of many millions.

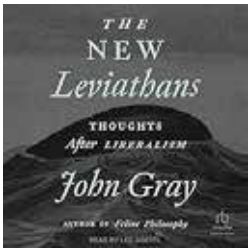
He displayed ingenuity and a certain kind of courage. For example, he persuaded Swinburne that an edition of one of his poems, never before published in book-form and supposedly dating from thirty years before, was genuine. Such a scheme would occur to very few people, but if it occurred to them, even fewer would dare to carry it out. One shouldn't laugh at the criminal impertinence of Wise, but one does.

Carter and Pollard smelt a rat, as did other book dealers, but unlike the others they had the persistence to trace the source of the smell. It was surely odd that not a single copy of a small, privately printed edition of *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, allegedly at Elizabeth Barrett Browning's expense to give to her friends, should contain a dedication in the poet's hand, and that every copy should be in perfect condition half a century after its printing. Moreover, Browning himself knew nothing of the edition.

Carter and Pollard, the latter an aficionado of detective fiction managed to prove that the font in which the books were printed did not exist until well after the stated date of the printing, and that the type of paper on which it was printed was never used until at least fourteen years later. They conclusively proved that the book was a forgery, but they did not name Wise as the perpetrator, though everyone in the book world knew that it must have been he.

Hone's book is particularly strong on the last year of Wise's life. Wise survived Carter and Pollard's exposure by only one year, and it is possible that it shortened his life. He never faced criminal charges –nearly twenty years later it was revealed that he had also removed pages from seventeenth century playbooks in the British Museum to make up incomplete copies in his possession, and died not in the odour of sanctity, but rather of fear and odium. I find it difficult not to have some sympathy for him, this man whose lust for books turned him into a criminal. He became what is known as a biblioclast, a destroyer of books, in order to improve them. In1880, the typographer and printer, William Blades, said in his charming pamphlet, *The Enemies of Books*, that book collectors were even more of a hazard to books than fire, water, careless servants, or insects.

Hone's Thomas J Wise is arrogant, a bully, and almost without redeeming features. But he was also erudite and extremely clever; in a sense, his lust for books was a civilised lust. I cannot afford his forgeries, but I do have, as a kind of holy relic, a copy of Trelawney's *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* once owned by Thomas J Wise. I think he must have bought it early in his life, for before long he would not buy any book that was not in perfect condition, as this is not. I am assured by those in the book trade, however, that his signature on the inside cover is perfectly genuine.



What a state we're in

Hadrian Wise

The New Leviathans John Gray, Penguin 2023, £10.99

John Gray's *The New Leviathans,* subtitled *Thoughts after Liberalism*, explores how modern states have deviated from the liberal concept of the state adumbrated by the 17th-Century philosopher Thomas Hobbes. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues state power is legitimised by an implicit social contract, in which each member of society agrees to hand over his natural right to use force to a central, sovereign authority, giving that authority a monopoly on the right to use force, enabling it to protect every citizen from the violence of every other, and so preventing society's degeneration into a "state of nature" where every individual has the right to use force against every other and there is a "war of each against all".

The success of this Hobbesian state, Gray argues, depends on the modesty of its ambitions. Rather than seeking to realise "the good life" for its citizens, the Hobbesian state confines itself to enabling them to pursue their own individual notions of the good life without interference by their neighbours. Instead of imposing an ideal of the good life on society, the state exists to *prevent* any individual or faction from imposing such an ideal. As Gray points out, Hobbes's idea of "the good" is a subjectivist one: it is simply the word for what people want and varies from person to person. The purpose of the state is to enable everyone to pursue what he considers good to the maximum extent consistent with everyone else's having the same ability.

The 20th Century saw radical challenges to this model. Gray contends the Russian and Chinese Communist Parties sought to embody ideas of the state that, rather than enabling human beings to pursue their own individual goals, involved creating a new type of human being whose priorities were collective rather than individual. In practice, these regimes moved so far from the liberal Hobbesian model as to foster what Gray calls "artificial states of nature", bringing about the very conditions the Hobbesian state is meant to prevent. In efforts to enforce collective priorities, citizens were encouraged to spy on and report each other, nurturing a human type who might have been new, but also was primal - the suspicious, hostile, and selfish Homo Sovieticus in his struggle for survival became hard to distinguish from Hobbes's natural man. Putin's Russia is not only an NKVD state, but also a theocracy in which a nationalistic Russian Orthodox Church has come to fill the ideological gap left by the Communist Party. The mission may have changed, but the Russian state still has a mission, to redeem the sinful West as a "third Rome". Xi's China is a "panopticon" seeking to make every aspect of life public and to subject every aspect of the individual's life to the scrutiny of the state, with the aim of rewarding and penalising citizens according to the "social value" of their behaviour, this value being conceived in broadly Confucian terms. This effort to enforce a particular moral code in every aspect of people's lives is, again, a far cry from Hobbes's model.

More controversially, Gray maintains there are unHobbesian developments in

modern *Western* states. He zeroes in on "hyper-liberal" identity politics as the most salient.

"Within Western societies, the hyper-liberal goal is to enable individuals to define their own identities. From one point of view this is the logical end-point of individualism…. From another, it is the project of forming new collectives, and the prelude to a state of chronic warfare among the identities they embody."

If a self-defined identity is to be more than a private fantasy, the people holding that identity must somehow bring others to accept it.

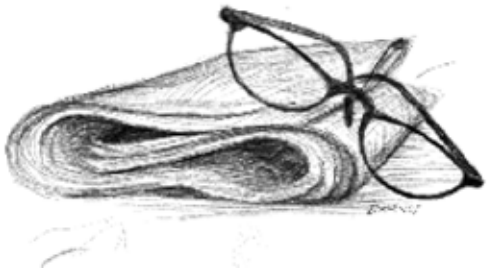
"Hyper-liberals aim to achieve this by capturing institutions that divide people into distinct categories, which then become competing groups…. The result is to make self-definition a battle for power in which words are the weapons of choice."

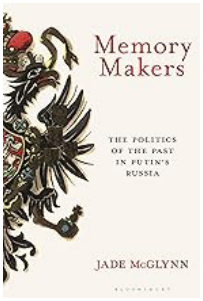
As well as providing an outlet for recognizably religious impulses, the Woke movement, in common with previous revolutionary movements, acts as "a vehicle through which surplus elites struggle to secure a position of power". With a glut of graduates chasing a small number of stimulating jobs in politics and the media, a graduate's woke credentials become another means of advancement, alongside academic qualifications and social connections. The overall effect is to foster groupthink and Newspeak and prevent dissidents from getting their careers off the ground.

While there is much that is illuminating in this picture, we take issue with Gray on two points:

Hobbes was writing in the shadow of the English Civil War, and his explicit purpose was to show why rebellion against the sovereign was illegitimate. This applies whatever the nature of the sovereign authority - elected assembly, hereditary monarch, even colonial conqueror. Any sovereign with the power to monopolise force in the polity is *ipso facto* legitimate. Liberals, by contrast, are concerned about the *nature* of the sovereign authority and believe its legitimacy depends on factors beyond its ability to project force. And the state Hobbes describes is less minimal than Gray suggests. As well as having the right to enforce adherence to whatever religious doctrine it desires - again, not a recognizably liberal idea -, the state confers property rights, which do not obtain prior to the state, and all property rights are subject to the discretion of the sovereign authority. The sovereign has sole right to decide which states citizens can trade with, in what commodities - a notion that doesn't obviously support the liberal ideal of "free trade". Hobbes may be sceptical about the viability of assets held in common, but overall, it is hardly stretching things to read him as something other than liberal.

Second, life in Western countries is still very different from life elsewhere. Criticism of the authorities is public and widespread and political prisoners are all but unknown. We have the rule of law. There are new "Woke" social norms that some people are intolerant about enforcing, but how different is this from the intolerance about the different social norms of the 1950s? If the West was "liberal" then, why not now?





More of an enigma than ever

Martin Dewhirst

Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia, Jade McGlynn, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2023.

By the end of 2012 Putin had decided that Alexander Nevsky (1221-63) had made the right choice by resolving to collaborate with Eurasia, the Mongol-Tatar hordes, rather than to cooperate with the Christian Swedish army in an attempt to avert the 'Battle on the Ice' in 1240, when he was still a teenager. Stalin was of the same opinion, as is clear from Eisenstein's remarkable propaganda film. But how well does this fit in with Putin's alleged veneration of various other Vladimirs/Volodymyrs and other Princes who ruled in Kyivan Rus, given its mutual, friendly relations with several of its Western neighbours?

Now (according to Https://europeantimes.news/2024/07/the-Russian-patriarch-to-putin-you-are-first-truly-orthodox-president/), the current Russian Patriarch, Kirill, has just awarded his President the religious Order of "St. Alexander Nevsky – First Class" in St. Petersburg, expressing his 'complete agreement between the church and the authorities in Russia'.

This is a book about the uses, misuses and abuses of history. Is history really more important to Putin than geography? Must Russia again become even larger, whatever the cost, perhaps repeating some of the terrible mistakes of Hitler? McGlynn has much of value to say about what she and many others persistently and misleadingly call 'post-Soviet' Russia which, like Belarus, is still in many ways 'neo-Soviet', whereas Ukraine became genuinely 'post-Soviet' over a decade ago – that fact is indeed at the heart of the current tragedy. And is the Cold War really over? It's a matter of definition, and experts might well differ over whether and when it restarted.

Another linguistic problem is caused by the author's, and, alas, many other writers' misleading translation of the term for the Soviet-Nazi/Russian-German 1941-45 blood-soaked confrontation. It's known in Russian as the 'Great Fatherland War', but is rendered innumerable times in this book as the 'Great Patriotic War', despite the fact that there is a perfectly good 'Russian' word for 'patriotic': patriotichesky! Russians often refer to their country both as their 'rodina' (feminine, sometimes with a capital 'r') and as their 'otechestvo' (neuter). McGlynn is well aware that Russian has two, very different, words for 'truth' 'pravda' and 'istina', but fails to spell out that Putin and his colleagues are not interested in the latter concept and its more philosophical and religious view of human life as fundamentally, intrinsically and inevitably tragic. But she should be congratulated on taking the concept of Russian messianism seriously (use the Index if you haven't the time to read the whole book). I was surprised that there is very little mention of Lenin(ism) and Stalin(ism). Curiously, there is no discussion of Solzhenitsyn's views on the optimal size of a future Russia. Perhaps the question of Russian continuity and Russian change needs another airing? Will

most Russians ever behave more like *real* Europeans? And is a neo-Putin Russia more likely than a post-Putin Russia?

The author is trying hard to make sense of what, , is probably senseless. She persists on referring to the Russian 'government', but has nothing to say about the extremely powerful Presidential Administration. She mentions in passing, several times, the forcible and cynical banning of 'Memorial', the organization that has uncovered and tried to disseminate so much more carefully checked information than the recent and current Russian authorities have revealed about what *really* happened in Soviet, and, to some extent, neo-Soviet Russia – a wonderful example of what genuine, professional research based on *istina* as well as *pravda* can do. Now we are facing both a new Cold War together with an all too bloody Hot War. How much hotter will it get?

McGlynn deserves to have almost the last words in this review of her stimulating monograph, based on a huge amount of careful and methodical work. 'However, in practice, there cannot be any real discussion of historical consciousness being awakened, given the Kremlin's well-documented use of disinformation, myths and false narratives to build appealing and usable history, measures of persecution and legal mechanisms to target those who add to historical knowledge, and its surreptitious and dishonest efforts to promote state initiatives as bottom-up while it appropriates and redirects for its own ends genuine grassroots efforts to raise public consciousness of core historical events and apolitical acts. In other words, this was not about engaging people with history but about creating a sense of *engagingness*, through activities and language that appeared to engage but really refused or redirected the agency of those involved. It had much in common with its forerunner: Soviet templates of class consciousness.' "Being Russian depends on possessing the correct consciousness of one's cultural and historical roots, rather than the reality of one's actual national identity determining one's awareness of cultural and historical insights."

Perhaps the title of this excellent study should have been *Memory Fakers*? Poor Russians!

Icons of survival

Merrie Cave

Hitler, Stalin, Mum and Dad, A family Memoir of Miraculous survival, Daniel Finkelstein, William Collins, pb 2024 £10.99.

David Low's cartoon of the Nazi-Soviet pact shows the two dictators greeting each other in hell. Daniel Finkelstein, *The Times* columnist and conservative peer in this detailed and thrilling narrative explains how Hitler and Stalin made a hell on earth in Germany and Eastern Europe but especially for his parents, who miraculously survived death in Belsen and the Russian steppes to live happily ever after in Hendon Central. The history of the twentieth century for many now is as remote as the Middle Ages, so the book should be in every school library, – Finkelstein's father Ludwig always thought that knowledge was the most important tool against oppression."

His mother Marijam was the youngest

daughter of Alfred and Grete Wiener. Alfred was a patriotic German who had fought and been decorated in the Great war but became aware earlier than most – even Jewish people of the steady increase of anti-semitism. The chaos and violence erupting from the collapse of the Austrian, Russian and German Empires was usually blamed on the Jews and Alfred foresaw a dreadful future accurately which is why he started to work for the Central Statsburger CV (a periodical representing Jewish interests) His pursuit of concrete evidence about Nazi wickedness became his life's work and by Hitler's time three quarters of the Jewish population were members. When Hitler came to power he moved his family to Amsterdam., but in 1939 to keep his archives safe Alfred moved to London and then to New York while his family became trapped after Hitler's invasion of Holland in 1940. A miracle saved them from death: the Nazis were not averse to exchanging Jews for money but only a few thousand were able to escape this way. Frantically searching a way to get his family out from Belsen, through a former colleague he came across a group of Polish exiles in Switzerland who furnished fellow Poles with false Paraguayan passports expiring in December 1944 – and then did the same for Jews. It was extraordinary that the Germans knew about these false papers yet never questioned it. After fraught correspondence the Paraguayan documents arrived just in time for the family and they were allowed to leave for Switzerland. Their final stroke of luck came near the border when the Germans thought there were too many for the exchange. An SS man tried to turf them off the train, but relented when Ruth told him her mother was too sick to move. Tragically on reaching freedom Grete died from the efforts of keeping her family alive in Belsen but Mirjam and her sisters were able to join their father in New York.

Finkelsteins's father Adolf (Dolu) and Lusia Finkelstein had a dream house in one of Lwow's smartest streets but only stayed in it for less than a year. Daniel's great grandfather had started a successful business supplying iron and steel in the region and were like the Wieners, not Zionists, who believed that Jews and Poles should live together in the resurrected Poland

The Nazi-Soviet pact brought imprisonment or deportation to the Polish middle and upper class, for Stalin wished to destroy the country by murdering its leaders and expelling thousands from their homes to become slave labourers in Siberia or imprisoning them in terrible conditions. Dolu disappeared while a long train journey took Ludwik and Lusia to the steppes of Kasakstan where she worked on a collective farm. As deportees she and Ludwik could receive letters and parcels; letters (in code) could tell them what was going on in Europe while parcels of food kept them from starving. Ludwik a teenager the future distinguished engineer and professor discovered that burning cow dung could keep them warm in the winter. Meanwhile Dolu suffered sleep deprivation, endless interrogations and a journey to the edge of the Arctic circle where he and many others were worked to death – one in four died every year. He became ill but as a Russian speaker he landed a coveted desk job which saved his life. When the Germans invaded Russia, Gen Anders having survived the Lubyanka was allowed to start a Polish army and recruited suitable Polish men in the gulags. Dolu joined and was reunited with his family from a chance glance at a message board. Towards the

end of the war while Stalin was content to keep some Poles on the Eastern Front, their dependents would have starved, so Anders realized all his fellow Poles would have to be evacuated. His brilliant diplomacy wore Stalin down and overcame the usual ifs and buts of the British establishment.

To get back to Europe they travelled from Uzbekistan to Turkmenistan to board a ship to Iran: List A for ethnic Poles and list B for Jews. They were the only passengers on List B but the spirited Lusia announced loudly "List B comes first" and "Carry my bags please" to a Russian guard eventually wading through the water with her compatriots singing "Lord who has saved Poland in Ages past". The family then moved to Tel Aviv where Dolu helped train people to run newly freed German occupied territories.

At the end of the war the Yalta agreement which cemented the Soviet yoke on Eastern Europe meant that the Finkelstein family like many others could not go home but Poles who had fought under British command were offered British citizenship. Dolu's suffering brought an early death but Luisa became a language teacher for the au pairs in the district. Known as Mrs Finn she became a popular figure as she had been in Poland.

"I'm prepared to forget as long as everyone else remembers" (Alfred Wiener)

Alfred's work was now recognised with the formal creation of the Wiener library in 1946 which became the most important centre of information about Nazism. He visited the Federal Republic in the fifties after the war where Adenauer gave him the highest civilian honour – Grand Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic

Stalin's crimes are not well known while Germany has to a great extent atoned for Nazi crimes. There is no special library in London about Marxism's millions of murders. "Nobody invited my father to give a talk in schools", and Poland of all countries suffered the greatest death toll and unimaginable suffering. Stalin never acknowledged let alone apologised for the murder of 22,000 army officers and others in the Katyn forest, pinning this bit of genocide on the Germans who had not yet invaded Russia. (1941) Shamefully neither did our Foreign Office admit the crime until the sixties; that strange institution has always harboured a tolerance of communism.

Finkelstein remarks that the last decade "has dented his confidence in the value of liberal democracy", reminding us of Burke's famous aphorism about eternal vigilance. The last year has shown this painfully with the war in Ukraine threatening danger for nations near Russia and the war in the Middle East threatening to spread further in Europe and the US, ugly mobs are preaching hate about issues only a fraction of them understand, even in University towns.

In Short

Between Meals: An Appetite for Paris, A J Liebling, Penguin Modern Classics, 2023 [1959], £10.99.

Some books come unexpectedly into our lives and thereafter hold a place in our hearts. A J Liebling's *Between Meals: An Appetite for Paris*, is a reissue of some of his gastronomical reminiscences of Paris from the 1920s onwards, previously published in *The New Yorker* where he spent most of his career, apart from being a war correspondent in the Second World War. The book is a delight, neither profound nor, like its rotund author, weighty; it does not alter or enhance one's perspectives of politics, religion or philosophy; but it gives the reader a tremendous *joie de vivre* and life-affirming contentment.

In this slim memoir of a very fat man, the American journalist Liebling's precise writing effortlessly brings his elegant narrative to an intimate connection with the reader. At twenty-two in 1926, Liebling went to study at the Sorbonne where he began his love affairs with all things French: food, women, alcohol and the capital itself while mentored by Yves Mirande" one of the last gastronomes of France". Relatively hard up in his early visits, he was bolstered by the mighty dollar against the war-battered franc as well as his generous father, a successful New York furrier.

Liebling portrays the real Paris, from fine-dining to workers' cafés. A dedicated gourmand, he was never a food snob, and he pitied those living off *haute cuisine*, for they have been denied the pleasures of simple food. "A diet based chiefly on game birds and oysters becomes a habit as easily as a diet of jelly doughnuts and hamburgers. It is a better habit, of course, but restrictive just the same". On piscine fare, fine diners largely find themselves restricted to salmon, trout, sole and turbot, denying themselves the delights of "The fresh herring or sardine *sauce moutarde*; the *colin froid mayonanaise*; the conger eel *en matelote*; the small fresh-water fish of the Seine and the Marne, fried crisp and served *en buisson*; the whiting *en colère*…" etc, all of which "have their habitats in humbler restaurants."

His appreciation of good food came without condescension for it was imbued with good taste. But, oh – the dishes! And done only as the French can. Woodcock in Armagnac, leg of lamb larded with anchovies, *canard au sang*, *bouef de Charolais*, trout *grenobloise* – and on it goes. The oenologically and spiritually minded will also enjoy Liebling's judgments on French wines and spirits. Nor are pastries ignored: *vacherins*, *suissesses*, *îles-fottantes de Tante Marie*, etc and some of what he experienced can still be found in Paris today. I experienced a particularly fine *îles-fottantes* in a traditional Parisienne bistro last year. The glory of Paris is that "*La cuisine française* is not one cuisine but many, "regional in origin, shading into one another at their borders and all pulled together at Paris".

It can be fun looking up unfamiliar dishes and one does not need to be a gourmet to appreciate this book; a vegetarian friend has read this book twice in a few months. This joyful appreciation of the dining experience

is much more than a restaurant memoir.

Liebling is a fascinating character – obese, myopic, and greedy but he married three times and charmed a certain type of woman drawn to his sharp intelligence". He remarked he "owed a debt the size of a small Latin American republic for sorrows unsuffered during the next thirty years to Angele". "Tu n'es pas beau , mais t'es passable."

There are some incongruous *longeurs* on Liebling's obsession with boxing, which attempts to assert some masculinity in his epicurean lifestyle. These sporting indulgences are far less interesting than his culinary ones. But readers are not Liebling's sparring partner; they are his dining companion in Paris in a different, more romantic, time. It would be unfair to consider *Between Meals* as an ode to gluttony; rather "an ode to wine women and song" as well as a *bon vivant* showing how the need to eat can be elevated to one of life's great experiences.

Sean McGlynn

The Lost Europeans. Emanuel Litvinoff, Apollo. £10

After the war London was full of lonely men living in single rooms, most were innocent victims exiled from Europe where they'd lost everything, others the perpetrators of terrible crimes. *The Glass Pearls* by Emeric Pressburger, set in 1965, was about a Nazi war criminal hiding in Pimlico. *The Lost Europeans*, published in 1960, by Emanuel Litvinoff, imagines not so much lost and gone but the present; Jews trying to accommodate themselves to a shabby new world and their shattered past. Litvinoff was himself a 'lost European.' He grew up in Whitechapel, then culturally closer to Odessa than London, the second of nine children, abandoned by their father. He visited Berlin in 1957 to research this, his first novel, and created a gripping drama, part romance, part noir spy-thriller about two men returning to their devastated homeland which had rejected them so cruelly.

Martin Stone, exiled from Berlin aged nine, returns to Berlin, without telling his aged father, living in a decrepit flat in north London, to seek compensation for their financial ruin by the Nazis. Like other refugees he feels he has no place in the post-war world. 'Afterall, was he so English? How would they be remembered in London, he and his kind? As temporary residents among the thousands who occupied furnished rooms?' 'A clear bitter voice seemed to be speaking in his mind. The truth is, it said, you have been condemned to homelessness.' In Berlin he finds himself in a city of dangerous strangers, or so it feels. 'One in every five people down there was a Nazi of some kind,' his friend Hugo, tells him. Hugo is a fat homosexual who once led a contentedly sybaritic life in Berlin, but now is on a self-destructive quest to find the love of his life, a louche, charismatic entertainer who joined the SS and abandoned him to torture and imprisonment.

As Martin and Hugo explore the ruined city, they realize that they can't trust anyone or anything. Hugo suspects a young American who cultivates him is a Russian spy or possibly connected to the dangerous man he's seeking. They can't get the measure of the people they meet. In a vivid scene, women in an underground bar accuse Martin of seeing them as common prostitutes. 'Swine!' one screams at him. 'Treating us like muck because our men were killed!' Martin finds their violent reaction, 'Strangely exhilarating.' 'Far from being frightened, he found it challenging. For perhaps the first time in his life he felt

perilously free.' Weimar Berlin had that same allure but now it's a pile of rubble teeming with wounded souls.

In Berlin Martin lives in a boarding house full of lonely people fighting each other for use of the bathroom, ruled over by Frau Goetz, a sharp, comic study of a gutsy former cabaret artiste, a 'Chocolate-box blonde,' until, 'Buchenwald changed her,' after she was sent there for hiding Jews. She's now a wreck with 'Pink powder flaking from her skin,' consoling herself with religion. The fate of the two men is also infinitely sad. The theme of the book is loneliness and how profound loss and their quest to understand the past brings them no fulfilment. In a poignant story of yet more rejection Martin abandons Karin, his adoring girlfriend, a seamstress from East Berlin who was raped by marauding Russian soldiers. ''Is it impossible for you to forget that I'm German?' she demanded quietly.' Which turned out to be true.

The republication of this book has led to some criticism. The poet Michael Schmidt in his forward of 2016, notes, 'moments of miscalculation,' meaning a description of sex between Martin and Karin. References to the female anatomy are now considered offensive to the 'woke,' as are older representations of homosexuality. 'Litvinoff,' writes Schmidt 'Partakes of the darker prejudices of his period.' Really? I didn't notice that at all only laconic description. Sadly, neither Pressburger's Pearls nor this novel were made into films. It's easy to imagine many great British character actresses playing Frau Goetz. Litvinoff sold the film rights immediately and was able to buy a family home in Hertfordshire on the proceeds. Wolf Mankowitz wanted to write the script and Dirk Bogarde was earmarked for the part of Martin. That never happened but we do have some illuminating writing in compensation.

Jane Kelly

The

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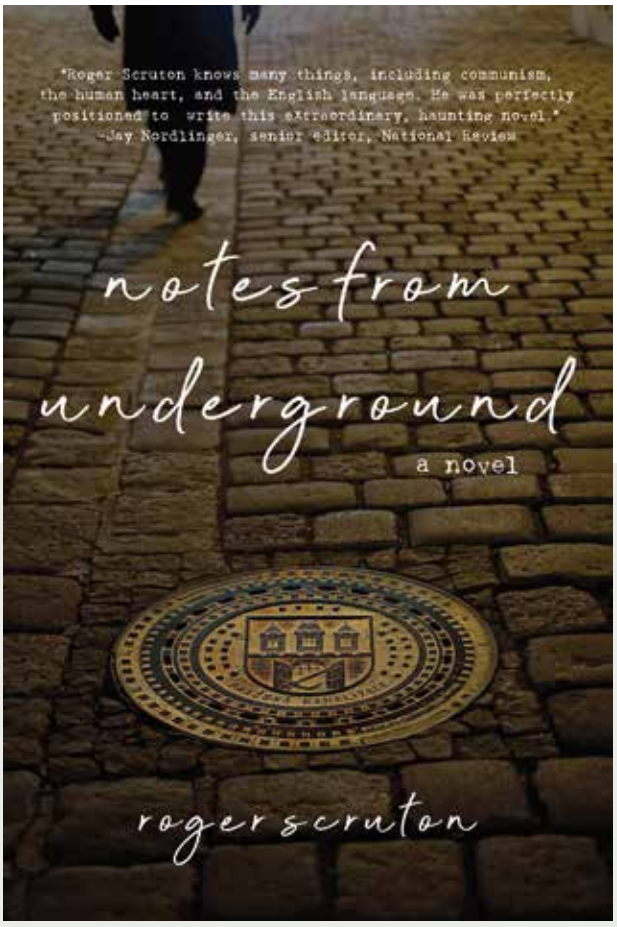

Set in the twilight years of the Czechoslovak communist regime, this novel describes a doomed love affair between two young people trapped by the system. Roger Scruton evokes a world in which every word and gesture bears a double meaning, as people seek to find truth amid the lies and love in the midst of betrayal.

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