

*The*  
*Salisbury*  
*Review*

*The quarterly magazine of conservative thought*



The Third Marquess of Salisbury  
1830-1903

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**The American Election / Daryl McCann**

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**Among the Bohemian Right / Merrie Cave**

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**Mutant Liberalism / Alistair Miller**

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**Cancel Russia's Culture / Bob Weil**

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**Political Corruption / Theodore Dalrymple**

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**Fox-Hunting / Alexander McClintock**

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**Don't Bank on Good Manners / Jane Kelly**

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The  
*Salisbury Review*

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# Editorial

Europe faces a threat to its peace and security unparalleled in our lifetimes. The nightmare scenario is that China invades Taiwan, and a distracted America leaves Europe defenceless against an emboldened Russia led by a vengeful gangster bent on restoring his nation's imperial glory. The great dictators have returned to the stage of world history and seldom have the liberal democracies seemed more exposed.

Against this backdrop, the parlous state of our national defences gives grave cause for concern. The deficiencies in weapons, ammunition, and equipment across all three services are common knowledge and were painfully visible in recent 'deployments' of our aircraft carriers, which lacked fighter aircraft, stand-off weapons, trained pilots, reliable airborne early warning, supply ships, and escorts. But no less serious is the decline in personnel, due mostly to cutbacks but now exacerbated by severe difficulties in recruitment and retention. The army is down from 109,600 in 2000 to 76,950 in 2023, the lowest numbers since the Napoleonic wars. And in the year to October 2023, our regular forces fell by 4 percent from 145,270 to 139,490, and our reserves by a whopping 5.2 percent from 34,760 to 32,950. All this in a single year.

Poor pay and conditions have played their part, as has the disastrous outsourcing of recruitment to Capita, which replaced face-to-face encounters with serving soldiers at local recruitment centres by a cheaper centralised online system. But there is also concern within the military that the Ministry of Defence's strategy of 'mainstreaming diversity and inclusion in defence culture and behaviours', while prioritising BAME recruitment to meet diversity targets, has alienated its traditional recruiting base – the white working class.

Your average working-class white lad might not be much of a historian, but mention the Battle of Britain, Waterloo, Trafalgar, or even Agincourt, and something stirs. He recognises it as *his* history, *his* heritage. During the Peninsular War, Wellington called his men 'the scum of the earth', but he took infinite pains to ensure they were properly trained, equipped, and provisioned, often to the exasperation of his

superiors in London. The men repaid their country at Waterloo by forming squares and withstanding the assaults of French cavalry and cannon bombardment for hours on end. By the First World War, the legend of the British Tommy had been established, a figure of courage, dogged determination, and good humour in adversity. But working-class lads who would have fought proudly for King and Country are left cold by the causes of diversity and inclusion, particularly when diversity targets have seen BAME candidates fast tracked for training ahead of white men, as happened in the RAF last year.

The wider issue is the loss of that common culture, that shared inheritance of traditions customs, habits, loyalties, and shared memories that once united us, and furnished our sense of a common home worth fighting for. A generation or two ago, every child knew of Drake, Raleigh, Nelson, Baden Powell, Captain Scott, and Group Captain Douglas Bader. It is little exaggeration to say that Nelson's flag signal 'England expects ...' stirred our hearts. Now, our national heroes lie forgotten, cancelled because they might cause offence by today's liberal standards. For the prevailing dogma of multiculturalism is at heart a repudiation of our English civilization and of our English history. And the working class has been hit especially hard by a bourgeois liberal establishment that has turned its back on them, denigrating their unashamed patriotism at every turn.

Wars are won, not by utopian idealists, but by patriots. For Tommy Atkins, it was his love of his country, his attachment to old Blighty, and his loyalty to his comrades that kept him going. For many, their vision of England was of a green and pleasant land, an idyll of dreamy villages, of country cottages and gardens. A bucolic idyll perhaps, but our dreams and visions matter. Yet according to a report produced earlier this month by the environmental coalition Wildlife and Countryside Link, our countryside reflects 'white British cultural values' and 'racist colonial legacies'. One is left wondering why, nowadays, any Englishman would bother to fight for his country.

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# Long live Amerika

*Daryl McCann*

**T**ravelling across the USA in the first months of 2024 made it no easier to predict the outcome of the November election. Americans, on the surface at least, seem as divided as ever. Trump Derangement Syndrome (TDS), the idea that democracy will not survive the return of Donald Trump to the Oval Office, is battling it out with the Cult of Donald (CoD), the belief that only Trump can save democracy. Underneath all the acrimony, however, lies a sentiment shared by most: the USA, as we have known it since 1945 and even more so since 1991, is at an end. America is dead. Long live Amerika.

Crossing from Manhattan to New Jersey in mid-February, a billboard promoting the return of Jon Stewart to American television after a break of nine years caught my eye. Its slogan was witty enough: ‘A second term we can all agree on’. The joke, obviously, was that while Americans could agree on Stewart having a second shot at prime time, the same does not apply to Joe Biden or Donald Trump, each vying for a second term in the White House. The billboard was not entirely accurate – not everyone welcomed Stewart’s return.

Stewart, on his first night back, made relatively innocuous jokes about Joe Biden’s age and the president having ‘lost a step’. At the same time, to keep it balanced, he lambasted Trump for saying ‘things at rallies that would warrant a wellness check’. The mostly progressive viewership of *The Daily Show*, however, were not looking

for balance, and consequently Stewart received widespread reproach from his followers for ‘practising both-sidesism’. For those experiencing TDS, obviously, acknowledging more than one contestant in the 2024 presidential race – given that the adversary is a latter-day Adolf Hitler race – is inimical to democracy. Stewart’s mock-apology, a week later, to his critics for mentioning Biden’s cognitive decline was typically sharp: ‘I have sinned against you, I’m sorry. It was never my intention to say out loud what I saw with my eyes and then brain. I can do better.’

It is not as if Stewart, notoriously anti-GOP (the one exception being as long ago as 1990), returned to the spotlight in order to loosen the Democrats’ hold on the Oval Office. Doubtless Stewart was intent on reprising his old role as a satirist of conservatives – sometimes brutal but often nuanced and playful – between now and November. But the times have changed since Stewart’s last appearance as host of *The Daily Show* in 2015. In the immediate aftermath of his ‘both-sidesism’ *faux pas*, exclaimed Stewart: ‘Donald Trump is not Adolf Hitler.’

From the point of view of the anti-Trump fanatics, that is exactly where Stewart has it wrong. American leftists or progressives (the terms are now almost interchangeable in America) might use the term ‘Christian nationalist’ to classify their opponents, but this is just a euphemism for ‘fascist’. As the title of a recent article at the progressive

*Open Democracy* site ominously warn: ‘If Trump wins the presidency again, the rule of law is over in the US.’ This, obviously, is nonsense.

Where a second Trump term will dramatically change America and where, as a traditional conservative, I am most at odds with the Trumpistas is foreign policy. The idea, promoted by some right-wing populists, that Putin’s homicidal regime is somehow ‘Christian’ and that the Ukraine War happens not to be the Kremlin’s fault is more nonsense, only this time from the other side of the political aisle.

As a case in point, consider Tucker Carlson’s lame February 8 interview with Vladimir Putin and subsequent propaganda visit to one of Stalin’s Moscow subway stations. Walter Duranty would have been impressed. All Carlson’s time in Russia produced was fresh satirical material for Stewart to use in his second Monday hosting of *The Daily Show*. We can assume Stewart won back a lot of his disgruntled fans with the headlines at the *New York Times et al* blaring ‘Stewart Skewers Carlson’, ‘Stewart Shreds Carlson’ and so on. Sometimes it is not so easy being a conservative.

Nevertheless, the kind of isolationism that Trump appears to endorse these days – despite the conservative internationalism of his time in office – is not without cause. More than \$2.3 trillion was spent on America’s intervention in Afghanistan and a further \$1.1 trillion on Iraq. And to what end? Afghanistan is once again ruled by the Taliban and Iraq has become a satellite of the Islamic Republic of Iran. George W Bush’s Global War on Terror has soured a lot of Americans on continuing to play the role of global policeman.

And then there is the human cost. It

came as a surprise to this Australian visitor to see an Honour Roll in a Walmart store commemorating the locals who lost their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq. What shocked was the extensiveness of the list of dead from Steubenville alone, a city of less than 20,000. From 9/11 to Joe Biden’s ignominious withdrawal from Kabul, the twenty-first century has so far been a traumatic one for America. There are estimates that a full third of the nation’s 600,000 homeless people are veterans.

Therefore, the Amerika we can expect to emerge from a Trump victory in November this year will no longer be subsidising the defence of Europe. A Trump Administration might even cut its ties with NATO. European countries will, at the very least, have to build up their own potent armed forces if they want to deter the Russian Bear from encroaching further on their territory. This is not 1945 and Europeans will have to fend for themselves should they want to retain their independence. It is as if the West won the Cold War only to lose the post-Cold War peace.

Trump supporters are seemingly less concerned about securing Ukraine’s border than their own porous southern border, which has seen an estimated eight million illegal immigrants enter the United States, more people than the combined population of the eight smallest states of the Union. Opinion is divided on whether the influx of aliens is a result of sheer incompetence or a deliberate ‘open border’ policy on the part of the Biden Administration. In any case, those with eyes to see and a brain – to borrow from Jon Stewart – know a stealthy invasion of America is under way.

Not only the pro-Trump brigade believe America’s rich and powerful are untroubled

by open borders. In a private speech in 2016 to Latin American bankers, Hillary Clinton, then the Democratic candidate for the presidency, revealed her hopes for a 'common market with open borders' in North America. Meanwhile, the presence of so many undocumented workers in the United States keeps wages down and, lawfully or otherwise, promises votes for the Democratic Party.

Not all illegal migrants are members of a Venezuelan crime gang or budding Islamic terrorists, and yet everyday Americans are rightly worried that a nation unable or unwilling to protect its own borders is not a nation at all. An increasing percentage of Hispanics and even African Americans, customarily Democrat voters, now contemplate voting for Trump. According to *Newsweek*, which is not exactly a pro-Trump outlet, he 'may win more Black votes than any other Republican presidential candidate in history'. One reason is surely Biden's laxity on the southern border, which is a

form of discrimination against regular tax-paying American citizens regardless of race or religion. No wonder the Teamsters union has endorsed a Republican presidential candidate for the first time in living memory.

Momentum might have been moving in Trump's direction by late February, and yet this victory was a long way from assured. There is every chance that Biden will be substituted for a younger candidate – Gavin Newsom, for instance – at the Democratic National Convention in August. Perhaps President Biden will announce that, regrettably, he had 'lost a step' over the past three years and it was time for the energetic Governor Newsom to take over the reins of power. And the Californication/impooverishment of the country will accelerate. By the time of Election Day, of course, Donald Trump might be headed for the Big House rather than the White House. Either way, America will no longer be America but a hybrid of First World and Third World sensibilities. Long live Amerika!



'There's nothing wrong with your flag...  
.. it's just the context in which  
you're waving it.'

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# Down Among the Bohemian Right

## *A Personal Memoir*

*Merrie Cave*

Working for the *Salisbury Review* is rather like joining a friendly interest club where everyone shares your fundamental beliefs so you are not afraid to speak your mind because there would be only aimable criticism or agreement instead of a torrent of PC drenched disapproval. Our circle of friends expanded globally to meet believers (as Roger called them) and many of the contributors and subscribers we met were extraordinary ordinary people who had had interesting and adventurous lives. As my title suggests very few of them were conventional Conservatives of the rent-a-standing-ovation variety. A few made it to the obituaries column, notably Mervyn Matthews and Tristan Jones. David Twiston-Davies of the *Telegraph's* obituaries remarked that the lives of the relatively unknown and eccentric should be recorded as they are often more interesting than the obviously eminent.

I started working for *The Salisbury Review* before the technology, especially email, attachments and so on, caught on and as a result talked and wrote to many more people by phone or letter. On my first day I had to photocopy a large bunch of articles which took the whole day but this apparent drudgery didn't matter because interesting visitors came into the office and shared your

concerns about the state of the nation and world.

In those days the Salisbury Group had regular meetings which had been set up by the then Marquess of Salisbury and Diana Spearman, a formidable but wonderful eighty something who had worked in Central Office and had engaged Roger as Editor. Both Lord and Lady Salisbury were very supportive of the *Review* and Molly Salisbury, also a doyenne of causes, continued to read it until her death. Diana became my mentor in the bewildering world of the intellectual right and when she died in 1991, I wondered whether I would be able to cope without her. She introduced me to Enoch Powell who was the most courteous person I have met – he always personally answered telephone calls. He came to dinner to our home with others of the righteous and later on I organised a fund-raising dinner at which both he and Roger spoke on Decadence. The Salisbury Group promoted both Claridge Press and the magazine and meetings were held in the house of Richard Sykes who had been the solicitor at the *Daily Telegraph*. He was a very good friend to the *Review* and also to me when I was accused of racism by the Magistrates' authorities – I had not long been one – when I had joined Ray Honeyford in setting up a ginger group to campaign against multi-culturalism in

schools. My ‘crime’ was picked up by the *Guardian*, but I was eventually exonerated after 18 months of occasional columns in the *Guardian* and letters from the Lord Chancellor’s office which seemed to coincide with the arrival of the *Guardian* column. Ray was the first of several ‘martyrs’ who dared to air their contrary views in the *Review* and was followed by several other victims like Jonathan Savery who was sacked from teaching for daring to write an article in the *Review* entitled *Anti-racism as Witchcraft*; thereafter he became a taxi driver and then took up a teaching post in Saudi-Arabia. Roger of course was deprived of an Oxbridge chair because of his brilliantly articulated views.

Not long after I joined, the Berlin Wall came down – it was very sudden. Only a few weeks before Roger had warned a student who was taking some materials and samizdat into Czechoslovakia to return to his hotel if he suspected that he was being followed. We were also asked to pray for Jan Carnogursky who had just been imprisoned again. During the nineties and many years beyond we hosted people from Central Europe who came to London either to get training like in insurance studies – under communism of course there hadn’t been any, or to take a short course in something. What was marvellous about these young people was that they were much easier to talk to – their English was usually excellent, than our own young who had suffered or enjoyed – depending on their temperament – an educational system, at least in London, that was Marxist. One girl who stayed with us remarked how lucky I had been as teacher in the West, but was astonished when I told her that around a dozen people in our college including me suffered harassment which drove many of

us to early retirement and that more of the ‘lumpen intelligentsia’ believed in Marxism than behind the Iron Curtain.

After the end of the Cold War, we began our *Salisbury Review* tours, usually staying with people we had hosted in London. We first went to Prague in 1990 before privatization and caught a glimpse of the atmosphere that persisted even after liberation – stony faces in restaurants that didn’t want to serve you in an empty establishment. We had many visits to Slovakia whose ethos was very different to the Czech Republic and certainly Brno, not far from Prague, was quite different. The Slovaks were far more friendly and easy going and the food was better because of the influence of Hungary whose province it had been for hundreds of years. I remember with affection Frantisek Miklosko and Jan Carnogursky among 20 or so people who had stayed or dined in our house, meeting in a Bratislava café. Indeed, nearly all the people we met had been dissidents some of whom had written anonymously in the *Salisbury Review* during the eighties. We visited Hungary several times, and one year we stayed in Pecs down in the south where resistance had persisted for some years after 1956. Our hosts told us you could hear the guns from Vukovar then in the Balkan War. I had not realized there were so many Protestants in Hungary especially around Debrecen which was an outstanding musical centre.

Later when we visited Romania and travelled through Transylvania; it was much easier, through seeing the beautiful landscape, to understand why Hungary mourned the loss in 1919 of that province, from which many of Hungary’s finest writers and poets came. Perhaps we especially enjoyed Romania because we were staying

with people of our own age. Certainly, our friends there had suffered greatly as the dictatorship was determined to stamp out the intelligentsia while nearly destroying Bucharest – it was formerly known as a mini-Paris. It was marvellous later to stay in the house which one of our families had lived in before Communism, and where as children they had played with members of the royal family. They fought a long battle in the courts to get it back and were lucky to have one of their sons earning an international salary who could subsidize the struggle. They had hidden beautiful pictures and furniture in the country for decades and the house was restored to its original standard. In the countryside you had a hint of what the European countryside was like before agricultural modernisation – drifts of wild flowers, horses and carts with rubber wheels, even in the towns. When you walked back home in the evening, you caught glimpses of the Middle Ages cheek by jowl with the twentieth century with cows and sheep tethered near the houses. The food was delicious because of the absence of pesticides while wine you could buy from a farm was like tasting a new drink.

We went to Russia in 1995 where I was substituting for Roger Scruton at a ‘conservative’ – some of the presentations were Marxist – conference in Perm University. We stayed in Moscow first with a friend we had met in America and saw Soviet and Tsarist customs still in use. Traffic scuttled to the side if any big wig came by in a posh car and water was cut off one morning without any notice. It took twenty-four hours by train to reach Perm which is nearly in Siberia and the whole impression was of backwardness while the miserable people standing at the stations reminded

us of photographs from Tsarist times. The subject of my talk was the influence of communism on the British intelligentsia and like the youngsters from Eastern Europe the audience was astonished that Marxism was alive and well in our universities and that the satirist Michael Wharton was sent to Coventry by his BBC colleagues when he expressed joy at Stalin’s death in 1953.

The Russians we met in Perm and Moscow were enormously hospitable, friendly and eager to talk to us. The Professor of History was an Arsenal fan and stayed up all night to watch matches but the approaches to his flat looked like a drug dealer’s den in Hackney. Inside it was the civilised home of an intellectual like in other countries in Communist Europe with a few old bits of glass, rugs, and silver which had somehow been lovingly preserved. Perm had been a staging post for the gulags and everyone we talked to had lost a relative or close friend in the camps. Every so often they would process to the camp sites and leave flowers. The standard of English was usually excellent and for us quite amusing, as they had learnt English from old pre-war tapes and talked in that old fashioned BBC English when the man who read the news wore evening dress.

It was through Mervyn Matthews, one of our contributors, that we made this trip and he and his wife Mila had certainly been victims of Soviet communism. They had met and fallen in love when Mervyn was a student in Moscow but after getting married in the Hall of Weddings in Moscow he was expelled. HMG were of course unhelpful. ‘The best thing you can do’ piped Sir Humphrey, ‘is to go home’. ‘If that’s the best thing you can do, you should come home too’, answered Mervyn. His strength of character/chutzpah ruined his promising academic career so he

had to leave St Anthony's College Oxford and took up a post in an inferior institution. Mila's father had been shot in 1938, her mother sent to the Gulag shortly afterwards and she and her sister had become separated during the war. She suffered a tubercular hip from her terrible childhood, so it was difficult for her to escape through a border – other methods of getting to the West were exhausted. Eventually Mila was exchanged for one of the Lonsdale spies. The whole story is wonderfully described in their son Owen's book: *Stalin's Children*.

We came to know Portugal well through one of the subscribers who had had a problem getting her magazines; Patricia Lança said she found them essential reading as she was then a Deputy in the Portuguese parliament. They had gone to Santiago de Chile instead of Santiago do Cacem which is in the Alentejo in Portugal. Putting this mistake right in two Post Offices led to a friendship and many contributions to the *Review*, which lasted until she died in 2014. Patricia was certainly an extraordinary person and one you would never forget. She had been brought up in the Wirral because her father worked in the Portuguese consulate in Liverpool and had married a Liverpool girl. During the war they went to America and being short of money sent Patricia to work in the Portuguese consulate in New York aged fifteen, where she first became aware of the impending Holocaust dealing with applications from desperate refugees. A year or so later they returned to Europe and she went back to school. Instead of going to university she joined the British army while her parents and brother returned to Portugal. By this time, she was interested in communism particularly because of the poverty in Liverpool although her father

quite rightly told her that the creed would not solve the problem. She then married a Canadian of Ukranian origin and they both went to Czechoslovakia to help build socialism. This task became her life's work until middle age, and with her third husband Carlos Lança they had an interesting time in the early sixties in the aftermath of the Algerian war. That was their last attempt at socialist building and they then settled down in the UK to a more conventional life with proper jobs.

They were barred from living in Portugal because of their life on the left when she had also written a book about Portugal: *Oldest Ally*. By this time, they had discarded their former beliefs and atoned for them by returning to Portugal in 1974 to stop the country turning communist. There was a real danger of this happening for they had also realized that Portugal was a land of mild customs unlike Spain, under the ferocious Franco – capital punishment for instance had been abolished in 1867 and under Salazar political prisoners were allowed to take their degree examinations in prison and indeed there were only two or three hundred political prisoners when the 'Carnation revolution' started. She gave us a blow-by-blow account of all these events with graphic descriptions of the 'baddies' and their dastardly deeds. Carlos was once travelling to Oporto and on the platform happened to meet his gaoler from Mozambique where he had been working at one time. He had been sent to prison there for recommending just a discussion about the need of decolonisation in the Portuguese colonies. The man was terrified that Carlos would denounce him: 'Don't worry old chap, I've long ago given up all that nonsense.' The man was visibly greatly relieved.

We went to Portugal every year – and still do – and it was interesting to observe the transition from what had been a backward country into a sophisticated one which was achieved of course with the help of the richer countries in the European Union. Patricia took us all over Portugal, always didactic and eloquent about Portuguese history and politics. Through her we learned that Salazar was not the raging fascist he was painted by the left-wing press but a sensible ex-professor of economics who was trying to put the country's finances in order and stop the political violence which had plagued the country until the 'twenties. We motored into Spain as well and she was delighted to see the improvements there, particularly evident in the school playgrounds comparing the bonny children with the miserable barefoot creatures to whom she had given food and pencils in the fifties. 'Portugal after Spain was like travelling from hell to heaven', she said.

In the nineties and beyond we visited America where I was successful in getting funds for the *Review* and for Claridge press. This happy situation continued until 2008 with the downturn. We went to various conferences where we met and stayed with interesting people like Russell Kirk, the author of a fine book: *The Conservative Mind* and one of the last examples of an independent intellectual on both sides of the Atlantic, the sage of Mecosta as he was called, in Michigan whose landscape resembled Russia – endless birch fields. Paul Gottfried was another magnetic personality among what were known as paleo-cons, the neo-cons being people who had often converted from leftism and were more interested in free market economics than any other issue. These culture wars raged

much more sharply than in the UK and Paul, who had probably had his academic career ruined by such people, was described by one on the other side as Paul-kill-a neo-con today Gottfried. But he was certainly one of the brightest people I have met – originally Jewish German-Hungarian and a classicist, he spoke and wrote several languages and was an amusing raconteur as well as being extremely hospitable. It was shameful that his last job in Elizabethtown was teaching people who certainly would not have made it to an English grammar school. Sylvia Crutchfield was a vivacious lady who ran one of the several think tanks we were in touch with. She was one of our regular donors and every year ran a conference at Windsor Castle to impress her big American donors with speakers like Ray Honeyford or Rhodes Boyson. It was fun attending some of these and even more fun seeing the sights in the US like Williamsburg or Baltimore with her. She ran her think tank and home from a beautiful period house in Alexandria where we slept in the same bedroom as Robert E Lee had as a boy. We visited an eccentric publisher near Richmond Virginia who had conferences in his home where I met Sam Francis, a brilliant writer who died far too young. I remember realizing that rural America did not necessarily possess all the mod cons we associate with America; the water from David's taps was uniformly brown.

One morning in the early nineties a polite African gentleman, Oscar Kambona, rang me up and said he wanted to write an article for the *Salisbury Review* about Julius Nyerere's visit to China. This encounter started a long friendship with the Kambona family. Oscar had already written in the *Review* about the famine in Tanzania. Later on, I learnt that

on two occasions the British authorities were suspicious of Nyerere and advised Oscar that he would make a more suitable leader, the first just before independence and secondly in 1965 when the army mutinied and Oscar had to travel to another part of the country, negotiate with the army and stop the mutiny. The British authorities now had further proof that Nyerere was not a suitable leader but Oscar refused to break with him. I'm sure he wished he had later on. Oscar accompanied Nyerere to China where Nyerere was captivated by the crowds lauding Mao and wanted to imitate his style in Tanzania. On their return Nyerere introduced collectivization and started to lock up people who disagreed. Oscar and his immediate family were lucky enough to be warned by the Chief of Police that he would be next and managed to drive to Kenya at night. His brothers and other family members like many Tanzanians were not so lucky and languished in ANC prisons for several years. Nyerere's secret police harassed Oscar in Britain but by the end of the eighties with the waning of Soviet power his former 'tails' were asking *him* for money and complaining that they were not being paid. Oscar returned to Tanzania in the nineties and tried to start a new party but Nyerere's party was still entrenched. Oscar returned to the UK and died in 1997. Both he and his brother Otini who died at the same time were among the finest people I have met and had one of the best funerals I have attended, so I was proud to have written Oscar's obituary in the *Telegraph*. A young American historian has nearly completed his biography and I hope that his book will put the record straight about the seemingly saintly Nyerere – Africa's Stalin as he was called by the Countess of Listowel, an ex-

girlfriend who eventually saw the light.

In the early nineties we met the ebullient and glamorous South African columnist, Jani Allen who had left the country in 1989 in fear of her life as she had been active in exposing the evils of apartheid but also the hypocrisy of the ANC and their assorted allies in the West. She was linked with the notorious Eugene Terreblanche, the alt right campaigner and fought several libel suits cases in SA and also in the UK successfully, but she did not survive the killing skills of George Carman and eventually returned to SA eventually settling in America. Through Jani we met several African intellectuals and she helped me put together a whole *Salisbury Review* issue about Africa and its problems.

Early in the next century we visited Tanzania to visit the Kambona family and it was salutary to see how soon a country can recover from tyranny. Neema, Oscar's daughter, remembered going back to Dar the first time since she was a baby and thinking that the place had experienced a war. Many people (traders usually) who had been in Tanzania before like an Italian pizza joint had returned and set up businesses. Open air markets were flourishing and I was fascinated to see flower bedding schemes in the middle of some of the roads in Dar. Altogether I thought that the streets were much cleaner than in India which we also visited twice in the early 2000's. By then Indians had of course abandoned socialism Nehru style, with market forces flourishing in the towns but unlike East Africa, Hinduism ensured that many parts of the towns were full of cow muck. The Editor of *Freedom First* with which the *Salisbury Review* had an exchange was adamant that nothing much could change until the rural

population could progress from superstition and backwardness.

We went to Australia in 2001 and met many conservative folks, usually contributors or subscribers to *Quadrant* with whom the *Salisbury Review* had an exchange, among whom were a handful of subscribers to the *Review*. Len Bosman agreed to take over distributing the magazine and collecting subs for us. He had a wonderful photograph in his hall showing the descendants of his ancestor: one convict who had been transported to Botany Bay. We were charmed with Australia and I remember thinking that if I had gone there as a young girl, I would have stayed. Except for Virginia it was much more English than America and everywhere we went people were anxious to know if we were enjoying the country. No traces of Pommie bastards in our experience. We stayed with Peter Coleman and his wife Verna who had stayed with us in London; Peter was a star who had been a distinguished Cold Warrior and an outstanding journalist on the *Sydney Morning Herald* and latterly the editor of *Quadrant* which was a magazine rather like *The Salisbury Review* defending western values. His fine book *The Liberal Conspiracy* described the culture wars of the Cold War era but he had also written a book on film and a biography of Barry Humphries who was a great friend. In addition he had the energy to go into politics and had been the Governor of Norfolk Island. Through him I learnt about the ferocity of the Australian Trade Union movement while ours seemed like the Flopsy Bunnies in comparison. We had met Hal Colebatch in London who was delightfully eccentric and had an interesting family background. He was the son of Sir Hal Colebatch's second marriage and had a

step brother who had fought at Gallipoli. His father was one of the group including Sir Robert Menzies who supported Churchill during the thirties against the appeasement establishment.

The new century saw changes in the *Review*: Roger Scruton quite rightly retired in 2001 to pursue fame and fortune. The new editor, Arnold Harvey, was an eccentric independent scholar who said he was indifferent to financial rewards but I had saved enough money from this change to pay contributors, some of whom were established journalists or writers like Michael Wharton, the satirist, Ronnie Payne, formerly the *Telegraph's* correspondent in Paris, and others. Many of our contributors had hitherto been academics who often wrote in leaden prose with some exceptions like Roger and Christie Davies, and my friend Phyllis aka P D James remarked 'it became a different magazine'. Our literary editor Ian Crowther who was a great support invented the Conservative Classic column and gradually other columns appeared like the Reputations and Eternal Life. (Peter Mullen had offered that idea to the *Spectator* but was turned down). Roy Kerridge too now had his own column. We also had a typographical makeover from a young designer, Jessica Chaney, who introduced illustrations and the occasional cartoon; her basic design has not been altered much since.

Although Arnold Harvey was an excellent writer with a library in his head and had written a shelf-full of history books, he suffered from mild autism and found it difficult to work with other people. It did not help that he had no phone, could not type and relied on me or a copy typist. He would have managed better in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As he spent most of his time in the

Public Record Office or the British Library he was very keen on publishing historical documents. Some of these were spot on like the account by Evelyn Waugh in Croatia in World War II but we clashed about a series of letters between Dame Juliet Rhys Williams and Harold Macmillan about the Common Market. I knew that our readers would find it tedious; so did Elspeth Chowdry Best, Rhys Williams's daughter, but Arnold was never one for compromise so he abruptly departed after three years. Elspeth's husband George was a great asset to the *Review* and contributed many articles on 'byways' subjects. He was an important figure on the Oxford Dictionary team.

Arnold Harvey hit the headlines in the *Guardian* 'the Man behind the great Dickens and Dostoevsky hoax' an interview about his activities in inventing a group who over many years had in various small magazines and scholarly journals been commenting over one another's work. His antics were only discovered when doubts were cast about an article in the *Dickensian* (2002) written by Stephanie Harvey which according to her had been documented in the journal *Vedomost i Akademii Nauk Kazakskoi*. Arnold had invented a meeting between Dickens and Dostoevsky in 1862. Anybody with a nodding acquaintance of Russian history would have known that Dostoevsky

was in exile in Siberia at the time. Claire Tomalin in her biography of Dickens (2009) repeated the story so Russian scholars asked why Dostoevsky's portrait of Dickens was not included in his collected works and why they had not come across the *Vedemosti* journal. The full story of Arnold's deception was written up in *TLS* by Eric Naiman, a professor of Slavic languages at Berkeley University. Naiman wrote to me asking me to say what I thought of Arnold and he told me I was the only person who had a good word to say for him. I felt really saddened by this comment for although I and my family and close *Review* friends laughed hysterically at how he had fooled the arrogant and humourless academic establishment, we

realized that his mischief was grounded in his bitterness about the failure of his academic career; he claimed he had been turned down for 700 posts but denies that his intention was revenge, but his connexion to the *Salisbury Review* would not have improved his prospects. If you loathe the academic establishment, their political correctness and their pomposity especially the Oxbridge variety you will love this *Guardian* article which is still available online.

An interregnum followed Arnold's departure when I ran the *Review* with a lot of help from kind 'believers'. Myles Harris appeared around 2005. He is a super



intelligent doctor but had been a very active journalist in the eighties and nineties and written a lot for the *Spectator*, and the *Daily Mail* and had been the science correspondent of the *Evening Standard*. Most of his medical career had been spent abroad: a flying doctor in Australia, experience in America, Canada and Jamaica. His book *Breakfast in Hell* describes his experience of working for the Red Cross in the Ethiopian famine in the eighties. It was interesting to observe how a doctor's skills contribute to the craft of writing. The giants like Somerset Maugham, A J Cronin and Chekhov are complimented by many others less well known like Anthony Daniels and James Docherty. Tony of course is much more well-known: the psychiatrist from Winson Green is an astonishingly prolific writer with many titles both here and in the US as well as travelling the globe, often in its dangerous parts. James Docherty was quite different: he spent most of his career as a GP in the East End but was talented in discovering unusual stories as well as contributing many book reviews.

Myles was a great help in contributing articles particularly about science which was a gap which Brian Ridley, a distinguished physicist also helped to fill. Myles introduced cartoons on the cover and inside the magazine which lightened the content. Alfred Sherman had a distinguished career as a journalist, director of the Centre for Policy studies and one of Mrs Thatcher's speech writers. In his retirement he wrote many articles, editorials and reviews for us, speaking of the *Review* as a voice crying in the wilderness, and was upset that only a few people were listening. It seems to be that way still. In his youth he had been a fervent communist and had joined the International Brigade during the civil war.

At his memorial meeting which I helped to organise we discovered he had kept up with his comrades, now in the eighties and nineties and a few of them pitched up – they were not supposed to, much to the alarm of Mrs Thatcher's devoted security people. Helen and I took a couple out into the street and assured them that the comrades were harmless and probably voting Conservative.

During the nineties I held St George's Day Dinners and managed to get interesting speakers like Judge Argyll, Dick Body, Christopher Booker, P D James who also contributed articles, and Ray Honeyford among many others. The event became a focus for Euro-sceptics for this was the era of meetings about Euro-scepticism and there were many articles and book reviews about it in the magazine. Helen Szamuely was one of the leading lights and held meetings in the Red Lion pub in Westminster every month. If the EU could have been defeated by words alone, Helen could have done it with the brilliance of her rhetoric. She was very supportive of *The Salisbury Review* contributing reviews about the complexities of the EU and always helping me dispatch copies of the *Review* which was then undertaken at our home Sadly she died prematurely in 2017 before seeing the end game.

Dick Body (Sir Richard Body) was an eccentric knight of the shires and a thorn in the side of the Major government but also correct about many other issues apart from the EU like agro farming (he was President of Compassion in World Farming) and nuclear weapons. He was one of the 'bastards' who held up the Maastricht Agreement; a delightful raconteur about past times, he helped me set up the *The Salisbury Review* on a proper financial footing after Roger

sold Claridge Press and helped in many other ways, suggesting several authors for reviews and articles including one of our star reviewers, John Jolliffe, who still contributes to every issue.

We came to know some of the authors of Claridge books, notably Mervyn Hiskett and Brian Crozier. Mervyn had worked in northern Nigeria and had been a soldier in the ill-fated occupation of Palestine before going to SOAS so his book *And some to Mecca turn to pray* was rooted in actual experience. At the time (1993) before terrorism it was a useful handbook to understanding Muslim attitudes and the Arab-Itthe Salisbury Reviewaeli conflict as well as criticising the British government's handling of the Muslim community in the UK. Brian Crozier was a journalist and an enthusiastic Cold Warrior who had set up a one-man intelligence agency. He was in Norris McWhirter's *Guinness Book of Records* as the chap who had interviewed the highest number of heads of state. He knew everyone on our circuit and was such a help to me apart from giving me lunches with descriptions of his adventures – he stopped Roger from trying to sell the *The Salisbury Review* to a magazine in America, for he was a frequent visitor there. His book for Claridge Press the *Gorbachev Phenomenon* was about the tumultuous change in Soviet affairs and we also published the *Other Brian Croziers* about his other accomplishments which included playing the piano to concert standard and painting; he contributed many articles to *The Salisbury Review* as well.

We have always felt lucky to have known Michael Wharton, the satirist, and his wife Susan. Claridge Press published two anthologies of the Way of the World: *Peter Simple's Century* and *Peter Simple's*

*Domain*. Many regard him as the most important satirist since Swift. The trouble was as he often said that real life was catching up with his characters but he certainly didn't predict the destruction of statues. We often used to visit him in his house in the Chilterns and take along Roy Kerridge whom Michael regarded as a genius. The Honeyfords and the Caves always said that the best cure for any depression was reading Michael's autobiographical description of the goings on in the Kings and Keys during the last golden days of Fleet Street. Through the Whartons we met Ronnie Payne and his wife Celia Haddon. Ronnie, a former *DT* correspondent in Paris, used to do the 'French' Reviews while Celia, who wrote for many Fleet St titles, still contributes reviews on animals and natural history.

One might go on and on with more stories about extraordinary ordinary people, usually terrific company as well: our proof reader Andrew Wilton worked at the Tate for most of his life and suffered enormously from the modernist dictators there. He is a world authority on Turner and ran the Turner Society for many years. I especially remember the delightful M R D Foot (Michael) the chronicler of the history of war time resistance, whose copy was always near perfect; one of his contributions had not a spot on it. Donald Moore was an excellent writer who had written about his experiences on the Arctic convoys, and after the war, books about the emergency in Malaya which he experienced. He was a publisher based in Singapore and anyone you met during his time there remembered him particularly as a brilliant impresario arranging concerts, theatricals etc there. Tristan Jones was a mariner whom alas I didn't meet but Mervyn Matthews who met him in Phuket thought

that he was one of the most impressive human beings he had encountered. Born at sea on a ship off Tristan da Cunha, he left school at 14 to work on sailing barges and spent the rest of his life at sea, in the Royal Navy as a delivery skipper, and as a daring adventurer who has sailed a record 400,000 miles in small boats, some of them with only one leg. Subsequently legless in Thailand he worked with handicapped youths teaching them nautical skills. I hardly know one end of a boat from the other but found his books, over 20, enthralling, laced as his adventures were with his traditional robust views. They sold millions and you can still buy them in market stalls or any second-hand bookshops still surviving. He wrote a piece in our anniversary issue (2007) about Philby's son John whom he had picked up in Spain.

I never imagined I would meet a senior Commander of the IRA who repented his role by defecting and sabotaging the IRA from within by reporting to the Garda. The strain of being a double agent made Sean O'Callaghan flee to England in 1983 and racked by the guilt of the murders he had committed, he turned himself in to the police, was convicted and sentenced to several life terms of imprisonment, but after ten years was released under the Queen's prerogative. I met him through the Friends of the Union and the journalist Ruth Dudley Edwards and he contributed reviews and short pieces to the *Review*. Like many of his compatriots, he had beautiful manners and was a delightful dinner guest. He had always refused police protection and a new identity 'so I keep looking in front of me as well as behind me', but put his chances of dying a natural death at no more than 20 per cent. He is reported to have drowned in a swimming pool in Jamaica.

At this point I must mention Andrea Downing who more than anyone has ensured the *Review's* survival. Since 1990 she has typeset both Claridge books and the *Review* and saved us much money, for we certainly do not pay her the commercial rate and she is very patient with last minute changes. For me personally she has been a great encouragement and support when going through rocky times when I have been tempted to throw in the towel, and a superb diplomat on tricky occasions. She is anxious that her brother Roger's legacy should be maintained.

We are now in 2024 and I think we have done well to have reached over 40 years for most small circulation magazines do not last long especially in the digital age. Traditionally the *Review* has attracted young writers like Daniel Hannan who were on their way up while people who have retired or semi-retired like John Jolliffe are happy to contribute for modest rewards. We have also been happy to attract gifted amateurs. Unfortunately the last three or so years has been difficult for us like many other enterprises: the chaos of Covid brought a decline in subscriptions thus depleting our finances. We are expecting a new improved website shortly and look forward to our readers contributions to it.

*Merrie Cave is our Literary Editor*

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# Cancelling Russia's Culture

*Bob Weil*

**A**fter reading (and re-reading) “The Myth of Russian Culture” written by Gustav Fondlauen pseudonymously in the September 2023 number of *The Salisbury Review* (pg 34), I find it necessary to present an opposing view.

The article does not refer at any point to Ukraine or Vladimir Putin, but it is clearly a thinly veiled political hit piece masquerading as cultural commentary, written in response to Putin's brutal and unjustified assault on Ukrainian political and cultural sovereignty. At first, I thought from the outrageous argument that the writer unfolds that this was intended as parody, and that the closing words of the author would dispel the screed with a laugh. But by the time I reached these sentences on the final page, I realized that the author was dead serious:

[Russia's] is a culture of despondency, primitiveness, cruelty, stupid vulgar buffoonery, lack of individual and creative self-awareness. If this is understood, everything falls into place and the logic of their behavior becomes clear. A nation that demonstrates the lowest level of culture in business and political life could not and cannot have a great culture, which comes from the very essence of the nation.

Although the English version of this article was quite possibly rendered by Google Translate, these words clearly bring home the objective of the diatribe: demonstrate that Russia is and always has been a cultural

non-entity, from which Russia's neo-imperialist land-grab in Ukraine naturally proceeds.

I am the son of a first-generation Ukrainian immigrant and have visited the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia several times for graduate studies and on business. I met and spent time socially with several major Soviet-era literary and musical figures in the 1970s, both in their home country and when they visited my university in Southern California. There is no doubt that the Soviet Union made use of Russian and Soviet culture for propaganda purposes throughout its existence. This reality did not diminish the original creative power of the artists and their work that I encountered – many of whom were obliquely critical of the Soviet regime. Some cultural figures, such as author Alexander Solzhenitsyn, composer Dmitri Shostakovich, poet Osip Mandelstam and cellist Mstislav Rostropovich were more direct in their criticism, and paid the price for it. The creative work of these artists is rightly admired in their homeland and in the West.

Of these highly original and world-renowned artists, Fondlauen's article mentions only Shostakovich (dismissively), only to say that he owed everything to “the influence of imagery and technique of Bach, Mahler and expressionists, with the influence of late Satie (by imagery and orchestration).” So, because some of his inspiration and orchestral technique came from outside Russia, “he is simply an operator using

someone else's equipment," and therefore nothing uniquely Russian or original could emerge from his pen. Numerous other composers, writers and painters throughout Russian history are mentioned, but they are peremptorily dismissed in a similar way:

Their work is not a new national culture; they followed traditions, ideological content, genres, forms, harmony, instrumentation, which were born, grew and formed in another world, in European cultures, with aesthetics and mentality alien to Russians. The work of Tchaikovsky or Rachmaninoff is to Russian culture the same as the graceful buildings of the Sacred Heart Cathedral and Government House in Suva, Fiji, are to the culture of local tribes. . . . If we are talking about these masters, it would be correct to say "composer from Russia" or "artist of Russian origin" and about their work – "painting produced in Russia" or "music written by a composer of Russian origin," but it is incorrect to say "Russian music" or "Russian painting". It is more correct to say "literature in Russian", but incorrectly "Russian literature."

Fondlauen is careful not to mention the indisputably creative, original and very Russian voices found in early Russian and Soviet film, for example.

One of these is Soviet film director Andrei Tarkovsky, a filmmaker who the universally-admired Swedish director Ingmar Bergman considered to have achieved more than he himself had in his own work. With unconstrained admiration for his contemporary, Bergman wrote:

My discovery of Tarkovsky's first film

was like a miracle. Suddenly, I found myself standing at the door of a room the keys of which had, until then, never been given to me. It was a room I had always wanted to enter and where he was moving freely and fully at ease. Tarkovsky is for me the greatest, the one who invented a new language, true to the nature of film, as it captures life as a reflection, life as a dream.

Several of the earliest innovators working in film were Russian – a fact that Fondlauen sidesteps. These include Alexander Dovchenko (a pioneer of modern montage – continuity editing technique) and Sergei Eisenstein, whose contributions in creating film technology and technique are foundational to what we see on screen to this day. These men were preceded still earlier by another Soviet Russian innovator, Lev Kuleshov. The Kuleshov Effect, as it is now known, is a film editing (montage) effect demonstrated by Kuleshov in the 1910s and 1920s. This is a phenomenon by which viewers derive more meaning from the interaction of two sequential shots than from a single shot in isolation. Three entirely different shots (a bowl of soup, a dead child laid to rest, and a beautiful, scantily clad woman) are intercut with a close-up of an actor's face. In each instance, the audience assumes that the actor is reacting differently to each still shot in succession, even though the close-up image is exactly the same in each instance. European directors began to develop montage technique along similar lines – but concurrently with and independently of advances in Russia and the Soviet Union. Russian work in film was clearly not derivative.

It is not surprising that Fondlauen does not mention most of these notable film artists at all – they would not lend

credence to his argument that all Russian artistic creations (from Byzantine chant and icons to Pushkin's poetry and Tolstoy's novels) may be dismissed because they are pale reflections of European models and precursors, and because they make use of tried-and-true techniques, thus contributing nothing original to world culture.

Ukrainian philosopher and writer Anton Tarasyuk, while not responding to this article, makes the following trenchant observation in his 2023 article "Canceling Russian Culture Doesn't Free Ukraine":

Cultural bans, restrictions, and histrionic rejections don't help Ukraine from breaking free from Russia. Serious engagement with the great works of Russian literature and culture reveals a great deal that might be turned against Putin's regime. Wasn't Tolstoy, for instance, a radical anarchist and anti-imperialist thinker? A key aspect of this is to understand the enemy's culture in its complexity – not the strawman of propaganda – and recognize places of convergence and separation.

To suggest that this may be a good time to de-emphasize production of Russian musical works and hit the pause button on cultural exchange is not an unreasonable discussion to have. Writing in the *Guardian*, Oleksandr Tkachenko argues that such a "cultural boycott" would not amount to "cancelling Tchaikovsky", but would be "pausing the performance of his works until Russia ceases its bloody invasion". On the other side of the ledger, David Butcher, the chief executive of Manchester's Hallé Orchestra, (whose upcoming concerts feature works by Stravinsky and Shostakovich) observed that "While we at the Hallé abhor Putin's

invasion of Ukraine, and are not performing music or working with artists who support this illegal war, we as Ukraine's allies stand against the Russian state, not its people or its culture."

We can also agree that in the current historical moment inviting criticism of Russia (or rather, its authoritarian leader) on a political and military level makes perfect sense. But to indict all the people and the entire culture of Russia is simply untenable. "Cancel culture" is illiberal and repugnant enough – we do not need to flip that concept on its head and move from a "culture of cancelation" to "the canceling of culture" when a war breaks out between factions and nations. Who knows where that will lead as precedent?

*Bob Weil is a retired marketing executive, a published author of two books and numerous articles on a variety of subjects, and has had his artwork recognized by awards committees and exhibited internationally.*



*'I'M AFRAID YOU'RE ABOVE THE FINANCIAL THRESHOLD TO BE A SOCIALIST.'*

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# The Curse of Mutant Liberalism

*Alistair Miller*

The war on woke being waged by the conservative media, along with a handful of Conservative politicians, offers us some consolation in these dismal times. The left-liberal juggernaut still ploughs on, ‘deconstructing’ our institutions, desecrating everything in its path, but at least its progress has been slowed. However, what is forgotten is that by their dogmatic adherence to the tenets of neoliberalism, the modern-day globalist revival of classical liberalism, modern conservatives have contributed as much to the destruction of our Judaeo-Christian cultural inheritance as post-Marxists brandishing historic victimhood, white guilt, gender theory, post-colonialism, and the rest of the paraphernalia of critical theory. Indeed, it sometimes seems that, in their shared attachment to borderless globalism, the two are working in tandem.

Few economists would dispute the unparalleled efficiency with which markets can organise productive resources to meet the needs of countless individuals by spontaneously coordinating their dispersed knowledge, skills, and entrepreneurial energies. Markets bring a host of other benefits too, at once rational and moral, by making the individual responsible for his actions. Friedrich Hayek elaborated these arguments with unparalleled eloquence in a series of classic works, beginning with *The Road to Serfdom*. By the same token, few economists would dispute that markets can also fail, sometimes spectacularly.

Whether it be periodic slumps or crashes, the extortion of excess profits, as practised by Big Tech and the utilities, predatory lending by banks, or ‘negative externalities’ like pouring sewage into rivers, to give but a few examples, markets cannot be left to themselves. Moreover, by creating wants through advertising, the market makes of us mindless consumers locked into a perpetual rat race.

But even if markets worked with perfect efficiency, were cleansed of all advertising other than the strictly informative, and ministered only to our ‘authentic’ needs, a fundamental problem remains: the neoclassical model of the economy, according to which perfectly competitive markets maximise consumer utility or welfare, is allied with a classical liberal-neoliberal-libertarian vision of society in which the freedom of the individual to choose his plan of life, along with his values and beliefs, is judged paramount. The individual is elevated to the status of a morally and rationally autonomous being, or ultimate arbiter or ‘sovereign chooser’.

In one sense, our freedom to lead the life of our own choosing free from coercion is a precious gift. It is the crowning glory of a free society. Nevertheless, the market cannot furnish *all* our needs. Crucially, our deepest values, beliefs, and principles, the things that lend purpose and meaning to our lives, and that guide us in our everyday decisions, are by their very nature not things

that we might browse and choose in the marketplace. For by what criteria and from what standpoint could we make the choice? No matter how much we reflect on them, or submit ourselves to cross examination by Socratic questioning, our values cannot be deduced or critically justified by the exercise of rational thought, for they are themselves the original premises, the *archai*, on which any reasoning must be founded. Our deepest values and beliefs can have only one source: the traditions, practices, institutions, customs, manners, arts, and standards of discrimination of a cultural inheritance *into which* we are initiated, and *in which* we are cultivated and formed. Yet it is precisely the appeal to a cultural inheritance, to custom and tradition, that is systematically undermined by modern liberalism.

The hubris of the sovereign chooser, of man the prime mover who can live by his small stock of reason alone, is already apparent in classical liberalism. For John Stuart Mill, writing in his celebrated essay *On Liberty*, the enemy to be slain was ‘the despotism of custom’ precisely because it stifled ‘the spirit of liberty’. The crucial thing was that a person should ‘choose his plan of life for himself’ because it is only in making a choice that the faculties of reason ‘which are the distinctive endowment of a human being’ are exercised. Hayek, the greatest exponent of Mill’s liberal individualism in the twentieth century, took up these themes in *The Road to Serfdom*. For Hayek, the grounding principle of liberalism is the priority of the individual over society, community, and state. Society is essentially a collection of individuals whose infinite variety of needs, values and ends cannot be represented by some imposed ‘social goal’, ‘common purpose’, ‘common good’ or

‘single end’; for the essence of individualism is that the individual should be ‘the ultimate judge of his ends’.

The advent of John Rawls and modern egalitarian liberalism marks in many ways a natural progression from classical liberalism that is suited to our radically democratic age. It has clear left-liberal leanings in that it promotes equality and social justice as cardinal political and moral principles. But the individualistic core of classical liberalism remains firmly in place, with autonomous individuals pursuing their own freely and rationally chosen ends. Indeed, to guarantee our individual freedoms, our inalienable human rights, the egalitarian liberal state adopts a scrupulously neutral public position concerning all beliefs, values, social norms, and conceptions of the good. Such is the nature of modern liberal democracy.

In his celebrated *Theory of Justice*, Rawls follows his classical liberal forbears in arguing that the path to the good life consists of a person’s rationally deliberating between alternative life plans, and selecting the one that best realises ‘his most important aims’, ‘his more fundamental desires’. But how are our most important aims, our fundamental desires, our deepest values, and beliefs, formed and cultivated if not by initiation into a cultural inheritance? A combination of psychoanalysis and cultural tourism is unlikely to do the trick. And yet it is precisely the transmission of this cultural inheritance that is abandoned when the modern liberal state adopts the position of neutral arbiter, and leaves everything to the sovereign individual.

Ironically, it was Hayek, later in his career, who recognised the crucial importance of initiating people into a cultural inheritance;

indeed, his defence of tradition is one of the most powerful ever penned. In *The Constitution of Liberty*, Hayek qualified the radical individualism of his earlier *The Road to Serfdom* by emphasizing the vital importance of institutions, of ‘established habits and traditions’, and of the ‘unconscious patterns of conduct’ that mediate the common framework of beliefs, values, and morals without which a free society cannot function. For human nature is ‘very largely’ the result of these patterns of conduct ‘which every individual learns with language and thinking’. Moreover, this framework can never be proved ‘demonstrably true’ – that is, justified rationally – as the Enlightenment rationalists would have us believe, because it is the fruit of generations of experience. Hayek’s conclusion, that ‘a successful free society will always in a large measure be a tradition-bound society’, is positively Burkean.

Paradoxically, Hayek concludes *The Constitution of Liberty* by rejecting conservatism, which he associates with an authoritarian ‘fear of trusting uncontrolled social forces’, in favour of liberal individualism because he trusts to the ‘free growth and spontaneous evolution’ of society. His argument is that although a cultural inheritance is passed on ‘by learning and imitation’, the cultural inheritance has itself evolved through an adaptive process of social evolution, which selects as exemplars the institutions, values, habits, and so forth of the most successful individuals and groups. Indeed, for Hayek, it is the mechanism by which civilization grows and progress is achieved, even at the cost of the destruction of traditional patterns of life. But even if we accepted Hayek’s account of civilizational progress, the transmission of a cultural

inheritance would remain the bedrock on which a free society is founded. And it is precisely this foundation that modern egalitarian liberalism, in harness with global neoliberalism, destroys.

Indeed, with this modern mutation of classical liberalism, we end up with the worst of all worlds. Instead of a leisured aristocratic elite, whose cultivated tastes and patronage sustain a high culture, we have a techno-elite of Big Tech billionaires and a new professional managerial caste who work all hours to maintain their elite lifestyles. And whereas the old elite class generally felt some sense of responsibility towards the rest of the population, a sense of public service or *noblesse oblige*, the new meritocratic elite has a winner takes all mentality and regards the masses with contempt. The old feudalism has been replaced by the new, but the new feudalism is the more sinister because, as Joel Kotkin argues in *The Coming of Neo-feudalism*, the advent of the digital revolution, data gathering, social media, electronic surveillance and artificial intelligence will enable those who control these technologies to control every aspect of our lives, our behaviour, and even our thoughts. Huxley’s *Brave New World* seems more prophetic by the day. Meanwhile, global markets undermine our customs, traditions, and institutions, our local loyalties and attachments, and our settled patterns of life, because these are hindrances to the free play of market forces. Yet for neoliberals, this dissolution of society into a mass of atomistic consumers is justified because the freedom of the individual, the sovereign chooser, is always paramount.

It may not be practicable, or desirable, in this era of democracy to reinstate a leisured aristocratic class. But the hallmark of a

conservative ought to be that he wishes to transmit to future generations the traditions, pursuits, achievements, norms, manners, standards of behaviour, and loyalties, along with the institutions, that we most cherish and value – in other words, the Judaeo-Christian moral and cultural inheritance that has taken the distinctive form in these islands of English civilization. And if this cultural inheritance is to furnish the common framework of institutions, norms, customs and so forth on which a free society must be founded, as Hayek argued, the state must publicly endorse this inheritance as *our common culture*. A conservative ought also to recognise that central to any civilization is a hierarchy of tastes and standards of discrimination, that there are higher forms of culture and art that are necessarily the preserve of an elite, and that this is all to the common good. By the same token, a culture or civilization promotes certain ideals of public service, of virtuous conduct, of manners and sportsmanship, even of gentlemanly and ladylike behaviour. Again, this is not an argument for resurrecting a feudal or an aristocratic society. But since all societies, communes excepted, are stratified in one way or another, we might as well aim for a society that is, in T S Eliot's words, 'healthily stratified' – in other words, civilized.

The final nail in the coffin of our cultural inheritance is signified by liberalism's latest and final mutation, the extension of egalitarian liberalism to incorporate the 'insights' of post-Marxist critical theory. The outcome is the diverse inclusive multicultural society, in which hegemonic power structures are dismantled and bourgeois norms dissolved. Again, this could be seen as a natural progression, as individuals are liberated to

assume a more radical transgressive form of freedom – choosing their own gender, for example – and oppressed minorities are empowered. And it is facilitated by global markets, which erase national boundaries and promote free movement across open borders. The difference is that whereas egalitarian liberalism merely abandons the transmission of our common culture, multiculturalism actively repudiates it. And yet conservatives who prosecute the war on woke cannot see that, by their blind adherence to the dogmas of neoliberalism, they are themselves complicit in the destruction of our free society. For when the bedrock of our Western civilization goes, our free society goes with it.

For Hayek, an émigré from Central Europe who witnessed first-hand the rise of National Socialism, the choice we faced was between spontaneous individualism and coercive collectivism. He could not have foreseen that our free society would be sacrificed on the altar of mutant liberalism.

*Alistair Miller is our Assistant Editor*



'follow the money, see! That's who's bank-rolling all these online cats!'

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# Don't Bank on Good Manners

*Jane Kelly*

'I've got one of them here and that one over there,' called the young man plaintively to a colleague across the room. I was, 'that one,' seated on a discoloured plastic chair in an airless local bank hoping to talk to someone.

I'd felt lucky at 9am when I'd phoned about an appointment and got through to a human voice, albeit one that could have been in India and sounded uninterested. I wanted to open a savings account. He said that I could go into my local branch and they'd, 'show me how to do it on my mobile.' I wanted to discuss it with someone first. He sounded baffled by that and said goodbye. In the bank I huffed and puffed in a long queue and nabbed the lad who told me to sit down. I looked across hopefully at his colleague, an Asian youth with a neat beard, and he agreed to deal with me. 'I need to find out if taking this policy is the right thing,' I said enthusiastically. 'That is up to you,' he said, curtly. 'Not up to me. The information is all on line.'

He went off to help some angry elderly people struggling with the automatic cash-points. I sat again taking out my mobile as if I knew what I was doing. He returned and told me the bad news that I had to log-in to my bank and receive an authorisation code by email at the same time. The writing on the screen was tiny, and just like an old tweet I realised I'd forgotten my glasses, or rather brought prescription sunglasses which seemed too dim. I rooted in my bag for a

pen and note-book and my debit card which had been balanced on my knee, disappeared. As I hunted for it, he returned to the people struggling to get cash.

'I need to know if it's worthwhile to do this,' I called to his disappearing back. What I meant was, 'Please help me. I'm English. I can't do sums.' 'I'm not obliged to do any calculations for you. The card is between your feet,' he replied sternly. It was like being in a cruel comedy film. I didn't recognise my role; incompetent but obsequiously polite old lady, or the manners of the young people around me, as they didn't have any. That I was an unwanted was the only understandable thing. I am old enough to remember how the old used to be treated in banks. About thirty years ago a newspaper sent me to interview elderly ladies in Edinburgh who belonged to a Bank of Scotland Saturday Investment Club. They'd gather in the bank and over coffee and cake discuss their money with great acumen. The radical change from customer to nuisance has been quite rapid. When I moved from London to Oxford in 2014 Lloyds Bank offered mince pies and festivity at Christmas. The idea then was to get people inside, meet them, possibly sell them products, but mainly convince them that you were a nice bank to join. All that has gone and despite generations of poor maths teaching, customers have got to do it all themselves, at home.

My helper returned. I said it must be difficult working in a place so short-staffed.

There was a faint flicker in his face, perhaps a residual memory of the requirement to make a response to another person’s remark, but it passed and he didn’t reply. He sat glumly by my side refusing to do any of the calculations I needed, so I tried to do them myself, in my little note-book. He watched and was forced by exasperation to make useful comments such as, ‘No, two to zero is zero, not two’ and gradually without realising it, he did the maths for me. I was going to be £200 better off if I went ahead, but only after a year. He got up as I said I didn’t know how to do

the transfer. He sat down and did it with his thumb nail, showing me so I would know next time, or I would have if the print on screen hadn’t been so tiny.

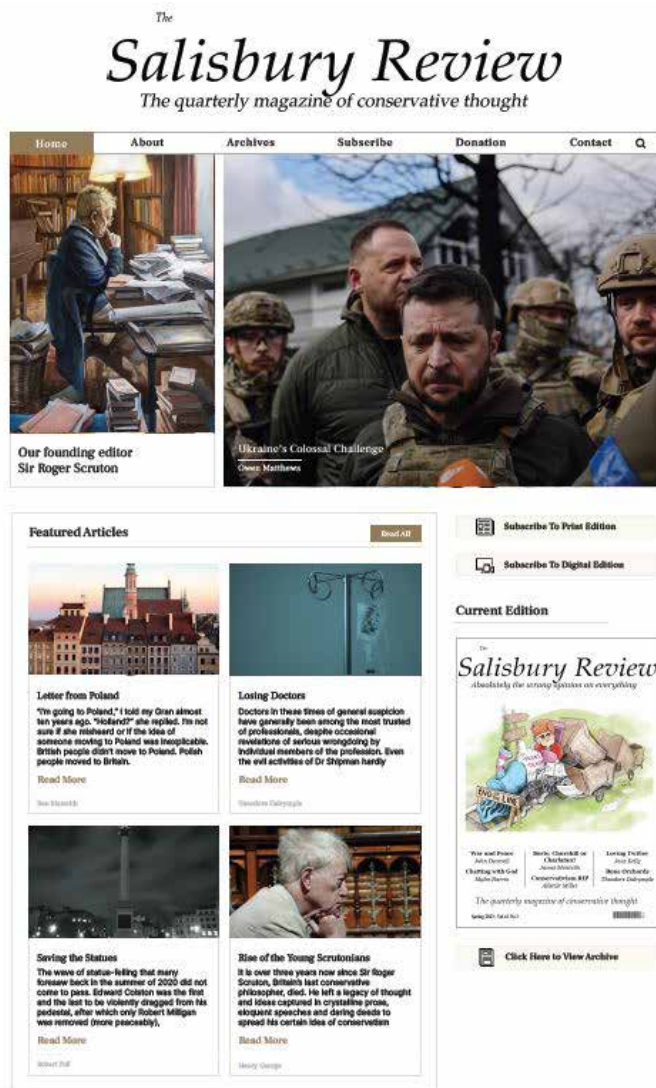
Outside in the fresh air, I felt grand and securely wealthy; I had done something financial, for myself. A bit later I wondered if that £200 was based on my existing account before or after we took the money. No idea. Too late, no going back, not ever if I can help it.

*Jane Kelly worked at the Daily Mail.*

## We will be launching our new website in April

The Website will contain

- the current digital magazine
- additional articles not in the magazine
- a letters page
- the entire archive dating back to 1982
- the graphic shown is a template of what is to come
- we will email our subscribers when it has launched



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# Corruption Legalised

*Theodore Dalrymple*

Slowly and reluctantly, I have come to the conclusion that Britain is a very corrupt country indeed – worse than, say, France. It is corrupt, of course, in its own way, that is to say, slyly, indirectly, surreptitiously, and with a good leavening of hypocrisy. Outward forms of institutions are often maintained, more or less, but they are eviscerated of their meaning. Perhaps the best model is American philanthropic foundations, whose purposes in the hands of their staff often end up as diametrically opposed to those of their founders.

It is true that most people in Britain still go through life without having to pay a bribe to anyone and this in itself, in the context of world history, is a remarkable achievement. Financial corruption of the kind that most people think of when they think of corruption – for example bribery or kickbacks for the award of contracts – no doubt occurs, as it has always occurred, and probably, given the trend, more now than in the last century or two. But this kind of corruption is, within limits, of far less significance than the kind of moral, psychological, administrative and intellectual corruption from which Britain now suffers. Corruption of the financial kind is, at least in theory, easy to extirpate. It is straightforwardly illegal. The problem with corruption on the modern British kind is that it is legal, and indeed has been – dare I say it – institutionalised, even compulsory. It is all-pervasive and affects almost every

sphere of life. It is so hydra-headed that even to try to think of a solution is enough to give one vertigo. One feels that the whole country is becoming a Post Office scandal on a vastly greater scale.

In American universities, DEI stands for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. In Britain, it stands for Delay, Expense and Incompetence. The latter is of a peculiar quality: it is not because of low intelligence in any formal sense, it is more wilful than that. So many jobs depend on incompetence that competence, where it exists, is feared and whenever possible eliminated. The motto of Dickens' Circumlocution Office has become the mission statement of British public administration and on the whole a description of it: how not to do it.

Everywhere one looks, one sees evidence of things not done properly, but nevertheless expensively. It is as if the real purpose of public expenditure were first to assure the pensions of those working, or ever to have worked, in the public sector, and to assure the employment of hordes of consultants, special advisors and the like.

With expenditure about 25 per cent lower than Britain's own defence, France has more than 33 per cent more soldiers, more than twice as many tanks, six times as many military satellites, and more ships in its navy.

The cost of HS2 to Manchester is projected to be more than twice the whole of Spain's entire high-speed railway network

(the largest in Europe). While there are good reasons why it is cheaper to build such railways in Spain, they surely cannot explain why in Spain it takes less than 5 per cent of what it costs in Britain to build a mile of such railway.

Building contractors on roads in Britain not only create a terrible mess as they work but leave it behind them when they have supposedly completed their work. No one holds them to account; they take no pride in what they do and the public authorities that have awarded the contracts evidently take no steps to enforce tidiness.

It is not as if the work is messy because it is done hastily, let alone quickly. There are sites at which traffic is held up for roadworks for several weeks without any evidence of work being done. Near where I live, road signs saying that a certain road was closed to traffic for road repairs remained for several months after the work had been done.

I pay very similar local taxes in France to those I pay in England, but in France the roads are well kept, the verges immaculate, and repairs take a fraction of the time they would take in England.

In my county in England, the roads appear as if they have been subjected to repeated earth tremors before anyone could get to repair any of the damage; in the same county, the council lost nearly all its financial reserves – tens of millions – on a single property speculation. It will have to close libraries in order to avoid bankruptcy. Taxes rise, services diminish, index-linked pensions are protected. The chief executive of the council is (so the council's website informs us) up for an award for public service employees.

Notwithstanding the employment of large numbers of bureaucrats, large numbers of

'consultants' are also employed, from the so-called private sector. Many of these are little more than a year out of university, and a friend informs me that what they lack in knowledge or experience, they make up in numbers. Their main activity is to call meetings where they hold forth. His ministry regularly wastes tens of millions of schemes and projects that, all too predictably, do not work.

Our police are scruffy, frequently too fat to run, and inattentive to what should be what a bureaucrat would call their 'core activities'. Like the sinners of the general confession, they do what they ought not to do and do not do what they ought to do. Over and over again, gross failings are revealed by dramatic cases, and it is claimed, in the subsequent enquiry, that 'lessons have been learnt' – which has become a virtual promise of repetition in the near future.

Our administration is not only incapable of, but unwilling even to try to, control the numbers of people coming into the country. A Martian observing Britain might conclude that the real policy of the government was to pay millions of people to pretend to be ill or otherwise incapacitated, especially by so-called mental illness, and to import cheap labour to make up for it.

In short, there is a near-palpable atmosphere of decay and collapse in the country, despite the fact that there are still millions of people in it who are intelligent, hard-working, conscientious, obliging and so forth. There seems to be a contradiction or a paradox here that requires explanation.

While there is a deal of ruin in a nation, as Adam Smith said, we should also remember Ernest's Hemingway's dictum that people go bankrupt first slowly and then suddenly. We seem to be on the sudden portion of this

trajectory, and unable to halt it.

But what is the explanation of our current predicament, in which public administration is catastrophically bad while many people work so hard and so well?

I'll refer to two possible factors. The first is traceable to the unintended baleful effects of Mrs Thatcher's reign (if that is quite the word for it). She found the public service incompetent and corrupt. She gave the impression that, if the public services should be run in a business-like fashion, those running them should be – in fact *were* – businessmen. If so, the bureaucrats seized their chance with both hands. They realised that they could have dividends without profits and proceeded to loot the public purse with great skill and determination. Nurses became directors of operations, or of strategy, and so forth. The embryo of a nomenklatura class was formed, creatively developed (as Mr Brezhnev used to put it), under the Blair regime. A quangocracy, whose members moved seamlessly between the private sector and the upper reaches of the public sector, was created: and in this, unusually, creation proved easier than destruction.

By turning the upper reaches of the public sector into pretend-businessmen, who spouted managerialese as the geyser of Yellowstone Park spouts hot water, all sense of transcendent public purpose was lost, except for dishonest rhetorical purposes.

But this happened at a time when there was a withering of any sense of what the public purpose should be, thanks in large part to the expansions of the universities which turned out huge numbers of ideologically indoctrinated young people who nevertheless had to be employed in some way or other. Thus, the purpose of

local government became not to administer streets, roads and public facilities, a humble task much below the dignity of many of the newly-intellectual graduates employed, but to secure what is now called social justice, a wonderfully moving target with so many requirements. Here is a statement I found recently on a borough's website:

By leveraging their position of power, [the council] aims to ensure that outside businesses demonstrate their commitment to approved values before being commissioned. This proactive approach reflects their dedication to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment in the borough.

By elevating political considerations above efficiency, the council happily creates the need for many bureaucrats. Supposed political virtue coincides with the interests of apparatchiks and their nomenklatura.

Walking through the borough, one has the impression of walking through a Central American garbage dump. Only the vultures are missing. But of course, social justice is so much more important, interesting, and lucrative, than sweeping the streets.



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# Fox-Hunting with Hounds is a Moral Necessity

*Alexander McClintock*

In 2002, in the largest protest march London had ever seen, over 400,000 people, almost all from outside London, were counted through gates built out of scaffolding poles and adorned with banners. They were protesting against the Labour government's plans to introduce legislation to ban fox-hunting with hounds. The bill, when it came before parliament, took up 700 hours of parliamentary time and has resulted in a precipitous decline in the fox population of rural England and Wales. With a Labour government likely to be elected later this year with a manifesto commitment to legislate further in this area it is worth recalling why fox-hunting with hounds is morally and practically desirable.

Fox-hunting with hounds involves relationships between humans, hounds and the environment. Central to this is the nature and role of humans in that environment. Humans are animals – multi-cellular, eukaryotic organisms that consume organic material, breath oxygen, are able to move, reproduce sexually and grow from a hollow sphere of cells. But they are also different; unique to humans are their use of symbols, making of art, and the capacity to model the false beliefs of others. They write books about birth, death and beauty, but depend crucially upon what they share with other animals: food, reproduction and protecting their offspring.

Humans need an ecosystem in order to live; they achieve one by killing plants and

animals in their ecosystem and changing their environment to benefit humans at the expense of other organisms. Many other animals, from bears to spotted jellyfish, also manage their environment to obtain food, to confuse or mislead predators or to otherwise gain advantage. Humans, like all animals, are part of a food web. By eating, humans transfer matter and energy from organisms in their environment to themselves.

In any ecosystem the population size of each type of organism is regulated by herbivorous, predatory, and parasitic interactions between organisms within communities of organisms. This prevents any one population from becoming overly abundant, but if the ecosystem is changed to achieve a particular end, it will respond in undesirable ways. The removal of predators on deer in the eastern United States led to sustained high population levels and the over-browsing of regenerating forests. Humans, and their outputs to their ecosystems, become food for viruses, bacteria, fungi, algae, rats, mice, ants, cockroaches, bears, wild dogs and other animals. By their participation in ecosystems and food webs humans exhibit their nature as one living organism amongst many others.

The concept of an ecosystem is imprecise and its physical boundaries are determined by human interests. In ecosystem studies the two most common definitions are the watershed and the stand. Similarly, ecosystem boundaries in time are also defined by human

interest. The shrinkage of the Amazon rain-forest could be considered as a natural property of an oscillating ecosystem with a period of about 100,000 years.

Human values do not take in nutrients, nor do they produce outputs that biota in an ecosystem may consume. Despite this, they often act like a biotic component of an ecosystem and drive behaviour in humans which changes the ecosystem and are subject to constraint and revision as a result of the responses to that behaviour within the ecosystem.

It is useful to think of human values as an input into ecosystems. A culture of getting into work irrespective of your state of health might encourage more cold viruses with extended infectious periods. A culture which encouraged casual, unprotected sex might favour the development of sexually transmitted diseases with development periods which maximise the spread of that virus. Commonly held values in a community act like a component of the virus' ecosystem. More generally anything that changes normal human behaviour, like farming subsidies, political agitation or moral values will have an effect on the ecosystem.

Pye-Smith in his book *Rural Wrongs* has documented changes in the socio-economic-eco-system of fox-hunting with hounds since the introduction of the ban on traditional fox-hunting in 2002 (Scotland) and 2004 (England and Wales). One change has been the growth of fox-control clubs. He notes that these clubs, which are paid for by farmers, aim to eliminate foxes as a class vermin whereas traditional fox-hunts aimed only to kill foxes that had become verminous, perhaps as a result of age, illness or learning, and taken to killing livestock. The hunts then sought to manage the fox population at a level where it was tolerable to land-managers and farmers.

These hunts were paid for by members' subscriptions and cost farmers nothing.

Traditional fox-hunts also managed coverts, sometimes buying them, to promote populations of foxes that were healthy. The fox, being an apex predator, needs an extensive food pyramid to sustain it so the coverts were maintained to promote a diverse and complex ecosystem which favoured foxes. Such an ecosystem provided ecosystem-services like nitrogen fixing, nutrient cycling and uptake of nutrients from deeper soil layers which were distributed to the surrounding environment by processes of decay. They remained as oases of bio-diversity services for the surrounding farmland regardless of changes in farming techniques and practices driven by the commercial constraints of farming.

Foxes are territorial, seeking out territory with plenty of bugs, beetles and voles to feed on. Younger foxes drive out older foxes from their territory while foxes that prey on livestock tend to be older or less healthy. In traditional fox-hunting, when flushed from a covert, a young fox was very likely to get away; Older or unhealthy foxes were not. A typical chase would last 16-31 minutes and be concluded by bites from hounds which either broke its neck or killed it in a few seconds. The pleasure of traditional fox-hunting for the mounted followers was that of a day in the country riding a horse and jumping some fences, occasionally at speed, with friends while watching a huntsman work his pack.

Control of foxes is currently limited by law to the use of two hounds which must flush the fox to guns which kill it. This removes the possibility of selection of foxes by their ability to out run (out-fox,) hounds. So it is easier to control foxes by attracting them at night using electronic 'calls' which imitate the sound made by their prey and then shooting them, usually using a thermal imaging sight.

With this change has come, perhaps driven, a change in values about the fox. Whereas previously foxes were accepted as a part of the rural environment – vermin in lambing season, but also a source of recreation and social bonding through hunting in other seasons, now they are purely vermin and to be exterminated wherever possible.

Coverts are unsuitable for arable agriculture so it made sense to replace them with commercial partridge shooting, a more profitable use of land than ordinary farming. The value of commercial shooting drives maximum bird release and foxes kill partridges all year round so game keepers must kill as many foxes as possible while the partridges clear ground-cover by foraging for food resulting in the loss of biodiversity. The root systems and understory plants of a covert provided a constant supply of organic material to surrounding soils.

The values promoted by the socio-economic system of commercial partridge shooting is merely extractive whereas the values promoted by traditional fox-hunting acted on humans in their social context to maintain a distinctive ecosystem which favoured foxes. Traditional fox-hunting involved people from all walks of life and classes of society and held this openness as an ideal. Hunts exerted social pressure on farmers to maintain coverts and ecosystems.

This type of socio-economic-eco-system, of which fox-hunting with its typical values was a crucial part, was sustained for 150 years. It had become a feature of the land of England and Wales, and was as natural as hefting for upland shepherding is ‘natural’. The system increased ground cover, increased biodiversity, reduced pressure on the ecosystem, encouraged deep rooting plants such as trees in hedges or on field margins which reduce nutrient leaching, promoted human

communities and social solidarity, reduced social division and increased the aesthetic value of the landscape. It was outlawed in exchange for a political donation of 1 million pounds.

Pye-Smith notes that other benefits result like hedge-planting, reserved field margins and winter feeding. There is however no enduring feature of the socio-economic system in rural England and Wales which will maintain the social pressure to develop these values and afford their cost. Traditional fox-hunting was maintained by the pleasures that the hunt brought to a diverse cross-section of rural human society. There are no equivalent pleasures arising from commercial shoots to plant hedges and trees, reserve field-margins or provide winter feed. The ban on hunting with hounds has imposed a cost on farmers and reduced the biodiversity in much of England and Wales.

One of the social effects of traditional fox hunting with hounds was to civilise vermin-control. Civility is a contested concept but one of its main functions is to allow people who disagree profoundly about some subject to be present together without fear of violence. In civil society everyone communicates a sense of respect for others, irrespective of whether they feel it. Extreme incivility occurs in societies where you must sleep with a sword beside the bed or a gun beneath the pillow to feel safe. Civility enables people to live together and helps to define who can be respectable, who will receive respect, who has high social status and who can be trusted.

In the final chapter of *Purity and Danger* the author points out that the natural world is chaotic, and that humans impose order on it, whether by growing crops, building houses, or herding animals. They also impose order on their society through notions of acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. This order creates

categories which define a society. Things which break the category boundaries of a society are held to be impure and often create distress and discomfort. It is certain that there will be things which are rejected and these will be separated by boundaries or rules from things which are accepted and are a condition of human survival. The rules of civilised behaviour mark, the domain within which a person may feel physically safe.

Douglas notes that boundaries or rules, as a consequence of the role they play in structuring a society, must sometimes be broken if change is to be possible. The breaking of the boundaries which define a society may therefore be a condition of its continued existence. This gives rule-breaking the power of renewal. Symbolically, and sometimes literally, change, a new way or new rules, is made possible by rule-breaking which attacks the established order. The breaking of boundaries is therefore a danger to the good order of a society.

Rituals control this danger and make dangerous activities feel safe through repetition, patterning and stylising. Fox-hunting with hounds is such a ritual and boundaries of private property are an imposition upon the land that puts order on the chaos of nature. Breaking those boundaries symbolically returns the land to nature. In fox-hunting private property is crossed by strangers, boundaries which define ownership of property are ignored, social classes mix that would otherwise seldom meet, and the vermin-control officer is elevated to the master of the hunt. This may be why the hunt of the imagination is wild and chaotic, perhaps giving rise to the myths of The Wild Hunt. Fox-hunting symbolically returns the land to nature. The hunt releases the potential for renewal and reinvigoration of individuals and of their society while death is central to

this renewal. Killing is impure and makes its practitioners uncivil; it is also a part of the natural world but killing and death within a firm ritual framework helps to bring man into harmony with the rest of the natural world.

Hunting serves to renew its followers by making acceptance of themselves as part of the chaos of nature safe. Participatory ritual with symbols however can easily descend into habit which disempowers its symbols. It therefore requires its own rules and practices which demand effort from the participants to keep it alive. In fox-hunting with hounds this takes the form of cultivation of beauty: turnout of horse, of dress, performance of riding control of hounds, playing of horns and other accoutrements of hunting.

This power of beauty to purify that which is impure has been widely observed and one of the themes of Beauty and the Beast. This story is as old as Ovid's telling of Cupid and Psyche and has spread to India, Russia and China. The accoutrements of traditional fox-hunting, from the turnout and conformation of horses, to the running of the hounds, to the dress and details of the attire of the field and the huntsmen, all strive for beauty and thereby redemption of part of that which lies beyond the bounds of civility.

Fox-hunting with hounds has also produced novels which remain in print 150 years after they were written with poetry, satire, and paintings. Through these, hunting is able to redeem an activity that would otherwise be impure. It also enables us to know ourselves, the wellsprings of civilised life, and the roots of our intentions better than we might do otherwise.

The role of civility as purity can be seen in vermin-control. Vermin are animals that subvert human attempts to manage their environment. Without vermin-control a human environment rapidly ceases to support

humans. In rural areas foxes, rabbits, pigeons, slugs, snails, and numerous species of beetles and flies subvert farmers' attempts to manage their environment for the production of food. Management of vermin by killing is consequently crucial to food production and settled human habitation. It follows that the killing of vermin, including animals thought of as sentient, such as rats, is a necessary condition for debating morality, including the morality of killing animals. The discussion of ideas about morality is thus entangled with killing animals but foxes do not debate the moral status of raiding the chicken coop.

Domesticated animals are also entangled with human life. Sheep, cows and horses and other domesticated animals have had long years of selective breeding, so they are not wild and could not survive there. They exist as part of the structure that makes settled society possible and are therefore loved for what they are. Their transfer to an abattoir, their death, and conversion into meat for consumption, moves them through the boundary of what is considered 'pure' into the area of impurity and therefore danger. Their meat brings with it from the area of impurity and danger renewal and new potential for life, not merely as nutrition, but symbolically revealing the natural chaos underlying our imposed order. The duty of care that we feel for domesticated animals is morally contingent upon our status as their creators and keepers. No one likes to see a domesticated animal in avoidable pain. To inflict unnecessary pain is not only commercially counter-productive, it also makes a farmer less virtuous, or even impure, in the eyes of his peers. Good husbandry of farm animals increases the perceived purity of both the farm and of the farmer.

Traditional fox hunting gives experience of life and wisdom required for virtues like courage, self-discipline and greatness of

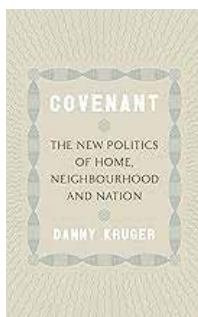
soul. Serious injuries from falling off a horse while hunting were not uncommon. Riding a horse and jumping fences requires coolness, physical courage and profound harmony with the horse. Following a hunt on horseback as part of a field requires control of your horse and yourself and good manners – not pushing to the front, holding a gate open for others less able to dismount and mount etc. Hunting takes place in all weathers including wind, rain and sleet. To hunt in these conditions requires a follower to develop fortitude, to judge his skill and his horse's capability when choosing whether to jump a hedge, and, when separated from the field. It requires the ability to think clearly while riding, to rejoin the hunt. Following hounds also requires the self-discipline to get up early when on holiday and the hard work of making your horse and yourself beautiful to attend a meet.

Traditional fox-hunting with hounds was part of a self-maintaining, autonomous, socio-economic-eco-system which provided bio-diversity and ecosystem services to the land that was hunted for over 150 years. It bound divisions and classes of society together through common pleasure and facing common danger in an activity that required skills and physical courage while learning common virtues and an appreciation of a common beauty. The only entry requirement to this community was good manners.

Hunting also performed a useful function for farmers and land-managers at no cost to them and sustained economic activity that yielded local employment and taxes. Traditional fox-hunting with hounds was both practically and morally desirable and, should become so again.

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# Arts and Books



## A Scrutonian Manifesto

*Alistair Miller*

**Covenant: The New Politics of Home, Neighbourhood and Nation**, Danny Kruger, Forum, 2023, £20.

Before becoming MP for Devizes in 2019, Danny Kruger enjoyed a long and fruitful political apprenticeship as thinktank researcher, conservative policy adviser, *Telegraph* leader writer, and special adviser and speechwriter to David Cameron before he became prime minister. One of the results was the 2007 Civitas pamphlet *On Fraternity*, in which Kruger lamented the “social desertification” that had occurred under successive Conservative and Labour governments in the name of “the cult of individual freedom”. What ought to lie at the heart of conservatism, he argued, was the fostering of civil society, a sense of community and a culture of belonging – the true ground of freedom. It is a pity that Kruger left politics shortly after to work for various charities, because he might have lent Cameron’s admirable “Big Society” initiative some impetus and intellectual ballast. In fact, it fizzled out after only a few years in government, leaving nothing behind but the haze of “compassionate conservatism”.

Kruger’s new book develops the themes of his earlier pamphlet, but instead of the nebulous term “fraternity”, he employs the more appealing formula of a “social covenant” in which a common conception of the good is founded on the cultivation of the virtues. He explores in practical detail the social and political policy implications. And he writes throughout with style and verve.

For Kruger, the polluted rivers of his Wiltshire constituency are a metaphor for a society that has lost its bearings. We have lost our sense of the things that matter: “our sense of ourselves, our relationships with one another, and our place in nature”. Instead, we are prey to a shallow consumerism, an addiction to progress and growth. Meanwhile, the local associations and institutions that mediate these relationships, reinforcing our local loyalties and attachments, are crowded out by an all-powerful state that ministers to our every need.

Kruger blames Enlightenment rationalism, the forerunner of today’s Cultural Marxism, which seeks to free us from all social attachments and inherited norms so that we can “fashion our own essence”. But compared to the liberalism of old, the new Marxism is like “a zombified monster”. The exclusive ideological identities it promotes, amplified by a culture of grievance and offence, turn us into “a society of shrieking ghosts, colourless harridans, and no less harmful for being ghostly”. But what is to be done?

The Human Rights Act of 1998 and the Equality Act of 2010 may have been well-

intentioned but have merely contributed to the entrenching of post-Marxist ideology via notions of group identities, protected characteristics, systemic bias, unconscious bias, and, ultimately, “thought crime”. They should go and be replaced by an older principle: “that the rights of the British people are protected by the ordinary laws of the land”.

The traditional covenant of relationships and reciprocal obligations, of “habits of right living”, centred on the institution of marriage has been shattered by the cult of personal liberty. In its place, we have recreational sex, pornography, transgender rights, and that “final fulfilment” of personal freedom, euthanasia. We therefore need to “get sex back where it belongs, behind closed doors”; and we need to regard the old and frail, again, as people whose lives are worth living. Kruger argues for a radical restructuring of society around married families with dependent children and elderly parents. We should tax households rather than individuals, as other countries do. We should promote the idea of a “family wage”, whereby “the household is supported on the earnings of a single full-time or two part-time workers”. And housing should be provided by Community Land Trusts, who acquire land and then sell or lease homes at affordable prices to local people.

We should also “break the grip of the large producers and retailers”, promoting local and sustainable models of farming instead; develop “a genuinely UK-based tech sector” that harnesses technology in the national interest; revive manufacturing to create jobs, skills and wealth beyond the City of London; and promote local finance sectors and regional banks. In a covenantal society, business must recognise “a wider set

of obligations than returning profit to their owners”. Our duty of care to others must not all be outsourced to the state, but this requires radical changes to our economic model: a family wage that creates the necessary time and space for family life and community service. Councils should open decision-making to their communities, and everyone should serve a year as a part-time local councillor.

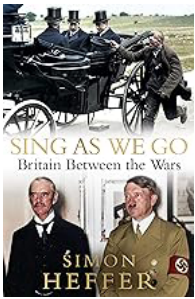
How this could all be implemented is unclear. But in a political world desperately short on ideas, especially conservative ideas, Kruger’s work is brimming with them.

However, the central weakness in Kruger’s argument is all too familiar. He begins by arguing that if the social covenant is to be restored, there must be some common idea of the good life to bind people together. There is no point in trying to foster a civil society of local institutions and voluntary associations, Burke’s “little platoons”, if these have no shared loyalties. And this requires “a deference to the past”, an acknowledgement of “the primary authority of the historic culture of these islands”. But almost immediately Kruger sounds the retreat: but also a culture “with full tolerance and respect for the many different cultures represented in our population”. Yes, the values and the culture of “our country as a whole”, but also allowing for “the fullest expression of cultural diversity that any country has developed”. What we need, is a stronger and more confident *civic nationalism*.

But civic nationalism is neither a common culture nor a common idea of the good life. It is, as Eric Kaufmann writes in *Whiteshift*, an inclusive and inoffensive conception of nationhood defined in terms of universal liberal values that cannot confer the identity

of a shared culture. Kruger’s vacuous civic nationalism is, of course, a fudge, an evasion of the inherent contradictions of multiculturalism. To question the dogmas of multiculturalism and diversity immediately invites the racism charge, and subsequent cancellation. But so long as conservatives remain silent on these crucial cultural issues, their chances of defeating Cultural Marxism are slim.

Nevertheless, Kruger’s socially conservative Scrutonian manifesto is preferable to the desiccated liberalism currently on offer from the official Conservative party.



## The Long Weekend

*Alec Marsh*

**Sing as We Go: Britain Between the Wars,** Simon Heffer, Penguin books, 2023 .

Weighing in at 860 pages, Simon Heffer’s history of Britain from 1919 to 1939, *Sing As You Go*, is undoubtedly a tome but what you find is its surprising economy.

For here are 20 of the most tumultuous and transformative years in our islands’ history; two decades furthermore sandwiched by the two greatest conflagrations in world history. Against that backdrop a strike rate of 43-pages a year looks light.

Heffer begins with Britain’s emergence from the Great War, offering fascinating details about the genesis, for instance, of the Cenotaph – first built in a hurry in wood

and plaster with an inscription written by Kipling, before being built in stone. “The Cenotaph nearly didn’t happen,” “David Lloyd George, who had in the 1918 election campaign been happy to call himself “the man who won the war”, had learned that such a symbol would be constructed in Paris ... and would not be outdone.”

Against the backdrop of a grief-stricken and massively indebted country – national debt stood at £7.4 billion, versus £650 million in 1914, we have the transition to peace and the demobilisation of men and society, along with the birth of a Labour party, heralded by the introduction of universal manhood suffrage in 1918.

We have another war in Ireland and the struggle to find a political solution to meet divisions there culminating with the birth of the Irish Free State in 1922. At the same time the fleeting post-war boom turns south, taking with it the ambitious social welfare plans of Lloyd George’s Coalition government and bringing with it the spectre of mass unemployment and civil unrest – all just a few years after the Russian revolution’s dispatch of the Tsar. As it was remarked at the time: “It must be remembered that in the event of rioting, for the first time in history, the rioters will be better trained than the troops.”

The post-war economic contraction led to the wielding of the Geddes Axe: the first of many attempts to align government outgoings with income, the collapse of the Coalition and the first Labour government under Ramsay MacDonald in 1923-24. “The whole nation had been imbibing Socialism without realising it,” remarks Heffer of the incipient welfarism of the post-war consensus. “It was now time for the subconscious to rise into consciousness.”

There is little let up in the economic malaise running up to and exacerbated by the return to the Gold Standard in 1925, and the General Strike of 1926 – a moment Heffer describes as the “last heave of pre-war Britain ... it failed because of the embourgeoisement of British society since the war. The middle class was too big to support a revolution”.

Along the way Heffer gives us sections on the state of the empire and India, on the rise of the wireless and the history of the BBC (founded in 1922) with a portrait of its founding director-general Lord Reith – revealing, among other things, that he fancied himself as the next Viceroy of India.

There are, meanwhile, sections on changing social mores – the Bright Young Things and the authors, like Evelyn Waugh, who satirised them, and the changing economic landscape: “Although 1 per cent of the population still owned two-thirds of the nation’s wealth, and a tenth of a per cent owned a third of it, they were beginning to lose their hereditary grip”. In Shropshire between 1922 and 1934, some 53 of the county’s 173 “principal seats” were sold, with eight given “alternative uses”, and seven remaining empty. The great London houses were going too, even the Duke of Devonshire was obliged to sell his, which had been built in 1730s and “was replaced in the fashion of the times by an office block above a car showroom.”

The experience of the Great War had changed people and their perceptions: “There seemed a determination to scale down deference; the literature of the time reflects that the servant class has shrunk, that the well-to-do are engaged in a constant battle with those who will not know their place, and that the expansion of the self-

reliant lower-middle class has ended at times from a near-feudal sense of dependency and obligation felt by the lower orders towards their supposed betters.”

The macroeconomic story of 1920s Britain is the economic slump as output of the country’s historic industries – notably coal, shipbuilding and the cotton mills in Lancashire, which went into freefall – all well before the Americans decided to join the party in with the Wall Street crash of October 1929. At the same time, there were new industries in London and the South East, principally around automotive and domestic goods and accompanying prosperity.

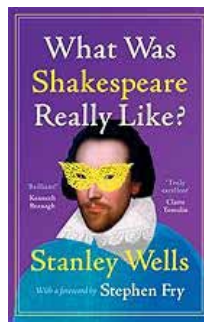
And then we are in the 1930s, but Heffer provides a fresh and scrupulously drawn narrative of the decade and its failures. The domestic economic story that emerges, particularly in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, is familiar as governments attempt to balance the books against the backdrop of grinding poverty.

In Heffer’s account Neville Chamberlain emerges a hero of the decade, and arguably the leading figure of these two decades, thanks to his forgotten work as a social reformer. “Britain, thanks partly to Chamberlain’s work in the 1920s, had Europe’s most advanced health service.” Then it was his work as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the National Governments of Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin that he also distinguished himself, financially engineering a massive rearmament programme and the rebuilding of the RAF, under the largely pacifist leadership of the former and the docile “followership” of the latter (“followership” in that Baldwin was determined to follow public opinion rather than lead it. Winston Churchill argued that it wasn’t enough, but when the battle of Britain came it would have

been a different story but for Chamberlain. Baldwin emerges as the politician with most blood on his hands for Britain's national security failures in the 1930s: "His record as prime minister has badly undermined his posthumous reputation, and created a brush with which Chamberlain would be tarred." Appeasement, meanwhile, was "constructed, largely by accident as a result of a desire to avoid war during the MacDonald administration, and continued by Baldwin between 1935 and 1937." It was not seen as a "something for nothing policy"; it was giving something in return for peace. Such a policy depended on both sides keeping their word: something anyone who understood Hitler knew he would never do."

Which of course, was Chamberlain's blindspot, certainly until Munich in 1938, one made worse by his growing self-regard and his insistence on running his own foreign policy. Heffer is rather sympathetic to Chamberlain, remarking Churchill was "right about Baldwin: he would always, though, misunderstand how far Chamberlain would agree with him."

How did Britain get through all this? The clue is in the title of this book, which is inspired by the Gracie Fields' feel-good film of 1934 written by J B Priestley. "The film argues that if the working class bears up, and society pulls together, all will be well," notes Heffer before quoting George Orwell: "The post-war development of cheap luxuries has been a very fortunate thing for our rulers. It is quite likely that fish and chips, art-silk stockings, tinned salmon, cut-price chocolate, the movies, wireless, strong tea and the Football Pools have between them averted revolution." Adds Heffer: "He might have added "Our Gracie" to his list."



## A King Like Any Other?

*Anthony Daniels*

**What Was Shakespeare Really Like?**  
Stanley Wells, Cambridge, £14.99.

To be 93 years old and still as enthusiastic about the subject of your life's work as you were at its beginning is an enviable and admirable condition. Shakespeare, being inexhaustible as a subject of study, has allowed Sir Stanley Wells to reach that condition, and he is duly grateful to the Bard for that.

In this short book, which began as four lectures given over the internet during the Covid lockdown, he tackles the question that surely must occur to any reader of Shakespeare: what was this man like, who seemed able not only to enter into the minds of so many different kinds of people, but allow us to follow him, such that we seem ourselves actually to *become* them? It was a stroke of national good fortune that the greatest poet in its language should also have been its greatest psychologist and dramatist, but he remains himself a somewhat shadowy figure. Evidence of his personality is fragmentary, and if he were to be reincarnated, it is quite possible that we should not recognise him, at least not by his personality.

The main source of information, or at least of plausible speculation, about Shakespeare himself must be the work itself, albeit that it

is always dangerous to identify an author's own views with those of the characters he creates, especially when he creates (or is it describes?) so many. Nevertheless, I think it likely that Shakespeare was opposed to puritanism, that he disliked and had contempt for mobs, that he regarded prudence as a political virtue, and that he understood both religious belief and scepticism. No one, I surmise, could have written Macbeth's soliloquy about the meaninglessness of life unless he had himself experienced that feeling, even if only temporarily. Since he makes us love the fat, roguish knight, Falstaff, I think we can deduce that he did not believe in the possibility of human perfection, for otherwise we could not come to love so imperfect a man. And I think that Shakespeare would have had a sense of the equality of human beings, not in the political, economic, legal or even ethical meaning, but in a deeper, existential one, that which Richard II enunciates when he says that he is only a man like any other. 'How can you say I am a king?' – with the corollary that you cannot say that any man is a king, if by that you mean a man freed from the basic necessities and limitations of human existence.

For long, I surmised that Shakespeare's personality was so protean that in essence he had none of his own, like an impersonator who spends so much of his life imitating others than in the end he destroys or empties his own personality of all content unique to him. For Sir Stanley, Shakespeare was modest, hardworking, able to work in a team, anxious to secure the wellbeing of his family (no deductions from the second-best bed for him), humorous but not excessively sociable. After all, no one could have written so much without isolating himself for long periods.

He must have read a great deal, says the author. After all, he derived many of his stories from books, and he must have read Ovid, Plutarch and Hollinshead. He does not comment that he mentioned no books in his will, though books were very expensive at the time.

Shakespeare's mind must have been like a sponge, soaking up information about a wide variety of metiers, and giving him an imaginative grasp of them. This encyclopaedic knowledge and acquaintance has led, or deluded, many eminent persons to believe that there were two Shakespeare's, the one the boy from Stratford, the other the author of the plays, and that the two were not the same, on the grounds that no mere provincial who had not been to university could have acquired so vast a knowledge or grasp of the philosophy of the time. Sir Stanley has been a stout opponent of this somewhat snobbish view and will have no truck with it.

Naturally, there are omissions in so short a book. When he quotes Mistress Quickly's moving and beautiful account of Falstaff's death, he does not mention that it is clinically accurate. This is significant, because Shakespeare's son-in-law, Dr Hall, had a medical degree and wrote a book, titled *Select Observations on English Bodies*, which is completely valueless, and even ridiculous, from the medical point of view. If Shakespeare had been learned in the medical doctrines of his day, or had taken them seriously, he would not have described Falstaff's death with such fine observation. As Dryden said, Shakespeare needed not the spectacles of books to read nature.

In the absence of firm evidence, plausibility in the light of such evidence as there is constitutes the standard that must apply to

speculations about Shakespeare’s character. Sir Stanley believes that the *Sonnets* are autobiographical – not all scholars think so – and that they reveal him to have been both bisexual and a man who had several affairs with women, more or less without guilt. Since he must have spent long periods away from his wife, it would be surprising if he had not.

There are one or two points at which I dare to demur slightly from Sir Stanley’s opinion. I cannot see Shylock as in any sense a comic figure; if he were played for laughs, it would be against the tenor of what he said. And “My mistress’s eyes are nothing like the sun” seems to me not satiric in the slightest, but rather, in recognising her departure from accepted standards of beauty, a moving avowal of love, all the deeper for its object not being of great beauty.

This book is a pendant to the author’s long and distinguished career. Not all his textual emendations or biographical suggestions will stand for ever, but he accepts this as being perfectly right and proper. This book can be read with pleasure by anyone with the slightest interest in Shakespeare.



## The BBC Grandma used to Hear

*Mary Sidney*

**Hilda Matheson A Life of Secrets and Broadcasts**, Michael Carney and Kate Murphy, Handheld Press £13.99.

In the distant past it was said that women talk too much but in the early days of the BBC a new culture emerged where mainly conservative, upper-class ladies were paid large sums to opine publicly as much as possible. Hilda Matheson the BBC’s first female head of department, their “Talks Director” was paid £1050 in 1932, twice the national average for a man. She wrote to her lover, Vita Sackville-West, who she met in 1928 when she invited her to broadcast, that she would, “Screw every penny out of my stingy, miserly BBC,” and she did.

Carney has written the first biography of Hilda Matheson, “A small trim figure (containing) a spirit which soared above her contemporaries.” Although she has remained obscure, he has plenty to cover; even though his subject died aged fifty-two. In his jocular style Carney says, “Hilda had six successful careers.” The daughter of a Presbyterian minister, she worked for MI6 in the Gt War, then became Lady Astor’s political secretary. Mary Somerville, the first director of schools broadcasting, introduced Hilda to Lord Reith in 1924 at one of Lady Astor’s “At Homes” and she moved to the BBC. H G Wells, who tried, unsuccessfully, to molest her, admired her

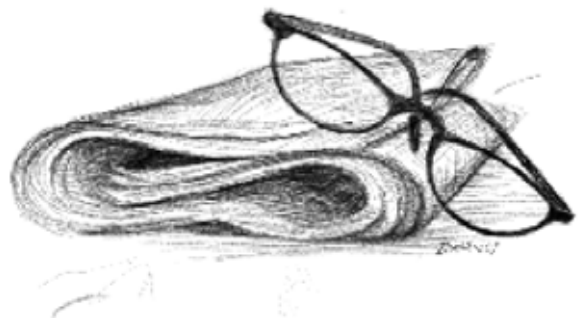
efforts as its “Talks Director” to “Bring the most stimulating ideas into the home.” Eventually Reith turned against her energies but she then led a monumental survey of African economics and natural resources. At the beginning of the Second World War, she took charge of a new propaganda unit.

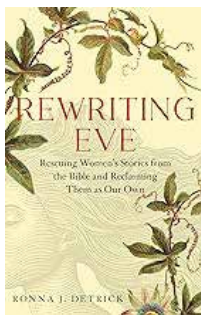
Carney’s work is followed by an essay from Kate Murphy former producer of Radio 4’s “Woman’s Hour,” which she points out must “Not be muddled with the older “Women’s Hour,” founded by Matheson in 1923 for an entirely different sort of woman, probably married and occupied with housework. Murphy says that reading Carney’s biography changed her life, leading her to write a report for the BBC in 2002 on the history of women in the corporation, then a PhD and academic career. She is fascinated by female professionals like Hilda who entered the work force for the first time after 1918. but has a bit of a problem with their politics. “Hilda was not a campaigner; we know little about her political views.” As someone so close to Nancy Astor, they are not hard to work out; right-wing conservatism and an outright rejection of socialism. Carney writes that Hilda became, “Nancy Astor in another form”. He dismisses Astor’s political influence although she was the first woman to take a seat in Parliament, received at least six hundred letters a day, and spent her life at meetings, dinners, and conferences at home and abroad. Apart from having five children, the youngest a baby when she took her seat.

Both authors are in the strange position of apparently loving their subject but not her politics. It’s not certain that Murphy has a realistic view of who was listening to “Women’s Hour.” She says “Hilda was aware that most of her audience were

working class.” How did she know, and weren’t many of those women out at work during the day? It sounds a bit like a familiar BBC dream of inclusivity.

There is a good research index after Murphy’s essay, and her work is useful for anyone interested in the burgeoning women’s societies in the 1920s including The National Federation of Women’s Institutes, Townswomen’s Guild, Women’s Citizens’ Association, Women’s Electrical Association and wonderfully named, CCOW, Women’s Advisory Committee of the League of Nations. They create the image of the time of increasing postwar optimism. Nearly a million men were recently dead, women could make new lives as widows and spinsters, and many found they could do it well. It was a time of powerful female friendships and “jobs for the ladies”. Hilda used her friends and contacts as speakers for her talks, including Virginia Woolf, who referred to her as “Common” and Dame Ethel Smyth, Rebecca West and Baroness Mary Stocks, who some of us remember from BBC Any Questions in the 1960s. We get to know such curious ladies as Miss Minty Lamb, who spoke on “Women in Africa,” and an assistant referred to as “Fat Miss Sprott.” Female solidarity had its limits even for Hilda.





## A Feminist Teach Yourself Bible

*Celia Haddon*

**Rewriting Eve. Rescuing Women's Stories from the Bible and Reclaiming Them as Our Own**, Ronna J Detrick, She Writes Press,

*Rewriting Eve* is a book written in opposition to American evangelicals and other churches that treat women badly. One of the reasons for writing it can be seen in this quotation from the late American tele-evangelist and Southern Baptist minister, Pat Robertson. "Feminism," he declared, "encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians."

Women's Studies in universities have been plugging away for at least three decades at the unthinking or sometimes deliberate way churches and their interpretation of their faith legitimise the poor treatment of women. The work of anthropologist the Reverend Elizabeth Koepping has highlighted the way some pastors or clergy legitimise domestic abuse not just among their flock but within their own marriages. Now Ronna J. Detrick, a corporate trainer, the former wife of a pastor and 'certified spiritual director' (whatever that means), has written a book to reinterpret the stories of various women in The Bible.

While nowadays a growing number of British children are probably growing up without having even heard of Adam and Eve, those who *have* gone to church, synagogue

or mosque will all be familiar with her story. Created from a rib of Adam, in *Genesis* she is responsible for the fall of man and the entry of sin into the human world. Persuaded by the serpent to eat an apple from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, she in turn persuades Adam to do the same. The result is expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

The author has plunged into the Bible and pulled out this and ten other women's stories to retell and comment upon. Her format is not a historical discussion of misogyny in *The Bible*, whether the Judaic *Old Testament* or the Christian *New Testament*. Instead, she has written a sort of self-help book for *Bible* readers, with a mix of reflections, vignettes from her own life, ending with a series of questions that suggest further reflection. More like a sermon or self help guide than a study text, the stories even include an imagined blessing from each individual Biblical woman.

Her choice of female stories are not always the obvious ones. Indeed, one of the eleven, Cain's wife, has only one sentence as her entry in *Genesis 4* – 'And Cain knew his wife: and she conceived and bare Enoch.' From this sentence, she recalls how a single sentence from her father could make her feel she wasn't good enough and moves on from there to ask how that single sentence about Cain's wife might affect the readers' own thoughts about their lives. The questions for further reflection include: "What do you feel about how easy Cain's Wife is to miss? What feels familiar about it?"

A more obvious story (much loved by Renaissance painters) is that of Jael, who uses a tent peg to slaughter, Sisera, the male leader of the enemies of Israel. She has lured him into sleeping before she does the deed. This is the sort of feminist tale that must make ministers like Pat Robertson

agitated! Out of interest I looked up some current Biblical commentaries on this story. Most commentators are, indeed, uneasy not just about the circumstances of the murder but also that it was done by a woman. For Detrick the story, rather disappointingly, merely prompts her to reflect on the risks of speaking up on women's issues.

From the New Testament she passes over the story of Mary Magdalen, that female figure so irresistible to religious painters in her swooning combination of sexiness and religious fervour. Instead, she has chosen the story of the Canaanite Woman who persists on asking for Jesus' help for her demon-possessed daughter, even though the disciples want to send her away. Not only was she a woman but she belonged to the then despised indigenous pre-Jewish population. It's not an easy Bible story, not least because Jesus unkindly compares her to a dog. The traditional way of finding meaning in this story is to emphasize that Jesus ministered not just to Jews but to Gentiles, an emphasis that was important to an early church which was by now spreading among the Gentile world.

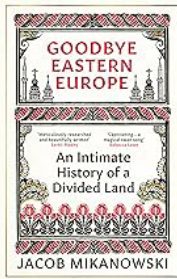
Detrick retells it as a tale of a woman who refused to be silenced, who wanted help, not for a valued son, but for a mere daughter. Her take is that it is a lesson, not so much about Gentiles being worth as much as Jews or the value of the woman's faith in Jesus' power, as a story of female persistence despite being labelled a troublemaker or a shrew. J.K. Rowling and her fight for safe places for women came to my mind.

A similar interpretation is given to retelling and commentating the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, from whom Jesus asked for a drink of water. The author points out that the conversation Jesus has

with this much-divorced Samaritan woman, a heretic in the eyes of Jewish society and a woman living with a man to whom she was not married, is the longest and one of the most interesting of all his conversational exchanges in the *New Testament*. Traditional commentaries dwell on this woman's sinfulness. Detrick comments on the way women are more shamed for sexual sins than men. Go away and sin no more.

This is a very American book in style and quotes feminist literature with which I am not familiar. It mentions but does not study in depth the past commentaries on *The Bible*, which have shaped what is said in the pulpit and accepted without question in so much of *Bible* study, whether by theologians or by ordinary churchgoers. I would have preferred much more about this historical background. But that is not the aim of the book. It is aimed at those female readers who have been badly treated by the churches or their clergy. The book assumes a reasonable knowledge of the Bible.

Is there a need among the faithful for this kind of feminist retelling? I think there is. To give just one example, the group Broken Rites had to be formed to help former ex-partners of clergy who had lost marriage, home and sometimes pensions when the marriage failed. The book challenged me, so that I had to go back to my *Bible* and think hard even when I disliked what was written. It was worth reading for its insights into female feelings of inferiority in some Christian communities. If the poet Milton had read it, he would never have written "He for God only, she for God in him," – that line from *Paradise Lost* that has always irritated me and, I suspect, many other female readers.



## Where Multi-culturalism worked

*Merrie Cave*

**Goodbye Eastern Europe**, Jacob Mikanowski, One World, 2023, £22'

Hector Monro (Saki) observed that there was too much history in Eastern Europe for its own consumption. Jacob Mikanowski, born in Boston from Polish emigrants of the eighties, has managed to absorb this surplus and produce an exciting narrative from the Dark Ages to our own 'dark' one full of fascinating detail and riveting stories some of which came from the records of his own ancestors. He has enjoyed tracing Czech cowherds, Dalmatian sailors, Romanian doctors, Hungarian winemakers and reading the Austro-Hungarian census which recorded everything down to the last calf.

For my generation, except for the intrepid, the region was unknown to travellers until the Soviet yoke was lifted in 1989. We could only learn about it from books and the occasional film, but we were aware of its multi-cultural peoples long before such labels became buzz words in the West.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire migrations stopped much earlier in the West where homogenous nations were created, helped by geography and determined rulers who enforced religious and linguistic uniformity. Visigoths and Franks were soon forgotten, while in Eastern Europe population movements never stopped. Paganism persisted much longer too

(c1000): an outdoor religion with forests as temples and groves as shrines but it never disappeared completely, becoming absorbed in folk tales and beliefs. Much of the land was empty and mysterious with dangerous borders and primeval forests containing vampires. As late as 1691 an old man in Latvia was tried for being a werewolf. Cumans were still arriving in Hungary from the steppe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and Tatars were still carrying out slave raids around Lviv in the eighteenth while groups of Sufis, Jewish and Christian pilgrims, professional beggars and particularly Gypsies with their special skills were wandering around the region, until the present day – Mankowski calls the Wanderers "the great cross pollinators and hybridizers of Eastern Europe."

The beautiful province of Transylvania illustrates the East European 'layer cake' in miniature: Hungarians, Scklers and Saxons at the top and Romanian serfs at the bottom as well as Armenian and Jewish traders in between. Even in this century, in a day you can see a fortified church in Biertan, (a world heritage site) full of German graves – most of the Germans left after 1989, a Hungarian castle, a Romanian village or an Armenian cathedral. The different castes never mixed; the lady of the Manor might chat to her Jewish factor but he wouldn't be asked to stay for dinner. Equality before the law also was an unknown concept in Eastern Europe

Three Empires dominated the region from the end of the Middle Ages: Russian, Austrian and Ottoman but unlike the West they tolerated differences of race and religion. The Ottomans had swallowed up the Balkan peninsula as well as parts of Ukraine and Romania but Christians and Jews were allowed to manage their own affairs and many of them worked for

the Turkish administration. The Hapsburg monarchy never enforced German although it was the *lingua franca* of the educated.

Jews travelling to Eastern Europe in the medieval period found it empty and welcoming especially Poland-Lithuania which was a huge country stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic and comprising today's Poland, Lithuania and Belarus as well as Ukraine and parts of Latvia. Most Jews can trace their ancestry back to their Polish forbears but after the Polish commonwealth was swallowed up by Austria, Prussia and Russia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Russian Empire became anti-semitic because Jews dominated the commercial life of the towns. To deal with the competition Jews were forced to live in the Pale of Settlement – roughly the former Poland.

. By the 1800's the French Revolution had spread nationalism throughout Eastern Europe and rebellions broke out regularly in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere. The drive for independence was necessarily tied to language, but sometimes there wasn't a formal one but many dialects – Slovenia had 48, so it had to be invented. Tomas Masaryk, the Czech leader proved (1918) that some medieval manuscripts which had been “discovered” were fraudulent. Serbia and Poland were fortunate for they had been able to keep national identities before they were conquered.

The twentieth century was a catastrophe for Eastern Europe and its peoples endured unimaginable suffering unknown to us in the West. In the First War the three Empires collapsed, replaced by independent but vulnerable nations with substantial minorities bringing discord for the future. The Russian Revolution among its other evils increased antisemitism as so many of

its leaders were Jewish. In the Second World War the Nazis destroyed European Jewry. In Poland alone three million Jew were killed: 92 per cent of the population. In most places “it was an intimate slaughter; the official reward for delivering a Jew to the German authorities could be as much as fifty kilos of sugar; even the smallest village had a 100 eyes.”

The aftermath of the war saw the largest movement of populations since the end of the Roman Empire; many German communities who had lived far away for centuries like the one near the Volga, were forced to return to Germany. In the soviet satellite states social cleansing, arrests, expulsions and show trials were common. On the bright side remains of feudalism disappeared and landless peasants often moved to the towns while cinemas, telephone and electricity came to the countryside. Housing might be unpleasant but it was available like healthcare, holidays and education.

By the fifties Stalin's death and Khrushchev's secret Speech in 1956 indicated that the God would fail eventually. The Hungarians were rewarded by their brave but unsuccessful rebellion with Goulash communism – “keep your head down and enjoy a peaceful life” but in other places vicious persecution continued almost to the bitter end. In Czechoslovakia intellectuals were sacked from their jobs and worked in factories and, boiler rooms; in East Germany one in 10 people spied on their fellow citizens.

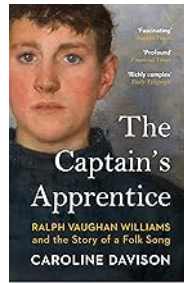
The collapse of the Soviet Empire was a major revolution as people were forced to adjust to capitalism in a hurry. The past was predictable: “We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us.” Now healthcare and other services were no longer free while

most East European countries were soon full of crooks hatching fraudulent schemes. In Albania many lost their savings in a phony pyramid scheme which started a civil war, with thousands fleeing the country.

A terrible four year war erupted in the early nineties in the former Yugoslavia for Croatia and Serbia's bigoted leaders wanted to enlarge their countries at the others' expense which brought brutal massacres and destruction of a kind not seen the Second World War. Bosnia Herzegovina's experience was tragic for this part of Yugoslavia, a mixture of Muslims, Croats and Serbs was still a fine example of the tolerance that had existed since the Middle Ages. Even thirty years later the villages in the Serbian half of that province are still empty.

By around 2008 most nations in the region had adjusted to the changes and developed market economies and acceptable democracies but nowadays the future for Eastern Europe is uncertain for the West has lost its resolve in its support for the Ukraine laying the region open to further attacks from Putin's Russia. If there is no positive outcome Moldavia and the Baltic states might be the next victims.

Mikanowski much regrets the passing of the old Eastern Europe, "a ramshackle Utopia" – many people of different faiths and languages managing to live together. "For Europe to have a future, it would be best not to lose sight of its promise even as we remember the tragedy of its demise."



## Music for the Place that was England

*Rory Cranstoun*

**The Captains' Apprentice**, Caroline Davison, Penguin 2023 £9.99.

In 1905, Ralph Vaughan Williams embarked on a journey to the isolated East Anglian port town of King's Lynn. Today recognized as one of England's most celebrated – and at times, divisive – composers, the trip profoundly influenced the trajectory of his musical oeuvre. At thirty years old and not yet famous, Vaughan Williams was a committed socialist, fervent internationalist, and cultural nationalist, a blend of convictions that might seem paradoxical by today's standards. This combination of sensibilities has perplexed many modern commentators but earned him admiration from a wide array of public and political figures, from Michael Heseltine to Jeremy Corbyn, who championed Vaughan Williams's symphonies during the 2017 General Election.

Born in 1872, Vaughan Williams' visit to King's Lynn was part of a pilgrimage into the heart of England's folk tradition. Urged by an idealism that once led him to state that "Every composer cannot expect to have a worldwide message, but he may reasonably expect to have a special message for his own people," the journey was part of a broader cultural effort, alongside friend and fellow composer Gustav Holst, to reject the bombast of 19th-century German classical music and create authentically English music. According to Vaughan Williams, such music was found in the rapidly disappearing

folk songs of the English countryside. Despite initial setbacks, the quest led him to discover the tune called “The Captain’s Apprentice”. It is the discovery of that tune which is expertly detailed in Caroline Davison’s book of the same title, a text juggling biography, musicology, history, and imaginative speculation to encapsulate both the local and wider social character of our islands.

Davison’s narrative offers a panoramic view of Vaughan Williams’s life and the cultural milieu of King’s Lynn. Through her exploration, readers gain insights into the composer’s personal journey, his interactions with the townsfolk, and the broader socio-cultural implications of his work. Beginning with the story behind *The Captain’s Apprentice*, Davison handles the nuances of song ownership and cultural appropriation, illustrating the y parochial troubles and class-based problems Vaughan Williams and other contemporaries met during their song-collecting efforts. His week-long stay in King’s Lynn yielded about 70 folk songs, most notably *The Captain’s Apprentice*, introduced to him by seaman James “Duggie” Carter, with the aid of the local vicar, at the Tilden Smith public house. Now renamed *The Retreat*, the Tilden Smith is the last surviving pub of the old “North End” area of King’s Lynn. Largely levelled in the 1930s, Vaughan Williams described it as “the worst [slum] he had ever been to” and that he was “very forcibly reminded [upon visiting the area] that the appeal of the folk song was to the ear and not the nose”.

We should be grateful to Davison for such insights, as her reflections on Vaughan Williams’ “absorption with the idea of evoking place” and his belief in folk songs as “an audible manifestation of the English

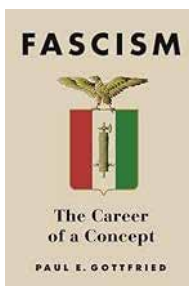
soil” are brought to life with her vivid sketches of King’s Lynn in the early 20th century and the isolated conditions that gave birth to those folk traditions.

Davison develops Carter’s meetings with Vaughan Williams from local knowledge and embellishes them with her own speculative thoughts, the end result being sometimes excessively detailed and factually ambiguous discussions on the possible origins of the song itself. Such an approach, however, does succeed in embellishing the nuanced mystique of what we call “folk songs” and somewhat emulates their spontaneous transition through time, place, and the collective consciousness. Vaughan Williams incorporated the modal melody of *The Captain’s Apprentice*, a narrative ballad about the torture and suicide of a teenage cabin boy, into his first *Norfolk Rhapsody*. We are told by Davison of the original tune’s myriad verses and melodies which appeared in other parts of the country. Still, its origin likely concerns Robert Eastick, a King’s Lynn boy who drowned himself in 1856 after being sadistically abused on a merchant ship bound for Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka).

The music is haunting and sombre – Johnson Doyle, the captain of said ship, was later tried (and acquitted) for Eastick’s murder, creating a sense of profane tragedy around the whole piece. Yet, while Davison’s presence in the narrative is measured, her historical and speculative recitations serve as a compelling invitation to delve deeper into the life and attitudes of Vaughan Williams. We learn that he was a man much less interested in the stories behind the folk songs than he was in their melodies and modes, which Davison refers to as a “disconnect”. This is perhaps best exemplified in his practice of “cribbing”,

the lifting of motifs and sometimes whole songs as main themes in his works. Vaughan Williams considered this a “legitimate and praiseworthy practice,” so long as it was deliberate and he “made it [his] own”.

Yet Vaughan Williams’ approach to composition, characterized by the blending of traditional and novel elements, reflects a deep-rooted belief in the power of music to express the universal aspects of the human experience. As a singer and resident of Norfolk herself, Davison’s book is more than just a window into the life of Ralph Vaughan Williams but an exploration of the nature and rich heritage of English traditional song and its lasting influence on classical composition. Unfocused at times, her attention to nuance and local lore paints an intimate picture of a subject that has been chalked up by some commentators in the wake of Vaughan Williams’ death with blind nostalgic sentimentality, and by others with charges of fascism or chauvinistic nationalism. Folk song, Davison reminds us, should not be confused with bucolic romanticizing. It is the very real expression of the human condition.



## Everyone Gets a Label Now

*Benjamin  
Carson*

**Fascism: The Career of a Concept**, Paul E Gottfried, Northern Illinois UP, 2017.

On the July 19, 2023 episode of one of America’s more insipid talk shows, “The View”, co-host Sunny Hostin compared

the former U.S. President Donald Trump to Mussolini for attempting, in her view, to consolidate power under the Executive branch of government. Hostin’s co-host, Joy Behar, asserted, “that particular brand of fascism and bigotry might work in Florida, but it’s not going to work in New York, it’s not going to work in certain cities in this country”. While Hostin and Behar exhibit clear signs of Trump Derangement Syndrome, their need to label Trump a fascist is as lazy as it is misguided. To call Trump a fascist is a nice way of calling him a Nazi.

Paul Gottfried, , would be right to accuse these women of using “extravagant political rhetoric” to suggest Trump represents a “ubiquitous fascist danger” afoot in the U.S. that must be brought to heel. Unfortunately for the Left, Trump, despite his soi-disant authoritarian impulses, is hardly, in Yeats’ words, the “rough beast / . . . slouch[ing] towards Bethlehem to be born”. What Gottfried makes clear in his, comprehensive study of the scholarly discourse around the term fascism, is that fascism “was a movement of the revolutionary Right, a force that now exists in the West *as an isolated or only remotely approximated curiosity*” [emphasis mine] and that “today’s mainstream parties *do not look like anything that could be described as “fascist” in any historical sense*” [emphasis mine]. Gottfried is right, then, to refuse “to mislabel political actors as representing an ideology that has mostly come and gone”.

Following the great scholar of fascism, Ernst Nolte, Gottfried argues that fascism is a product of a particular time and place—the interwar years in Europe. “According to Nolte”, Gottfried writes, the “confrontation [between Fascism and the Revolutionary

Left] came out of the chaos engendered by the First World War and reflected the ideologies adopted and sustained by returning soldiers . . . . [M]inus a certain context, which interwar Europe provided, specifically fascist movements are not likely to emerge”. That “certain context” was a politically neutered and bankrupt Germany after the Fall of the Habsburg Empire and the Treaty of Versailles, as well as a rising anti-global sentiment. It is ironic that the further we get, historically, from legitimately fascist regimes, ranging from the generic fascism of Italy to the revolutionary fascism of Nazi Germany, every politician we disapprove of is now a fascist (read Nazi). Gottfried writes, “Although certain regimes may not enjoy media approval, this hardly attests to their fascist pedigree”. Viktor Orban in Hungary comes to mind.

Leftists like Hostin and Behar, unburdened by deep learning, would be surprised to learn that Marcus Garvey’s Back to Africa movement was “brushed by fascist ideology” and that “even the democratic Left sometimes and in some places celebrated Mussolini as a hero”. The U.S President Franklin Delano Roosevelt drew on Mussolini’s *Carta del Lavoro* as a model for the New Deal. Gottfried reminds us that FDR “lavished praise on *Il Duce*, up until the time that the Italian leader strayed into an alliance with Hitler” and that the American fascist sympathizer, Father Charles Edward Coughlin (1891-1979), who edited the journal *Social Justice* and founded the National Union for Social Justice in 1934, was certainly no apologist for American capitalism . . . . Coughlin came from the left wing of the New Deal Democratic Party and returned to his New Deal Democratic roots in the 1960s”. None

of this is to say, that fascism is a “variant on Marxism”, a product of the Left. For Gottfried, following Nolte, fascism is a reactionary movement that has more in common with the Right. This historical truth provides a convenient opening to the post-Marxist Left, “devoted”, not to proletarian revolution but “to expressive freedom and lifestyle liberation”, to call anyone who adheres to what Thomas Sowell calls the “constrained vision” a fascist.

While fascism is no longer a threat to Europe, Gottfried quotes Nolte to warn that the “periodic racial tensions” and the “extent of American power” could give rise to “racial, continental fascism”. But we need to be very careful not to conflate power hungry politicians for authoritarians-cum-fascists. We need, in Gottfried’s words, to not “blur critical distinctions”.

For students and scholars of fascism, Gottfried’s book is essential, for he deftly captures the nuances of fascism in its many forms. The reader will quickly get the sense that Gottfried has read and absorbed everything ever published (in multiple languages) on the subject. Drawing on the work of the most important scholars in the field, he distinguishes between generic fascism and revolutionary fascism, between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, while showing where and how they bleed into one another. Gottfried does not set out to offer an original argument, given the impressive and exhaustive work that has already been done on the subject, but he offers an evaluation of the “various interpretations of fascism from the time fascist movements became a historical force in the 1920s.”

A long Appendix — on Rainer Zitelmann’s and Roger Griffin’s interpretations of fascism — and extensive footnotes round

out this highly readable study. Gottfried's work, will make serious readers think twice before hurling a slur that, despite its rhetorical power, is a relic of the past, a sign without a referent. It is worth remembering, the words of Mark Twain: "History never repeats itself, but it does often rhyme." As history chimes on, we would be wise to stay vigilant and keep an ear to the ground. It is when we sleep that the rough beast begins to stir.



## Not such a safe place to stay

*Martin Dewhirst*

**The Red Hotel.** Alan Philps. Headline, 2023. £22.

The Metropol Hotel in Moscow was and is located within easy walking distance of both the Kremlin (politics, ideology) and the Lubyanka (state security), so it's not surprising that it was often visited by many of the most notorious and despicable Soviet leaders. I had the honour being escorted to it very early one morning at the height of the "Thaw" in 1962 from my much more modest hotel, the "Armenia", to be interrogated for a couple of hours by two officers who had, I assumed, come down from the Lubyanka, before I was instructed to present myself at the Belorussky Railway Station at 16.00 hours that day to be deported by train to West Berlin (without having any Polish or East German transit visas) and instructed never to come back.

Not surprisingly, I galloped through this

well-written volume much more quickly than through any other non-fiction work of well over 400 pages that has ever come my way. It is very much more than a history of a hotel. It is also an account of the foreign, not only British, journalists who lived and worked in it before, during and in some cases after the "Great Fatherland War" of 1941-1945, and of some of their female Soviet and anti-Soviet Russian translators and interpreters, notably the redoubtable Nadezhda Ulanovskaya (who in 1960 translated Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* into Russian) and Tatyana Svetlova who later became a Mrs. Ronald Matthews and published two books in English about her life in Russia and the West. Older readers may recall the names of several once quite well-known Westerners who did time in the Metropol, such as Vernon Bartlett, Godfrey Blunden, A T Cholerton, Eddy Gilmore, Charlotte Haldane, Ralph Parker, Edgar Snow, Felix Topolski and Alexander Werth.

Philps makes many good points; he writes that "Stalin's fear of the army wresting control of the workers' state from the Communist Party had not eased in wartime." Might this also be true of Putin? It "turned out that, after thirty vodka toasts, the *bon vivant* Vernon Bartlett was the only journalist throughout the war to say anything remotely challenging to [Stalin's] face." "This book has focused on the extraordinary lengths that Stalin took to control the media narrative in [the] Second World War. It is not fanciful to suggest that Putin has been following Stalin's playbook and he has had some success in using twentieth-century methods to control twenty-first-century media at home. In the Russian heartland, away from the more sophisticated big cities, he appears to have convinced people that his

ill-conceived and unnecessary war [against Ukraine – md] is an existential struggle for the survival of Russia. The ground was well-prepared.”

This was the first monograph I read after reviewing Masha Karp’s book on Orwell in our previous issue and I wondered whether Philp’s work might contain the answer to why the Preface to *Animal Farm* (subtitle: *A Fairy Story*) was not, contrary to expectations, published when the book came out on 17 August, 1945. Philp mentions, that an American intellectual, Whittaker Chambers had known Nadezhda Ulanovskaya when she was living in America in the early 1930s, explained in *Time* magazine on 5 March, 1945, why

he had finally broken with communism. The article was entitled “The Ghosts on the Roof”, but with a disclaimer saying that it was merely a “political fairy tale”. There isn’t any real difference, in this case, between the meaning of the political fairy tale and the meaning of the *Fairy Story*, but perhaps Orwell didn’t want people to think, incorrectly, that he had ever been influenced by Chambers?

If you’re interested in “eternal Russia”, do read Philp’s book and, ideally, follow it up with Ann Summers’s translation of Ludmilla Petrushevskaya’s much shorter but no less powerful memoir, “*The Girl from the Metropol Hotel*”

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## FILM

Anselm

Director: Wim Wenders

Jane Kelly

Many artists have the problem of finding space to work and store their stuff long-term. German artist Anselm Kiefer has no such issues; one of his studios, a disused silk-factory in Barjac, southern France, covers 350 acres. Now open to the public like a stately home, he has to cycle around it. Other studios are now ‘installations’ the equivalent of small towns. A move in 2008 from Barjac to Paris involved using 110 lorries.

This film by German director, Wim Wenders, made over two years, draws us into Kiefer’s extraordinarily industrious Germanic world, inspired by Teutonic myth, philosophy, nature and the deep tragedy of Nazi genocide. Born just after the last war, Kiefer grew up in rural Germany feeling angry about his country’s apparent amnesia over the recent past. In 1969 he posed in the countryside

giving Nazi salutes wearing his father’s Wehrmacht uniform, which not surprisingly attracted attention. That included from the performance artist, Joseph Beuys, the former Luftwaffe rear-gunner who was famously shot down in Crimea, burned, covered in fat and rolled in a rug by local tribesmen and later used fat and felt in his work. Perhaps Kiefer’s original inspirational myth maker.

In his first attic studio, Kiefer scored and pounded away with oil, acrylic and paper on large canvasses 287.5 x 311 cm, 2 933.48097 feet (2933 feet 549/64 inches) showing Nazi architecture, terrifying images of decay and evil defeated. From the start he was able to articulate his nation’s past in a highly effective and stunningly original way. At an exhibition in London, I was moved by his small watercolour showing a romantically

beautiful boy lying dead in the snow, perhaps on the Eastern Front, shot through the throat. Not many people use that quiet medium so stunningly. In the 1980s he attracted the American art market and quickly became internationally successful.

This is very much a German film; mournfully romantic and fractured; it opens with sunlight illuminating, Ra, his installation of angel-Icarus, wedding-dress draped figures near Barjac, then moves into recurring scenes of Germany in ruins. Wenders makes a dramatic reconstruction of the artist's early life, Kiefer played by Wender's nephew as a young boy, and by his son Daniel, as youth wandering about the fields with an amazing looking camera. Photographic technology is to the fore here, everything filmed in 3D. Wenders mounts small, industrial cameras on drones, allowing soaring landscape shots and intimate depth moving through passageways and tunnels through Kiefer's art-hangar world. The 3D effect, stereoscopic imagery, captures the depth of field, rich organic colours and massive texture of the of the collages of straw,

wood and lead, and emphasises the scale of the canvasses. It's fascinating to see Kiefer at work with hammers and giant blow-torches, burning mounds of straw, no HR or H&S bods in sight. They would have no power against him, young men driving in with heavy plant are deferential, obviously recognising a master alchemist/engineer/artist, or perhaps it's just the German respect for art.

We are smashed over the head with Kiefer's intense artistic cerebration but I wanted more clues, in words about his technique, where did all that use of boiling lead start, and the problem of using it. We don't learn anything personal about him; the deserted first family, the new family in France, the effect of international success – in 2017 he was listed as one of the 1,001 richest people in Germany. But this film is for those who hold to the visual rather than the verbal, and do not require less earnest biographies. Any artists watching might also be left with a sneaking question – what if the Americans hadn't liked him so much and he hadn't made all that money, where would all his stuff be now?

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## In Short

**The Winding Stair**, Jesse Norman: *Biteback*, £20.

This outstanding novel is centred on the struggle between the two most formidable lawyers of the early seventeenth century, Sir Edward Coke and Sir Francis Bacon. There are dozens of books about the Elizabethan Age and the Civil Wars, but for many the reign of James I is comparatively fresh ground, apart from the ridiculous Gunpowder Plot. James was the chief begetter of the idea of the Divine Right of Kings, which was to bedevil the Stuarts for the rest of the century.

After an appalling childhood he had reigned as King of Scotland until called to London to unite the two kingdoms. His Law Officers, the Lord Chancellor, the Chief Justice, the Attorney and Solicitors General, had to tread very carefully to avoid being tripped up by each other or by the competition of the Ecclesiastical Courts, and still remain acceptable to the King.

Sir Edward Coke was one of the greatest and most industrious of English lawyers, and only fell after his ruthless and grasping treatment of his wife and her great fortune., and the triumphant rise of the King's last

and most powerful favourite, who was eventually made Duke of Buckingham

Sir Francis Bacon, who replaced Coke, was far more than a powerful lawyer. He went beyond his original aim, which was the interpretation of the natural world, to promote “the utility, the conquest and direction of nature to suit the good ends of human nature. Look, see the force of discoveries unknown to antiquity; printing, gunpowder, the compass. These three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world...” This is far more original and impressive than the self-seeking, ever scheming concerns of the other lawyers and politicians of the day. They were all lawyers.

This was all happening at the time of the eclipse, for 200 years, of the Cecil family, who had made themselves indispensable to Queen Elizabeth; first Burleigh, and after his death in 1598, his nephew Robert Cecil, the first Lord Salisbury, who was what is nowadays called “vertically challenged”, and was fondly addressed in King James’s letters to him as “my little Beagle”. After him the Cecils took a back seat for over two centuries until the gradual rise of Robert, the third Marquess of Salisbury, who served Queen Victoria in the family tradition until his death in 1902

This tremendous story, with its endless twists and turns, is unravelled with great skill and patience by Norman. It may be a novel, but it creates, faultlessly, a picture of the essence of the political world that it covers from 1570 to 1622 in a far more accessible fashion than many a mere catalogue of the facts. It is told in the beautiful idiom of the day, with never a word out of place, but lucidly and arrestingly throughout. It is the most compelling historical novel that I

have read since the days of Patrick O’Brian. It will be of great interest not only to the historically minded but also to many others who have a feeling for well-crafted and elegant English prose.

*John Jolliffe*

**Thunderclap A memoir of art and life and sudden death**, Laura Cumming Chatto & Windus £25 .

Teaching art in Wormwood Scrubs could be tricky. Muslim prisoners wouldn’t draw any living creature as that was disrespectful to Allah. Some Afro-Caribbean men were only interested in copying images of violent graffiti. But I was able to interest them all by showing them *The Goldfinch* by Carel Fabritius, which Laura Cumming in this book about the short life of the artist, calls, “A small miracle”. Painted on recycled wood in 1654, the year Fabritius was killed aged 32, the author in her intense way tells us that the finch has, “Gone as far as it can to the right-hand edge of the ledge and the picture. The bird has an air of solitude and sorrow. It is shackled and there for the rest of time.” No wonder the prisoners responded to it so readily.

She is determined to demonstrate the visual profundity of Dutch art, which some including Sir Joshua Reynolds have dismissed as, “Mere accuracy of illusion”. The title of the book, “Thunderclap,” suggests sudden shock, human vulnerability and still life painting as a reminder that life is transitory, able to end in a trice. This is personal. Because the book is a “salute” to her father James, a painter, who died after “the cancer exploded in his brain”. She quotes St Augustine, and Euripides on death, “Come back! Even as a shadow, even as a dream” to express her grieving for

the lost men she loves, James and Fabritius. The Dutch painter is hardly mourned by anyone else. “Almost every trace is said to have disappeared.” “In his own time he was scarcely mentioned for more is known about the death than the life.” This book passionately and diligently tries to put this right but she begins and ends with the death. “A sudden explosion of gunpowder: The Delft Thunderclap. A flash was followed by a blast so loud it could be heard more than seventy miles away on the island of Texel. Everyone in the house was crushed by the roof beams, which instantly collapsed. Only Fabritius survived. But the rescue came too late for he died just before twilight that day.” She later gives a more detailed evocation of the scene comparing it to devastation in Beirut. She was writing before Gaza, and has even consulted the, “Blast Department at Sheffield University” to get them to analyse the explosion “in the context of Beirut.” The Goldfinch was the only survivor of the blast from the arsenal that day. It was, she tells us, “The first painting in history to be given a CT scan.” She may not be able to paint like her father but she offers the reader

vivid written details. Marks on the surface showed that it still, “bears the traces of a blast, hurtling matter, broken shards, hard pellets pockmarking the surface in an instant.” The scan also revealed that the paint didn’t split because it wasn’t dry. “A living thing in the studio when Fabritius was dying.” She has “Searched and searched for his grave,” but “When I stand in front of this painting it carries the last of his energy as an artist painting a picture.”

Perhaps this book marks the entry of emotionalism, “Lived experience” into what she calls the “dust dry” world of art history. That ethos from the US which has invaded all our institutions may be replacing previous post-modern resistance to any personal identification by writers. In the American way she also keeps referring to the National Gallery as a “museum,” which it isn’t. But despite her emotion she is a knowledgeable critic and this passionate book will take anyone, deep into Dutch art and the brilliant light it casts onto its disturbing tenebrism.

*Mary Sidney*

*The*  
*Salisbury*  
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*The Roger Scruton Legacy Foundation presents*

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The Roger Scruton Legacy Foundation is pleased to announce the launch of the Book Fund, an initiative dedicated to perpetuating the intellectual legacy of Sir Roger Scruton. This programme, made possible through the generous support of the Mathias Corvinus Collegium, is designed to make Scruton's influential works more accessible to groups and associations committed to exploring his ideas.

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